



## Prescription Drug Community Action Kit

### SURVIVOR STORY

# Sally

## WINNING THE BATTLE AGAINST ADDICTION

“Life was unraveling, if we couldn’t find ‘Perc’ we used heroin.”

Sally is a 23-year-old bright, articulate woman and an enthusiastic mother of two girls. It’s a life Sally didn’t realize was possible; a long battle with opioid painkiller addiction kept her from seeing her potential for many years.

Sally first took opioid painkillers at age 14 following a difficult surgery to remove her tonsils. She was given 10 mg of Percocet to manage the pain. Sally immediately loved the buzz of the opioids.

At age 16, Sally again began taking opioids. She had an appendectomy with ongoing complications, and she was given a three-month supply of narcotics. Sally experienced that familiar buzz she’d grown to enjoy when she had her tonsils removed. She wanted the narcotics more and more.

As she got older, Sally used marijuana occasionally and bought opioids when they were available. She enrolled in a demanding and stressful medical tech program, and a friend recommended taking the opioids to help her ‘cope.’ Sally’s use began to increase.

Using opioids made Sally feel more focused and productive, and she felt she performed better and slept well. Sally started using 30mg Percocet and eventually began taking 10-13 pills per day. She also added cocaine to the cocktail of drugs she was taking. As her addiction spiraled, Sally started crushing the Percocet, mixing it with water and injecting it.

It was a low point in her battle. Injecting drugs was something Sally never thought she would do.

She lost her job due as a medical tech to performance issues. Her relationship with her boyfriend, also an opioid user, was unraveling. They had no food and were living moment to moment. When they couldn’t get Percocet, they used heroin. She never really felt high; Sally just felt like she was maintaining.

She knew what she was doing was wrong and incredibly damaging; her medical background told her so. But Sally was convinced she could handle it. Finally, Sally and her boyfriend reached a point where they knew they had to stop and were admitted into treatment.

It was just the beginning of Sally’s recovery efforts. After nearly three years of rehab and relapses, sober houses, and new starts, Sally determined that methadone was the only way she was going to stay clean. She struggled against her own cravings and fought against a familial predisposition to addiction, making treatment that much more difficult. Sally entered into a methadone program and continues taking it today. Her recovery process has four components: commitment, her doctor’s care, methadone and counseling.

In sobriety, Sally can now care for her two young girls. She hopes to someday be an advocate for other recovering addicts and raise awareness about how opioids damage the brain.

They can “rob you of your future,” Sally said.

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