

My name is Krystal Atkins and I am a Certified Peer Recovery Specialist and a Forensics Specialist (CAPRS II-FS) for Daviess Community Hospital. I also facilitate a Narcotics Anonymous Meeting once a week in Vincennes. There are several pathways to recovery and as a PRS, and I support whichever recovery pathway a person chooses. However, my recovery pathway has primarily focused on 12-step programs and finding my Jesus.

I grew up with parents that had their own issues of substance use and alcoholism, but back then the thought of recovery wasn't brought up very often. I was born in Washington, IN and remained here until I was two years old and my parents divorced. My mom, step-father, and I moved to Loogootee, IN and that is where I grew up through-out my schooling years. Although in the same town I stayed, we never really had stable housing for long periods of time. I experienced homelessness and displacement while I was growing up. I visited my father every other weekend here in Washington. I never really knew what "love" was as a child. I began seeking that attention in other ways by the time I was 12 years old.

Don't get me wrong, I do have several good memories and pictures of my childhood and those are the only memories I choose to keep close today. Through my recovery and finding Jesus I learned how to forgive people and the actions of others no matter how bad the situation may have been. I do have trauma that I, to this day, still have problems accepting, but Jesus and my program help me live as a survivor from that trauma.

After a lot of my childhood trauma had happened I had a new perception of life. That perception was that I had to fight for whatever I wanted and I had to work very hard if I wanted to keep it. On top of that by the time I was 15 I was in full blown addiction. I continued to excel in school, so no one would see my dark side. I maintained a job and played sports. The love that I had came from a dark love. "The love of having a dangerous side" I enjoyed having a life that was normal and then the life of drugs, drinking, and living horribly. This life carried on through high school, into college and, even in adulthood. I was a Chameleon. I could form to whatever environment that I was in for years.

That one day came when my life came crashing down. After 17 solid years of using substances and drinking I lost my children to the system, In the months to follow I got clean and sober and tried real hard to get my life back together. It took over a year of treatments, meetings, psychiatry, classes, and rehab until I began to see what true recovery felt like. I will never forget the day that I honestly hit my knees and screamed to Jesus, "I can't do this anymore, help me." That was the last night I had to feel the defeat, heartache, brokenness, and shame of my life choices. That day was the first day I was clean and sober for what has now been over five years.

By the grace and true mercy of Jesus I was able to reunite with family, my children came home. I was able to get my house and vehicle back. It has been hard work and a long road since I began my journey on August 3rd, 2018, but I would not change anything because it has taught me how to love and be strong in a new healthy way.