

Next Step Staff Stories: Blake Raffensburger



Blake's Story

They say no one is unique in this process but I feel as though my story is one of a kind. I was raised in a beach resort town on the eastern shore of Maryland and grew up as an only child. My mentality was one stereotypical of only children: "me, me, me." My parents split when I was two and by the age of 18, I was one of seven siblings between both parents. The whole "me me me" thing went out the window. My addiction really progressed, either due to jealousy or maybe resentment towards some people. In high school I was a star athlete and normal kid, but lying cheating and stealing was also comfortable to me. Back then I didn't realize how many people I was actually hurting, including myself.

My addiction started out easy and light and steadily progressed to heavy and hard stuff that I thought I could never turn back from. It really took a turn for the worst in my early 20s, around the time I returned home from an ambitious try at college. I began working at dead-end restaurant jobs where everyone was using but I still found a way to get fired from all of them. Eventually I found myself on the run and not allowed home until I turned myself in. Thank goodness I did because as sad as it sounds, being in jail was when I was finally safe. I had burned bridges with anyone I had ever known and stolen everything I could get my hands on, all to feed my addiction. I wasn't welcome home anymore and had no choice.

How Blake Came to Next Step Recovery

After I had been in jail for a while my savior/mother came to visit and gave me the option of either staying in my cell or going to a treatment

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center. You might guess that I chose the treatment center and headed to Black Bear Lodge in Georgia. After a 50-day stay at Black Bear, I came up with the brilliant idea to move to Asheville, North Carolina. I knew nothing about the city except that I needed some sort of geographical change. Black Bear set me up with Next Step Recovery in Asheville and that was the first halfway house I came to after arriving in NC. The love, advice and support I received from the residents and staff at Next Step, I will cherish and hold forever. It was literally my saving grace.

Blake's Advice for Those on the Path to Recovery

I've been on a long journey in Asheville and am about to celebrate two years clean on July 15th. This is my first shot at trying to get clean and relapse hasn't been a part of my story. It doesn't have to be part of yours, either. I have worked extremely hard to get where I am at now and things have come full circle. I am now part of the staff at Next Step, where my journey all began. Miracles can happen if you stay clean. Do not be afraid to ask for help. This is a "we" program and "we" cannot do this alone. Stay in today because who knows what tomorrow will bring.

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