

SONJA'S NEW LIFE

At a very young age Sonja found herself drinking alcohol as a way to suppress the trauma she had gone through in her childhood. Later on she found in cocaine the consolation she needed when life just simply wasn't going her way.

She had a tough childhood. Her dad passed away when she was 6 years old. She grew up watching her mother and grandmother suffer from alcoholism. Her mom passed away at the age of 44 from cirrhosis of the liver. Two of her uncles also died of the same disease. "It runs in my family", she said. "So I knew I had to do something different with my life."

As a result of her addiction, she ran into problems with the law and was charged with both assault and possession of narcotics, resulting in 2 years of probation. During this time, Sonja realized that in order to put her life in order and break from her family's history, she had to be honest with herself and surrender - so she asked for help.

"I was so nervous to go to jail; I didn't know what to expect. It was hard, but I just knew I had to do it". Her family was supportive, and they knew Sonja was determined; she wanted to do it for herself but also for her 10 year old daughter who is living with her grandmother while she seeks treatment.

After a month and a half at the Harris County Jail, Sonja was transferred to Santa Maria Hostel where she was admitted into residential treatment and was introduced to the Women's Access Project Houston (WAPH). She completed 3 months of the WAPH Program while in residential treatment, followed by 4 months as outpatient. While still in treatment she suffered the loss of 2 family members: her uncle and cousin, both deaths within a week of each other. These unfortunate events lead Sonja to a relapse. "Luckily I had the best team of counselors and coaches who took me under their wings from day one. They know that things can happen and are here not to judge but to help me in my recovery."

This episode of relapse reminded Sonja to stay humble, to work on sobriety and recovery every single day. "In order to deal with addiction I have to deal with my trauma and my emotions. I had to start by forgiving my mother, my grandmother and especially myself."

"I have a lot of 'wow' moments, where I am able to recognize the reason behind my actions and that gives me so much confidence in myself... I don't regret anything that has happened because thanks to my past I am who I am today. Recovery has made me a better person."

"I'm forever grateful to SMH for the role it has played in my life. It has been a life changing experience. They change lives for real, they changed mine."

Now Sonja is part of the Transitional Living program (HUD) at SMH, which she calls her "safe heaven". She now has a full time job, studies Business Administration at South University, serves as a member of the Peer Advisory Council of SMH and has big dreams for herself.

"Some times it's overwhelming but I just feel determined. I prioritize and I get it done. I find motivation when I look back at how far I've come and how much I've grown as a person. I'm putting in the work now and the sky is the limit".

SMH and her Recovery Support Team made such an impact in Sonja's life that she wants to advocate for recovery as a way to give back. "I turned my life around and I'm making the difference in my family... because I'm doing things differently. Now I want to make the difference in someone else's life too".