



Prescription Drug Community Action Kit

SURVIVOR STORY

Ken

WORKPLACE INJURY LEADS TO FOUR YEARS OF ADDICTION

Ken always felt a deep sense of gratitude. He thought often about the things he loved – his work in masonry, his home and his family. Tragically and unexpectedly, Ken's thoughts became dominated by an addiction he never intended to have.

To deal with pain from a neck injury, Ken was given a high dose prescription for Percocet, one of the most powerful opioid painkillers on the market. After 60 days, Ken's dosage increased. People began to ask Ken if he would sell his Percocet, but he was too deep into his addiction. Ken was snorting as many as 300 pills each month and spending around \$200 each day to support his habit. Eventually, Ken was prescribed OxyContin – even more powerful than Percocet – and could not get up in morning until he snorted it.

Ken's life began unraveling. Every day of his four-year battle with addiction pulled Ken further from the things he valued most. He worked on a project and was compensated with painkillers in lieu of cash. Ken's house was searched by the police, and he was very close to losing his child.

Many people who develop addictions to these legally-obtainable drugs find themselves spiraling downward in a similar manner. Opioid painkillers account for more fatal overdoses than heroin and cocaine combined. While opioids can help manage pain after surgery or serious injury, they are often only needed for a short period of time. A person can develop an opioid painkiller addiction in as few as five days.

Ken is a testament to the power of treatment. In his case, medication-assisted therapy has been extremely successful. Today, Ken takes methadone, a synthetic opioid that is used medically to treat opioid dependence. He works with his counselor to identify ways to stay free of the drugs. This includes being grateful for his work, his home and his family.

He is especially grateful for each day of sobriety, because he was fighting a drug addiction far too many people are unable to shake.

"Nothing grabbed me like the opioids," he said.

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