

My Journey to Empowerment

By Kimberly Edwards

Almost five years ago I was unrecognizable. For most who knew me, they were shocked to learn that I was enslaved to a heroin addiction. Every day I was one step closer to death, and the failure I felt towards myself was overwhelming. Before this addiction took over my life, I was doing well in college, but I was also struggling with severe depression. I had never dealt with the abuse and neglect I had endured as a child. It took me being in the wrong place at the wrong time, and a lack of caring about myself to cave into trying a terrible, destructive drug. From then on, my life spiraled out of control. I lost everything I was working for, every penny to my name, and the respect of my family. I failed myself in so many ways, and for a long time, I thought I would never overcome.

My story did not end there, thankfully. After four years of drug abuse, I made the life changing decision to get help. I entered a year-long rehabilitation center for women in Sacramento, CA. It was the hardest journey of my life; I had to face all my inner demons and the root issues that lead me to where I was. I am proud to say that today I am almost five years sober. After picking my life back up, I experienced a strength that I had never felt before - a strength that told me that if I am capable to overcome a heroin addiction, I am capable of so much more. I made the decision to return back to school at the age of 31 after 2 ½ years of sobriety to pursue a degree in nutrition. My past has motivated me in a way I never thought possible. I was given a second chance, and this makes me work even harder to achieve my dreams. Continuing my education will not only enrich my life, but others' as well. I volunteer at a women's rehab center, and when I tell someone my story - how I am now in college, pursuing my dreams - I can see the hope in their eyes. Seeing that tells me that what I went through was not in vain. I know firsthand how powerful hope can be. I am no longer ashamed to share my story, and I want to know that what I went through and my progress is making a difference in another woman's life.

For too long, I abused my body and exposed it to harmful substances. Studying nutrition has empowered me to care for my body the way I know it deserves. It feels amazing to learn about how to improve my health, and how to properly nourish myself. I want to use my degree to continue to help women. My hope is that I can

one day work with women who struggle with eating disorders and addictions. I only want to help others the same way I was helped.