

Getting clean: Heroin addict goes through pioneering program

October 8 2015, by Philip Marcelo



In this Sept. 18, 2015, photo, Kylee Moriarty, left, and her mother, Jackie Law, sit together outside the halfway house in Boston where Moriarty resided. This was their first meeting in person in more than a year. Moriarty is among more than 200 addicts taking advantage of a unique program offered by police in Gloucester, in which heroin addicts are fast-tracked into treatment rather than arrested. (AP Photo/Philip Marcelo)

Kylee Moriarty has experienced her share of ups and downs since deciding to kick her heroin habit this past summer.

The 26-year-old's journey started in early July when she showed up, beaten and gaunt, at the police station in Gloucester, Massachusetts, looking to take advantage of the department's pioneering policy of connecting addicts with treatment rather than throwing them in jail.

Fast forward to late September, and Moriarty has been clean for more than 70 days—her longest drug-free stint in years, according to her and her family. Her mother, Jackie Law, pays a visit. It's the first time she's seen her daughter in over a year.

Outside the Boston halfway house where Moriarty has been staying, the two sit side by side on a picnic bench, enjoying an unseasonably warm morning.

"I never thought we'd be here again," Moriarty says, clasping her mother's hand.

"You were really sick," Law says in a tearful mumble. "But you're not anymore. You're back. And I'm so happy."

"I'm not going anywhere now," Moriarty reassures.

Days later, she stumbles.

She's tossed out of the halfway house after housemates accuse her of being high on marijuana, a charge she vehemently denies.

Moriarty says there have been times over the past three months where she was on the verge of quitting and submitting to her cravings. She maintains she never did.

"The director basically wanted me to lie," she says, still seething at the decision that sent her to another recovery house nearby, where she's now required to submit to random drug tests but has somewhat greater freedoms to pursue work and other activities outside the house. "She said if I just admitted I was high, she'd let me stay. But I'm proud that I'm clean and sober."

Moriarty says she's as committed as ever to living clean. She's focused on making amends with her family. She also hopes to one day reconnect with her young son, Landon, now in the sole custody of his biological father.



In this July 10, 2015 file photo, volunteer Ruth Cote, facing, hugs Kylee Moriarty inside the police station in Gloucester, Mass., who had voluntarily come to the police for help kicking her heroin addiction. Moriarty is among more than 200 addicts taking advantage of a unique program offered by police in Gloucester, in which heroin addicts are fast-tracked into treatment rather than

arrested. (AP Photo/Elise Amendola, File)

"That's what keeps me going," she says. "I'm going to get back those things that I lost."

She says her addiction was the product of a tumultuous few years in which she dealt with bladder cancer, gave birth to her son two months prematurely and lost her biological father to suicide.

"Just a lot of things all at once," Law observes. "Right after the cancer, her life went into fast forward."

Law says she cut off Moriarty to protect Landon, whom she'd raised for years as her daughter struggled with addiction.

"I had to make a choice to let you go," she tells Moriarty during their reunion. "Emotionally, I was pretty tired. It took me a lot to even just come here. I didn't know what to expect."

Moriarty replies: "You made the right choice, Mom. I was completely toxic to everyone in my life. There was no reaching me."

After her father committed suicide in 2008, just months after Landon was born, Moriarty says she started taking Suboxone, a prescription drug her boyfriend at the time had been taking to treat his heroin addiction.

From there, Moriarty says, she fell deeper into drug use, from the synthetic party drug Molly to oxycodone, cocaine and heroin. Along the way, she was arrested on a range of offenses, including speeding, misdemeanor assault, receiving stolen property and resisting arrest.

The reckoning came in early July, when her boyfriend beat her and threw her out, accusing her of stealing his drugs. In a twisted way, Moriarty says, the altercation was a blessing.

"Jail didn't do it for me; losing my family and my child didn't do it for me," she says. "I literally had to be sleeping in a park for three days with no shoes and a broken face to get to that complete and utter desperation."

She eventually reached out to Joe Titone, a longtime family friend, for help.

"I almost cried. She looked horrible. She lost almost 30 pounds. Her face was all black and blue from getting beat up," the Seabrook, New Hampshire, resident recalls.

Titone immediately took her to a hospital in southern New Hampshire, but officials there said they couldn't offer treatment for her drug addiction. That's when he delivered her to the police station in nearby Gloucester.

By then, the department had drawn attention for offering heroin addicts a radical proposition: Commit to getting clean and police will fast-track you into treatment, no questions asked. The program, which by now has been replicated in a number of other cities, has placed more than 200 addicts into treatment.

Gloucester Police Chief Leonard Campanello, who has become a prominent voice in the national drug epidemic that's hit New England especially hard, met Moriarty the night she came to the police station and has been keeping up with her ever since.

The department covered her first \$150 monthly rent and provided her

some personal effects to get her started at her new recovery house.

Campanello says he's not too concerned with her most recent move, as long as she's still committed to living drug-free.

"She's light-years from where she was 2 1/2 months ago," he says. "This disease is a day-to-day thing. She's going to have to work at it every day."

Moriarty says she's prepared to weather the bumps.

"I no longer wake up in the morning dreading my day. I've alive. I have hope now," she says. "I still have a lot of stuff to work on. It's progress, not perfection. It's baby steps."

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