



Supreme Court of Appeals State of West Virginia

News

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Meet Cassie, A Family Treatment Court Graduate

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Photos on SmugMug: <https://wvcourts.smugmug.com/Photo-Galleries/2021/Events>

In honor of the second-year anniversary of Family Treatment Courts, this is a first-hand account from Cassie, who graduated from the Boone County Family Treatment Court on September 20, 2021. She did not want her last name to be public.

Where it all started

I started using back in my teenage years. I tried pot, partying with friends, and drinking. Once I got in my early 20s, pills became popular here (Boone County), and I was in a car wreck. I had broken ribs and what the doctors wrote for me was never enough.

They prescribed hydrocodone, but then I started buying oxycodone on the street. I was strung out on that for about seven years. Then, at one point, I was stealing from work at Buffalo Wild Wings. That is where I got arrested. I was charged with 16 counts of uttering and 16 counts of forgery. My lawyer got me a plea deal that, if I could complete a year of drug court, they wouldn't indict me because it was my first time being in trouble.

My first attempt at sobriety

I tried drug court at the time, but I wasn't ready; I hadn't hit rock bottom yet. I got kicked out of drug court, and I became a felon. I was sentenced to two years of probation. I tried to straighten up, but it wasn't enough. I was still getting away with using a little bit. But now I was taking Xanax. I failed drug tests so the probation officer had to turn me in. I got myself into Karen's Place in Louisa, Ky. It's a Christian-based drug rehab for women. I didn't really like it too much, but I spent 60 days there.

I had good reports so they let me go to a halfway house. I went to the Rea of Hope in Charleston. I was there for six months and, when I was finished there, I came back to Boone County, and I had this thought that I wanted to get high again.

Back home and back in trouble

As soon as I got back to Boone County, I got on Suboxone. I ended up getting really high and really sick.

A few days later, I found out I was pregnant. It was my first child. I quit everything for a while, but the guy I was with then, we didn't make it long after the baby was born.

Then I got with my ex, Leon. He was ready to quit and get cleaned up like I was, but it didn't last long. A year later, I was pregnant with my second, a girl this time. We had the baby, and everything was going well. Then Leon was sick all the time. He got septic over his teeth and had to have open heart surgery. Five days later, he had an aneurysm in his brain and didn't make it.

That sent me into a whirlwind; I was crying all the time. For like a year, my mom was helping me with the kids. Then I started dating a guy. At first, he was great to my kids and me. Then he started bringing meth around. I started doing it, too; it helped me feel better. But after a few months, we started arguing really heavy and it wasn't long before he started hitting me. That is when I decided to give my two kids to my parents.

Things got much worse

I knew I couldn't bring them into that world of meth. At that point, things really went downhill. I was living wherever, shooting up wherever. I lived two years like that. I used to be one of those women who said, "It's their fault because they keep going back to someone who beats them." Now I understand that the abuser breaks you physically and with their words, too.

Now that I look back on it, I understand it was an escape because, in that moment that he is tearing you down physically and mentally, you can't think about anything else; you can't think about the fact that your kids aren't with you or that your significant other is gone to a better place or how big of a mess you are. There were times I thought he was going to kill me and, in the moment, all you can think about is if you are going to live or die.

It took a while and a lot of soul searching, but I finally made it through all the abuse, the drugs, and I just want people to know that it can be done. I'm living proof.

I finally got out and met Tyler. He was an addict, too. Soon I was pregnant for a third time. I was on meth during my whole pregnancy. I tried to get off, but it was so hard. I was also on Suboxone at the time.

When I went in to have the baby, we were off meth for five days and, thank God, there was no meth in her system.

After she was born, CPS showed up, which I knew was going to happen because I failed every drug test during my pregnancy.

They placed her with Tyler's aunt, and she has been so great. Then, Tyler said, "Let's quit this. Let's put the needles up and quit."

A light at the end of the dark tunnel

I got into family treatment court then, and Tyler does a program through CPS.

At first, I didn't want to do the program, but a month or so in, I couldn't ask for anything better. They check on you every day. The 7 p.m. curfew really helps and so do the resources they give you. I could not have found anywhere else better.

I thank God for family treatment court. I think I failed one drug test for alcohol in the beginning but that's all. The program works if you work it. Tyler was offered to go through the same program, but he wanted to do the regular CPS program. I am really proud of him. He is my strength when I'm weak and vice-versa. Tyler could have gotten the baby back in the beginning if he would have parted ways with me, but he said, "No, we are in this together." I just thought that was amazing of him, and he says he is so much better for it now. Things couldn't have turned out any better because he needed some accountability in his life and CPS gave him that.

Small steps

We have the baby full-time now. We have been in our programs for almost a year and will graduate at the end of September.

I have reconnected with my other two kids as well, but they still live with my parents. I'm trying to take things slow. I don't want to overburden myself and slip up. As an addict, we want everything right now, but I am just trying to do what I can.

Why family treatment court works

I think the main reason family treatment court is working when drug court did not is because I was so young in drug court. There was about a 10-year difference in me going through the programs, and I just wasn't ready before.

Back then, I hadn't seen rock bottom. Definitely rock bottom for me was giving up my kids. I know I did it willingly, but I knew I couldn't take care of them.

It is a lot easier when your partner or significant other is going through the same thing. No addict can do this by themselves.

Other things keep me busy now

I now fill my time with work and the baby. I would like to go back to school. I am currently working on becoming a recovery coach, but you have to be in recovery yourself for about two or three years.

I also exercise, listen to music, do artwork. I always try to keep myself busy. There are days that are still hard and I want to use, but I don't act on it.

To keep what you have, you have to give it away

I think it's important to help others who are facing the same challenges that I faced. We have been through this. We can give advice, and it still gives us that group of people to call on if we need someone. There is nothing like seeing someone who is in a place you were not too long ago and finding a way to

lift them up, a kind word or some encouragement. That's what it's all about really. People are stronger than they know. The same boiling water that softens the potato hardens the egg.

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