



Learning to Stay

I HAD 15 ALCOHOL RELATED ARRESTS BEFORE I CAME TO THE EXTENSION. My life was full of toxic relationships, and I bounced around motel rooms for 10 years. I had been married for almost 20 years and divorced because of alcoholism. My ex-husband went home to Long Island with our kids and told me not to call.

The crazy part is that I knew about The Extension the whole time I was locked up. There was an older woman from a church, her name was Dorothy, who would come by and tell me, “You need to go to The Extension.” I loved this woman, God bless her. She’s passed away now, but she saved my life then. She was my savior. She and her husband prayed over me; they helped me get motel rooms when I needed them. They wanted a different life for me, but I kept running away.

It wasn’t until I ran out of money that I decided to get sober. My kids didn’t want to talk to me unless I was clean and hadn’t been drinking. One time while I was on probation, I wanted to call my kids, but my ex-husband said he would call my probation officer if I sounded drunk. I was, so I never got to hear their voices. Again, I found myself out of money and out of liquor. I had my motel room for three more days, and I knew that was my opportunity to change. I was sick and tired of the cycle. Getting arrested, saving money while I was in jail, getting out, and then spending it all on alcohol. I went through this pattern at least 15 times. I couldn’t stay like this anymore.

Dorothy had continued to support me, so I knew I could count on her now. She helped me gather everything I needed to enter The Extension. She even drove me there when I got accepted into the program. She and her husband have both passed now, and I feel like I never got to repay them, but I try to pay their kindness forward.

I knew I could get sober, I just had to learn how. I was raised in an extremely strict household; my parents were rigid people. I knew how to follow rules so that wouldn’t be my issue in recovery- staying would. My sister who lived in New York would call me and ask, “when are you getting out?” I told her every time, “Well, they want me to

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stay another week.” It was always “another week, another week” and slowly, it started to connect for me. The group sessions, the meditations, the therapy, the yoga, my sponsor Judy, the relapse prevention plans - it all made me realize that I had to change the way I thought about life.

I started to hold myself accountable, take responsibility for my life, and give back. After my time at The Extension as a client, I stayed on as a house monitor for two more years. At the time, it was just a little efficiency apartment- it's been completely transformed now. I don't have letters at the end of my name, but I learned a lot. I shared my experiences with the ladies and showed them that it was through my life experiences and what I've lived through that got me to where I was. I was able to pay forward the kindness of Dorothy and her husband. I love that I get to keep sharing kindness to this day, and I always will.

Something I learned in recovery at The Extension is that you

know the familiar very well, so you must change the way you think about what's familiar. You have to live your own life, but you can't live it the way you have up until now - you have to choose a different mindset. I still see it every day, I still talk to homeless people because I was one; I choose to do that. Even at my job at Walmart, I see people I knew 20 years ago, and I get to tell them about my new life.

The Extension gives us a home and gives us love. We don't even love ourselves when we first get there, but they embrace you and help you find the core issue of why you do what you do. We find our own spirituality, our source of strength. We find hope. It's in the alumni that come back, the group and individual therapy, and it's in power hour. Hope is everywhere at The Extension if you stay long enough to find it.

Since I transitioned out of The Extension, I've gotten my life back and I'm doing what I'm supposed to. I have a car, a job, my kids, and everything in my life is okay. There's no need for

making up stories in my head that never happened. I think of myself as a human being, not a human doer. This doesn't mean that I have control of my life, but everyday I thank God for helping me that day. It's simple, really simple. I don't struggle anymore or procrastinate or worry about what's next. It's a simple program for complicated people.

I learned to ask for what I need, and I don't worry about what other people are going to think. Most of the time we are making up what they'll think anyways. I'm up for a promotion this year, and I had to do a background check and drug test, and those don't scare me anymore. I know who I am, I get up, I show up, I come to work, and I do it to the best of my abilities.

The Extension is an incredible place, if you keep doing what you need to, everything will fall into place. I've seen all sorts of charges dropped, lives transformed, and relationships healed. You'll see miracles happen at The Extension if you learn to stay like I did.

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It's a simple program for complicated people.

BUILDING COMMUNITY & SHATTERING STEREOTYPES



THIS SUMMER WE LAUNCHED A SPEAKER CIRCUIT aimed to bring our community together, educate people about recovery, break the stigma of substance use disorder, and cultivate unity towards supporting our clients and alumni. Drug and alcohol addiction impacts everyone. Individuals who come to The Extension have been living on the street, often in and out of jail for offenses related to their addiction, and nearly all have become alienated from their families. As a community, we need to be prepared to support

these individuals once they have moved into recovery. This speaker series is an opportunity to connect community members at large with our recovery community, helping to forge relationships and challenge the stereotypes many people have about drug and alcohol addiction.

At our first installment, D.A. Flynn Broady and Attorney Traci Trippe spoke about their experience and perspectives on addiction in our community. As an alumna of The Extension, Trippe shared her own story of recovery, while D.A. Broady shared a larger picture of addiction in Cobb County, emphasizing the need for treatment and recovery.

The room was full of alumni, friends of The Extension, people who had never heard of us, and community leaders. All with the purpose of coming together to support those in our community who need it most. We intend to recreate this electric energy in rooms across the county and keep fighting to bring light to our work and shatter the stigma of substance use disorder.



Sisters In Sobriety

THE SISTERS IN SOBRIETY ARE EXACTLY THAT: SISTERS. Nothing can replace the compassion and understanding of women who know each other's struggles, because of the stigma that comes with being a woman experiencing SUD. Navigating motherhood and sober living comes with many challenges, but your SIS is here to support you. Here are just a few women who know the power of this community:



"The Extension has given me a new lease on life! My family relationships have been healed and I have a network of sober friends that are here for me, day or night. I'm so grateful for my recovery and The Extension gave me the tools I needed to navigate life without the use of drugs or alcohol." — Amy

"The Extension showed me what it's like to be selfless by loving myself. I was able to turn fear, pain, insecurities, and self-doubt into faith, healing, confidence, and self-growth. I never knew that I was capable of being the person who I always felt that I was. I never knew that you could be so grateful for such a down fall in your life." — S

"The Extension has given me a second chance at life and taught me how to build a life I didn't need to escape from. They gave me the tools I needed to shape me into the woman, mother, friend, and sister I am today. I have a relationship with God and rebuilt relationships I had destroyed. Today I love myself and I love my life. The Extension will always be in my heart, and I will be forever grateful and continue to give back what was so feely given to me." — Christine B

"The Extension helped me to create a life I could only dream of. I have repaired relationships with all four of my daughters and I get to be involved in my three grandbabies' lives. I was loved unconditionally as a resident and eventually was able to love myself. Today I have family, true friends, a relationship with God, and a true desire to help others when they need it. Today, I am grateful to be alive." — Cassie C

"The Extension saved my life. While I was there I learned so much about myself, was taught the tools for healing and living life without the use of alcohol or drugs... no matter what. My marriage has been restored, I have a relationship with my children and have recently had a new baby! I went in with nothing and no one, but day by day, I was taught how to rebuild my life and my relationships. I will forever be grateful for The Extension. This will always be a place I recommend to other women like me to get the help they so desperately need and deserve!" — Trina B

"The Extension showed me how to live life again. Not only how to get up and walk tall, but how to forgive myself. I fell down a few months after leaving The Extension, but if it wasn't for the time there where I learned the tools to pick myself up and do the work to get myself right, I wouldn't be here today. I remembered what being sober meant, doing the work and seeing the promise of who I could be. The Extension is a safe place where I can and always will call home! Thank you for saving my life more than once! - Jessica R



Your SIS is here to support you!



Counselor Q&A

CECELIA MACK IS A LICENSED PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR SPECIALIZING IN FAMILY SYSTEMS. She has worked in the addiction field for 15 years and adds invaluable treatment to our clients. We all know our families help shape who we become, and Cecelia helps our clients understand how their family and childhood affects their substance use. We asked her a few questions so you can get to know her.

What made you interested in the intersection of addiction and families?
I've worked with women, children, and men individually, and found that when you approach from a family's perspective, that you tend to help more because addiction is a family disease. If you don't address each member, then you have situations where you have the enabler, the victim, the scape goat, etc. They all cause the person to never actually get clean.

How do you find that our families of origin affect our present lives? How does this come into play with addiction?
I had a client who had an emotionally available mother and unavailable father- there was some trauma that came into play as well. Because of her childhood, she didn't have the resources she needed to deal with her issues, and it led her to abuse drugs and alcohol. She never learned how to cope, so she found something that felt like it could help her feel better.

Do you see any ways that women experience substance use disorder differently than men?
I think it's different for women a lot of times because of their children. There is added guilt on them of not "being the best mom". Society puts a lot of pressure on women to be perfect moms, and that's not possible. Then you add the issue of being away and having issues with drugs or alcohol, and it adds guilt to their already full plate.

Do you think there is a stigma around women specifically dealing with substance use disorder?
I think so. Even when people talk about women in recovery, they say things like "they've been through the ringer," and that's not something we say about men in recovery. There's also a stigma around being separated from your children, specifically because you're a woman. Whereas if you're a man, the expectation is for you to go and get better, while the mother should just deal with it while caring for the children.

How can family members support a loved one starting their recovery journey?
I would suggest they attend AlAnon, to offer support but not to enable. Helping as far as listening, but not doing anything that might



jeopardize their recovery by enabling them to feel like they can stop working on themselves and go back to the way they were. It's hard for families because they are so used to jumping in and trying to save them, so then they never have to do any of their own work.

What would you tell a woman who wants to start her recovery journey but faces family issues?
I would tell her that family will rally around you harder when you're doing the right thing. It will be more rewarding for you because the support is different. It isn't enabling, "I'm afraid to lose you," its more "I want to help you because I see your doing well." Getting over that first hump of commitment to change your life on your own makes all the difference.

Please post at your church or place of business. Thanks!

A Little Competition Goes a Long Way

MAKE COLLECTING ITEMS FOR THE EXTENSION FUN!



ON YOUR COMPUTER:

Find our **Welcome Back Housewarming WishList** on Amazon



IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD:

Left Side of the Street: fill up your porch with toilet paper

Right Side of the street: fill up your porch with paper towels



AT YOUR CHURCH:

Challenge your small group to compete with another with

"**Undie Sunday**" new men/women's underwear or

"**Sock It to me Sunday**" new men/women's socks

Email Betsy@theextension.org or call 678-410-7520



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Enclosed is my gift of \$ _____

I pledge \$ _____ per month quarter year

- I would like to be sent a reminder of my pledge.
- I would like someone from The Extension to contact me.
- I made an online donation at www.theextension.org

Please mail to: The Extension, P.O. Box 793, Marietta, GA 30061

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Volunteers needed **TO PREPARE AND SERVE DINNER & BREAKFAST.**

It's Easy!

Just visit our website to view dates available: TheExtension.org/support-us/meals or you may also call **770-590-9075** or email mallory@theextension.org to volunteer!



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