



## Putting a Face to Recovery: Emily Lux

My name is Emily Lux. I'm 32 years old and have two daughters; 15 and 13 and an eight-year-old son. I was born in Chicago but moved to Green Bay in 2001. I began my drug career at the young age of 11, smoking pot. By 14 I was addicted to cocaine and didn't realize I was an addict. I thought I just liked to party and have fun. When I began using drugs, I didn't intend to become a full-blown strung-out junkie . . . but almost two decades later, that's exactly what I was. I was addicted to heroin and on my way to prison and jail. It was a cycle I didn't know how to break. It was destroying my life and the lives of those I loved.

I used cocaine and weed and drank all through my teenage years. I got pregnant at 16 and managed to not use during that time, but resumed right where I left off the day I returned home from the hospital after giving birth. This continued until two years later when I became pregnant again. I stayed clean for those nine months and started partying shortly after my daughter was born. I didn't think anything was wrong with how I lived. I held a job, paid my bills and lived what I thought was a "normal" life.

In 2001 my daughters' father, myself and our two beautiful children decided to leave Illinois and moved to Green Bay to start a new life. It was around this time I fell in love—with opiates. I left my daughters' dad for a man I met who had connections to the real good pain meds. Before I knew it, I was hooked. I got pregnant with my son in 2005. I felt great, loved life and loved my pills even more.

In 2010, I got into trouble and went to jail for a couple months. I got out and was introduced to heroin by this man that said he loved me. Later that year I was sentenced for crimes I had sat in jail for already. The next 10 months of my life were spent in Taycheedah Correctional Institution in Fond du Lac. But my using didn't cease. I only changed my drug of choice to whatever was available.

When I was released, I managed to stay sober about a month, and then went into my addiction full force, ultimately landing me in a treatment center in Eau Claire called the Fahrman Center, as an alternative to revocation. It was an amazing 21 days. I left there to live in a halfway house for women. I made it a week and found myself relapsing on bath salts. I was 100 miles away from my children and any kind of life I could have. I couldn't get it together and began spending every penny I had on drugs, mainly heroin. I didn't have custody of my children and was slowly killing myself. But hope came in the form of a four-month jail sentence, one that I feel is partly responsible for my success today.

I received new possession charges and was awaiting revocation. I was still abusing drugs in jail. One day, after hearing how upset and broken my son was and having my daughters verbalize they wanted nothing to do with me again, I looked around and realized this was going to be my life for the rest of my life if I didn't make some changes. I vowed that day to quit any kind of mind-altering substances. That was December 12 of 2012 and I haven't picked up a drug or a drink since. Shortly after that decision I was approached by the Brown County Drug Court Program. I was interviewed by the coordinator, Beth Robinson. Not long after, I was accepted and released on the GPS monitoring device. It's definitely not an easy program and seems very overwhelming at first, but I've grown accustomed to their rules and a little over a third of the way of a potential 12-month program. This is the healthiest and happiest I can ever remember being.

I'm a current participant in the Women's Recovery Journey, an intensive outpatient program through Family Services and am very active in my recovery. I attend Narcotics Anonymous meetings almost every day and have developed true, solid friendships in that fellowship and with some of the women I live with in a women's recovery house. I have relationships with my son and 13-year old daughter. My oldest daughter is still not really speaking to me, but once she can actually see that I'm serious this time and not just going through the motions, I'm sure she'll have a different opinion of me. I've made some horrible decisions that permanently scarred my kids and the little bit of family that would still communicate with me. I'm slowly working on rebuilding the trust I lost with so many, one day at a time. . . .

For anyone like myself, that didn't or doesn't understand the nature of drug addiction, please research it before judging or closing doors on relationships that are in disarray by this disease. It's comparable to Type 2 diabetes or cancer, in the sense that it's incurable and just as devastating. But unlike Type 2 diabetes or cancer, it's judged harshly by the world, and is not socially acceptable. What may have been a choice in the beginning quickly became unmanageable and out of control. Crimes are committed every day by addicts resorting to whatever necessary to not be ill, when the choices would have been much different had they not been plagued by the disease. And, because of their choices, they are often incarcerated with no option of treatment. Like with Leukemia, where you receive radiation to put the disease into remission, addicts need inpatient drug and alcohol treatment to learn the tools to live a life that's not riddled with crime and active drug use, usually formed out of necessity. Every one of these things I do today contribute to my recovery, and I'm grateful to every program I'm involved in for their part in my sobriety. It's a lot of work but completely worth it. Like I said, I didn't set out to become a junkie, I just wanted to have fun, but drugs hadn't been fun for a long time by the time I ended my journey with drugs and alcohol and began actually living. It took me the better part of 20 years and will continue for the next 20 years, probably the rest of my life. Recovery is a whole lifestyle change and a constant lesson and learning experience.