

MJ

If it wasn't for the people who listened to me when I was crying out for help, I don't know if I'd be around...

Mary-Joe, or MJ describes her journey of recovery paralleling that of Jekyll to Hyde. With a wide grin, she was engaging with one of the nurses about how profound the changes in her life and personality have been. When asked, she was happy to sit down and share this story- to empower others and to enlighten those outside the community about those who reside in our inner city.

She was introduced to the world of drugs by a former partner. Her usage progressed to an addiction that controlled her. "I kept using because I thought I was missing out on something, I wasn't missing out on anything... it was destroying me." As she describes, the old MJ was someone who yelled, angered people, stole, got into trouble with drug dealers and would wake up in unknown places after passing out. MJ bypassed death many times.

One time in particular stands out to her as a catalyst that scared her so much she had to change. In 2014 she was living in Vancouver when someone gave her dirty dope, most likely laced with fentanyl. She was alone when she took it and when she felt herself going down, had to drag herself several feet to her phone and call herself an ambulance. It was after this that she decided it was time to get help. "I didn't want to die." She moved to Edmonton to be close to her kids, and to better her herself. While she was in Edmonton she saw the Boyle McCauley Health Centre in a resource pamphlet her ex-partner had. She didn't have full medical coverage and had complex needs, so she came to BMHC to ask for help.

MJ shares that she is so thankful for the medical care she received ever since she met her "unicorn" of a doctor on her first visit. The clinic staff "put up with her when she was a pain... and now they're stuck with me!" They call her for reminders, searched around the clinic for her when she hadn't presented for appointments, and helped connect her to resources for stuff like housing and addictions.

Today, MJ sits as an optimistic, friendly, wise woman who is 154 days clean, staying in her own apartment, working towards completing various courses + tickets, and employed casually. "There is no gold medal in the word to replace where I'm at". She has cigarettes, food, and a roof over her head. Proudly she shares that she can walk with her head up, can face people and feels she can speak honestly. There are things and people that trigger her, but she has the strength to distance herself and to advise her former acquaintances on how they can reach their best possible life. Since she is in a healthier place she can help people- eventually she plans to go back to school to be a peer worker. What she wants people to know is that "it is up to you what you want and where you want to go. Death? Addiction is a hard recovery but [take charge of your life]".