

Hi. My name is Erica...

My journey has had a lot of ups and downs. Last year I was featured in the breakfast video; I had just moved into my own apartment and was only a month sober. Today I stand here 1 year sober.

I was born on September 27th, 1988 to Sheila and Ronnie. I was born with 1 kidney and had to have several surgeries to get my kidney to function. My dad left for good when I was two never to be seen or heard from again. So my mom was left to raise me and my two brothers by herself. It was really hard for her and she drank to escape her pain. But she was a functional alcoholic who went to work everyday and kept food on the table and a roof over our heads. She could be mentally and emotionally abusive but she never left us. My childhood was pretty rough. I was sexually assaulted several times by different people between the ages of 3 and 8. I never told my mom because her drinking caused me to not trust telling her. And I was terrified.

These would be the first secrets I learned to keep.

I ran away from home at the age of 11. The cop that picked me up and took me back home told me I was the reason for my moms drinking. I heard that a lot from different people, including my mom, so I believed it. But I didn't want to be the reason my mom was destroying herself. The guilt and the fact my mom was distant lead me to start self harming at 12. All I wanted was my mom to show me that she loved and cared about me. She did in her own way but because of the alcohol she didn't know how to show it.

At age 15 I attempted suicide for the first time but it wasn't my last. I wasn't hospitalized or put in therapy. It was basically ignored and life would continue to go downhill. At 17 I almost lost my life to alcohol poisoning. I was four times the legal limit and dead. I had no idea at the time that you could die from alcohol, my mom drank all the time so it didn't occur to me that you could actually die from it.

It was an eye opening experience and I really didn't drink after that. I graduated high school at 17 and enrolled into a university. The first out of my family to go to school. After the alcohol poisoning incident, I turned to using drugs to ease my own internal pain. I also attempted suicide several more times. But I never got help.

In 2009 my mom decided she didn't want to be around any longer and she attempted suicide. She ended up on life support for 3 days and then she was court ordered to go to central state for a couple of months. This lead her to quit drinking but only for a couple of months.

In 2011 my cousin committed suicide. And in May of 2011 one of my good friends was murdered. His killer got to walk free. This was first time I experienced justice not served. Both of these events hurt me deeply and I continued to use drugs to deal with my pain. I had several friends that I loved dearly that were also into drugs, unfortunately I lost most of them to drug overdoses.

In 2013 I lost my best friend, someone I consider my brother to suicide. I never saw it coming and I had no idea he was struggling as bad as he was. I blamed myself for years for his suicide. Still to this day his decision to end his life still affects me. I miss him so much. After his suicide I attempted to take my own life several times. This lead to 9 hospitalizations where in the hospital I was treated horribly.

Like I was less of a person because I had mental health issues. During the last stay one of the therapists referred me to a place called Bridgehaven. To be honest I had absolutely no interest in going. I really didn't want help at the time. I just wanted to die. My mom who was afraid to lose me, encouraged me to go. To just try it. The first day I went I told myself I didn't belong there and I wasn't going back.

But Bridgehaven was different than any other place I had been.

The therapists reached out to me and showed me they really cared and that I did belong there. But it would certainly be a journey. In 2015 my mom quit drinking. We started to repair our relationship but the damage to her body from drinking was already done. So she was sick a lot and I was her caretaker. Then covid hit. February 24th 2021 my mom passed away from covid and complications from organ failure due to her alcoholism. I was devastated.

But Bridgehaven was there to support me. Some of the therapists even showed up to the funeral home to pay their respects. It meant a lot to me I wasn't alone in my grief journey. Three months after my mom died I was raped in the home I shared with my brother. Living there was beyond chaotic and as much as I didn't want to leave my brother I knew it was time to get my own place.

I have lived in my apartment for over a year now. I actually just signed another 1 year lease. I've had to adjust to the loneliness. I do have a dog named Abbie who is my emotional support animal and my protector and she does her job well. Living without my mom and my best friend has been hard. But I wanted to show my mom how much I loved and appreciated her by purchasing the most beautiful headstone for her. She would probably kick my ass for the money I spent but I wanted to make sure she got the best. I hope she's proud of me.

Bridgehaven has really kept me going.

They have been my biggest supporters. Currently I attend 5 days a week and I go to groups like CBT, CET, Sober life and many others. They have helped me gain confidence I need to keep going. They have taught me to love myself and to be a better person.

I've been diagnosed with Bipolar disorder, Borderline personality disorder, PTSD and of course anxiety and depression come with all of that. But Bridgehaven has taught me that my diagnoses doesn't define me. If it wasn't for Bridgehaven there's no telling if I'd even be alive. The help and support I get is incredible the staff treat you with the upmost respect. You're a person at Bridgehaven, a person that is loved and valued.

Bridgehaven is an incredible place that promotes recovery and healing.

The journey of recovery isn't linear and I'm sure I'll have more ups and downs. Bridgehaven is all about Hope. The word I had forever tattooed on my arm because hope is what gets me through and Bridgehaven is the definition of hope. Hope for a brighter future and hope for a better life.