

POSITIVE PEER ~ Natasha Garcia

What happens when your best friend, brother, and the person that watches over you gets hit by a drunk driver and dies when you are only five years old?

It doesn't matter how supportive and hardworking your parents are, or how much therapy you go to, things just don't ever feel right. And you want to feel right again. So, growing up in the North Valley, Natasha started experimenting at a young age which led her to smoking weed in the eighth grade. Then ditching school. Then cocaine. Then getting kicked out of school.

By 18 years old, Natasha Garcia was a full-blown addict and within a few years she had 15 mug shots to her name. She tried to get clean when she got pregnant the first time, but it didn't last. Her life became a complete blur. Her mom started raising her daughter and then she got pregnant again...this time she kept using and then her mother had a second child to raise. At 28 she got locked up for a year. When she got out, her mother was having some health struggles and she knew she had to end the crazy life she was leading. She was able to get into several programs, including job development counseling, and by the grace of God and the support of her daughter's dad, who was also ready to get clean, she was able to start the path of recovery. She saw how much her parents had sacrificed and how much support she really had the whole time. She also credits Suboxone for helping her break the cycle of substance abuse and the help needed to start a new life.

She got a job at Duke City Recovery and then trained to be a CPSW. She has worked at Courageous Transformation and at BHSD and now, after months of working to get cleared from her felonies, she is working with moms in the NICU at Presbyterian Hospital in Albuquerque. She is the first Peer Worker to work with addicted moms in this capacity.

"I understand where they have been and the judgement you can get from hospital staff. Not every mother is ready or has the capacity to change in that moment and I want to be there for them."

In general, she says she just tries to be a support for others without having to have the answers. She understands that we all go through sad things and she realizes she might not always have the right words but she can show up and listen.

Her best advice for Peers:

"Stay in your heart to help others. Bring your heart to the table every time and keep your compassion and empathy strong, even for yourself."