

# TRT helps Sarah learn to trust and change

by Julia Wentworth  
Community Engagement

Transitional Residential Treatment (TRT) client, Sarah, started using methamphetamine 12 years ago to treat symptoms related to trauma, her arthritis and back pain. More so than physical pain management, Sarah looks to the dysfunction of growing up in a family of users that not only initiated her own use and caused the trauma, but modeled unhealthy decision making and relationship dynamics in her adult life.

"I'm definitely a product of my environment, not realizing it was a bad environment until recently. I didn't have any trust and was emotionally distant. Honesty was not part of my world." She recognizes that dishonesty and criminal thinking perpetuated drug use and illegal activity that eventually resulted in all three of her children being taken away, two adopted and one assigned custody to his grandparents.

Unbeknownst to her at the time, landing back on probation and in the Adult Integrated Treatment Court (AITC) program six months ago would become a transformational opportunity for Sarah. She had historically avoided engaging with the program and her probation officer due to a lack of trust in others and a belief that everyone was against her. However, when Sarah was assigned to the TRT program through AITC, her outlook changed. "Had I known what treatment would have been like a long time ago, I would have come." She also knew "I couldn't do what I was doing anymore."

Since beginning at TRT, Sarah has seen a dramatic change in her behavior, lifestyle and interaction with those supporting her journey to recovery. With a newfound awareness of her body due to sobriety, Sarah has taken major initiatives to improve her physical health. She had her teeth fixed to increase her self-esteem, began eating healthier, practicing yoga and

working tirelessly with doctors to treat her sleep apnea.

Sarah also speaks openly about the importance of learning to trust her probation officer, TRT therapist and others supporting her well-being. "I have had to learn to trust my drug court team and it is scary. It triggers fears of rejection, abandonment and vulnerability. But, I know they have my best interest in mind."

All TRT clients must have a paying job, participate in residential chores (cooking and cleaning), and engage in a minimum of one individual and four group therapy sessions per week as part of the program requirements. Currently one TRT therapist, Kim Kaufman, is assigned to all clients in the program which caps at six due to bedroom space. TRT Case Manager, Paul Egan, and various detox staff also host drop-in support groups throughout the week.

Sarah's entrepreneurialism and community support led her to begin selling books through Amazon.com. The business venture serves as a source of income that also caters to Sarah's inability to work on her feet for extended periods of time. At the encouragement of TRT staff, she started soliciting used and unwanted books from counselors, probation officers and friends. Instead of recycling the books, these individuals now donate to Sarah so she can generate a profit and work toward financial independence.

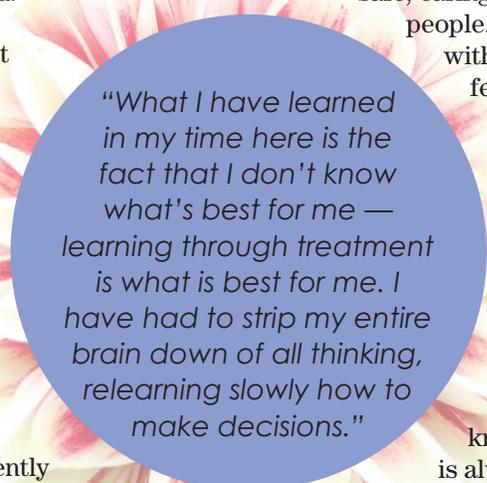
Managing the sale and distribution of books has also taught Sarah valuable computer, financial management and administrative skills. "They have geared my program around me and

my needs, have helped me learn to advocate for myself and figure out what my needs are. They have been supportive in helping me figure out my own way."

Sarah looks toward her bright future with thanks to the TRT program for helping reorient her thinking around relationships. She describes Mental Health Partners and the TRT team as "safe, caring and supportive people. People I can trust with my thoughts, feelings and opinions. They listen. I have never been around such healthy people in my life and it has helped bring out the healthy side of myself. No matter what, I know instant support is always there."

As Sarah prepares to transition out of TRT she recognizes it will be an ongoing process. She plans to stay in touch with the TRT community and surround herself with healthy, sober family members. Most of all, she looks forward to gaining back custody of her son. "I have a lot of work to do with him. I can't take back being the mother I was to my kids, but moving forward I can be the best mother and grandmother ever. I can prove to my kids that I changed."

The profound influence of her TRT experience may even inspire a new career path. "Maybe in six months I'll go to school for my CAC (Certified Addiction Counselor) license; hopefully working back at TRT doing continuing care." Feeling healthy, empowered and confident, Sarah is ready to take her life in a new direction. Thanks to effective treatment, she plans to be in control, not her addiction.



*"What I have learned in my time here is the fact that I don't know what's best for me — learning through treatment is what is best for me. I have had to strip my entire brain down of all thinking, relearning slowly how to make decisions."*