



SUCCESS STORY- SHARON HADLEY

Meet Sharon Hadley, a fifty-something recent graduate of Bel Inizio's program. Her story gives us an insight in the difficult journey most of our clients face. But her commitment to her recovery and to Bel Inizio's mission has allowed her to achieve the long-term goals Bel Inizio aims for. This is her story:

My name is Sharon Hadley and I am a woman in long term recovery. What that means for me is that I have not had any alcohol or drugs or committed any crime since July 23, 2012. And for that I am truly grateful!

In the 10 years before I came into recovery I was incarcerated 14 times and when I wasn't incarcerated I was homeless. My life was a nightmare. The last time I was incarcerated I joined Plane State Jail's Turning Point program. It was there I began to think about change for the first time and the idea terrified me. I was feeling completely hopeless. I remembered having hopes and dreams but felt that was all over for me now. Life had slipped through my fingers and I didn't know how I had let myself get into this situation and I certainly had no idea how to get out. I had never even heard of recovery.

When I was released from Plane State I went to Santa Maria Hostel for in-patient treatment to learn about my disease and how to manage my recovery. From there I went to transitional living at Salvation Army's Sally's House where I learned more tools for recovery and worked the 12 steps of AA. After nine months at Sally's house I was finally ready to test all my new found knowledge.

I was accepted into Brigid's Hope, a program for women who have been incarcerated to learn how to live independently. This was the first time I was responsible for feeding myself in a very long time and I have to admit I was more than a little scared. I also knew that I was at the stage of my recovery where I needed to start improving my physical health and wellness but I just couldn't seem to get motivated.

So when Bel Inizio showed up offering their program I can't say I was excited but I WAS very grateful to have people there to support and encourage me as I moved into a new stage of my recovery. The instructor shared with us how exercise had helped her cope with a difficult time in her life and she had a passion for passing on these coping skills to women like us who were in a transition in their lives and dealing with all kinds of new emotions and situations. Her excitement and enthusiasm were contagious and it wasn't long before we were all excited by the prospect of running a 5K race.

Bel Inizio came to us twice a week and before we all set out to train they spent time teaching us how to eat nutritious meals that were simple and affordable. We started out with a short walk and increased the distance a little every time



we met. We were all allowed to walk or run at our own pace. We all made a commitment to work out on our own at least one day a week.

As the days and weeks passed something very beautiful began to happen to our group. We were in this thing together, cheering each other on. Our self-esteem and our sense of self-efficacy grew. We were feeling better and looking better and we had found a really positive way to cope with our feelings.

Finally race day was upon us and with were together wearing the t-shirts that had been designed specifically for us and the running shoes that had been so generously donated, we were ready! We all ran the race at our own pace but we were never alone because there was always a Bel Inizio volunteer nearby to cheer us on. This was particularly helpful as I neared the finish line and they encouraged me and ran right beside me while everybody who had already finished cheering me on. It felt great to cross that finish line! After the race we were given a wonderful awards ceremony where we each received a certificate. It was an awesome ceremony with lots of pictures to commemorate our journey and we were all left with a real feeling of accomplishment.

SAMHSA, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Association, defines recovery as a process of change, through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self directed life and strive to reach their full potential.



Bel Inizio supported every one of those tenants. They recognized change is a process and broke the race down into smaller achievable goals. All of us experienced an improvement in our physical health and wellness through better nutrition and exercise but also our emotional health was improved by building our self-esteem and self-efficacy. Living a self directed life was supported through our commitment to exercise at least once a week independent of the program as well as learning to feed our selves healthy meals. And of course we challenged ourselves to reach our full potential in this area, every time we went a little further than the last.

Today I am a recovery coach at Santa Maria Hostel and I have the privilege of watching as class after class get to experience the joy of being a part of the Bel Inizio program and they all wear the t-shirts designed specifically for them with great pride. I am very excited and honored to have this opportunity to share with you what Bel Inizio has done for me.