



Podcast: Therapeutic Communities Participant Testimony

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Bridie Clevenger: It was so hard to listen to that stuff that you said about me because a year ago that was not me, that's not who I was. Thank you family for everything you've done. Good morning family and guests.

Audience: Good morning miss Clevenger.

Clevenger: Thank you for allowing me to share my words with you this morning,

Serenity has only been in existence for 12 months, but I can promise you the past 12 months have been the most meaningful, most memorable and some of the hardest days of my life, but there nothing I have done to the point in this program that wasn't worth all the pain and the tears that I've had to endure. To be honest with you, I would do it all over again, if given the choice.

I knew I wanted something better for myself, something different. The problem was, I didn't know where to start, nor did I believe I was even good enough to deserve something better—But still I did want it.

It saw this simply with a wish, or possibly a fairy tale. I just never could get that glass slipper. They don't make them in a size 3. *(laugther)*

You don't get over an addiction just by stopping using. You recover by creating a new life where it is easier to not use. If you don't create a new life, then all the factors that brought you into your addiction will catch up to you again. The statement was drawn up on a classroom wall, and I was drawn to it. I fell in love with the hope that these three sentences provided. It was as if a lightbulb had finally been switched on. I had created a

complicated jungle of chaos now said in a statement of simplicity, but not to be confused with the idea that it was going to be easy. I still had no clue where to start. How was I going to figure this out. Was I crazy thinking someone was as hopeless as I was could rise above what I had always been? Sadly the answer to that was almost a yes, until we created our community philosophy statement.

“Guided by our strong moral compass, we live a life grounded in recovery. Cultivated by our principles and nurtured through positive values, we look to a power greater than ourselves for direction. Not letting our past define our future, we will bring forth change in our recovery. Together as a sisterhood, we strive to achieve Serenity by living with integrity, honesty, willingness, humility and compassion. With these beliefs, we will be confident in our everyday living.”

I didn't know this right away, but these next five sentences would become my guide into this life of recovery that I would belong to. And I have to admit there were words in the statement that I had to look up in order to really understand their meaning. But thank goodness I did because, what I thought they were, were not even impacted. Moral. Compass. Cultivated. Principal. Values. Sisterhood. Integrity and Honesty. Several words I found I really knew nothing about.

So being valued by a strong, moral compass I learned was about using the principles I learned of quiet to determine a direction. What did I know about right and wrong? That was my thought. But I came to understand, I did know the difference between right and wrong. It was about having to become brave enough to drop comfortable, anti-social addiction-based ways and act like a woman who wanted better for herself. I had to stop to cut my own way back but it was worth it so much.

Cultivated by principles and guided by a power greater than myself, those were the next lines I had to start understanding. Learning a new code of conduct with set pro-social rules through improvement with lots of hard work and labor, that is what I came to understand this first part to mean. Tons of hard work. Breaking old habits and new pattern forming through trial and error was causing me to act differently. (408) Joy and esteem were replacing the hurt and the shame. Smiles and good times with my sisters have replaced tears in isolation. Being a role model and positive choices had soon replaced the example of what I didn't want to be and things you never should do. It also became apparent to me that a power greater than myself wasn't only about following God... it was about me realizing that alone I am only one, but together with my sisters, we're a mighty force. What power than I could ever be all by myself. And soon we're looking toward this confident direction of recovery.

I've learned today not to live in the wreckage of my past, not have it around my neck like an anchor. I do live in the hope of the future. And I have to tell you that nothing has

ever been brighter. Together as a sisterhood, as Webster defines sisterhood, it says a solidarity of women based on shared conditions.

A solidarity of women based on shared conditions. Serenity is being achieved by the power of God. Then you add integrity. Goodness. Honesty. And a willingness for things better to be in life and here and outside these gates. Humility and the act of servitude for my fellow sisters and a life filled of compassion for women everywhere, I lay the foundation for my healthy support systems, friendships and relationships, where once I was only capable of thriving in the muck and the mire of being a druggie.

The statement ends with the words that “with these beliefs we will be confident in our everyday living.” To me it’s powerful statement and one that rings true today. To you I’ve just described this letter, it’s how I live my life today. And I can only do so because of my sisters in Serenity.

My life is not perfect, or flawless. I would absolutely not want it to be. Am I unsure times of my next decision? I’d be lying to you if I told you I wasn’t. But I believe in progress, not perfection. But my mistakes and my philosophy are what makes Ms. Clevenger, Ms. Clevenger. Each day is different. Each day is progressive. Each day I move forward in my new life grounded into recovery. The best part is that I’m proud of the woman I am today, what I represent, the choices I choose and the success story I am becoming.

I thank all my sisters for my spirit and my heart. Because without you loving me like I could love myself, I wouldn’t be here today. Thanks to our wonderful staff and support from D-O-C, because you are mentoring us with everything you do. And I want to thank my family for sticking it though and being with me when I didn’t deserve you guys. I don’t deserve all of this. Actually, I do deserve this today. And I am grateful to have all of you. Yesterday, today and tomorrow.

Once again:

(all join in) Guided by a strong moral compass, we live a life grounded in recovery. Cultivated by our principles and nurtured through positive values, we look to a power greater than ourselves for direction. Not letting our past define our future. We will bring forth change in our recovery. Together as a sisterhood we strive to achieve serenity by living with integrity, honesty, willingness, humility and compassion. With these beliefs, we will be confident in our everyday living.

(Applause)