



Yoga Instructor Combats Opioid Addiction with the Help of Methadone, Rehab, and Community

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"Recovery is not some huge, insurmountable task," said Richard Filc, a yoga instructor who has slowly been recovering from his opioid addiction. "It's a collection of tiny little things."

In July 2017, Filc woke up in a hospital bed after overdosing on opioids and suffering from heart damage. There was something mixed in with the drugs he was taking. He had to be sedated for a couple of days in order to limit the damage to his cardiovascular system.

This particular overdose was not his first: Filc is unsure whether it was his fourth or fifth. But he was sure it was time to seek help.

"I think it was the way in which my parents reacted to it," he said of his overdose. "My mom was in Poland at the time, and her mom, my grandma, was sick with pancreatic cancer; she had been given a month to live. She just said, 'I give up, I surrender, I'm done the fighting. You're either going to make it or you're not.' And that really hit me and that finally shook me enough to say, 'I can't continue to do this on my own. I'm finally ready to give in to this whole recovery thing.'"

Today Filc is in recovery, and it's been about a year and a half since he's used an addictive substance. He now works as a yoga instructor at several studios. He also teaches weekly yoga classes to men dealing with addiction.

A year before his 2017 overdose, Filc was on methadone. He says that it served as one of his first steps toward recovery.

"Methadone was a very important stepping stone for me," he said. "It got me to a point where my brain healed enough, and I started to see a little bit more clearly that one day in the future I'd be able to abstain from all opioids or all drugs."

Methadone is suitable for certain patients because recovery based on pure abstinence sometimes feels impossible. Methadone is a drug that can help in the detox process when administered by medical professionals. This is done during the process of gradually lowering a patient's drug intake so that they can slowly become less dependent on it.

During drug detox, the patient may go through withdrawal, and so medical staff members are there to provide support and treatment. They also help reduce cravings and allow the patient to stay on the right path.

"Opioid agonist treatment is the medication that includes methadone, but it can also be buprenorphine, which is also known as Suboxone," says Dr. Jonathan Bertram, an addictions medicine physician. "There are other medications that are also used, but those are the two main ones."

For patients who are addicted to drugs like heroin, oxycodone, and Fentanyl, opioid agonist therapy can even be considered as the first line of defense.

Reducing cravings and handling withdrawal are some of the first few steps to stabilizing someone with an addiction?medications like methadone allow that to happen.

Filc's community also served as an integral part of his recovery, because it helped him find comfort through recovery groups. Overall, the yoga instructor believes that his recovery is a work in progress, but he has made some big steps, and he even feels different nowadays.

It only goes to show that sobriety is a journey, and not a destination. If someone in the family is struggling with opioid addiction, it is important to seek help. A combination of medical detox and behavioral therapy can go a long way in the fight against drug abuse. But because every individual is affected by addiction differently, a comprehensive program tailored to their specific needs is necessary. Look for a nearby

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