

How Lynette October returned from the point of no return

It takes a brave and courageous person to get out of a horrible situation – a point that many will call the point of no return – dust themselves off and face life again. Heroin addiction survivor, Lynette October, tells how determination and courage helped her overcome what appeared to be an insurmountable challenge.

Lynette October's love for technical drawing motivated her to enroll for a fitting and turning course at a technical college in the Western Cape.

However, growing up in Mitchells Plain, Cape Town, was not easy. Social ills that had engulfed her community touched her, too.

The downhill spiral began when, out of curiosity, she decided to experiment with heroin. The experiment proved that the drug was too strong for her and she soon became a heroin addict.

"You start by socialising with the wrong crowd. This is where you start seeing all these things. Even though I didn't like it before, it's here now; it's been put on the table. You want to join the party; it's just for this weekend. Monday you are fine, until



Lynette October ... A drug addiction survivor

you are not fine again - until the drugs don't need you, you need them," she says.

"For me, doing drugs was not about peer pressure, because I was old enough to make my own decisions. I was a grown-up woman already.

"I was around 23 at the time. I was actually one of the people who hated drugs so much. If I knew you were doing drugs, I would not associate with you. Nobody forced me into

drugs," says Ms October.

The habit forced her to start stealing from her family members and she would often disappear without a trace for weeks.

"I could not live at home because I would do something I was not supposed to do. I used to live with friends and my family did not know how deep I was into drugs," she says.

From a promising future to a very bleak one, her dire situation became even more painful for her mother.

"She could not even look me in the eye. Sometimes I would come home looking for food and she would

“I am a firm believer in the fact that no matter how deep you are in it, there is always a way out”

dish up for me and start lecturing me about the dangers of drugs and that I should stop” she says.

“There is an old adage that goes, ‘Every time you draw a clean breath, you are like a fish out of water.’ That was my life.

“Fortunately, I have a very supportive family. They did everything they could to get me clean. I would go to rehab and before you knew it, I would be back on drugs.”

As fate would have it, one night Ms October met the father of her daughter and her sister.

“That is the night that changed my life completely. It was at that moment that it dawned on me that I needed help. It had to come from me and nobody else. I had been on drugs for six years and life was no longer the same. I wanted to change badly,” says Ms October.

“I am a firm believer in the fact that no matter how deep you are in it, there is a way out.

“I’ve seen people who were in worse situations than I was who got out of it. I told myself that if they could, so could I,” she says.

Going to rehab is not an easy feat

and she can attest to that.

“I had been in rehabs before, where I would be given painkillers every time I was in pain or needed a fix. But going to a Christian rehab was a different experience altogether.

“There were no painkillers and there were no sleeping tablets. You had to depend totally on God’s teachings.”

After nearly six months, she had to leave the rehab facility two weeks earlier than initially scheduled and relocate to Lephalale in Limpopo, where she had to pick up the pieces and start a new life.

“My sister had asked me to come with her to Lephalale. Coincidentally, it was the same month she was going to join my brother-in-law in Lephalale. It was not a matter of convincing me, it was a matter of choice.

“I had nothing to lose. I had to rediscover myself. You lose yourself when you are on drugs. You don’t know who you are anymore. You lose your morals and values,” she says.

“It was a great opportunity for me to bond with my child, Relitta, because I had not been with her for six months. When I went for an apprentice

interview at Murray & Roberts I was rusty. Remember, I matriculated in 1997 and my apprenticeship started in 2006,” she points out.

“The interview was a success, though. After that I had to do the practical element. I had to identify all the tools. I didn’t know what a spanner looked like anymore. There were 15 tools and I needed to know at least 10 of them.”

Fortunately, she met a woman who had just finished doing the practical test. She still had her textbooks with her and she lent them to Ms October. “This is how I started my apprenticeship at Murray & Roberts at the Medupi Power Plant,” says Ms October.

She was selected to do pipefitting. “I had a very good mentor, who showed me the ropes. It was scary and exciting at the same time.

“Writing a trade test was difficult and nerve-wracking. Luckily, we had the opportunity to attend classes at the training centre and that prepared us very well for the trade test,” says Ms October.

Today, she is a qualified artisan.

