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My name is Francisco Celis and the date of my last use is July the first twenty-nineteen. I work a twelve-step anonymous program and I have a sponsor. I utilize the zoom platform and I do in person meetings. My story begins with not knowing how to do this thing. I don't know what to recover. I know everything that I have tried has failed. I had eight years of sobriety before and then a three-year relapse happened.

What did I miss? What didn't I get? Was I ready? Because I thought that I had arrived into remaining in abstinence.

I did not know about the work that needed to get done to stay sober.

Court mandated me to recovery without detox or treatment in nineteen ninety-eight. I remember going through the withdrawals in jail, and I did not seem to understand the disease that I have. The illness that I am suffering from or the disorder that is taking place. I am in trouble and in complete chaos. I can't seem to identify with each one of you and instead I blamed you for being there.

I am learning that there was a problem before I could take my first drink or use my first drug. I believed that the alcoholic was a homeless person. The drug addict was a fictional character in the movies. Someone who lived on skid row and not my father and my grandfather who were unfaithful. I did always wonder why they always came home to beat us from work after only having a few drinks.

I was in the complete mercy of, powerlessness and hopeless only to develop the skin to say "I am not going to be like that" and "That is not going to be me".

I was confused and misunderstood, no one came knocking through the door to help. We were all religious and the faith I had was not enough to stop. I grew up with only one choice to make. Get an education if you can afford it or join gangs. Do drugs, commit crimes and spend the rest of your life behind bars.

This time, I got arrested and I was out on probation.

Checked into the St. Anthony's emergency room and psyche unit.

Not once but twice. The good doctor there said to me. Let me help you.

Can I help you? Referred me to the Haymarket Center.

Short stay-by default of my medical insurance. Then housed at the Salvation Army for the work therapy program.

I thought it was what I needed. But, I would come to witness that people were drinking and using drugs on passes home in the weekends. I had the opportunity to live one year at a men's recovery house on the west side of Chicago. That is where I would learn of outpatient treatment. Recovery support services, Narcan training, CPR and first aid in the case of an emergency. I would develop skills for providing people with the information and refer them to pantries, shelters, and clothing services. I enjoy doing this work, It is a calling and I do it because of the constant reminder of being homeless myself.

I learned harm reduction, anger management, the use of dharma, s.m.a.r.t. recovery, r.e.b.t. and cognitive behavior training.

I am particularly grateful for how to overturn an overdose.

So many times, have I overdosed not know what they would lace with the drugs that I was using and abusing.

My name is Francisco and I approve this message.