

# THE LIFELINE

*August 2021 - Hope, Help & Healing for Everyone Affected by Addiction.*

## THE MOUSE THAT SAVED MY LIFE: NAOMI'S STORY

My name is Naomi and I am an addict.

My drug of choice is heroin. It's potent and it helps me escape reality.

This is the story of the worst relapse of my life, and the rodent that helped me find the road to recovery.

### My rebellion

I became an addict at a very young age. I come from an abusive home. My parents were always arguing, throwing things.

My parents never told me they loved me, and I never felt like they cared about me. And as a teen, I rebelled. I found myself a boyfriend who was five years older than me, and mixed with the wrong crowd.

If my rebellion was a cry for help, my parents didn't hear me. They couldn't care less if I got home completely smashed at 3am. As long as I stayed out of their way.

One night, after an evening spent drinking at a friend's house, I asked my boyfriend for a lift. "Go drive yourself home," he laughed, tossing me his keys.

I was 15.

### Getting hooked

I woke up in the hospital, my back in agony. I had swerved off the road on a side street and collided into a tree. I've lived with the pain ever since.

During that time, I was given medication to manage the pain. When my doctors began weaning me off the pills, I sought them elsewhere, and within a couple of months, I was hooked on heroin.

I don't like to remember much about the next few years. At some point, I lived on the streets. Begging for change at busy intersections. I recall getting arrested in La Ronde for some incident involving another ex-boyfriend. But it took a death to shake me awake from my daily nightmare called life.

### Coming clean

A close friend overdosed. At her funeral, I made up my mind. I would finally get clean. I'd tried to sober up in the past, and it had never lasted more than a day. But watching earth thud with sickening finality on my friend's casket made me realize that no one would be at my funeral. And I wanted a life.

I don't remember who gave me Chabad Lifeline's number but I called and they helped me. I learned to deal with my inner pain and to live a healthier lifestyle.

It took years but eventually I got completely clean, met a good man, and started a family.

### The pandemic

For years, even before the pandemic, my husband was an antivaxxer. When COVID started, he joined those demonstrations you may have seen downtown and he was strongly against anyone in my family putting anything into our bodies (perhaps he was overprotective of me - worried that getting vaccinated might somehow make me relapse).



We didn't wear masks. Spent time in close proximity with friends. Broke curfew.

When my husband got COVID, it started with small symptoms. We dealt with it as if it was the flu. Boy were we wrong. The sniffles. The fever. The loss of smell. The vomiting. The shortness of breath. Passing out in the car.

Had we gone for help earlier, perhaps he wouldn't have suffered so much. He ended up spending two months in the hospital. Meanwhile, I was stuck at home with a three-year-old and an eight-month-old.

### Isolation

I became terrified of catching the virus. I quarantined at home for two weeks, then remained home for another month. I had my groceries delivered and when they arrived I wiped down each item with strong sanitizer before use (even vegetables!).

I worried all day. I only saw my husband and friends over zoom. I wouldn't even let my toddler go out onto my porch! I was under stress all day and somehow I managed to hold it together until my husband got home. Then I cracked.

I walked outside for the first time in 9 weeks and returned home at 4am. I wasn't high. I had gone through a mental breakdown. My husband was worried sick. He had waited up for me.

The week or so was a blur. I refused treatment, and I became a burden to my husband (who was still recovering from his illness). Eventually, he took the kids and moved into his parents' home.

### The mouse

For the next month, I lived alone. In denial about my mental health, which had taken a deep dive.

One evening, I was sitting on the couch when a mouse darted past. I shrieked. I stared around at my living room. The squalor. The mess. The neglect. The empty high chair. The books on recovery. My phone. Once again, I called Chabad Lifeline and again, they were there for me.

I spent a month in the psych ward and thank goodness I'm back home with my family. Seeing a psychiatrist. An addictions counsellor. A marriage counsellor. Going to meetings. Living a healthier lifestyle. My house is clean. Once again, it is a home to myself, my husband, and our kids. Together. The mouse was killed by a trap.

Please note that certain people and identifying parts of this true account (including "Naomi's" name) have been changed to protect the anonymity of the people who went through this experience.

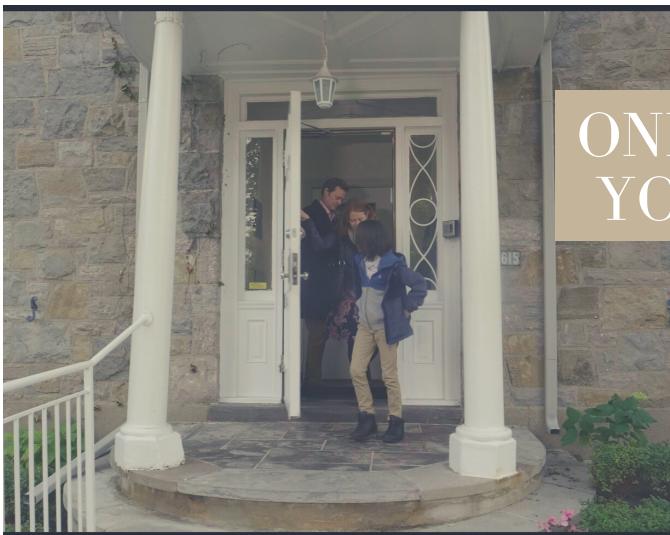


## THE IMPORTANCE OF A BEAUTIFUL CENTRE

*When an addict or the family member of an addict reaches out for help, their life is chaotic. Entering a warm home with a calming atmosphere can start the path to recovery. With meetings resuming on our centre's grounds, we've invested a lot of time and effort in making the centre a place our guests can feel welcome. It's a reflection of our commitment to providing all of our clients with a bright and hopeful experience as they begin their journey toward recovery.*

## LIFELINE NAMED TOP ADDICTION CENTRE

*For the second year in a row, ThreeBestRated has ranked Chabad Lifeline as one of the top 3 addiction treatment centres in Montreal. Their inspection report gave us scores of at least 9 out of 10 in every category.*



## ONE WEEK LEFT TO GET YOUR RAFFLE TICKETS

*Our annual raffle, which as our sole fundraiser supports all our lifesaving work, will take place September 1st. If you haven't already done so, please purchase tickets at [LifelineRaffle.com](http://LifelineRaffle.com) for a chance to win \$15,000.*