Isabel, Maria, and Rosa Accept Help and Give Recovery a Chance

No Longer ALONE

(A STORY ABOUT ALCOHOL, DRUGS, DEPRESSION, AND TRAUMA)

Isabel, Maria, and Rosa Accept Help and Give Recovery a Chance
Acknowledgment
This publication was developed as a collateral product to Treatment Improvement Protocol (TIP) 51, *Substance Abuse Treatment: Addressing the Specific Needs of Women*. It was prepared for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) by the Knowledge Application Program (KAP), a Joint Venture of The CDM Group, Inc., and JBS International, Inc., and with the subcontractor, TMNcorp, under contract number 270-09-0307, with SAMHSA, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Christina Currier served as the Contracting Officer’s Representative.

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Recommended Citation

Originating Office
Quality Improvement and Workforce Development Branch, Division of Services Improvement, Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 1 Choke Cherry Road, Rockville, MD 20857.

Electronic Access and Copies of Publication
This publication may be ordered or downloaded from SAMHSA’s Publications Ordering Web page at http://store.samhsa.gov. Or, please call SAMHSA at 1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727) (English and Español).

HHS Publication No. (SMA) 13-4781ENG — No Longer Alone
Printed 2013
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Main Characters

Isabel

María

Rosa

Gloria

Other Characters

Eduardo

Marta

Roberto

Carmen

Mrs. Smith

Jorgito

Sofia

Social Worker

Psychiatrist
Isabel, it’s great to see you!

It’s great to see you, too, Maria. It’s been a long three months, but so far, it looks like I’m doing well.

I’m taking control of my life. For years, I used drugs with my ex-boyfriend, Roberto. At first, it was just pot, but that led to other drugs.

The drugs were helping me with my anxiety. I had to take care of my little brother and sister, and I had fallen way behind in school. I thought I wasn’t going to graduate.

Isabel! Isabel! I don’t understand this homework. Help me!
At a beauty parlor…

Maria, you’re drunk again. Two days ago you fought with Ana and gave Mrs. Smith a bad haircut. You’re a very good hairdresser, but you need to go home now.

I am going to give you one last chance. I know your mom is sick and you need the job. Here, I got you this information. If you want to work here, then you need to get some help!

You know, Maria, I didn’t think I was in trouble, not even when the police arrested me for driving under the influence. I had to go to court, pay the penalties, and agree to treatment. It was a nightmare!

I went through the same thing. I denied having a problem with alcohol even after my boss gave me an ultimatum and I started treatment. That’s when I realized I had a problem with depression, too.
I understand that you are upset, but, don’t worry, they will be okay. You will be able to visit them, as you get better.

At the New Life Center, Maria meets with Gloria, one of the center’s counselors.

Maria, have you ever felt the need to cut down on your drinking?

No, Gloria, I have it all under control. When I am drinking too much, I just stop myself.

At the Child Protective Services office, Rosa meets with a social worker.

Rosa, the court decided that your children need to go into foster care for now. You need to get into a substance abuse treatment program.

No, you can’t take my kids. I’ll do better this time, I promise!

I understand that you are upset, but, don’t worry, they will be okay. You will be able to visit them, as you get better.

In another part of town, Rosa, another woman suffering from alcohol and drug abuse, cries for her children.

My kids! I can’t believe it! My kids are gone! I lost them. I got drunk and stoned and then passed out. That’s when Jorgito and Sofia got hurt playing with the stove and the fire started.

At the New Life Center, Maria meets with Gloria, one of the center’s counselors.

I was not being honest with Gloria or myself. I couldn’t control it. But I kept denying it.

In another part of town, Rosa, another woman suffering from alcohol and drug abuse, cries for her children.

I can’t sleep. I still have nightmares about my ex-husband hitting me. The only thing that helps me get my mind off it is cocaine.
Rosa, I would like to recommend that you see a psychiatrist.

What is that?

Don’t look at it that way. A psychiatrist can help you understand how the situation you lived in with your ex-husband has affected you and can help you find ways to better deal with it.

It is a state in which you can’t stop remembering a traumatic event. You tend to relive it over and over again with flashbacks, bad memories, or nightmares. It can also make you feel as if you are in a constant state of high alert. You might feel irritable, and sometimes you may want to stay away from a place that reminds you of the trauma. Or maybe you want to avoid a person who reminds you of the traumatic event.

Rosa, you are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD.

Thanks for sharing your stories. Now you know that you are not alone. You can choose to stay, and we can face your circumstances together.

At the New Life Center.

One week later at a private session.

At the psychiatrist’s office after evaluating Rosa.
I think this group is helping me.

My Aunt Clara has been a great help.

No thanks, I am OK. I don’t need anything.

But I miss you, sweetie. You look great. Why don’t we go have some fun? I have some pot, too.

One week later at the New Life Center, Gloria leads a group session.

Today we are here to work on your goals. Whether your goal is to get your driver’s license back, keep your job, or get your children back, we want to make a change in your lives, and we need a plan. We need to think of people who can help us. Can you think of anyone? Maybe there are also places we could go for help. Can you think of any?

You see, we are not alone in this journey. We can also think of joining a spiritual group, or you may believe in someone who will help you maintain hope and regain inner strength.

So, what else do we need for our plan?

Three months later, Isabel runs into her ex-boyfriend, Roberto.

What? You mean that, even though he is gone, I’m still suffering because of him?

Yes, you are, but we can do different things to manage your PTSD. I recommend you receive therapy for PTSD. You will learn some skills to cope with situations that trigger your reliving the trauma. I am also prescribing medicine for you that may help reduce the frequency of your nightmares, so that you can sleep better.

My Aunt Clara has been a great help.

My boss, Carmen, is helping me a lot.

I think this group is helping me.

Roberto, get away from me, both you and your weed. I am done with that stuff and with you, too!
Sure, Carmen. Why not? I do feel good. At the New Life Center, they helped me get sober and sent me to a doctor for my depression. She prescribed medicine that helps.

Hmm… This might help.

Hey Maria, you’ve been looking very good lately. Do you want me to give you a free haircut?

Sure, Carmen. Why not? I do feel good. At the New Life Center, they helped me get sober and sent me to a doctor for my depression. She prescribed medicine that helps.

It was hard to stop drinking. Then I felt so sad and hopeless. I go to therapy now, too. Between that and the medicine, I’m feeling so much better.

Just look at you now! You took charge of your life!
I feel awful. I did drugs again.

What is happening, Rosa? What’s troubling you?

Well, I still take antidepressants.

And that’s okay. Lots of people need medicine, and you probably won’t be taking them forever.

I feel awful. I did drugs again.

What is happening, Rosa? What’s troubling you?

I was following my treatment, and it’s been so hard. I have so many things to take care of. I have been looking for a job for weeks, and no one has called me back.

Well, I still take antidepressants.

And that’s okay. Lots of people need medicine, and you probably won’t be taking them forever.

Rosa meets with Gloria in private at the New Life Center.

I feel awful. I did drugs again.

I was following my treatment, and it’s been so hard. I have so many things to take care of. I have been looking for a job for weeks, and no one has called me back.
It is incredible what you all have accomplished, both as a group and as individuals. Each of you understands your own value and merit, as well as that of this group. Now, the work continues, and we need to prepare for the possibility of relapse.

So, Maria, tell me one situation that might make you want to have a drink?

Well, taking care of my mom, who is sick, and working full time is tough. Sometimes I feel helpless, and I start getting anxious, and then I feel like having a drink.

OK, let’s work on a plan to make sure you don’t have another relapse.

I see, Rosa. But do you think cocaine is going to help you get your kids back?

No, of course not.

I moved out of the apartment to help me forget about how horrible it was to live there with my ex-husband. I’ve been living with my Aunt Clara, and she has been great. But I need my own place, and I need my children now. It was just too much for me… and I did coke again.

Well, when I feel like grabbing a bottle, I go for a walk or a run in the park instead. I also like to meditate or call a sober friend. It was hard at first to clear my mind, relax, and have positive thoughts, especially when all I was thinking about was a bottle of booze to help me forget about my problems. But I am getting better at meditating, exercising, and staying sober.
What if someone offers one of you drugs or alcohol? How do you say “no”?

Great! So Maria has identified some things she can do to take her mind off the idea of drinking when she has a problem.

Well, I kept bumping into Roberto, my ex-boyfriend, and have tried to ignore him. It’s hard, you know, because sometimes I miss him and the drugs. But a few weeks ago, I confronted him and told him to get lost and that I was done with him and that stuff.

To tell you the truth, I thought it would be harder to say “no” than it really was. It’s hard to stay clean, but it’s worth it.

Great job! So you will always encounter situations in your lives that may lead you to have a relapse. These situations may be external or may be inside of you. The important thing is to prepare yourself and have an idea of what you need to do to avoid a relapse.
Maria became a peer counselor. She helps other women in substance abuse treatment avoid relapse. Being there for other women helps Maria remember her own commitment to stay sober.

Meanwhile at the beauty parlor…

…And you may think drugs are cool and that you are under control. But all I can say is drugs can take control of your life. It happened to me for a few years, and it wasn’t easy to get out of it. I still need to work hard on it. Stay clean and sober; you’re worth it. It’s OK if your friends don’t get it. Look for real friends who can help you when you need them the most. You are in charge of yourself.

Maria became a peer counselor. She helps other women in substance abuse treatment avoid relapse. Being there for other women helps Maria remember her own commitment to stay sober.

A few years later… Isabel just graduated from the community college. She will soon begin classes at the university and has become a speaker for a drug abuse resistance program. She visits students in youth programs at high schools to talk about abstaining from drugs.

Isabel speaks to a group of high school students.

…And you may think drugs are cool and that you are under control. But all I can say is drugs can take control of your life. It happened to me for a few years, and it wasn’t easy to get out of it. I still need to work hard on it. Stay clean and sober; you’re worth it. It’s OK if your friends don’t get it. Look for real friends who can help you when you need them the most. You are in charge of yourself.
If you, a friend, or a family member is suffering from a substance abuse problem, don’t be afraid. You are not alone. There is help. Give it a chance. Give yourself a chance.

We made a different choice. We are changing our lives.

We discovered that we are not alone.

We are stronger now, and when we are not, we look for help.

I take one day at a time. I still follow my PTSD treatment, and I go to an aftercare program.

At Rosa’s house.
Resources

To find substance abuse and mental health treatment go to http://www.samhsa.gov/treatment/index.aspx

Other helpful publications

• *Faces of Change: Do I Have a Problem With Alcohol or Drugs?*

• *Helping Yourself Heal: A Recovering Woman’s Guide to Coping With Childhood Abuse Issues*

• *Should You Talk to Someone About a Drug, Alcohol, or Mental Health Problem?*

• *No Longer Alone* is also available in Spanish

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