

No Longer
ALONE

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

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



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Acknowledgment

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No Longer ALONE

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

Main Characters



Isabel



Maria



Rosa



Gloria

Other Characters



Eduardo



Marta



Roberto



Carmen



Mrs. Smith



Jorgito



Sofia



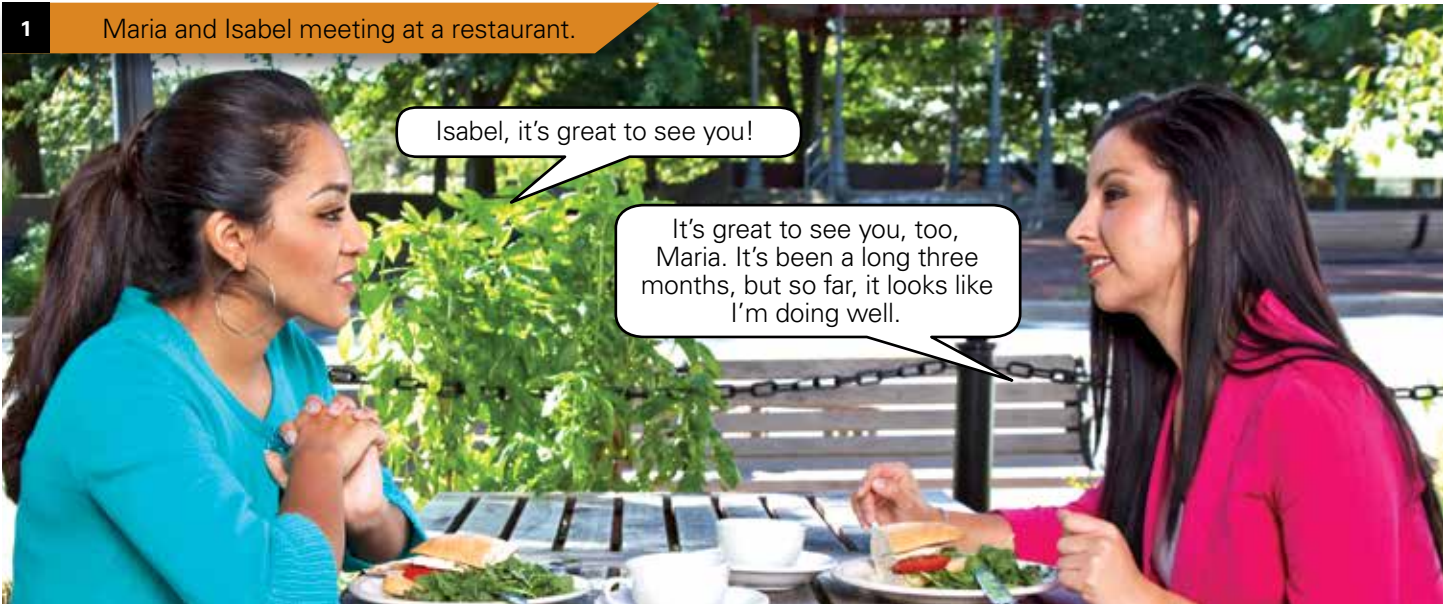
Social Worker



Psychiatrist

1

Maria and Isabel meeting at a restaurant.



Isabel, it's great to see you!

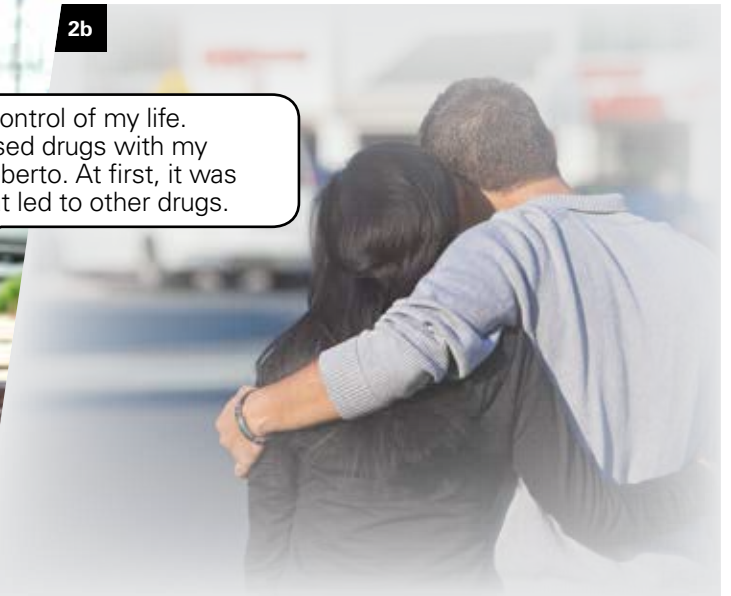
It's great to see you, too, Maria. It's been a long three months, but so far, it looks like I'm doing well.

2a



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.

2b



3a



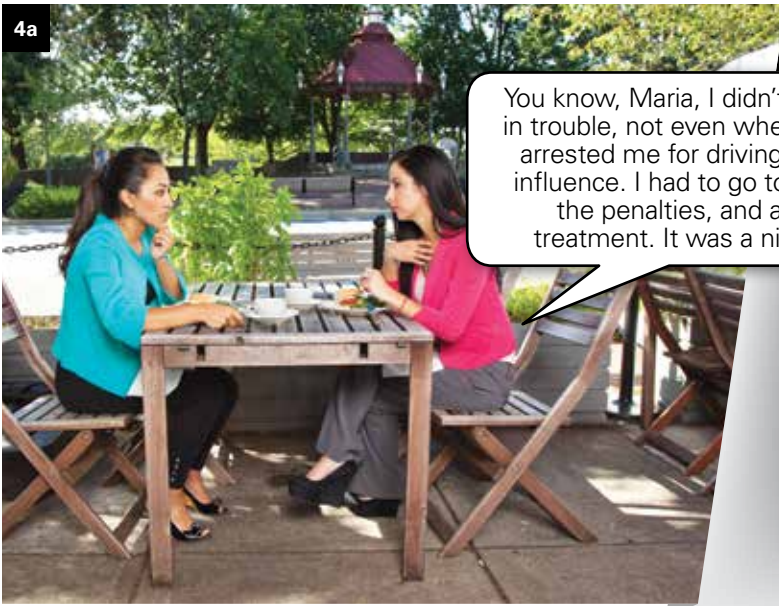
The drugs were helping me with my anxiety. I had to take care of my little brother and sister, and I had fallen way behind in school. I thought I wasn't going to graduate.

3b



Isabel! Isabel!! I don't understand this homework. Help me!

4a



4b



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!

5



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.

6

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 hair-dresser, 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!

7

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



8



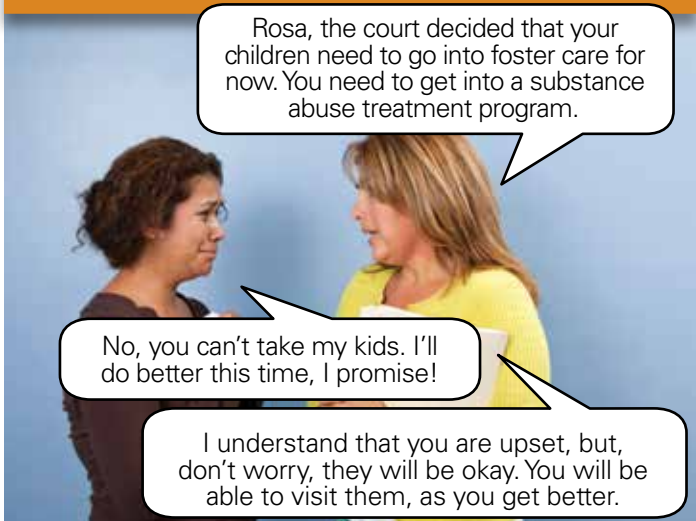
9

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



10

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

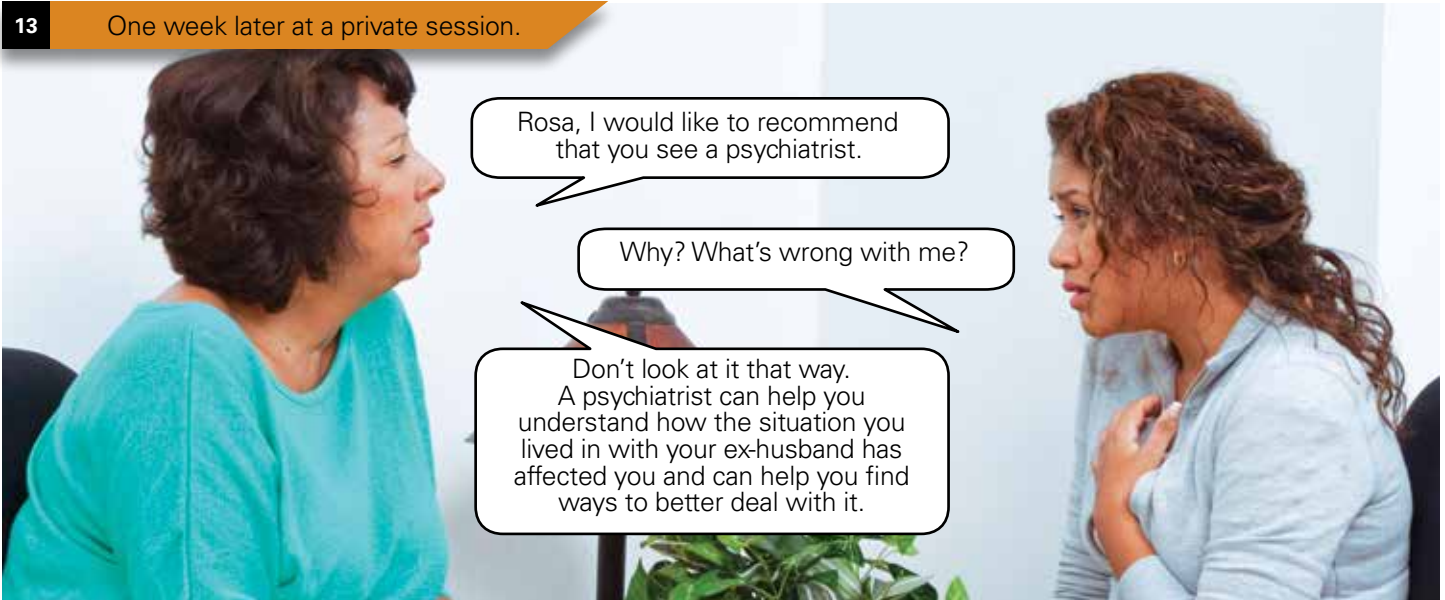


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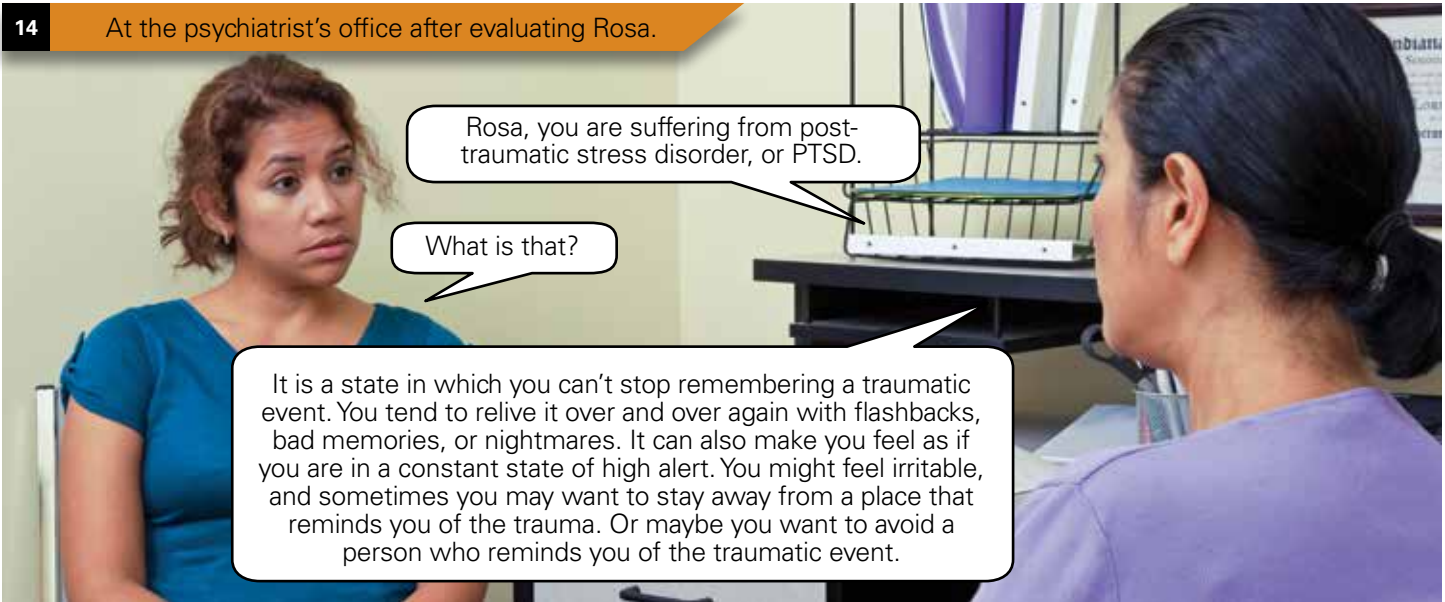
Thanks for sharing your stories. Now you know that you are not alone. You can choose to stay, and we can face your circumstances together.



Rosa, I would like to recommend that you see a psychiatrist.

Why? What's wrong with me?

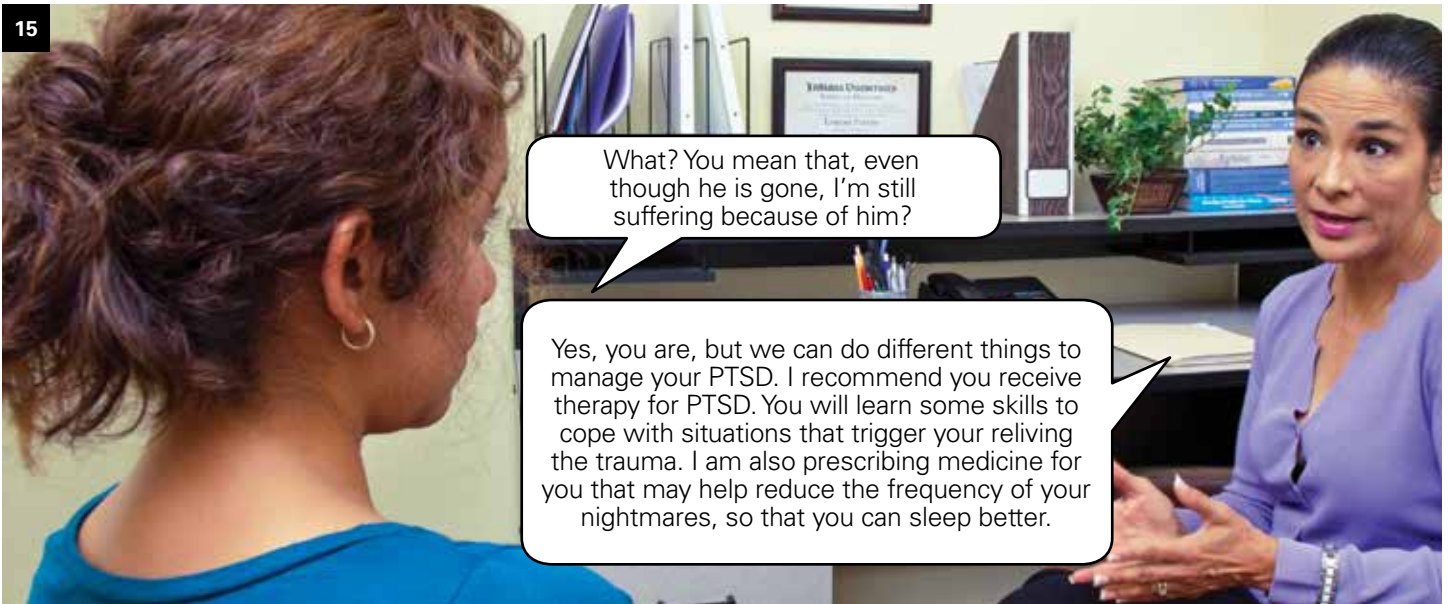
Don't look at it that way. A psychiatrist can help you understand how the situation you lived in with your ex-husband has affected you and can help you find ways to better deal with it.



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

What is that?

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.



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.

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?



My Aunt Clara has been a great help.

My boss, Carmen, is helping me a lot.

I think this group is helping me.

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.

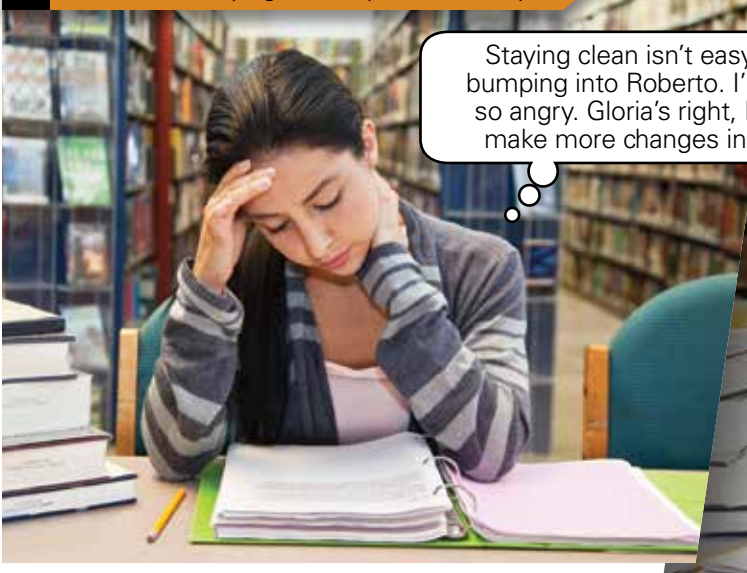


No thanks, I am OK. I don't need anything.

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

Roberto, get away from me, both you and your weed. I am done with that stuff and with you, too!

19a Isabel is trying to study at the library.



Staying clean isn't easy. I keep bumping into Roberto. I'm always so angry. Gloria's right, I need to make more changes in my life.

19b



Hmm... This might help.

20 Meanwhile, at the beauty parlor...



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.

21



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!

22



Well, I still take antidepressants.

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

23

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



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

I feel awful. I did drugs again.

24a



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.

24b





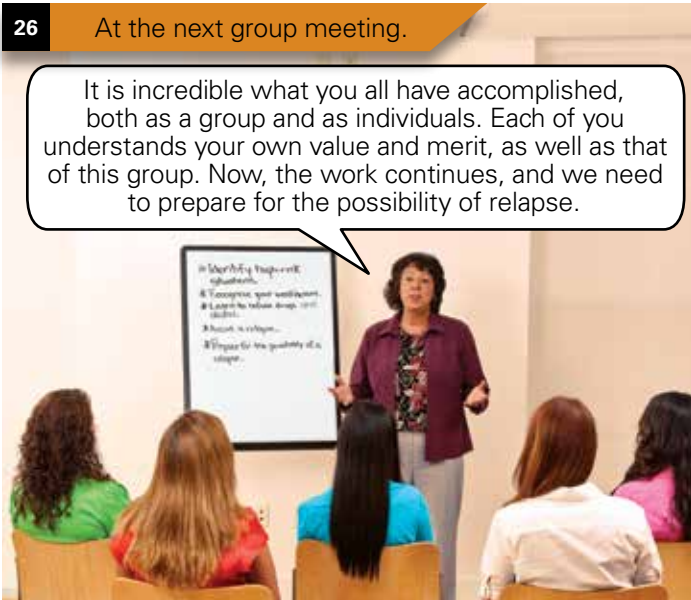
I moved out of the apartment to help me forget about how horrible it was to live there with my ex-husband. I've been living with my Aunt Clara, and she has been great. But I need my own place, and I need my children now. It was just too much for me... and I did coke again.

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

No, of course not.

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

At the next group meeting.



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.

- Identify triggers
- Recognize your weaknesses
- Listen to others' experiences
- Focus on relapse
- Prepare for the possibility of a 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.

So what are you doing to keep yourself from drinking?



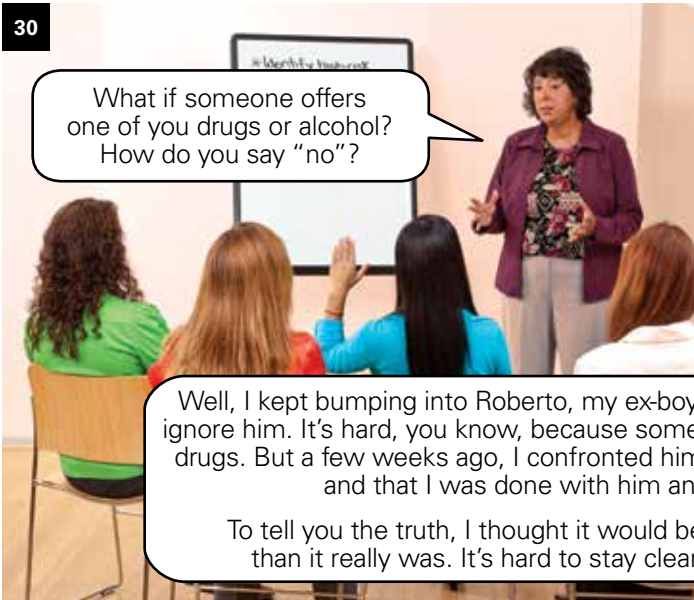
Well, when I feel like grabbing a bottle, I go for a walk or a run in the park instead. I also like to meditate or call a sober friend. It was hard at first to clear my mind, relax, and have positive thoughts, especially when all I was thinking about was a bottle of booze to help me forget about my problems. But I am getting better at meditating, exercising, and staying sober.

- * Identify high-risk situations.
- * Recognize your weaknesses.
- * Learn to refuse drugs and alcohol.
- * Avoid a relapse.
- * Prepare for the possibility of a relapse.



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

What if someone offers one of you drugs or alcohol? How do you say "no"?



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.



- * Identify high-risk situations.
- * Recognize your weaknesses.
- * Learn to refuse drugs and alcohol.
- * Avoid a relapse.
- * Prepare for the possibility of a relapse.



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.

33 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.



34 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.

35 Meanwhile at the beauty parlor...



Wow, Maria, what a nice haircut you gave Mrs. Smith!

Yes, she was nice enough to give me a second chance.

We all deserve a second chance.

36 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.



Hi Patricia, how's it going?
Is everything OK?

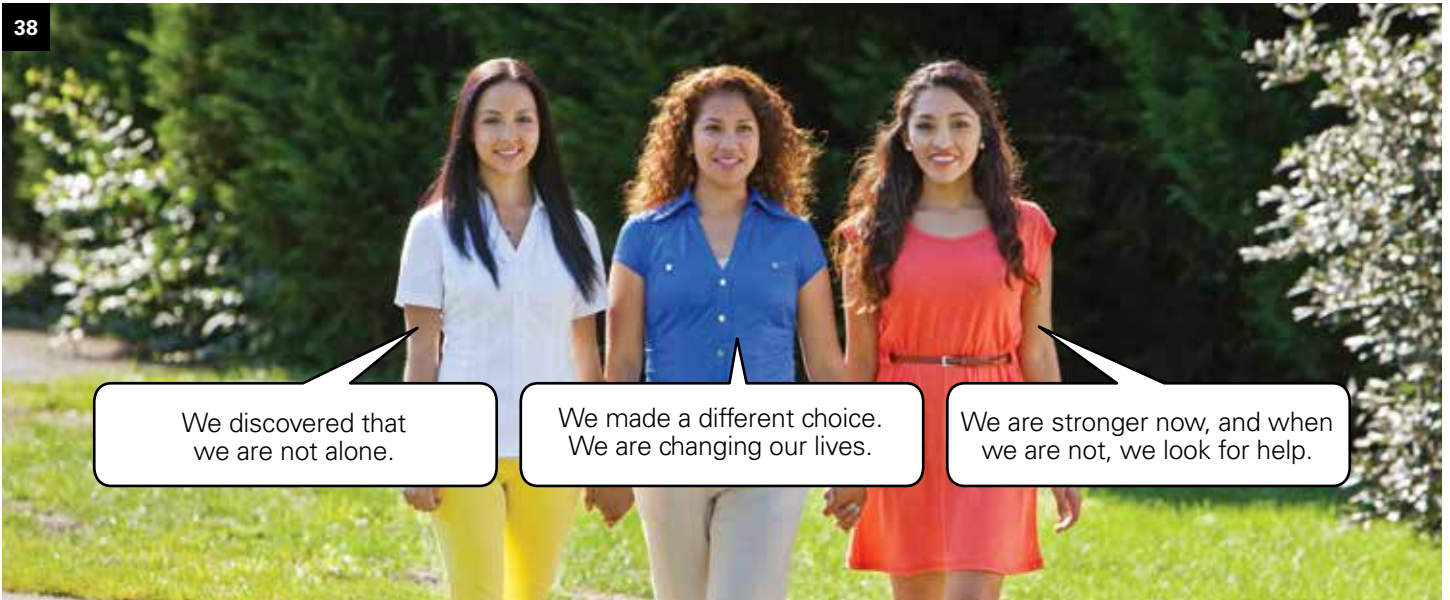
I take one day at a time. I still follow my PTSD treatment, and I go to an aftercare program.



We discovered that we are not alone.

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

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



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.



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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