Lisa G.

Help can come in the most unexpected ways. Lisa G. was once living homeless in Southeast Portland, addicted to heroin. She was mentally, physically and emotionally unhealthy with abscesses that weren’t taken care of because she had no access to medical care. She was suicidal and unmedicated for many years because she couldn’t afford her medication and wasn’t aware of services. “My life was completely unmanageable,” she says. “I lacked the ability to be a responsible human being.”

Finally, Lisa went to the only place she knew would help her: Central City Concern’s (CCC’s) Hooper Detoxification and Stabilization Center. There, she stabilized in a safe, medical setting. “I had tried to get clean many times before, countless times,” she says. “Thank god CCC got me on medication supported recovery (MSR) to help me get through the first excruciating months of post-acute withdrawal symptoms. Those first months are the hardest for an addict. I could never go longer than three days, let alone six months.”

MSR gave Lisa the ability to face the day and get things done without the obsession of addiction. She was able to regain power over her life and build a strong foundation of recovery.

In addition to integrated mental and physical health care, CCC moved Lisa into a recovery housing program in the Richard Harris building that focuses on recovery and self-sufficiency. She participated in process groups and learned coping skills to help her move forward in a life of recovery. “For the first time in a very long time,” she says, “I felt safe and supported. Suboxone [a medication that treats opioid-use disorder] helped me get there, especially in an environment where not everyone is working on their recovery. Knowing I physically couldn’t get loaded made a huge difference.”

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Lisa engaged with CCC’s Employment Access Center to hone her employment skills, and now has permanent CCC housing and a job with health benefits.

Today, Lisa is 100 percent re-engaged with her family, who had basically disowned her because of her addictive behaviors. “They gave me a ring for my one-year clean date,” she says. “It has all my siblings’ names and birthstones on it. I took a leadership role in my living community and outpatient group and I worked hard to gain the respect of others. These are traits I may have always had but never realized before. MSR gave me the opportunity to have a positive, healthy life as a productive, employed member of society.”