

# Five Months and 18 Days

That's how long it took Erin to lose her two young children, her job and her home - everything. Five months and 18 days, that was Erin's run time. That's how quickly the disease of addiction can take hold and bring a person down.



When you talk to Erin today you get the sense that she is very much in charge of her life. This college-educated young woman is well spoken, runs nine miles every day, works as a professional baker and is raising her two children as a single mother. But rewind the reel of her life back five years and you will find her sitting in a prison cell for pandering, prostitution and motor vehicle violations - all due to her addiction to crack cocaine.

What led Erin down that rabbit hole? As she likes to say, "I was an addict without the drugs. And then I picked up." Erin's cocaine-fueled downward spiral came to a sudden halt the day the Department of Children and Families (DCF) took her five-year old son and two-year old daughter away from her at MCCA's Waterbury clinic. Shortly thereafter she began serving her sentence.

After 40 days in prison, Erin was released to a long-term inpatient program where she began examining and reclaiming her life. "I was introduced to all the right people, Narcotics Anonymous (NA), and I was able to sit and listen and make the self-diagnoses that I am an addict." For the first time Erin felt she was part of the solution, instead of the problem.

Looking back, Erin believes that unresolved trauma was at the route of her addiction. "I wrapped it up in a pretty little box and stuck it in the back of the closet. I kept painting it different colors and avoiding my problems." She continues, "That caused me to act out in different ways and make the same mistakes over and over." In the process, she caused a huge amount of destruction to everyone in her life, including her two young children.



After completing the residential program, Erin came back to Waterbury and MCCA where she was determined to do whatever it took to stay clean. Returning to the role of 'mom' was the next big step for Erin. Although she had met all of the DCF requirements, including employment and a home, Erin was uneasy about the responsibility of motherhood. "Getting my kids back wasn't an easy thing, I wasn't sure I wanted them back, I wasn't sure I could do it by myself, if I could financially support them." But despite her fears and challenges she moved forward with the help of her strong support network and a 'lot of praying.' Erin's two children always attend meetings with her and most of their friends are NA (Narcotics Anonymous) children.

On Thanksgiving Erin stopped at Walgreen's with her 10-year son and they saw a young woman who appeared to be homeless outside the pharmacy. Erin recognized her from the street and knew she was a prostitute and was pleased when her older son asked,

"Why don't we give her our Thanksgiving dinner?" Coming from a child that saw his mother in her active addiction, Erin felt her son knew what this woman was doing. "It was such a magical thing. There was some kind of identification where he knew that it didn't have to be like that for her. And I knew it too. So we gave her our Thanksgiving dinner and he said, 'You know mom, we should never deny people food, it doesn't matter. It's a necessity.'"

Erin acknowledges that her addiction has taken a toll on her children and the process to repair her relationships with them has been ongoing. "I broke our relationship, our bond, our trust, our love. I broke so much between us." The pain and regret is evident in her voice, but Erin is determined and is grateful that she now has the tools to help him work through some of the issues that come up.

Things came full circle for Erin when she came back to MCCA's Waterbury Clinic after residential treatment. "At that moment it hit me how blessed I was." She adds,

"I'll tell you one thing, when I got serious about my recovery, MCCA was here."

