

NICOLLE

BREAKING THE CYCLE OF ABUSE



“I always say that I left home seeking freedom,” Nicolle confesses. “But I found the greatest bondage of my life.”

A mother of four children, Nicolle today is a promising example of stability in San Antonio. She has worked extremely hard to provide a better life for her children but unfortunately, difficulties with addiction almost took away the picture-perfect family she has today.

Nicolle says she had her first drink at 12. At 16, drinking became a part of her everyday life when she left home to live with a drug dealer from her high school. “Happy, sad, whatever it was, I drank.”

Not long after, Nicolle had her first two children with her now ex-husband. During this massive life change, her struggles with addiction, especially alcohol abuse, became worse. While her former spouse was abusive, she says her issues with substance abuse were driven by how she felt about herself.

“I did love my kids, but I didn’t love myself,” Nicolle said.

Over time, Nicolle would struggle in all facets of her life. She could not succeed as a mother, a daughter nor in her career due to substance abuse. Nicolle would go on to overdose and nearly lose her life. She would lose custody

of her children, who were then taken care of by her parents, as Nicolle fought to overcome addiction.

She suffered an unimaginable loss when her two-year-old son died suddenly while she was in Bexar County jail. She remembers being told about her son’s passing while in jail. This type of immeasurable loss would derail anyone’s stability and Nicolle continued her alcohol abuse for years after this tragedy.



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In 2017, after years of trying to recover with varying levels of success, Nicolle had her turning point.

“I found myself pregnant with my son and I didn’t have anywhere to go,” Nicolle says. “It was one of those nights when I was laying in bed, I realized that I had a God who said I had a purpose. I knew that meant something.”

Inspired to finally turn her life around for her soon-to-be-born son, Nicolle set forth on a different path.

“I began to do the hard work of humbling myself to the time requirements, the requirements that your family makes on you when you come back after so many years as a drunk. They don’t trust you. But this time around was different. This time around I saw my kids differently with the life that I had growing inside of me. I didn’t want to be not wanted anymore.”

Nicolle says her change was driven by viewing herself differently. “Alcohol and drugs are not the problem, its all of the stuff that’s inside. There are deeper roots, deeper causes of things and until you address them you continue these cycles.”



I could grab hold of what I knew to be true which was that I did have value.

She no longer focuses on what people have done to her in her life and instead focuses on her value to her loved ones and the world. “You can say that all these people did something to you but at the end of the day I had a choice. I could either continue thinking that of myself or I could grab hold of what I knew to be true which was that I did have value.”

Nicolle entered into the treatment program with United Way Impact Partner, Alpha Home. She admits Alpha Home wasn’t the first place she went for recovery but that it was different in all the right ways. With the support of a recovery program, Nicolle was able to get her life back on track and regain her family. It was a long and difficult process but this time, Nicolle regained her stability. She has been clean for six years now, lives with her children and recently gave birth to her youngest child in 2022.

“The programs that United Way supports are vital to the person that I am today,” Nicolle says. “They were vital to me becoming a mother again, becoming a daughter again,



becoming an employee and a productive member of society.”

Her oldest children, now adults, have a renewed relationship with Nicolle. “For Mother’s Day, we had everyone in the house at one time and it was a beautiful picture of restoration. I try not to take that for granted.”

With the help of United Way’s Strong Individuals and Families Impact Area, Nicolle was able to stop the cycle of abuse and build a foundation of stability for her family.

Abuse is one reason people in San Antonio struggle to become self-sufficient. Mental illness, lack of support, incomplete education, race and gender are common barriers to stability for people striving to achieve financial stability. Through the Strong Individuals and Families Impact Area, United Way provides targeted education and workforce development opportunities, advocates for system-level change to reduce the wage gap and provides intervention services to interrupt the cycle of abuse so that everyone can achieve their full potential.

For Nicolle, this support was life-saving.

“Without them, I didn’t have anywhere to go,” she says. “The United Way program saved my life.”

To learn more about United Way of San Antonio and Bexar County’s work and to hear more stories, visit uwsatx.org.