

“The only way out is *through*.”

— Olivia, Southwest Network Member



Growing up in a comfortable home with a loving family, Olivia enjoyed a happy childhood. She made friends easily and excelled in academics, and was often selected for her school’s talented and gifted programs.

So when she was diagnosed with clinical depression at just 12 years old, it wasn’t only derailing to Olivia’s trajectory but heartbreaking to her family who didn’t know how to help. Her doctors were more clinical than compassionate. Rather than getting answers, she just got more diagnoses — generalized anxiety disorder, social anxiety disorder, bipolar depression, and post-traumatic stress order (PTSD).

Olivia struggled immensely. She began to isolate. She dropped out of college, lost her boyfriend, and abandoned the hobbies and interests she had once enjoyed. She did everything she could to escape the world — and then she tried to escape it literally.

Three suicide attempts triggered a realization. Olivia didn’t want to get more diagnoses, she wanted to get better. She would start the journey by coming to Southwest Network.

At Southwest Network, Olivia has found a trusting bond with her case manager, recovery coach, and counselors. She has found a place where she’s supported. She has found hope.

With the help of her team, Olivia has emerged from the negativity and sadness that had constricted her. She has explored new thinking and is reframing her perspective. She works hard daily to grow strength and resilience.

Though recovery hasn’t been easy, Olivia is facing the obstacles as a champion. She’s redefining success, making new friends, and rediscovering her talents and gifts. She has also gotten herself involved in groups at Southwest Network and the community that let her explore her passions and purpose. Because she now has a good support system, she’s been able to relieve the burden on her family and begin mending relationships.

More important, Olivia has realized that “escaping” is worse. You have to show up, embrace both the good and the bad, and figure out your path.

“The only way out is *through*,” says Olivia.

Olivia is more confident and assured, and her smile brightens the rooms she enters. She’s working with employment support services to find a meaningful job, and she wants to go back to school. She has plans to be a videogame developer and is already imagining her first release.

Like Olivia herself, no doubt it will be a success.

Share your Recovery Story by emailing recovery@southwestnetwork.org