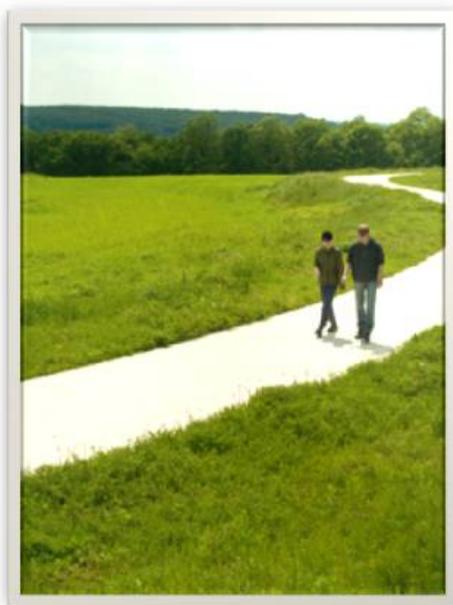


STORIES OF HOPE

“He is just...my brother” Jose’s Story



My story is not that unusual. At age 12, my 14 year-old brother and I started using drugs. My parents didn't know what to do with us, so they sent us to a so-called rehab facility in Mexico. The abuse was almost unbearable. When we came back to the US, we started using hardcore drugs again, and they sent us back to Mexico a couple of years later. Once we were back in the US, I straightened out, but my brother started using again. My mom and dad sent him back to Mexico a third time.

He came back home when he was 18, and I knew there was something wrong. I could tell that he was not himself. He was on medication because he was diagnosed as being schizophrenic, but when he arrived home, he stopped taking his meds. He was acting weird, telling us that he was God. One time I challenged him, and he tried to stab me in the chest, but a friend and I were able to take the knife away. We didn't know what to do. A few weeks later, he was

ranting and raving, and my grandma and I called the Access and Crisis Line. The counselor that answered listened to me, and suggested we take my brother to a mental health program. The problem was that my brother had to go voluntarily.

I remember getting upset with the counselor. How was I supposed to get my brother there? Voluntarily? Really? What kind of help was this? Why not just do what they did to us in Mexico and put him in a place whether he wanted to be there or not? I was so angry that I wanted to hang up, but didn't. The counselor explained to me that there are laws that have to be followed, and that the person that is having problems also has rights. I hated the answer. The counselor asked me a question that I had not heard before: he asked if my brother was a danger to himself or others? I answered that he wasn't. He explained that if he became violent, I could always call 911. It felt weird. Who calls the cops on his own brother because he's mentally ill? The counselor explained that the cops can take him to a place that can check him for mental stuff and that if he needed help, they could offer it to him. I hung up upset, but at least I knew that I could call the police and that they were not just going to lock him up. A few hours later, my brother started to threaten my grandma and me, and we called the cops. I explained that I had called the Access and Crisis Line, and that they had suggested that I call. I told the cop that my brother threatened us, that he was a schizophrenic and that he thought he was God. The police officers talked to him for a while, and could see nothing wrong. They didn't leave though. They

kept on talking to him, and after a few minutes, my brother ordered them around. He told them that he was God, so they had to listen to him and do what he was telling them to do. They took him in.

My brother is 20 now. After he got released from the 72 hour place where he was at, he went to a mental health/rehab program here in San Diego. He is completing that program next week. He is taking his medications now and is doing better. I am still working on my recovery, and I realize that all of this made me mature very quickly. At the time that I called the Access and Crisis Line, I thought that the counselor didn't help me because he could not take my brother away immediately. I know now that he did help me. He told me what to do and explained that my brother had rights too. I want to share this with others so that they know that they are not alone, and to look for help.

I get very emotional when I talk about my brother. Do I have resentments towards him? No. He is just....my brother.

* Consumer name changed to protect privacy