Ruth’s Story

Ruth is 24 years old and has a good job and a boyfriend. Everything seems to be going well in her life. But it hasn’t always been that way. When she was 14 years old, her friends began smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol. Because she wanted to be part of the group, she also began smoking and drinking when she went to parties with her friends. One night when Ruth was 16, her friends had some marijuana and they all tried smoking it. After using marijuana for about a year, she began experimenting with other drugs and, by the time she was 18, Ruth was using heroin every day. Her drug habit was costing her $75 a day. After a while, her boyfriend left her, and the rest of her friends were tired of her asking for money to buy drugs. She was fired from her part-time job because she had missed work so many times. She was arrested several times for shoplifting items from local department and discount stores. She tried to quit using heroin several times, but she had strong cravings for the drug. Each time she began having symptoms of withdrawal, Ruth went back to abusing drugs.

When Ruth was 20, her brother convinced her to go to a drug rehabilitation center. The doctors at the center began treating her with methadone, and she participated in group behavioral treatments. She followed her treatment exactly as the doctors prescribed and, after six months, Ruth thought she had beaten her addiction. She enrolled in college and made new friends. Her friends got her involved in sports, and Ruth found that she enjoyed running. She even competed in a 10K run. She continued her methadone treatment and saw her therapist every two months.

When she was 22, Ruth was under a great deal of stress when she took on a new part-time job in addition to her school work. She ran into her old high school friends at a party and did some heroin with them. She thought she could handle it. Over the next couple of months, however, she quit her methadone treatment and began doing heroin more frequently, every couple of days. She was beginning to isolate herself from her friends and was having trouble at work. Ruth was scared. She called her doctors, and they started her treatments again. With her doctors’ help, Ruth realized that she needed to continue her medication and her counseling.