

RECOVERY MONTH — SEPTEMBER 2026

One story from every continent. Real stories. Shared openly. Passed on.



RECOVERY STORIES · THIS WEEK'S NEWSLETTER

Recovery Month Special — September 2026

One story from every continent, with the sources so you can read further. Real stories. Shared openly. Passed on.

September is **National Recovery Month** in the United States — thirty-one days of events, screenings and stories under this year's banner, "**Recovery is REAL.**" The month closes with **International Recovery Day on September 30**, marked worldwide. This special issue gathers six of those stories from six continents — a student in Lusaka, a mother in Dublin, a coach in Córdoba — because recovery looks like all of them.

AFRICA · Lusaka, Zambia

Back in class: a medical student takes it one day at a time

Nkumbu, 24, started drinking in high school to cope with social anxiety; addiction later cost him two stints in medical school. After the death of his parents, he entered Sanity House, a rehab and harm-reduction centre in Lusaka — and six months sober, he has passed his exams and is back in class. He now speaks on Zambian television as a youth advocate for recovery.

"Rehab is one day at a time. One day turns to ten, ten turns to a month. And now, six months later, I'm back in class."

Read more: UNAIDS (June 2025) · https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/featurestories/2025/june/20250627_zambia

Five months in solitary — and the start of recovery

Izabel Rose's ketamine addiction began on London's rave scene. Planning a month in Japan to get clean for her 26th birthday, she instead had drugs mailed to her hotel — intercepted at customs, it cost her five months in the Osaka Detention Centre. In that strict, silent routine of journaling, meditation and reflection, her recovery quietly began. Released in September 2025, she now shares her story openly as Hyaku-Ban to break the stigma around addiction.

"It has been the most traumatic experience of my life — but also probably the best thing that's ever happened to me."

Read more: BBC News (Feb 2026) · <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/clv5xy73jp8o>

Three years sober — and her kids back home

Anna, a mother of two, developed an addiction to alcohol and cocaine after domestic abuse and the death of her mother. A near-fatal drive to buy drugs at 7 AM — and the loss of custody of her sons — became her turning point. Through the Chrysalis Community Drug Project and a four-week residential programme, she is nearly three years sober, has her children back, and speaks publicly to reduce stigma.

"I spent the first two weeks in treatment just crying, shameful, just absolutely hating myself for how much I felt I let my kids down."

Read more: The Irish Times (Sept 6, 2026) · <https://www.irishtimes.com/life-style/people/2026/09/06/all-i-could-think-about-was-getting-cocaine-mothers-share-their-stories-of-addiction/>

A veteran turns 20 hard years into peer support

Kevin served in a U.S. Army air defense artillery unit and spent more than two decades misusing alcohol and drugs to cope with chronic tinnitus — a spiral that ended in homelessness. Evidence-based care at the VA, including cognitive behavioural therapy, gave him back control. Today he works as a peer specialist walking other veterans down the same road.

"The way you think has a lot to do with the way you feel, and the way you feel has a lot to do with your behavior."

Read more: VA Maryland Health Care (National Recovery Month) · <https://www.va.gov/maryland-health-care/stories/national-recovery-month-veterans-share-how-mental-health-care-transformed-their-lives/>

"Substance use was a symptom" — fifteen years, then a new start

Ariel Palomeque's addiction began at 17 and lasted more than fifteen years, through repeated relapses, until he reached out to Espacio Puentes, part of the Hogar de Cristo network. With outpatient and residential care and the support of Cáritas, he rebuilt his life around self-worth and community. Now 34 and recovered, he works in Cáritas Córdoba's community outreach — supporting others in recovery.

"Substance use was a symptom. Learning to love, to have values, and to love myself allowed me to start something new."

Read more: Cadena 3 Argentina (Jan 2026) · https://www.cadena3.com/noticia/la-argentina-posible/dejar-el-consumo-y-volver-a-vivir-una-historia-de-recuperacion-y-esperanza_499077

500 days sober — and telling everyone why

Clay Scott first used drugs at 12 in his school playground. A decade of addiction followed: overdoses, suicide attempts, time in a maximum-security prison. After entering rehabilitation in 2025, he has now passed 500 days of continuous sobriety and works as an online sober advocate and coach in Australia, sharing his story so others know they are not alone.

"I was completely arrogant and unwilling to accept the fact that I needed help."

Read more: ABC News Australia (July 2026) · <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-07-25/clay-scott-drug-addiction-rehab-sobriety/106948772>

Recovery thinking at the bottom of the world

Because we promised every continent: polar research stations manage isolation with pre-expedition mental health screening, regulated alcohol policies and satellite tele-health — a reminder that structure and human connection protect mental health anywhere on Earth.

Read more: University of Bern, research on polar isolation · <https://www.unibe.ch>

Recovery Stories — Real stories. Shared openly. Passed on.

Materials are free to print, post and pass on — recoverystories.world · Need help right now? Crisis lines, treatment referral and mutual-aid meetings, listed by region: recoverystories.world/resources

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