Welcome back. This is Jen Lee, the creator and host of I Need Blue. Survivors Talk Surviving. Visit **www.ineedblue.net** for additional stories. As you listen, if the message moves you, there are sponsorships and advertising opportunities available. Please share the story with friends and family. The more we share, the more we learn, and the more we can help.

Please note, I Need Blue does contain sensitive topics which could be triggering. Please seek help if needed.

Today we will continue our discussion about addiction.

Robbie has been in recovery since Sept 18th, 2018 and he is proud to let you know, as he should be. He is going to share his story about being born into a family riddled with alcohol and drug addiction. His childhood included foster care, at times, an absent mom, and the death of 2 close family members. Robbie shares his journey of survival which includes the moment he was introduced to Space Coast Recovery. From there, I will let him tell you about the 1-year agreement he made with himself.

### Barbie Thrower is Exec Director/President of Space Coast Recovery since October of 2013. Space Coast Recovery (SCR) was established in 1969 and has been at the forefront of addiction treatment services in Brevard County, Florida.

She is part of Robbie’s journey and together with Space Coast Recovery, they are dedicated to empowering others to choose recovery from addiction.

To learn more about space coast recovery in Brevard County, FL visit: [www.spacecoastrecovery.com](http://www.spacecoastrecovery.com)

Barbie

Thank you so much Jen for having Robbie and I today. I've been the director for a little over 8 years. I'd come from the State Attorney's Office, and that's where I thought I was going to retire, but God had other plans for me. I have a passion for drug addiction and alcoholism. I've lost two marriages because of addiction, and I lost one of my very best friends because of addiction. Once I received my master's degree in psychology, I had to have a niche. I decided it was going to be in substance abuse counseling. God had his hand in it and here I am 8 years later, running this non-profit in Cocoa, FL. I have the great honor to have one of my top-notch counselors here at Space Coast Recovery and he's going to tell us his story.

Robbie

My name is Robbie, I'm a recovering addict and I've been clean since September 18, 2018. Ever since I can remember, my life has been dominated by drugs and alcohol. My first memory is being taken by DCF from my parents. I grew up with two sisters and my older brother. The first thing I can remember in my life is when DCF came to the house, and I had no idea what was going on. I was really confused. I remember, these people came in and my mom started freaking out and arguing. My dad was sitting there, and they were telling us to pack up our stuff, get our clothes and things we need. I knew something was wrong. My sisters were going along with it.

I ran and I hid in the closet. I remember them looking for me. I was scared. Eventually they found me, and I can remember walking down the driveway and getting in the back of the car. I remember crying as I looked out the back window not knowing what was going on.

We left Palm Bay and went to foster care in Rockledge. My sister has better memory than I do, but the foster parent was abusive. I remember being put in the corner for extended periods of time with my nose in the corner. My sister says it was for 10 hours, I would like to think it wasn't 10 hours, but I remember it being a long time.

I was 5 years old; my sister was 7 and my younger sister was 2, and my brother was 9. I remember she had bought light bulbs for the house. I was a five-year-old kid, and I took 2 light bulbs, put it up to me and made a joke about having boobies. This foster lady told me unzip my pants, stuff light bulbs in my pants near my privates, and taped lightbulbs to my chest and had me walk around the neighborhood with light bulbs attached to my body to teach me a lesson.

My sister told me how she would give my little sister cold showers and every time my brother and I would come in the house with dirty shoes on, she would make us strip down out back and hose us down. Those memories are vague to me. We did this for about 2 years. During that time we would visit my parents; sometimes just my dad, sometimes just my mom, and sometimes both of them. Eventually, we moved back with my parents, and they got a house in Melbourne, Florida where I grew up.

Shortly after we returned home to our parents, my mother was battling with addiction, crack cocaine addiction. We weren't in the best of neighborhoods, but on the ok side of US-1. The other side of US-1 was heavy with drugs, drugs everywhere, drug dealers, prostitution, and guns.

She was a great mom when she was home. We had strict rules, we had to be down for dinner, we all sat at the dinner table, say grace, we had to be at home by a certain time every night and we had chores. There was structure; until my mom relapsed and then the structure was on and off. To use, she would go right across the street to the bad neighborhood. My mom received many prostitution charges over the course of my life. During this time, I was 7 and my brother was around 12. He was the only one old enough to somewhat understand what was going on with my mom at the time. He knew something was wrong. He would get on his bike and ride across the interstate to try to find my mom. Him trying to find mom ended up getting him sent away.

They decided to send my brother to live with my mother's mom, her grandmother in Ocala. She, also, was alcoholic and I've never heard any good stories about my grandma. Everything I've heard is bad, abusive, she was into black magic and bikers. Because of the stories my mom would tell us about her trauma of her childhood, it never added up why they sent him. I never asked too many questions, but I always wondered, if grandma was such a bad mother to my mom, why would sending your son, my brother, to her in a time of trouble make sense? Why would that be the solution? I remember my grandmother’s husband was abusive too. None of us really liked him. We were all scared of him. There was nothing good which came around when he was around.

My grandmother was driving drunk with my brother in the vehicle, and they hit a tree. They both died on impact when he was 12 years old.

One night, my grandmothers husband shows up at our door in Melbourne. It was late. I just thought, what the heck is this guy doing here? We had a babysitter at the time. The “babysitter” was a family of 4 living out of the spare bedroom in our house to help pay rent, I suppose. This lady, babysitter/roommate started bawling, crying, and looking over at us. I knew something was wrong. My dad comes home, he's in tears. He ended up telling us our brother passed away.

I remember for about 4 weeks after, me and my two sisters would always sleep in my dad's room. We would play “in the arms of an angel” song. It is a pet rescue commercial. I would cry, I would like tear up and cry when I heard that song in the background. I stopped listening to it. I don't know what would happen if I listened to it today.

**Sponsor:**

**Today's episode is sponsored by Space Coast Recovery. Since 1969, Space Coast Recovery is dedicated to empowering their clients to choose recovery from addiction. www.spacecoastrecovery.com**

Robbie

Afterwards, my mom would be in and out of jail, or in the streets. She'd always come back to the house periodically. I used to fight with my dad for her to come back home. My dad would slam the door and they would argue. I wanted him to let her in. I remember what it was like, on/ off, on/off. She’d be right across the street, within a mile radius, doing her addiction and then come home crazy out of her mind, making accusations such as, she has pictures of my sister's being raped. She was out of her mind, and it got to the point where I was fed up with it.

My sister's and I would be watching TV on the couch right by the front door and windows. I would hear a knock and peak to see if it was my mom. If it was, I would roll off the couch, tuck myself right up under the crevice of the couch to where she couldn’t see me if she looked in the windows. I didn't want to interact with her because every time she came around, it was always some crazy accusations.

I remember one time she came in and I was playing video games on the computer. While out of her mind, she splashed water into the back of the computer claiming they're listening or whoever this or that, and the FBI etc…

My older sister took on the motherly role. She raised us along with one of my buddies in the neighborhood. He is a great friend, my best friend to this day. I feel like without them, I don't know what would have happened to me. My friend is forever a brother to me.

As a kid, I got into video games and basketball. That's all I did. My dad threw away one of my computer games, Warcraft III, which I played so much. I came home one day and couldn’t find it in the computer. I remember going out to the trash, digging it out and my dad being mad with me for playing it too much. It was an escape, you know, I was trying to escape.

Basketball, we had a great Junior High Team in 8th grade. We were an undefeated team and people knew who we were. We were a unit, best friends, hung out together and did things kids do. Basketball and being part of the team, was my identity.

I started using when I was around 15-16 years old. Probably 10th grade or halfway through 9th grade. I was big into basketball and ended up getting cut from the freshman team on day 1 of tryouts. I made a slick remark to one of the guys. This kid was not giving me the ball and kept doing what I thought was stupid things. I told him something slick. It wasn't nice. I think I just said, “you suck”. I turned my head, looked over my shoulder, and the coach was standing right there. He shook his head and walked away. I was like, “well, that's not good.” Next thing you know, I got cut, very first cut.

A couple of weeks later, the JV coach saw me walking through the halls in school and said, Hey, Robbie Gray, how’s practice going, how's that freshmen team? I said, “are you serious?” He said, “what do you mean?” I said, “I got cut. First round, the very first round.” He didn’t believe me. The JV coach spoke with the other coach. The JV coach came over to me and apologized. He was sorry for me, saying, “I know how much it means to you. You are a great player. I'm going to see about getting you on the JV team. Don't give up and keep doing what you do.”

I sat freshman year watching kids, all my best friends, all my buddies, go to practice and play basketball games. I would sit on the sidelines and watch from afar. Basketball was my life and I lost it that year. It was a touch year and that’s when I started to drink and smoke weed. When my addiction first started, I dabbled. I started to hang out with a different group of kids.

By10th grade year, I made the team, but I had a resentment towards the whole organization and basketball. 11th grade year, it started to get out of hand. I started taking pills. I would show up to practice, high on weed and my teammates would say something to me. I would say, “you know, I'm high, but I could still beat you.” “Watch what I do on the court.” I was arrogant. I was arrogant and didn't care. I had coaches try to tell me “Hey, man, look what you’re doing” and they would discourage the behavior.

Looking back, when I first started to get clean, I wished somebody would have given guidance. I wish somebody would have just grabbed me and said, “this is the way” because I felt like I didn't have that with my parents. There were people in my life who tried to pull me up, tried to say, “Hey, Robbie, that’s going to lead you down the wrong path”. At the time I thought, “whatever, you have no idea.” I wasn't accepting of any help. I couldn’t accept any guidance. I had no respect for authority. I didn't know how to accept love. I didn't know how to accept any type of compassion or guidance from anybody. It was Robbie against the world and that led me down a dark path.

I didn't feel like anybody ever cared about me. I felt like I had to do everything on my own because that was the only way it was going to get done. I didn't know how to accept love.

Throughout high school, my mom would be back and forth as she was throughout my entire childhood. My parents divorced when I was 12. Their relationship was always the same dynamic; on/off, on/off, it was his fault, and it was her fault. They hated each other.

Senior year I was captain of the basketball team. The other captain got injured. I'd put a lot of pressure on myself to make the team successful. I would get on the guys during practice wanting to push us to be better. I built up unneeded pressure. I was hard on the people around me. If they were slacking off during practice, I’d get on them. It became unmanageable for me and something which was impossible to deal with.

I chose to isolate myself from life. I was on a level all my own and it was a complete delusion. My mom did 18 months in prison and was getting out during Christmas break of my senior year. In my heart I felt, I’m going to get my mom back. She's going to do it this time. She'd been writing me and sending letters. I said to myself, “She's coming home and she's going to be a mom.” I wanted my mom home, and I was willing to fight my dad about it as he was against it. He had done this several times. I argued, “It's my mom, I'm going to let her come and stay.”

 He agreed and said we could stay on the other side of the duplex. He stayed on one side of the house and us kids stayed on the other. It was like this throughout my childhood. We did whatever we wanted. My dad was rarely home and when he was, he just stayed on that side, there was a wall in between it. He kept the lights on, he put a little food in the fridge. We had shelter, and food. But as far as structure and parenting that wasn't there, it was just kind of fend for yourself. It was the party house.

My mom comes home Christmas break of my senior year. I decide to stay home with her. In the past there were times where I would stay 24/7 with her. I remember she returned home, and we would lay on the couch, she rubbed my back and would just kind of be a mom. I loved that and I needed that. I remember when she would be there, we could lay together and feel nurtured. It was such a foreign feeling, but when I felt it, I knew I was missing it and I knew I needed it. I loved it and that's my mom.

I dropped out of school halfway through my senior year while I was captain on the basketball team. I just quit. I never went back. I think I told the narrative of like, Oh, my mom's out of prison. I'm going to stay home with her. But that wasn't the whole truth. I was taking Xanax and partying. I was done with school, and this seemed like a good excuse to get out. I babysat my mom and I remember one day, and this has happened many times, she said, “you don't have to babysit me. I'm going to go to the beach and get some shells.” In the past, she had gone to the beach, and she did that kind of stuff. She would collect a bunch of shells, bring them home and do whatever she did with them. I said, “sure. I'll go with you.” She said, “No, you don't need to go with me. I'll be alright, I promise. I love you. I'll be home.”

She never came home. She did this many times, whether it was going to the store to get a gallon of milk or this or that. I’ll be right back; I’m going to go get some cigarettes. She’d be gone for a month, or for two weeks and then pop back in out of your mind. She would relapse in the streets. Then home being crazy, jail, relapse, home, etc.

After I dropped out of school, things started to get bad for me and my addiction. I started using heavier drugs. The first serious drug I did was cough medicine. We would take that stuff all the time to get out of our minds. I was always looking for an escape. I remember I went to the hospital to go get my stomach pumps. It was the first episode of my physical problems with myself over substance abuse. The abuse progressed into pain pills, then cocaine, the drug I promised myself I would never do because that was my mom's drug. I would never do that. Never shoot up. I'll never do meth. Never. One time I was on cough medicine. My mom was staying at the house right across the street from our house. She was staying with the neighbor lady while she was on a crack binge. I knew what she was doing. In my psychedelic state, I came up with this revelation on how I can cure my mom of her crack addiction. I'll go over there, smoke it with her and then tell her to her face, is this what you want for your kids?

That’s exactly what I did. I went over there and played a game pretending I didn’t know what she was doing. I asked her to try it. It was the first time I ever did cocaine. I smoked crack with my mom. I was 16 years old. I don't like to say that because I know how much it hurts her to this day. She's apologized many times.

One time, I was at the gas station near my house, and I ran into my mom. She told me, “I don't want you to worry. (I don't know how to say this without sounding vulgar.) Every time I perform oral sex for drugs, I slip a condom in my mouth so I'm not doing it. Look.” She popped a condom in her mouth and showed me how she would sneakily put a condom in her mouth to avoid skin to skin contact with her Johns. Bless her heart, you know, I hate to even tell this but it is my story and it's the reality of my life.

My mom is also a recovering addict, and she deserves opportunity and chance for recovery too. It’s tough for me to say this because I don't want to hurt her anymore, because she has pain like all of us in recovery. She's had trauma that her mom put her through. So, I don't say this because I hold a resentment or blame my mom, but this is the reality of my story.

I made a promise to myself, I would say, I will never be the parent to my child as my mom was to me. I can still do that. I can keep that promise. Addiction, there is a cycle. I made that promise to myself before and when my daughter was born. 2 months after she was born, I relapsed, got a DUI, went to jail, and that's when I came to Space Coast recovery. I did three months in jail, and 6 months in recovery at Space Coast Recovery. I met Barbie and Luann. They would allow me to have my newborn daughter here and buy her a jumping thing, a walker and stuff like that. They promoted me being a father and they loved it when Nora came. It meant the world to me. That’s what we do at Space Coast Recovery. It’s the little things which matter.

I took an honest look at myself and said, “Rob, you're doing exactly what you said you wouldn’t.” I missed months of my daughters first year of her life. I wasn’t in the house with her. That sounds kind of familiar and too much like your mom when she was there and then left, back and gone, etc. Sounds like you're about to do the same exact thing but I'm not willing to do that. I want to live with myself.

I was doing anything I could get my hands on to escape reality. All the self-inflicted trauma from not being willing to work through a program of recovery and just compounding pain and trauma. It was through a lack of willingness to look at myself.

**Sponsor:**

**Robbie is a survivor of addiction. There was a time when he didn't have hope. There was no one to listen, and he started to accept substance abuse, prison and homelessness was his life. His only choice. Space cost recovery was established in 1969 and has been at the forefront of addiction treatment services in Brevard County, Florida. Robbie found love, compassion, his sponsor and 12 steps. He found the hope he was searching for. He realized he had a choice when it came to his life and Space Coast recovery offered him hope and opportunity. If you or someone you love is struggling with addiction reach out to space coast recovery today. They can be found at WWW dot Space Coast recovery.com or call them at 321-632-5958. Again, that's 321-632-5958 Space Coast recovery is dedicated to empowering their clients to choose recovery from addiction.**

Robbie

Right before my daughter was born and Nicole is pregnant, I was putting all this pressure on myself to be a father. To be a good father. What if I cannot be a father? No one had been a parent to me so how do I know I can do this? I had such insecurities like the fear of not being good enough to be a dad, it was driving my life and it drove me to relapse.

One night, during argument with Nicole, I decided to leave the house. I have a good wife, a good girl. She graduated college and walked the path her entire life. I was always conscious that she was a good egg, and I wasn't. I would try my best to protect her from myself, which is madness. This night I left, I had no money and started off in Melbourne. I go to a convivence store with a PlayStation 4. I plug this thing into the outlet right in front of the front door. No TV or anything. It's a video game console, and you need a TV to prove that it works, but I'm out here trying to sell the PS4 to anybody who's willing to buy it. People are looking at me like I'm crazy. I’m hitting the on and off button showing the display works. Everybody’s looking at me like I’m a madman. I’m trying to sell it for dirt cheap.

I called my friend I grew up with and he picked me up. I asked, “you want to buy the PlayStation? “He’s like, “what's wrong with you? Here, I'll give you some money. Keep your Playstation. I don't know what the hell you're doing, but what do you need?” I said, “I need a ride to Cape Canaveral.” I'd been living there before, and I knew how to get drugs there. I go to the Cape, and back to my old apartment complex which I completely compromised and got kicked out of because of partying with every person of every apartment. There was 16 different apartments and probably 10 of them were users, drug users or alcoholics and I was intermingling with all of them.

I started to use IV drugs, meth. What I thought was meth on the streets today, you don't know what it is. It could be bath salts; it could be some fabricated concoction. I'm doing that for hours in the laundry room, sweating bullets, trying to inject drugs into my leg. My leg swells up like three times the size of what it should be. I'm sitting there sweating bullets, delusional out of my mind, talking to people who aren't there. My old neighbor, who knew Nicole, called her, and told her to come get me. She picks me up and I'm completely out of my mind. I'm in the front passenger seat of the car. I'm ripping up the backseat accusing people of being in the vehicle which aren’t there. It's empty car. I'm trying to find people underneath the seat cushions in a sedan.

She takes me to the hospital, goes inside, and tells the people this guy's crazy. You need to come get him. These security guards, three big guys, come out and say, “sir, you need to come in the building.” She’s trying to baker act me. said the first thing that comes to mind. I said, “no, no, no, I didn't ask for any help. I'm just in the parking lot. I'm going to go ahead and walk away. You can't Baker Act me unless I ask.” They said, “well, I guess he's kind of right.” I walked away and escaped.

A Baker Act is an involuntary 72 hour hold because you're a danger to yourself or somebody else or suicidal. If somebody is concerned by your well-being they can call or take you to a hospital or call the police and say you're a danger to yourself. They'll hold you for 72 hours until they clear you through a doctor who says you're safe to reenter society. I've had that happen to me a couple of times. I remember being in the hospital and pulling out the IVs and trying to refuse treatment after an overdose. I was trying to get out of there, to go get high. They strap you to the bed so you can’t leave.

So, my legs swollen, I’m dragging it and I don't know where I'm going to go. My mom lives in Cape Canaveral. In my head I’m thinking, I’m going to hit the beach and just walk north on the beach until I get to where my mom lives. I'm walking on the beach, looking deraigned, sweating, and looking crazy. I've just done a lot of lot of methamphetamines; way too much. I don't know if it was my paranoia but I'm pretty sure this happened. As I'm walking up the boardwalk people are looking at me and pulling their children away. I take a seat on the beach. I'm peeking through my crossed arms, looking up, and thinking, I just left my apartment where my pregnant wife is, I run over to Cape Canaveral to get high, she picks me up and tries to get me Baker Acted. I'm just going and I'm going nowhere. I have no idea where I'm going. But I'm just going.

The only thing I can compute in my mind, is mom lives in Cape Canaveral, you can go there, somehow. Eventually, I get there. I'm knocking on the door, knocking on the door and nobody's answering. She's not home, but in my head, I hear my fiancé, Nicole, and my mom's boyfriend in there talking. They are talking about me. I can hear, “how are they going to tell me that the baby isn't mine? How are they going to break this to me? “I’m yelling, “I hear you in there. I hear you in there.” I walk away, come back, sit there, and realize I'm out of my mind. Delusional, talking to people who aren't there. My phone is dead but as I’m walking, and on my phone, I can hear my girlfriends’ relatives talking in their Asian language. I don’t’ understand what they are saying. The phone’s not even on. It's not powering on, but I was hearing this conversation. That's the kind of drugs which are out there.

I leave my mom's apartment after spending two hours out there, pounding on the door. I collect my thoughts and start walking. I get stopped by the sheriff. 4 cruisers pulled up on a sidewalk, park, keep their distance and begin talking to me. One of the guys I went to high school with and he would run into me, and say, “Robbie, what are you doing? I can’t keep seeing you like this and next time you're going to jail. I can't keep looking the other way. You can't be out in the streets acting like a madman.”

I tell these guys in my delusion, I said, “you know me. You know my girls pregnant. I'm about to have my first child and they just told me it's not my baby. “I’m freaking out and explaining why. I don't know if they believe me or not, but I’m going back and forth with them telling them what I believe to be reality. They ended up letting me go. I walked to another convenience store and asked to use the phone. She said, “Robbie, if you do not leave the store, I'm going to have to call the cops.” I said,” why are you being like this? What do you mean?” She's says, “you've been in the store for two hours, falling asleep, bumping into people and asking everybody for their phone or money.” I said, “what?” My life flashed before my eyes.

She lets me use the phone and I call Nicole. I say you must come get me I'm going to go to jail. She's, “Oh my god. Okay, I'll come.” I go behind the dumpster because I'm worried the cops will find me. It’s dark and I’m not sure how long I am waiting. My mom pulls up with her boyfriend. I get in with them and ask them to take me home. They say,” you're not going home. Your leg is bad and infected. You need to go to the hospital.” They get me to the hospital to get my leg checked out. I'm being super friendly with all the staff. I stink bad. They don’t want to touch me. I don't think they would touch me. They looked at it from afar, held their nose, and gave me an antibiotic. My mom and her boyfriend are begging the doctors to Baker Act me, but I'm happy go lucky. I'm like, I don't know what they're talking about. I don't want to hurt myself. I get high, I will admit that. They are begging me to go to treatment to get help. I wasn't going for it. They allowed me to smoke a cigarette while they're still in the hospital pleading for me to get Baker Acted.

There's one security guy out there with me and he's wants nothing to do with the situation. He is kind of watching me smoke. I’m watching him and waiting for him to turn his head. He does and I jump into the bushes. I'm gone. I hear my mom and her boyfriend screaming my name. Robert where are you? I see them driving away and I started walking down the street but near the trees to remain hidden. I escaped another Baker Act.

My little sister lives in Palm Bay. My dad lives in a Eau Gallie. I head South because staying with my mom was no longer an option. They wanted to Baker Act me. My leg is swollen, I’m dragging it while I head to the other end of the county. I’m picking up every single piece of trash and envelope I see on the side of the road, thinking hopefully there's some money in it or something. Just complete madness, complete madness. I walked and walked and I'm thinking in my head, I got to be in close to Melbourne. I get to a convenience store and ask someone, “where am I?” I was in Rockledge. Oh God! I got many hours of hobbling to do. They said, “we're going to call you somebody.” They call the cops, and one cruiser comes. He recognized I was the guy who left the hospital against medical advice. I denied it was me. He was going to give me a ride. I think I'm trying to talk to this guy the whole time and he doesn't want nothing to do with me. He takes me to the end of his jurisdiction; I get out and start hobbling again. I'm not goanna make it.

I'm not making it anywhere. I take a seat on the sidewalk and try to gather my energy, try to get back up. Now the sun's up and I’m on US-1 with traffic flying by. I can't move. I'm just getting baked by the sun. I'm dehydrated, not having eaten and I just can't move. I can’t even stand up. This old couple walked up to me, looking at a kid dying and asked what they can do. “Can I use your phone? Just make one call. “They say no, but we'll call for you. I said OK and gave him the number. He called my dad who didn't answer but they left a voicemail. Then they left and kept walking. I thought, “well, this is it. I’m going to die right here, talking to people who aren’t here, and I’m completely out of my mind.” My dad pulls up, “Robert, what are you doing? Get in! Get in the van. What the hell?” I say, “I can't. You got to come pick me up, I can't move.”

He picks me up and throws me in the van and took me to my little sister's house. She let me stay there.

I am telling my story because that is what a life of addiction has to offer. What kind of life is that? What am I doing with myself? But that's the reality of the life I was living. Today I have a life that means something. People are calling me for help, for advice, or to be there for them. At one point, I wasn't a person who people could even communicate with. People had to close the door. They had to pull their children away or hide from me.

When I tried to communicate, my voice was not heard. I would open my mouth, say words and even if they were good meaningful words, no ears were attentive. Nobody wanted to listen and for good reason. Who would want to listen to a deranged person? Today I look back and say, that's who I was and today I'm a man who can be there for his daughter, be a good dad and husband. My fiancé and I just got a mortgage on a home in a gated community. I've been clean for three and a half. I’m living right and making the right decisions. If you are suffering, I want you to know you can build a life. It's possible. There was a time where I felt there was no hope. No life.

I thought Robbie Gray is just meant to be a “Gray” which is prisons, substance abuse and mediocracy at best. It’s just a family name and that's fine as long as I do a little bit better than mom and dad. That’s bullshit!

Through Space Coast Recovery, through love, compassion, through my sponsor, 12 steps, I've found hope, life and opportunity. It was scary as hell, and it was the hardest thing I ever had to do. It’s hard to take an honest look at yourself, but it's the most worthwhile thing I've ever done, and I'll ever have done in my life. Knowing opportunities are there if I'm willing to do the work and dedicate to it, people in my life will want me around. I was a man that people couldn't have around even if they wanted to be a part of my life. I was always blaming my circumstances and upbringing and pointing the finger, even though there’s some validation to it, but sooner or later I had to decide. I could either be part of the cycle of my grandma, mom, me, and what I was about to do or choose Nora, my daughter. I could have easily been part of that cycle and people would probably get it, they would understand it makes sense or I could choose something else.

I believed something else is possible. I could forge a new path and a new life through God, and through others who have been through similar experiences. I was never open minded enough to take a hand, but I was in so much pain, I couldn’t see it.

Jen

Describe the moment you became open minded enough to realize this is not the life you want. I don't want to be the” Grey” of Robbie Grey.

Robbie
I think it was a series of things. The prior clinical supervisor here, I thought she hated me and wanted to send me to prison. She was pulling the strings in my life, a little bit. I was thinking she had ill intentions. But when I reflect and look back, I firmly believe this lady wanted nothing but for Robbie to live a life clean and sober. She wanted nothing in return except to see me do well. I truly believe she wanted to see me succeed and was doing whatever she could to help me get there. I believe they renewed my trust in humanity. For so long it was Robbie against the world; I might entertain some people for a short time, but I didn't really trust and believe in anybody.

Through one person believing in me, and wanting to help me for nothing in return, it unlocked the rest of the world where there might be something good left. I wrote off the world for a long time. I thought there was nothing good in it for me and other people. Broken trust hurts and disappoints.

My advice: do whatever it takes to find that one person, it just takes one, and they're out there. There are good, kindhearted, loving people who want you to heal, succeed and do better. They want to simply watch you recover. We'll never find it if we can't accept it. We must be open to looking for it. It's scary as hell and it sucks to open that pain to the world, but nothing good will have the opportunity to come through it either. Nothing good or bad will come thru.

Jen

There are people afraid of homeless people or people walking around having their own conversations with themselves, just like the parents who pulled their children away from you on the beach. But everybody needs that one special person to help them. So how do people who are afraid, learn not to be afraid and be more compassionate?

Robbie

Yes, remember that everybody's a person. I can't speak for everybody and everything, but most people just need love. Many people have lack of love, and we don’t know what they have gone through in their life. We don’t know their life experience which have made them and lead them to where they're at today. We treat people accordingly to what we see. Sometimes we don't see someone, at first glance, who needs love, compassion, and empathy. When we react with fear, we're doing nothing but providing more evidence to their beliefs against the world. You never know what someone's been through, and every person deserves an equal chance for love, unity, empathy and understanding. There's never a magical thing to say or the right thing to say. You never know when the timing is right to where what you say or when you say it, will open that door of love and compassion. When the time is right somebody will hear it and its they are going to get exactly what they need.

My younger sister is in California and active in addiction. I tried to force feed her recovery for longest time. That doesn’t work but what I do with her and other people I meet in the world is I will open my door if she comes to my house. In the past, she came and would cause a big blow up to start an argument to make a reason to escape and leave. I said, “you know what, Becca? You can go, it's not going to be because of something that I said, or you did. I want you to know when you're ready, this door, a bed, food, and all the resources I have in my life are available to you when you're ready.” And the same thing with like people I run into in the world. If I see, it's obvious that they have substance abuse or something like that, I just say, “I'm not saying you need to do anything, but if you ever know anybody, are you ever interested in wanting a new way of life, take this card, and I'll do anything I can for you. “That’s it!

By saying, “hey, there is another way and if and when you are ready, we’re here for you.”

Space Coast Recovery has been a blessing which changed my life and turned my life into something I never imagined it would be. I graduated and about nine months later, I noticed one of my peers from when I was in treatment, was working here one night a week. I said, “wow, I didn’t know they did that. I didn’t know they would hire us or me or anybody.” I was very shy and hesitant, but spoke to the supervisor and said, I’d be interested in helping here if there is ever an opportunity. She said, “Okay, how about this weekend?” I said, “let me think about it” and I walked away. About 30 seconds later I said, “Yes. Let’s do it.”

I never experienced empowerment like I felt from Space Coast Recovery, Barbie, the staff, and people here. It is the most empowering place. I'll forever be grateful for this facility, for believing in me, believing in people, and providing them with an opportunity for growth. That is what Space Coast Recovery does and I needed that more than I ever knew. You are empowered to say, yes you can or try it. Even if they thought it was a crazy idea, it was, go try it out. It created a spark for my spirit, opened my eyes to a beautiful life full of opportunity and allows me to do that for others. It’s the greatest thing I've ever experienced, and I get to experience it every single day.

Jen

What made you bring down your wall and trust Barbie and everyone at Space Coast Recovery here in Brevard County?

Robbie

I took a step back and thought about their intentions. I'm good at picking apart things and finding where the ill intent is or the lack of character, etc. I ask these guys when they get upset and they feel like people are trying to manipulate their lives, why do you think we do this? What you think, we get off on telling you, you can't hang out with this person or this or that? What do you what do you think the intent is? It boils down to these people want to help.”

It's on me to allow people into my life and to speak into my life. You can have the greatest guides, sponsors, and mentors in the world, but if we're not allowing people to speak into our lives, it doesn't matter.

Jen

Taking the first step is scary because you don’t know what to expect. Can you share with us your journey from when you first went to Space Coast Recovery and decided to try something new?

Robbie

I can share how this works for me, my experience. I said, “you know what Robbie, you did 28 years of life and look what you got.” I took an honest look and I saw, jail, relapse, rehab and over again. Every single person I love and care about in my life, who I wanted in my life that I cared and loved about, I did nothing but harm them. I've been a hindrance in their life. That's not good enough. 28 years of that, and that's what I got. I'm going to give one year, one year. That's it. I'm not willing to surrender my entire forever, but I'll give you a year trial run. I'll do everything and all suggestions I will follow. I'll keep the same job and I'm going to see how I feel. In that years’ time of just surrendering, doing what was suggested, my relationship was better than it's ever been. I was showing up to work every day, my boss wanted me around, I got multiple raises, people wanted me around, my friends counted on me, and they wanted to spend time with me, every aspect of my life was much better than it was in 28 years of doing it my way.

When I had that evidence, and really took the time to look at it, what do you have to lose? And if you're going to do it, why not?

Give it an honest effort, the best you can do. Most of us, we don't have that in us anymore. We attempt something and we tiptoe around it. That's what an addict does, right? We fear whatever it is, there's fear so when we want to write it off, you can act like it didn't work. Give it an honest effort goal, do the best you can and see how you feel after some time. If you do that and everybody who's ever done that, honestly and thoroughly, will tell you their life has got tremendously better.

Jen

You said one word there that I think is impactful and important. “Surrender.” You basically had to surrender yourself. I think that is a huge word which honestly had never crossed my mind before. Thank you, thank you for your honesty through this whole thing. It's very raw and genuine. I am happy you are where you are today.

Robbie

Barbie is the CEO of Space Coast Recovery program which saved my life, saved many of my best friend's lives, and continues to save lives. She has given many people who've gone through the program an opportunity to be a part of the program and to continue the cycle of recovery. Barbie has been nothing but selfless and compassionate. She's a great leader and done everything she can to provide the best facility, best tools, resources, and the best team to provide recovery for this area. I have the utmost respect and love for everything she's done in my life, and many people in my life.

Barbie

I'll tell you stories like Robbie, keeps me motivated to stay here and do what I do. I've seen Robbie from the minute he walked in this door as a client, to graduating college, Nora, and now being one of the best counselors here. I'm proud of him and there are many stories like his. We have great programs here. we We have licensed level 3 residential program; we're licensed by the state of Florida. We're accredited by CARF. We also have level 1 outpatient treatment programs, in Titusville, cocoa, and Melbourne. We do the DUI program, and we're also offering an exciting new outpatient program. We want to help as many people in the community as possible.

Jen

How do you reassure someone they've made the right decision and you're here to help?

Barbie

Everybody that walks through that door is broken, it breaks our hearts. We surround them with love. We let them know how important they are. We let them know that we care. Like Robbie said, we have a lot of rules in place, but those rules are for a reason, and it works.

I'm blessed with an amazing staff at Space Coast Recovery. We have one mission; to help people who are suffering. It is scary out there and the drugs out there scary. It's not about getting high or going to jail; it's about staying alive. We tell them we love them until they can love themselves.

Jen

Why would someone choose Space Coast Recovery over another facility?

Barbie

We are the best at what we do. One of the requirements is they all must get jobs. We're not a lockdown facility and all our treatments are done in the evenings. It’s a structured routine. Everybody's up and out of their bed with their beds made by 8am. They go to work. They come home, dinners at 5 every night, and we do our groups in the evening, 6 to 7:30. They're required to do 4 AA or NA meetings a week. We have lights out, we have curfew and then lights out. Then the day starts again. We teach them life skills. They'll have chores they have to do, and they learn to cook, and you must cook for 25 people. Everybody gets an opportunity to learn life skills. Some have never been taught before. We had one client who wasn't doing this chore and I asked him why? He never saw anybody use a broom, and he didn't even know how to sweep a floor. You must meet them where they're at when they come in, and just help them grow and learn.

www.Spacecoastrecovery.com We have open interviews every Tuesday between 2 and 4, people can walk in off the streets. We don't accept insurance. We take the homeless, the uninsured, the unemployed, and the indigent are partially funded by the Department of Children and Families. They pay $150 a week for their treatment which includes the room, their board, and their meals. We have liaisons in the jail if anybody's incarcerated. They set up phone interviews with the clinical team to come in for treatment. We are a non-profit.

Jen

Can people donate?

Barbie

Yes. On the web-site, [www.spacecoastrecovery.com](http://www.spacecoastrecovery.com) there is a red button which says, “Donate”. Two years ago, we purchased a transitional house. It's catty corner from Space Coast Recovery. It's 1138 Peach Tree. We applied for a grant with community housing initiative, and the city of Coco's working with us and we're going to begin renovations. The house will help 5 gentlemen who have satisfactorily graduated from our program. It is 5 bed/3 bath house, and we're excited. As you know, some of these guys, don't have a place to go once they graduate from our program successfully. It's hard. There's a lot of different challenges out there to find housing. So this transitional house is going to help them when they continue their journey of recovery.

Jen

Are your clients just men?

Barbie

Yes, our residential program is all males. Our outpatients our co-ed though. We have, through licensing, outpatient is required an hour, to an hour and a half of substance abuse treatment a week. We do that through the Florida Safety Council. Anybody that gets a DUI in the state of Florida must seek treatment. They choose us as their provider for groups in Titusville, Cocoa and Melbourne. We're beginning our level 1outpatient treatment and we're probably going to start them at two groups/ week which includes clients who don't need a residential treatment facility. Perhaps their employer is saying, you must complete an outpatient treatment before you can come back to work. Everybody knows somebody, addiction does not discriminate. There are different companies who need to send their employees for out an outpatient program, which wouldn’t disrupt their lives.

Jen

Addiction does not discriminate. If you are not trying to overcome addiction yourself, chances are you know, someone, whether it's a family member or a friend. I'm hoping this episode, gives hope and provides information on taking the first step to recovery. Space Coast Recovery is here, you do have an option. Thank you for all you do and we are glad you are part of our community.

Space Coast recovery in Brevard County understands that you are not alone. If you are struggling with addiction Space Coast Recovery will welcome you with open arms to provide the love, compassion, hope and resources to enter recovery. Please reach out to Space Coast Recovery today. They can be reached at [www.spacecoastrecovery.com](http://www.spacecoastrecovery.com) or call them at 321-632-5958 Again, that's 321-632-5958 and take your first step to recovery together.

Robbie’s recovery date September 18, 2018. Sounds like a great reason to have cake! Barbie and Robbie, thank you for being my guests today!