

The monster among us

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"Suddenly friends and sex was all linked to meth," Charles says. "Without meth, you have no friends and no sex. You must keep doing it to keep all you think you have gained. Even after the high wears away, you have been psychologically altered. It never goes away. Meth

changes your way of thinking. You must have a grasp of your balls if you do not want it to take away your life."

Not many meth users have that good of grasp.

"I had a boyfriend who was into crystal," says Huxold. "We were moving and everything, so I tried it. It was love at first sight."



Fantasia Williams (left) works with alcohol and drug specialist Kat Barrett at Outside In, which encourages young meth users to move along the harm reduction continuum toward treatment

Immediately addicted, Huxold's relationship with his boyfriend deteriorated when they began hooking up with other men and going to bathhouses while high. Huxold kicked out his boyfriend and tried to kick meth out with him. But it wasn't all that easy.

"I was depressed," Huxold says. "I was using again. I was not wanting to feel. Last year I knew I had a serious problem. My clients were getting concerned."

Then his mother was diagnosed with lung cancer.

"It was like God wakened my life, saying, 'You need to be present for this.' I went to Cocaine Anonymous, was lucky enough to find a gay sponsor."

Huxold says point blank: "Crystal meth breaks down your whole spirit and it fucks up your brain. I had to change my friends because all my friends used. It was the hardest thing when I was clean. I'd stay home and watch Life-time and cry."

Huxold looks down at the floor a moment, trying to compose himself before continuing.



PHOTOS BY MARTY DAVIS

Val Lawson leads ASAP Treatment Services' Triangle Project, Oregon's only comprehensive treatment program specifically designed for the sexual minorities community

"But my sponsor took me to meetings and I kept at it."

Last February, the fight against meth became too much. Huxold attempted suicide. "I had a battle. Pills on the bed," he said. "I was either going to kill myself or...God, what else can I do? I took the pills. But first I called a friend." That friend saved Huxold's life by driving him to the hospital.

"I fight every day to stay alive and not use



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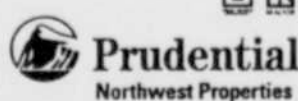
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