

RRP 103 — Luciano N.

Don't Stop Before the Miracle: One Man's Journey Through Homelessness, Relapse, and Real Recovery

Presenters: Peter and Julie

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EPISODE SUMMARY

In this episode, hosts Julie and Peter welcome Luciano N., a Salem-raised, bicultural gay Latino man whose story winds through family upheaval, discovering his identity, competitive cheerleading, the Portland nightlife scene, and a decade-long struggle with alcohol and drugs. From sleeping on MAX trains and in parks downtown to finding his footing at Blanchet House and Another Chance treatment, Luciano's road to recovery was anything but straight. Now nineteen months sober and serving as Director of Operations at Atlas Treatment Center, he shares what it finally meant to stop performing for everyone else and start showing up for himself.

KEY POINTS

00:05:53

Luciano grew up in Salem, Oregon with a bicultural background — his mother's Americanized family and his father's roots in Veracruz, Mexico. His father was incarcerated when Luciano was five, leaving his mother as the sole provider for four children. When Luciano was 13, his father was released from prison in Georgia and deported to Mexico.

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By his sophomore year of high school, Luciano was navigating his sexuality, exploring faith, and had his first drink at a family gathering — all at once. Sports, choir, cheerleading, and a natural gift for dancing gave him belonging, but alcohol was creeping in.

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Luciano moved to Portland for Portland State cheerleading, worked as a server and bartender, and became Mr. Junior Gay Portland No. 7. Drinking escalated from weekends to weekdays as anxiety, identity pressures, and people-pleasing intensified.

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A three-year relationship with a trans man who had three children pulled Luciano into a seven-year codependent dynamic. Drinking became daily. During the pandemic, he and a roommate drank from morning to night for months. He went through seven jobs in a single year.

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After losing housing and sleeping in parks and on MAX trains, Luciano ended up at the Portland Rescue Mission, then Blanchet House, where he worked in the kitchen serving meals as part of their 90-day program.

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A relapse led to ten days of bar-hopping and losing everything again. Collapsing at Laurel Hurst Park, unable to get up, Luciano crawled back to the hospital and then walked to The Peer Company (formerly MHAAO) — where peer support specialist Terry connected him to detox at Hooper and treatment at Another Chance.

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Luciano became house manager at a Sober Housing Oregon residence, learning to set boundaries for the first time. He experienced the death of a housemate to overdose — one of the most defining moments of his recovery.

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The day before his second treatment graduation, Luciano was offered a position at Atlas Treatment Center as Director of Operations. Now nineteen months sober, he describes his recovery as leaning into life rather than outrunning it.

GUEST QUOTE

“Don’t give up on yourself in the journey. The journey is the miracle, the path that you lead every day.”

— Luciano N.

WEBSITES DISCUSSED

Blanchet House — <https://blanchethouse.org/>

Portland Rescue Mission — <https://www.portlandrescuemission.org/>

Another Chance Recovery — <https://www.anotherchancerehab.com/>

The Peer Company (formerly MHAAO) — <https://thepeercompany.org/>

True Colors Recovery — <https://www.truecolorsrecovery.org/>

Sober Housing Oregon — <https://www.soberhousingoregonllc.com/>

Atlas Treatment Center — <https://www.atlastreatmentcenter.com/>

Real Recovery Podcast — <https://www.realrecoverypodcast.com/>

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