
THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Second Chances—CrossFit Works, Part 2

Two affiliate owners share how CrossFit helped them beat drugs and get new leases on life.

By Peter Egyed and Kevin O'Malley

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Staff/CrossFit Journal

The CrossFit community is full of amazing triumphs. In this regular feature, the *CrossFit Journal* compiles the most extraordinary stories from a community built by extraordinary people.

In this edition, we feature an athlete and affiliate owner who beat amphetamines to finish sixth in the CrossFit Games, as well as another affiliate owner who used CrossFit to pull himself out of the depths of addiction.

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Irony: A Short Autobiography

By Peter Egyed

Months and months of preparation led up to this day. I went nearly a week without sleep. Refined carbohydrates were a staple of my diet. I had a pack-a-day habit. To top it all off, I had over 16 months of amphetamine use behind me.

I was ready.

After a brief car chase and a head-on collision, I was on foot in an all-out sprint through a neighborhood at max effort, scaling every wall I could find, stopping for nothing—that is, until the final wall. As I dug my fingers in and scraped my feet up the sides, I finally got a view of the other side, a view of Freedom.

And then I failed.

I was done, face-down and handcuffed for the second time in a month. For the next eight months, I had some time to think—to think of failing and of what I would do with my life. It took me almost a year after my release to find the importance of my health.

I started running to quit smoking. You know, 4-5 miles two or three times a week. I began going to college and started lifting weights to kill time—legs, back, arms and chest, but I will tell you I did pull-ups because I never wanted to feel that failure again.

I put my lifting on hold to run a marathon. It was horrible. It cost me a few nagging injuries and decreases across the board in everything else, but I finished. I didn't run more than a mile for the next six months.

It was then that I knew there had to be something better. You couldn't be just a runner or a lifter. I wanted to be both, but not both of those. I wanted to be something else.

I was going to school for physics and filling an elective with a physiology course. I spoke to my instructor about fitness goals, and that's when I was referred to CrossFit.com. This was in February of 2007. A friend and I committed ourselves to the program in a corner of a run-down gym, and we thrived.

We knew nothing about CrossFit besides the website and videos. Then a competition was announced: the first annual CrossFit Games. We were broke college students, so we drove in my truck—which broke down twice—and decided to camp on-site. We also must have thought the Zone was a mental state in which you trained because we



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Peter Egyed replaced smoking, drug use and a bad diet with CrossFit, and only a few years later he managed to finish sixth at the CrossFit Games.

Second Chances ... (continued)

packed nothing but brownies and cookies for the ride out there and tons of Gatorade and other garbage for the days of the competition.

I remember being destroyed in the hopper WOD and stumbling through the run. I approached Dave Castro and Nicole Carroll and asked if there were any local gyms nearby. Nicole chuckled and asked if we didn't get a good enough workout. I looked at my bloody hands and replied that we actually needed showers. Dave took us in.

With the Games over, we felt part of something much bigger, and our training reflected that feeling. We began recruiting others, and not much later I attended a Level 1 Cert.

Before we knew it, another year had passed and I was making another trip to Cali, this time with my girlfriend in a rental. The event felt much better, and I was more prepared. I knew what insulin was, and our meals were packed ahead of time. I managed to finish 21st.

Something was much different coming home after the 2008 Games: we needed a real place to train. And so it began. Four months later, we signed a lease on a 2,600-square-foot building, and **CrossFit Fury** was born in Goodyear, Ariz.

For the next month, we built our gym and committed every moment to finding new clients and improving their lives. Oh yeah—we trained for the Games, too, but I kept thinking 2009 would not be my year. First, I did not qualify, finishing 11th in the Great Basin Regional, but then I won the Last Chance Online Qualifier.

Going into the Games, my only goal was to make it to the second day. To simply say I was among the world's 16 fittest men would have been enough. Hell, I'm still on probation.

Editor's note: Aside from the sandbag sprint WOD, Peter finished no lower than 15th in any event at the 2009 CrossFit Games, tying for first in the deadlift WOD and finishing fifth in the snatch/wall-ball couplet. At the end of the competition, Peter sat in sixth spot, one point behind 2008 Games champ Jason Khalipa.

Since the Games, I have had an even greater fire for the business and my fitness. Currently, I am working with two local police departments, introducing them to CrossFit with great success—the irony! I was recently contemplating this irony and realized that were it not for CrossFit,

I quite possibly would not be hired as a bag-boy at a local grocery store. Yet here I am running a business, changing lives and trying to make a difference.

Thanks for the second chance.



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My Journey From Addiction to CrossFit

By Kevin O'Malley

Three years ago, my life felt like I had just finished a brutal met-con WOD like Fran or Grace: I was beaten down, overwhelmed and utterly exhausted.

I was an average, middle-class American boy who had the world in front of him. I excelled in sports and education, but that all changed as my pattern of living went from normal to include daily abuse of heroin, cocaine and oxycontin. I delved into the dark, secluded life of drug addiction, and I abandoned my dreams, my family and my close friends. I gave up hope in myself.

My life was spiraling out of control. I gave up on college and my desire to play college basketball, and I was losing my family in the process. When you are deep into addiction, you never really see the anguish you cause the people who have loved and cared for you throughout your life. Your only purpose for living is to get that next high and find out whom you can manipulate the best.

Drug addiction is a leading cause of death in the United States, and in many instances it is looked at as an inner-city or lower-class problem. This is like saying anaerobic training is not as successful as aerobic training—it ignores large parts of the issue. Suicide, overdoses and domestic problems are at an all-time high in the middle-class, suburban areas where most people live and work. Addiction is a growing problem in all of America, and I believe CrossFit can heal the broken families and mend the broken hearts.

My own journey into CrossFit started about two and half years ago. I was sent down to Fort Lauderdale, Fla., for rehabilitation for drug addiction because I could not seem to get sober in my home state of Massachusetts. I went through three intense months of rehab and was placed in a halfway house in Fort Lauderdale's inner city.

I was introduced to CrossFit during this time, and I credit this physical regimen with my recovery. CrossFit not only got me into the best shape of my life, but it also gave me the new, healthy lifestyle I had been craving throughout my life. I returned back to Massachusetts with over a year of clean living behind me and a determination to commit to my new-found love of CrossFit.

I went to a Level 1 Certification and met a group a firebreathers from [CrossFit New Hampshire](#), who took me in and gave me expert training. Through CrossFit, I



Courtesy of Kevin O'Malley

***Kevin O'Malley's world is still upside down,
but now it's by choice.***

Second Chances ... (continued)

gained confidence in myself and realized I can accomplish anything if I put my mind to it. CrossFitters amaze me with their tenacity and overall determination to finish anything put in front of them, no matter the blood, sweat and tears. I also went back to college and finished my bachelor's degree in history. And I went back to school in another way—I became an elementary school teacher in the inner city.

I look at CrossFit not only as my training program but also a way of life that has helped me overcome obstacles in the last two and half years. I embraced the CrossFit workouts, and I decided to open my own affiliate, [Vagabond CrossFit](#), to give this same gift to my surrounding community. My overall goal is to give to the community something CrossFit has given to me: hope to accomplish goals.

Over the last year, I have finished triathlons and marathons, and I am currently in the process of training for the Vermont 100 ultramarathon in the summer of 2010. CrossFit has not only bettered me as an athlete, but it has also given me an opportunity to be a better person. Finishing marathons, triathlons and ultrathons is great for the resume, but seeing the smiling faces of the average person finishing a workout like Isabel is the real reason why I have committed to CrossFit both as my recovery program and my fitness program to achieve overall well being.

In the state of New York, there is a rehabilitation center for recovering drug addicts who are trained to run marathons. With a success rate of over 90 percent, the program has been an eye-opener for me. Through physical activity, you can better yourself physically and mentally, and it is utterly apparent to me that CrossFit creates a positive atmosphere and gives people a reason to push themselves to the limit. At the ripe age of 24, I am setting a goal to one day start a CrossFit rehab program for recovering drug addicts so I can give them the same opportunity CrossFit has given me: a second chance at life.



Courtesy of Kevin O'Malley

CrossFit helped Kevin O'Malley pull himself out of addiction and gave him hope, and so he started Vagabond CrossFit to pass that hope on to others.