

Heartwings NGO

CHANGE IS POSSIBLE - NEWSLETTER 1/2022



"I, Nadine (former prostitute from Switzerland), had a stark realisation last week: I have been destroying myself for years. This coincides with the diagnoses of my therapists.

Borderline: I deliberately hurt my body, destroy myself emotionally, throw myself into toxic relationships and deliberately walk a fine line between life and death.

Eating disorder: stomach, intestines, oesophagus, teeth, gums, heart rhythm and my soul, destroyed from vomiting all the time. This could all end fatally.

Alcohol abuse: My stomach and liver are damaged. Why am I doing this to myself? Why am I destroying myself? Cursed suffering! My body and soul have been through so much. But why am I now doing to myself what all the monsters in my life have previously done to me. I can't love myself and treat myself accordingly.

Even after the first sexual assaults as a teenager, I still sought pain through men. Even if I didn't want sex, I gave my body away. How and when they wanted, the men took it anyway. The more violence I experienced, the more I punished my body and soul. I beat up my soul. And kept going back to the psychos who were destroying me. I knew that they would destroy me psychologically if I disobeyed. So I preferred to break my heart myself so that it wouldn't be broken for me. At some point I lost control of my behaviour. Without wanting to, I sold myself mentally and physically.

I am addicted to self-destruction. And I am sure that no human being can stop my self-destruction. Only I can - through self-love. I hope I will manage to live a normal life someday and break the vicious circle. I want to stop destroying myself."

This is an excerpt from a diary entry from one of our clients, Nadine. You can read the whole entry on our website or listen her story as an audio file.



Healing processes are diverse. Every client is at a different stage. The above picture shows flowers. They need good soil that nourishes, gives support, and allows growth. For healing and change to happen, it needs protection, time, often a blind eye to misbehaviour and above all a lot of goodwill.

"THE VERY WORST ARE THE RICH ZÜRICH MANAGERS"

Kaya slipped into prostitution at the age of 18 and ended up on Langstrasse. In her first interview with the newspaper *ZüriToday*, she speaks fearlessly about abuse, abysses, and the problems of prostitution. Talking about what she experienced and confronting the public with the harsh reality fulfills Kaya with new purpose. As a result her healing and reflective process has been accelerated. Scan the QR code to read the interview on our website.



It is as if Ladina's first visit to the Ladies Lounge was only yesterday. She stood there shy, with a look that said: I don't trust anyone. Unimpressed by the dresses given to her as a gift, her distrust of Heartwings was obvious.

Ladina has been part of Heartwings exit program for more than a year. She is hardly recognisable. She speaks fluent German, has completed diplomas and further education. The internships and work experience as a cleaning specialist have given her new self-confidence and hope for the future. Within the course of a year her life and circumstances have been totally turned around.

Now, Ladina even participates as a helper in the Ladies Lounge team and invites her former colleagues from the street. Smiling, she stands at the door of the Heartwings office to greet her former colleagues from the milieu. She helps them choose their clothes, gives them art cards and food parcels and talks about the change that has been made possible in her life. To begin, Heartwings reached out to Ladina, pulling her out of the prostitution swamp. Now she is reaching out hers to help even more women. Ladina is living proof to all her friends on the street that change really is possible.



For years Maria was exploited in prostitution and experienced the most horrendous things. With the help of Heartwings, after she left prostitution, she found a job as a cleaner in a nursing home. For the sake of her protection, no one there knows about her unfortunate life in the red light district. Maria started with a small workload and managed her small salary sparingly. Miraculously, she was able to rent a nice flat. Her superiors were pleased with her and after a short time increased her workload. But more than that: Maria has such a big heart, and her work is so appreciated that she now only cleans for the grouchiest and wealthiest residents. And this at the direct request of these senior citizens, who all rave about Maria.

Maria has recovered from her trauma. Love has changed her heart so that she is now the most sought-after employee for these sometimes deeply distressed people. Mary, who herself has experienced so much suffering, is now the angel for these senior citizens in the last stage of their lives.

The word has already spread in the milieu: We now have a nail salon in our office! Every week, the women are pampered, get beautiful nails, and have now come to trust us more and more.





1996, Kinondoni street promenade in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: Sarah is best known here as an unpredictable, drug-addict and ice-cold prostitute. Deemed as a hopeless case.

Peter and Dorothée Widmer, the founders of the Heartwings association, were living and working in Tanzania at the time. It was their own story that drew them to people that no one else went to. They courageously started their work, with a local team, reaching out to prostitutes on the street. They wanted to help the women get out of prostitution.

One of the first women to leave prostitution was Sarah. For Sarah, one thing was certain: "Even if I had to clean toilets all my life, I will never go back to prostitution!" Step by step she fought her way to freedom and started her own small street food business. But in her heart, she carried a big dream: Sarah wanted to create a home for defenseless women, and children from prostitution.

In 2001, Peter and Dorothée Widmer returned to Switzerland. Contact with Sarah and the other dropouts broke off - but Sarah's story continued. A local Indian builder enjoyed Sarah's cooking. He heard about her sad past, about the change in her life and about her dream. Touched by this, he built her a house, in a safe place, for free. Sarah's dream came true!

Without money and with no plan, just a big heart, Sarah and her husband take in women and children from the abusive conditions of prostitution. Everyone calls this place simply; "Sarah House".



Miraculously in 2016, after years of no contact, the contact with Peter and Dorothée is re-established. In the meantime, the couple had founded the Heartwings Association in Zurich, and it was possible to support Sarah House financially. Beds, mattresses, and furniture were purchased. An outdoor kitchen and a recreation room were added so that there is enough space for the many children. But Heartwings does not only support financially, but also in a very practical way: for several weeks a year Johanna Sieber works and lives in Sarah House. And since Johanna grew up in Tanzania, she knows the culture and language well.



As daughter of Peter and Dorothée, I spent my formative childhood years in Tanzania. While my parents had meetings with the prostitutes at our home, it was up to me to share my toys with the children of the former prostitutes. However, these children had also experienced abuse and assault themselves. Abused children process what they have gone through in play. And this is how it came about that the children abused me whilst my parents helped their mothers. To me it felt as if the prostitutes were taking my parents away from me and that their children were destroying my sexuality.

For a long time, I didn't want to have anything more to do with prostitutes. Years later I was able to make peace with God, my own story and my second home Africa. For many years, I have been working with women from prostitution at Heartwings. And because my parents accompanied Sarah back then, helped her to freedom and never gave up on her, I can now continue their work at Sarah House. The wheel of life has turned a whole circle. Everything I experienced I can now use for good.

I am thrilled to be a part of Sarah's dream and to support her. Johanna Sieber

«LOOK, I'M HANGING MYSELF» shouts a little girl with a rope around her neck. She was just playing! She is processing the death of her own mother, which she witnessed.

Sarah House is home to over 70 young women and children. Some of the children and women are very sick due to HIV infection and arrived at Sarah House with little hope. One little girl was rescued from a forced marriage to an ancient man. Many of the boys in the house have experienced multiple sexual abuse. The scars on their little arms and legs cannot be overlooked. And poorly healed or still festering wounds and burns bear witness to their terrible and violent life before.

When the children move into Sarah House, they change. With great joy we witness the positive change in every single one of them. They lovingly call Sarah "Mam kubwa" - great mother. On arrival, the children receive schooling, educational opportunities, good food, love and an extended family. Everyone looks out for one another, particularly the weaker ones, together they overcome all the inconveniences that their many traumas bring. They give each other courage and hope.



The costs for school, education and studies for the 70 women and children amount to around 10,000 Swiss francs a year. Similarly, feeding all these mouths twice a day is financially demanding. To capacitate the increasing number of needy women and children admitted to the house, another extension is needed. Would you like to give the women and children in Tanzania the chance of a better future?

Support Sarah House & scan the QR code.

You can find more information about our work in Tanzania on our website www.heartwings.ch.



It is not only easy and beautiful witnessing healing in our clients. It is also challenging. It is challenging not only to endure the processes, but also to consciously invest in the women – even when, "little plant", momentarily shows no signs of growth and change. Thank you for making this conscious investment possible with your donation. The women will blossom! Thanks to your investment and your goodwill.

CHANGE IS POSSIBLE!



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