

Sophia Iovenitti: [00:00:00] Welcome to Shift Happens, a podcast by Newport Healthcare. Each episode we bring you stories of hope and healing trends in mental healthcare and best practices for lifelong recovery. I'm your host, Sophia Iovenitti, and this week we're talking with Roger and Destiny about their Newport experience. Roger and Destiny I am so excited to have you on the podcast this week. I had the privilege of watching you share your story together at a Story of Hope recording one month, and it was just so awesome to watch the connection that the two of you have and to hear your story of not just Roger, your perspective of being in care and you know, coming to Newport, but Destiny, all the work and care that you took as mom to like show up and do everything you could to make sure that your family could [00:01:00] find the healing that you were looking for.

And there was just something so special about watching the two of you together that I said we have to have you on the podcast. I have to, I have to have your story here. I have to have you together and um, I'm just so excited and thank you for being here today.

Destiny: Oh my God. Thank you so much for having us. But me and Roger, we absolutely love Newport.

Newport literally saved our lives.

Sophia Iovenitti: Love that. And I'm so excited to hear more about kind of how that experience has shaped over the time, because they start somewhere and they started with some really hard decisions that the both of you had to make. And so Destiny, from your perspective as a parent, can you share a little bit about what was going on in your family that led you to searching for Newport and trying to figure out like how to get support.

Destiny: Yeah, absolutely. So Roger, he, he wasn't like super out of control, but he was hanging with the [00:02:00] wrong friends and he just started kind of going down like the wrong path. He was getting suspended from school. It was like a lot of behavior issues. Like I saw a lot of anger issues that Roger was dealing with and, and I wanted to get ahead of it before it got worse, till it got to a point where like, I wouldn't be able to help him anymore. So honestly, I just remember one day I just was sitting in my room and I was crying. I'm like, I have to help my son like somehow, some way I have to figure out how to help my son.

So I started to Google, mental health facilities. And Newport was actually the first one that came up. Like I don't wanna send my baby, but it's like I have to help him in some kind of way.

But the initial staff, like, she was so patient with me, like with, within a whole six months, she's just like, she never like yelled, she answered all of my questions and everything like that. And then eventually I'm like, okay, I, I think I'm ready to send him now. But yeah, it was just, I wanted to get ahead of it before Roger got in a place where he was in trouble with the law or something like that, and he, he was just too out of control [00:03:00] and there was nothing else that I could do.

Sophia Iovenitti: Yeah, it sounds like you, you saw the warning flags come up and you knew, I need extra support. Roger needs extra support. We have to get ahead of this, and I'm so glad that when you met with the admissions team that you felt like you had space and a lot of time to get all of the questions that you wanted to, to ask answered, and I think that that's really important because this is a really hard decision to make for families. So I'm, I'm really glad to hear that that was your experience on the front end. And Roger, I'd love to know kind of from your perspective, what was going on in your world before you came to Newport?

Roger: Um. Honestly, more like what my mom was saying, like hanging around the wrong people. I say I kind of call myself like maybe a little easily influenced, like my friends would just do something or do something that look cool and [00:04:00] then I just jump into it, like not thinking where it'll get me later on. Um, you know, making just the wrong decisions, doing things out of just wanting to do it. I guess maybe just becoming a teenager, just doing it the wrong way. Really that's all that was going through my head.

Sophia Iovenitti: I remember when I heard your Story of Hope story, something that you shared really stuck out and you said, I thought my mom was joking about sending me to this place, and, and you were like, and then I ended up at an airport and she was not joking. Like, I still remember hearing you talk about that experience.

So tell me a little bit about kind of, how was that for you? Your mom looks at you one day and says, "Hey, I found a place. You're going on an airplane, you're going to this place" and you're like, am I? Like, what was that like for you?

Roger: Before I went to Newport, To be honest, I always kind of looked at myself as like a grown kid. Like, couldn't nobody tell me nothing. Couldn't

[00:05:00] nobody tell me I was gonna do nothing. That's just how I was for a long time. So it's like when she told me , yeah, you're going to Newport.

I didn't believe her. I, I just thought, I'm thinking like, okay, she's just saying stuff to scare me. But when she told me I'm just like, yeah, she playin'. So when I actually got to the airport, I honestly still thought she was playing when we was at the airport. I didn't think she was about to lie.

I think she's just taking a test really far. But when I got on the plane, I'm not gonna lie, my heart started racing and I thought I was never coming back. But that's just how that's how it went.

Sophia Iovenitti: Well look at you now, you're back at home with your mom. You're smiling, you're laughing, you're talking on Shift Happens podcast, which I'm sure you never thought was going to be what this journey led you to, but I am so glad that you did. Get on that airplane that day and that you, you came and found a group of people at Newport that you started to trust.

And, Destiny, I know that making that decision, not just the actual follow through of [00:06:00] bringing Roger to an airport, putting him on a plane and getting him to you know, our facilities. But that's, that's a hard decision to make as a family. And like you said, that's your baby. That is your, your prized possession, your, your heart, your soul.

And you know, I know that there's other families who might be listening who are nervous to make that decision and scared of all the what ifs that could happen. When you really sat and you said, this is the decision that I need to make, what was that like for you as a mom?

Destiny: It was terrifying.

It was a point, like my son was in a completely different state, on top of that. So not only is he gonna be away from me, but he's very far away. Like, I can't get to him if I need to get to him immediately. So I honestly, I, I was scared, but I didn't want to be scared in front of Roger 'cause I didn't want him to worry. So I really just kept my bravest face on, honestly the [00:07:00] whole time we were going there. And I just kept telling myself like, you cannot cry. I understand you're leaving your baby, but you cannot cry and you are doing something that's going to better him as a person. Like I had to kind of take myself and my feelings out of the equation and just strictly think about how this is going to better my child. Like how it's going to be so much better and he can get the help that he needed. 'Cause I know like he was struggling with a lot of stuff like my

mom passed away and my son was very close to my mom, so I know it was grief and stuff he was dealing with, and as a teenager, like it's hard to figure out those emotions. I have to help him. So I mean, it was, it was terrifying of course, because again, that's my baby, but I just kind of had to put those feelings aside, I have to do what's best for my child so that he could be the best version of himself.

Sophia Iovenitti: Warrior strength is what comes to mind. I, and I know that, you know, in those moments you felt really alone, I'm sure. And there's so many families who may be listening or may have already come through the [00:08:00] doors of our treatment facilities or others that have felt like we are the only ones in this whole world who are going through this and, and you are so not alone.

That fear is so real and the strength that everyone in the family has to take on to kind of walk through the doors hoping for the best outcome is, is so real. And I appreciate you sharing that with us.

Destiny: Absolutely.

Sophia Iovenitti: Roger, I'd love to know a little bit about how your experience was when you came through the doors.

You get off the plane, you land in a new state, it's real. The decisions that your mom, you thought were joking about, they're real. And, what, what was treatment like for you? What was it like to walk through the doors? What was it like to settle in? What were some of the, your favorite things that you got to do?

Roger: Um, so when I first, when I first walked through the door. Honestly, I was a bit surprised 'cause I, [00:09:00] I honestly didn't even know what I was walking into. I didn't know if it was like a, a camp, a boys facility. I just didn't know what I was walking into.

Honestly the first thought I had was just where am I, I was just trying to figure out where I was walking around at. But as we got to, the office and, I can't Miss Cody. I think, yeah, I think that's her name. She told us about the place and once I heard about it, the basketball courts, people have eating lunch together, having fun, uh, roommates. It, it sounded like a good time. But I didn't think I was gonna be staying there like, I thought it was gonna be like, I just come here every other day, stay here for a couple hours, my mom come pick me back up, and then everybody like, just go back to Michigan.

And then she's getting ready to leave at this point, so I'm, I'm even more confused, but I didn't think she was going back to Michigan when she was leaving. So when I'm just like, okay, bye. Like, okay, see you later. So I'm thinking she coming to get me. But she never came back.

So I had a pretty rough night that night, if I'm being honest. I feel [00:10:00] like that first night was probably the hardest night out of all the nights that I've had at Newport that night was probably the hardest night I've all I've ever had. And I couldn't talk to my mom like, 'cause you gotta settle in when you get there.

They try to give you a little space so you can settle in. But after like a day, like they get you to let, let you cool down, then everybody, like they, they talk to you like you can talk to anybody there, no matter who you walk up to. You can talk to anybody. They can help you anyway. But you know, it's your first two days, so you're not just gonna be like, okay, I'm comfortable now. But honestly, without them I probably wouldn't have been as comfortable as I got as quickly as I did.

So I really do appreciate the staff for that.

Sophia Iovenitti: What were some of the activities that you remember really being influential in your stay and your experience?

Roger: Um, well, definitely basketball, especially on like the days we didn't have school, they'd take like both of our cabins and then we would just go to have a big group of basketball. I really liked art too. One activity that like really just helped me through [00:11:00] everything was probably yoga. Like it put yoga took me to like a different, deeper level.

Like more praying, more spiritual, more being calm with myself, giving myself time. So I say like yoga and probably art. That probably helped me that much.

Sophia Iovenitti: I remember you sharing a lot about how yoga really stood out to you and the Story of Hope that you both shared, and if I recall correctly, I think you still practice that in your life at home in some ways. Tell me a little bit about that.

Roger: So I don't do like the, I actual like yoga poses we did at Newport, but, we did work on breathing exercises, like candle smells, stuff like that. So I, I take a couple candles, I'll light a couple candles. I just take time to just breathe, get a little bit more spiritual. I read a lot more books now.

I take a, couple times to pray a little bit. My praying has got a little more deeper with yoga though, so I just use those that way as [00:12:00] ways at that at home for coping and stuff.

Sophia Iovenitti: Destiny when, when Roger came home and started using some of the tools that he learned at Newport, like taking a pause and breathing through things and you know, talking about these activities, what was that like for you as a mom?

Destiny: Mind blowing. I didn't know who that kid was. I remember saying that. I remember, I remember I said, I don't know who this kid was, but he's just, he, he's just much calmer. He handles things differently like he thinks before he reacts, and at first I was, 'cause I was so used to him crashing out and just being mad every time. So I was almost still kinda walking on eggshells when he got home. But then it was like a situation where and I mean, me as myself, I don't even remember what the exact situation was, but I know it caused for him to be very upset and, and even start yelling, maybe even crash out.

But the way he handled it, he just, he breathed through it. He, he took a step back. He, he thought about it. He didn't react [00:13:00] badly, he just handled it beautifully and just, just kept going. And then, I mean, at, at a point I got stated when he, you know, before he left, like he didn't have the best or the, the best group of friends that he was hanging around.

And just even when he came back, like just the decisions and the choices he made, um, it was just, it was just so much growth. I'm able to trust him more and let him go more places now because I know he has coping mechanisms and he knows how to deal with stressful situations more.

So. At first I was like, oh my God, who kid is this? But now, he's been back for a while and it's just like I'm, I'm still just amazed how he reacts to certain things. He does it better than I do sometimes.

Sophia Iovenitti: Roger, I am so proud of you and I had the opportunity to speak with some of the people from your team and, they're very excited that you're on the podcast too, but they are also so proud of you and all of the work that you did because the success that you have and the ability to navigate those situations at home isn't because of the team.

[00:14:00] It's because you trusted the team and did the work yourself. And I just really hope that you hear with so much love. We are so proud of you, so proud of everything that you have accomplished. It's awesome. Yeah.

Roger: Really appreciate that

Sophia Iovenitti: So the podcast name is, Shift Happens and we have kind of, this has always been our tagline at Newport.

And so wondering, you know, from your perspective, Destiny and from your perspective, Roger, what was that Shift Happens moment for you? And it might be the same moment that you both had together and it might be very different, but would love to know.

Roger: Um, I'm probably say it was probably my second like family meeting. And it was when we was having a conversation with you and I was just noticing like my words, like my choice of words and the way I was saying it, it made more sense than when I would used to be talking and I was more fluent, I was more calm. And normally, [00:15:00] when a lot of people come around me or when there's a lot going on, I tend to get maybe a little irritable or a little shut down, but it's I could just breathe and find something to just calm myself down.

And once I started doing that, and once I started hearing the words that I was speaking, I knew that I was becoming a whole different person, and I knew I just had to just keep pushing hard on that. And then I hit mentor and then I went home and I was like, oh yeah, I got this. So I'd say that's probably what it was for me.

Destiny: Uh, that's so funny. 'cause that's literally the, the moment I was gonna say I re I actually remember that session like it was yesterday. And I think it might've, was it when we got on our first video call?

Roger: No, it was the second one,

Destiny: The second video call.

Okay, 'cause we got on our second video call and I remember seeing him and you know, as a parent, like when you look at your kid, you're like, oh my God, this is my kid. But it is just something that just looks different about him. He's almost like he had this peace or like this calmness over him. So I was just kind, I was just kind of in awe already before he even opened his mouth because he just looked healthier.

He just looked better than he had looked prior. So [00:16:00] he got on, he started speaking, it was just. He just sounded so intelligent and he just was so

vulnerable and open. And I'm just looking at my son. I'm like, oh my God, look at my son. Like he literally is not the same person he was before.

Like there's so much growth and there's so much change in him. And he was just like so comfortable with letting me know how he felt about things. And we both just got to express a lot of things to each other that we hadn't got to express before. And I think that was the moment for me when I was like, okay, it, it has shifted.

This is a new and better version of my son.

Sophia Iovenitti: My eyes are getting teary eyed because I just think this is, I mean, what a beautiful picture of what growth and vulnerability can look like and lead to it. It, it leads to some really beautifully healing moments for families, and I am grateful and honored that you have both shared that with me. And I just think it's, again, like pride is the right word. Like, I'm so proud that I get to [00:17:00] have this conversation with the both of you, but so proud that you both were so willing to do the work. Because you can hear it in both of you, of just what this experience took, but what it has led to, which is, a beautiful opportunity for Roger you to continue succeeding in your world and for you Destiny to, like you said, you look at your son and you're just so proud that he was willing to do vulnerable and hard things like this is why I joined this field in the beginning because I, you know, these are the moments that really stick out to you.

It's beautiful. It really is. So Roger, I heard you share a little bit about becoming a mentor, which is also something to be so proud of, and I just wanna know a little bit more about like what that was for you and what the process of becoming a mentor [00:18:00] was for you.

Roger: When I got to Newport and I heard that there's something that I can actually be here to work towards other than just, you know, helping myself and do other things like that. I knew that immediately I had to chase after it. So when they told me how hard it was going to be and how long it was going to take, I'm like, I just put a thought in my head like, nah, I, I'm pretty sure I can get this done pretty quick.

It was just one day in group. Miss Nicole, she just heard me just controlling the group and she just bumped me up like quick. It was quicker than I was supposed to be bumped up. So I got bumped up to, I think it was like the one before mentor, and I went to go see my favorite movie Captain America, just because I got bumped up that day.

So like, after I got bumped up that day, everything just changed. I'm like, okay, like I, I really gotta get to mentor now. So, I mean, I wouldn't say the process was hard. It was really just knowing your limits, knowing what you want, and you know, [00:19:00] just, just pushing towards it. So that's really what it was for me.

Sophia Iovenitti: Love that. And I love that you chose a Marvel movie, like so, such a fun activity. Like I'm just gonna go and watch my movie and eat my popcorn. I love that. I think, you know, sometimes we forget that like teens are teens, you know, and you, you still wanna just do like kid stuff, man, I wanna go to a movie and go watch Marvel movies too.

Roger: Yeah.

Sophia Iovenitti: You know? It's the simple moments sometimes that can really bring you just to those realness moments of like, yes, I am in treatment and yes, I am here because I need more support, but I am still a kid. I still like to do kid things and I, I think it's really important that those don't get lost on people, you know?

Destiny: Yes, absolutely.

Sophia Iovenitti: Destiny, were there any [00:20:00] resources that you found through Newport that really helped you as a mom during this process?

Destiny: Yeah, so I mean, well first of when, when we got into the program, I, I do definitely wanna shout it out, just, just the staff in general. They communicated with me so well.

So like, they were always a resource, like if it was down to his, his counselor or even the psychiatrist, like everyone was just very open and communicative to me. And then what I loved and I really, really appreciated is when they did put Roger on a medication. It's not like they just called me and said, here's the medication.

Like the psychiatrist, she called me, she had a conversation with me about it and she sent me actual, like documentation about it. She said, here's what it is. These are the side effects, this is what I'm thinking. And it was always that every, anytime they like ever changed something or did something with them.

So like that was extremely appreciated.

And then even after we're out of the program, like staff, like Maria, like she checks on us consistently. I talk to her like multiple times a month. I [00:21:00] told her like at this point, we're like family.

I had a lot of resources there and they're still even amazing after we're out the program.

Sophia Iovenitti: I love that and I appreciate you sharing that. And it is a such an important piece of what we get to do at Newport that I think, we get to stay connected to families like yours. We get to see how you're doing, make sure if you need resources, we can be there for you. You know, we get to invite families to come and share their story in meaningful ways.

And I know that both of you have participated in that, and I think it's beautiful. And I, I know that there's so many other families who have heard your story. Or had a conversation with you directly about your experience who have probably felt more at ease of, again, I'm not alone going through this process.

I appreciate the transparency, and I think that that is more powerful than any phone call that I could make some days. You know? It's important that that voice continues to be heard because your [00:22:00] story is a lived experience, and that is, that takes the cake and everything so. This question, Destiny, there's one for you and then Roger, one for you. But let's start with Destiny. So, what message do you wanna share with other families who are considering treatment for their teen or specifically at Newport?

Destiny: Newport took care of my son as if he was their own, like from the time that he was, my son got sick and he had to go to the hospital while he was at Newport for his tonsils. And I remember like I was a wreck. Like this was probably the second or third day he was there. But the staff at Newport made me so comfortable, like they stayed there with him. They, they let me be on speaker phone with the doctor, like they literally took care of my child. So not only did they like physically take care of my child, just mentally and emotionally, like they helped him in ways that honestly, like it was just genuine love that they gave to my child.

If you are like second guessing it or anything like that, [00:23:00] I'm telling you, send your child there because it was literally the best decision. Newport literally saved my child's life. It helped my child become the best version of himself. And then even with us doing like the family therapy sessions, it helped me to be able to see my son in a different light and be able to adjust as well to be able to help him as much as I could. I can understand being terrified because

that is your child, but sometimes just as a parent, you have to take your own emotions out of it and think like, this is what's gonna help my child be the better version of, of themselves, or this is what's gonna help save my child's life.

And honestly, since Roger went, we could communicate more. Something that I love between me and Roger is if we have a disagreement now, like we've gotten to the point that we could say to each other, let's park this now and let's, let's redo this again tomorrow. Let's do this at a later date, because tempers are flaring right now and we're not gonna get anywhere.

Neither one of us. And we've learned to walk away and then come back and then talk to each other. And we both learned to be accountable for things and it's just. The relationship that we have now is, it's beautiful.

Sophia Iovenitti: [00:24:00] It is beautiful. I mean, it's beautiful to watch the two of you interact with one another. I love this conversation. Roger, what would you say to a teen, who's maybe listening in and maybe struggling and maybe on their way to Newport?

Roger: Um, so if I'm being honest, when you just ask my mom that question, I was sitting here trying to see if I could find the right answer to say, or the right thing to say or what I wanted to hear, on my way to Newport. If I'm being honest, the only thing I would really want to hear if I was going to Newport was just somebody telling me that everything's going to be okay.

Destiny: Oh, I love that.

Roger: Honestly, I feel like if I just had somebody to tell me to be ready for the unexpected that everything's gonna be okay. And just to, just to try to, try to do my best and, and try to reach myself to a potential I'd never tried to reach before. If I just had somebody in my ear to tell me those [00:25:00] things, at that moment I was going to Newport, I probably would've had to a way better experience than I already did but, honestly, I feel like there's nothing you can really say to a teenager that's about to walk into an environment with a whole bunch of people that you've never seen before. But I just feel like there's nothing you could really say to them but just let yourself open up.

Try things you've never tried before, you around people you've never seen before. But do things you wouldn't normally do at home if you wouldn't go talk to this person at home, then if you're at Newport, go talk to five people, go talk to ten people.

Just do things you wouldn't do at home if you wouldn't play basketball at home, try to play basketball with people there. Uh, that's, that's just what I would say to a, to a teen that was on his way to Newport.

Sophia Iovenitti: It's an insightful message and I know that, you know, there's probably somebody who is gonna hear that and is going to take a deep breath and say, I heard Roger on a podcast tell me it's all gonna be okay and I'm gonna believe him even if it's just for a minute. You know, there is light at the end of this [00:26:00] tunnel, and when families come to Newport like you both have experienced, sometimes that tunnel feels really dark and you don't know how long it is, but there is light in there and it will start to peep through and you continue to put one foot in front of the next and that light will get brighter.

It has been such an honor and a gift to hear your story today. I'd like to end with just asking you, is there anything else you'd like to share, a message to each other that you wanna exchange? Anything at all?

Destiny: Yeah, I mean, I just, I, I wanna say to my son, like, I'm just, I'm extremely proud of you. You've come so far, like, you's such a, a amazing young man. Like you've, you've made such a 360 turn in your life, like you far as school, just like decisions that you've made. I'm just proud of you. Like, I know you just have so much great things in store for you, and I'm glad that we're at a point now that you can see the best version of yourself that I've always seen in you, and I just wanna tell you, like, just keep going [00:27:00] and, you know, I, I have your back no matter what. Like, I'm, I'm in your corner. I'm gonna always be your number one fan.

Roger: Thank you. Uh, and I just want to say like, honestly, like when you growing up. And you see like your whole family around you, like your aunties, your uncles, your cousins, everybody, and you just feel like you're so safe because you're around your family. But it's like when I get around my mama, it's like there's nobody, I feel more safe around. Nobody I feel more like in my corner or I feel more like I can just talk, talk to my mama.

If I didn't go to Newport, I feel like my mama would've been my Newport, Thank God for Newport, but I feel like if Newport would've never happened, I feel like my mom would've been my Newport, and I feel like that would've been just as good. So I just want to thank you for always, just being there for me, watching my back and believing in me.

So I appreciate you.

Destiny: I love you son.

Sophia Iovenitti: Okay, I'm crying.

Destiny: I'm trying not to cry [00:28:00] too.

Sophia Iovenitti: This is so beautiful and I, again, I'm just so proud of the two of you and Roger, there is nothing in this world that you cannot accomplish, and we are so excited to keep following you and supporting you and being your biggest cheerleaders in your corner right next to your mom. She's number one cheerleader, but we will be right there with you and, and just watch you succeed in this world because

the world is, is yours and you are resilient and you are a warrior and you have proven that you can do really hard things, things that once scared you, and that is so cool, and I cannot wait to see all that you accomplish in this world. Destiny, I just wanna say thank you. Thank you for being such a rock in, in Roger's corner, and for allowing our teams to join your support [00:29:00] network and go through this process with you.

You did not have to trust us. You did not have to let us in. And it is, it is not lost on us what that trust means to a family. Like I said to Roger, like, I can't wait to see your family continue to succeed and to keep moving forward. And, I just wanna say thank you so much for being a part of this conversation today.

It has, really ignited a lot of why we love what we do. Why I love what I do. It's because I get to have conversations like this with families who have done really hard things and have seen that light at the end of the tunnel. And, um, I'm just so grateful for both of you.

Destiny: Oh, thank you so much. We love you guys so much. Thank you so much for helping my son. Like I, I can't thank you guys enough. You guys are our family now.

Sophia Iovenitti: I love it.

Thank you so much for listening. If you found today's episode impactful, please share it and leave a review. [00:30:00] If you or someone you know is struggling with mental health issues, Newport Healthcare is here to help. Visit newporthealthcare.com to learn more.