



# Long jump star Manyonga opens up on battle to beat drug addiction

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OLYMPIC long jump silver medallist Luvo Manyonga has shared his story with University of Free State students, detailing how drugs nearly destroyed his career and life.

He was speaking at the university's Inspirational Stories of Lived Humanising Experiences session at the weekend.

The session was part of the university's student leadership training weekend for student representative councils and residence committees.

He said he has battled drug addiction for many years and openly acknowledged that is a daily struggle he intends to beat for good.

The 26 year old from Mbekweni township in Paarl said his drug problem started in 2011 after finishing fifth

at the IAAF World Championships in Daegu, South Korea.

"When I returned home from the championship I hooked up with the wrong friends and they introduced me to tik," Manyonga said.

"They told me: 'Hey dude, you are drunk. Just take a hit and it will sober you up.' I took it and it was nice, but that is where it started."

He said he hit rock bottom and lost

all his money to drugs and booze.

"At the beginning of 2014 I started to realise that I was throwing my life away and I needed help. I reached out to people close to me and told them I had a problem."

He thanked businessman and former international swimmer Ryk Neethling, who helped him when he was at his lowest, his mother, the South African Sports Confederation and Olympic

Committee, Tuks Sport and the high performance centre where he trains for the positive influence on his life.

Manyonga lost all his money while his athletic ability also suffered because of his addiction and he had to overcome huge obstacles as a former tik (crystal meth) addict.

Neethling, who shared the stage with Manyonga, said the athlete's story should inspire young athletes.

"I am so proud of this guy and we are just half way through this movie. The best is yet to come," Neethling said.

Neethling's advice to student leaders is to dream big, work hard, expand their network and find a mentor to learn from.

"Always surround yourself with positive people. You can succeed if you stay positive."

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