

Coworkers helped this veteran get back on track

Andrew: I'm Andrew. I'm 47. I served in the Army. I did six years in the regular Army and about almost two years in the National Guard before I went in. When I first when in the military I loved it. I mean, it was like basic training, AIT, I mean it was just a way of life that you know, I got attached to really easily.

During my last 3 years at Fort Bragg I went through a lot. I don't want to blame it on my alcoholic, but I was an alcoholic you know, and I lost all control you know, and I couldn't get along with people, sometime they make formation, but you know I still go off to work every day. I was a functioning alcoholic for a while. I was very functional, then when I started having other problems like fighting with my superiors, I mean fighting, really fighting, I gave up that spirit of you know, like I was when I first come in, what I really liked about it.

I came home, I worked several good jobs, a lot of good jobs, but I didn't like the job, because I was drinking too much because I was doing reckless activity, everything was reckless, I mean my attitude, my just the way I was, I mean it was just reckless. With my depression I knew because I'd get angry a lot, I get irritated, I kind of push people away, you know, I want to be back to myself. I don't want to see you, I don't want you to call me, I would turn my phone off, I would just you know, just sit up in a room and watch TV, and then when I get tired of that I will sleep, take my medication and sleep. I did that for years and then finally I hurt my leg at a good job and the guy that was working there was a Veteran and they really helped me and they told me, "Man, go up there and get yourself together, take care of yourself."

I went to North Little Rock VA. I checked myself in, 28 days I stayed in the hospital, got sober. I was thinking you know people look at me as a failure, people look at me like you know, he's asking for help, you know and that the last thing a patient want to do is ask for help and I felt scared. I mean, I just felt like you know, hey my life has crashed down on me, but I ran into some good Veterans that took me under their arm. I signed up for outpatient aftercare for alcohol abuse. It's a lot of Veterans, we sit around, and we talk about things that's going on with us that day, that week, that month, whatever's going on. It's amazing how you know, just sharing means a lot and how you can help somebody, just listen to someone else's story.

My counselor is always saying, she said, "Listening is assuring, but speaking is powerful." So, I love that. I keep that saying with me a lot.

I go to AA meetings every morning, 6:45 to 7:45. I see my mental health provider at least every 3 months and if I feel like I got some problem I'm going to call and do a walk-in. It's surrounding yourself with the good people that know what you've been through and don't be afraid man, I mean you gotta get over there especially those that have a family, loved ones that really care about them, you affecting more than just yourself on this. So, it's always best to like, get yourself together because they, you know you don't know how much you're affecting them to.

Counseling helped me to just like put a lot of stuff that I had inside away, a lot of my resentments and hatreds and just a lot of different things that I had to just let go, and you know the hardest thing for me to do but I did them. You know, I had to write them down and make amends. There's a lot of people I hurt that I had to talk to, so a lot of things I



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

**MAKE THE
CONNECTION**

had to go through, but in the end, it makes me a better person you know. I can wake up in the morning and I know that you know, I really changed, I love myself, I got self-esteem back. There's nothing on this earth that I can't do. I'm just a better person all around. Never give up on yourself. Love yourself. Surround yourself with other Veterans that know what you're going through you know. Some days are not going to be, you know everything in life is not going to be just like you want it to be. Get all the help you can, never turn down any help that you can get. Just keep fighting just like when you were in the military you fought, and you worked hard, just continue to do the same thing because this is your life. I mean, no matter how things get, I mean just reach out.



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

MAKE THE
CONNECTION