

Moving past trauma and drug use

Lisa: My name is Lisa, and I served in the United States Marines from December 1980 to December 1983, and I was stationed in Paris Island, Camp Lejeune, and Okinawa. I ended up dropping out of college, and I kind of looked around and said, you know this is not what I want. I recognized that I was a reckless teenager, and that I needed to get some discipline. And so, I joined the Marine Corp. It was the best thing that I could have ever done in my life, and if I had to do it all over again, I would do it again. I learned a lot there, and the skills that I learned are still valuable and work for me today in my life.

Before I got out, I actually went to drug and alcohol treatment. So, I got out of the Marine Corp my time was up, maybe about a month after I got out of the treatment facility. So then, I was drugging and I was working as a security guard, and I was sexually assaulted by one of the armed guards there, and I just went blank. I lost about six hours of time, and so I didn't go back to work, and then that's when I first sought treatment for sexual violence in the workplace. And then, when I saw the people there, I thought gee, I don't have it as bad as they do, so I diminished what was you know happening with me.

One day, I was at my brother's house, and it was after a Raider's game, and I was drinking, and I decided to drive home. I could have walked home. I only lived about a mile. I ended up getting a DUI. I spent 30 days in treatment. I went there January 2nd, 2004, and I've been sober ever since.

One of the first things that I learned at treatment was that anger is resentment, and resentment is anger, and it can kill you, and I had a lot of resentments, and I had a lot of anger, and it was from all the things that have happened to me over the years. And so, being in that alcohol treatment program helped me to pinpoint those issues and work on those things.

My treating healthcare physician recommended that I go to this mental health group. They had a women's support group there. And so, that's when I started in the VA mental health group. I got a lot of support there, because the other Veterans know what it was like in those experiences, and they could relate better, but I had a really good experience with the psychologist there. He was a man, and of course I had some I guess fears or obstructions of opening up to a man, but I was just ready to get this stuff out. He diagnosed me with PTSD and major depression disorder, and I started getting medication for that, for anxiety and mood disorder. It was validating what I was feeling and telling me that it was okay.

When I walked out of that treatment facility, I felt like I had a new outlook on life, a new freedom, and a new happiness. It just doesn't happen overnight. You have to be willing to look at your part in things, and it's a lifetime process. It's okay to ask for help. That's the one other thing that I learned when I went to treatment, that it's okay to ask for help.



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