

Overcoming drug and alcohol problems

Danny: Hi, my name is Danny. I spent three years of my life in the United States Marine Corps from 1980 to 1983. I was, my MOS was 0341, which made me 81-mm mortarman, and I spent three years in, started Parris Island, went to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, I deployed from there three times. We also did an emergency evacuation of Guantanamo Bay while we were down there in 1981 I believe, then we came back and deployed again to what they call the Westpac, it was in Okinawa, Japan. Even though it wasn't combat it was—there was some serious shit that went—you know what I mean? We were in the, we were in the mountains of Korea and we were—it was freezing cold. Every day we'd have to march, you know, 25 or 30 miles up and down these hills and then you'd stop and have a break and then keep going, and, they were actually tying kids to the back of the jeeps and if they fell down they'd let them drag and stuff like that, you know what I mean? It was, like—not me, I didn't have any problem with it. I mean, they wouldn't drag them forever, but there—it was to embarrass them into—and they were trying to do what they thought was right, but in my mind it wasn't.

When I came home it was kind of—it was different, you know what I mean? And people that I hung out with all my life had changed somewhat. They hung in different places. There was still the core group of people but it wasn't, they were doing different things at different places with other different people, and the most I had ever done was I smoked, marijuana, and I drank a bit, and when I got out the big thing on the scene at the time was cocaine, and, I didn't want to touch it, wanted nothing to do with it, but I didn't see anything wrong with making money off of it, and then one night I tried it, and that was the biggest mistake of my life, to be honest with you, because after that it wasn't green to me any longer, it was white.

I had a job I got on the phone company, climbing polls. They had what they call an EAPs, Employee Assistance Program, so this is before I was even married, the first time I had a problem when I wasn't going—you know, I wasn't showing up for work, instead of firing me they said “Look here, kid, you need to get into a, you know, a, some kind of rehab thing,” so I did, I went downtown to the main building downtown Boston and they, set me up with a—they had a thing in house, it was like a two-week program, I think there was, like, 20 people in the class and he had a—it was like me—you know, meetings every day, group therapy, watching films, discussions, roundtable discussions and stuff like that. I went to the—to that program for two weeks, like, it kind of, it helped a bit but, it wasn't long before I was back into the same foolishness.

I went to a—the place downtown Boston the New England Shelter for Homeless Veterans, so they had a lot of programs, they have a lot of good programs, too. They have training programs, they have help for substance abuse and stuff like that, and they also, when I was going through my divorce I went to counseling on my own, like a—like a once a week type of thing for an hour, you know, and three kids when we started the divorce it was '96, '97, one of them was an infant and the other two were three and four at the most, and she went home to her father and I was on my own, and every time they'd call the—there was a crisis, and the woman at—the woman that I went to for counseling said “You have to be able to hang up the phone. You can't get involved in the craziness and keep get—you know what I mean? Get tied into it,” and it was the hardest—it was a hard thing to do, it really was. Took me seven years and it cost me close to \$30,000, but I got custody of all three of my kids, you know what I mean? But it was the hardest thing I ever did, but it was well worth it, you know what I mean? And,



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and that was—that was a tough—I stayed sober for probably two years while I was fighting for—I didn't have one drink, nothing. I still have a couple of drinks now and then but I don't touch the other stuff and I drink very rarely.

You've got to be able to talk about stuff with somebody you can trust, you know what I mean? And as far as, and I think that you have those people at the VA—I think, you really do, that you know, you, there should be—if you're feeling—if you're feeling depressed or low or, you know, or thinking bad thoughts, you need to talk to somebody, whether it's a friend or a family member or somebody there, but you have to be able to verbalize it.



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