

This is helping; this is working

Richard: My name is Richard. I served in the Army from 1975 to 1978. When I got out, I felt, hey, nobody wants to hear about what happened to you in the military or what happened to you overseas or what happened to you in this incident with this maneuver or what happened to you at any time. Nobody wants to hear that. And so that just led to being depressed or feeling left out or that nobody cared about what happened to me. I got used and, hey, thrown away.

I don't know what to do about it so I'm going to drink or be on drugs or I'm going to do this or I'm going to do that and I'm going to do what I want to do. I was drinking alcohol and wanting to drive while drinking alcohol. Let them take my license. I don't care. Well, they took the license and they suspended them. I started getting court dates and I would appear on the court date and I would tell them something and they'd postpone it.

They kept postponing it, kept postponing it, kept postponing it, kept postponing it and pretty soon several years had passed by slipping through the system; manipulating the courts. And thinking I was pretty smart still doing the same thing. I got another DUI. Well, this time they said, "Well, you're not getting away. We're not letting you out; you're staying." I go straight to prison I don't go to jail. I go to prison this time.

When I got out, I got a job at the VA. I was having issues with anger and then I would relate back to drinking. I got into a couple of incidents with police. If you have two incident reports with the police while working for the VA Hospital you're out. And so, then I was told, "This is what you do, you agree to take some classes and we'll give you your job back."

And then when I started taking these anger management classes and all these other classes I realized that I had more than one problem. And I started listening to my Psychiatrist who told me, "Yeah, you have some other issues; deep down, buried issues that you're not addressing." And so, once I finally realized that I did have a problem I started getting treatments and going to classes and learning that there was something wrong with me and there was something I could do about it and how I can stop it.

Once I started doing the things, actually doing them, and then trusting in myself I felt rejuvenated and I felt like, "Hey, this is helping. This is working." And after seeing it worked in me, I wanted to see somebody else do the same thing. I wanted to try to reach out and help them. So, three of us during the process of doing this said, "Okay, I want to find out about the DRA groups that you used to have that they don't have anymore."

Dual Recovery Anonymous. It's for dual diagnoses. See, all of us had dual diagnoses. There were two different things wrong with us. One, is that we had our psychiatric problem and a substance abuse problem but a mental problem too. We decided to start a double timers DRA group at the VA Hospital so that Veterans could talk with other Veterans.

Once you get that trust with someone then you can help them and that makes you feel good. I am over 18 months clean and sober. And I wouldn't believe that I would have went through and sitting here today telling people that, "Hey, there's hope for everybody at the VA." If you just trust and believe in what they're telling you, go to the VA and have



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them examine the problems or the symptoms and the things that you say you have and they'll help you get back on your feet.



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