

## Sober and managing bipolar for a happier life

**Garry:** My name is Garry. I served 7 years in the United States Marine Corps. When I got out of the Marine Corp I was 23 maybe, 24, and I got involved with some things that I shouldn't have got involved in and I wound up selling drugs and just a lot of illegal stuff. I eventually started using my own product, and I became addicted to drugs and that led me for almost a little over 20 years, maybe 25 years in and out of rehabs, recovery houses, detoxes, all that.

I was living in an abandoned house, and a lady came in from the Homeless Outreach Programs and she gave this long speech and she said, "if any of you in here feel like stop going to get high and you want to get your life together come with me right now." After they processed me, when I went up to give them my information I told them I was a Veteran, and they sent me to the VA.

From the VA, I stayed on the 7th floor in the mental ward for like a week because I was suicidal. I was depressed and then one of the doctors, a psychiatrist came around and he talked to me, and he told me about a place called Coatesville where a lot of Veteran's were going to get clean at, and I wanted to go there and they took me to Coatesville and my recovery process began then.

They try to get you to see your problems and then they build you back up. They give you everything you need to stay clean and all you have to have is the desire, and I had the desire at the time because the first time I went I stayed clean for 3 years before I relapsed.

So, they have a lot of classes. Classes all day from the time you wake up to the time you go to bed. I started getting one-on-one therapy with a therapist where I got to talk about a whole lot of stuff, and then I basically just told them that the things that you know were going on with me mentally. It's like 1,000 things going on in your mind at one time. It's from one subject to the subject to the next. It's just constantly going and you want to stop it but you can't stop it. I get real anxious and fidgety. I get the feelings of superiority, like I can do anything, like I'm on a drug. It fluctuates, then it just goes real down, and the depression kicks in when I'm real low because I can tell when I'm starting to be depressed because I stopped answering my door. I stopped answering phone calls. I pulled all the shades down. I got the TV on, but I don't have no sound on. It's real dark and all I do is sleep, all I do is sleep and I don't eat.

They diagnosed me with bipolar. They said I was bipolar which I had to admit to that because of the mood swings, I'm all over the place, mood disorder, severe depression. I got some mental issues but I'm addressing them. I take medication for everything that I was just talking about. The medication helps me keep some kind of normalcy, and then you have a place called the Landing Zone where you can stay for up to 2 years and save your money and they get you jobs and all that, and that's when they introduce you to the **[UNINTELLIGIBLE]** Program which is a transitional housing for Veterans. So, that's how I came to be where I'm at right now, like my place is immaculate, and when I was on the street using drugs I never thought my life would ever be the way it is now.

I do a lot of things differently now then I used to do. I'm trying to break out of the shell and get out and be more sociable. My family now accepts that fact that I'm not going to get high anymore because for years and years I was telling them I'm stopping, I'm



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stopping, I'm stopping and now it just isn't verbal, it's action now and they see it. I get more respect from my family. My daughter trusts me with my granddaughter now. Like when they have functions they invite me now where I usually wasn't invited.

So, yeah quite a few things have changed but I still see Veterans on the street that don't have to be there and sometimes I wonder if they were like I was when I first got out, didn't even know I had the benefits. You don't have to live in the street, like they have things for us and we earned it, and all you have to do is put forth the effort right, and effort is small. You got to have time. You got to do the paperwork. You got to do the footwork. You got to do your part. The VA is here to help you.



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