

Therapy can be the key to recovery

Ed: My name is Ed. I was in the Army and I served from October 1985 to November 1988. The military was — I loved it. It was a very good experience. You meet a lot of people from different walks of life. When I got out, I just fell into with the wrong crowd. I'm from Chicago and so I went in, back to the West Side and I got hooked on drugs and then my life spiraled downhill tremendously for a while. 1991 and '93, I got into a little bit of trouble with the law, ended up going to jail and it was basically because of my drug use. And so I get out of jail and my drug use continued and I went to some half-way house. Somebody asked, "Have anybody in here ever been to the military?" and I raised my hand you know. I raised my hand and they say, "Hey, well we gonna take you down to the West Side VA."

I went to their substance abuse treatment facility. So I went there for 28 days. I would go to treatment, the VA would always put me in the treatment facility, they'd take care of me and I would get out, I'd be healthy, but all the pain that I caused people in my life and all those bad terrible things that I have done, I would just be away from it. Even though I'm sober and clean, I got a deep depression would just come over me. I wasn't motivated and so I would go to the VA and they would prescribe me medications for depression. I didn't want that label on me. I didn't want that label of me being depressed or mentally ill, so I would stop taking medications. I would stop going to the VA and I would just try to distance myself because I didn't want that label.

Around about the year 2005, I caught a case. I caught a possession charge for having some drugs on me. Eventually I violated probation. So August 5th, probation said, "Hey, we have a warrant for your arrest. We going to take you back in" and then they sent me to the penitentiary and when I got to the penitentiary, I started going to meetings. So guys from outside in civilian life would come to the prisons and they would just talk to us. I'm like, wow, maybe I can do what they told me to do this time."

I was diagnosed with schizophrenia in prison. Sometimes I would talk to myself, so I got diagnosed with that. I need to take my medication because when I don't take my medication, I'm not in the right state of mind and bad things can happen when I'm not in the right state of mind. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, that was the one that was kinda, it was like some intensive group therapy, so I couldn't say, "You made me mad" and this would irritate me because you made me mad, but it wasn't you. What I felt about a certain situation that you'd done caused me to think a certain way, so basically I had to change the way I thought to change my behaviors. It's just something we all need. We need to be able to take advantage of these resources and somehow that label, it still feels a little bit uncomfortable, but I'm okay. I don't have any major depression issues. I'm not hearing voices today.

The VA sent me to school. I went to school for Social Work. I'm like, you know what, let me help somebody. Went to school, I got straight A's at Paradise Valley, took five classes. They was paying me a stipend to go to school. Now, I just want to be able to get service. I want to go back and finish my degree requirements and basically I want to stay in the field of serving others just forever. I would say those people that's afraid to go out and research it and see what's going on, I would like to tell them just try it. Take a step. Go and be completely honest to someone and tell them what's going on with you and see what can happen.



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