

Finding avenues to recovery and wellness

Interviewee: My name is Robert. And I was in the Navy. I was a corpsman in the Navy, and I served then at Key West, Florida. I got a medical discharge, honorable medical discharge. I was pretty depressed, I guess. Depressed enough to be on a railroad bridge, thinking about jumping off the bridge. If it wasn't for my religion at the time, Catholic, Christian, I think I would have committed suicide, but I didn't want to go to hell.

Finished out my bootcamp training for a corp school, and had put in for my dream sheet, where I wanted to go, I put in for Mayport, Florida. I was active down there for close to a year before it seemed like, you know, before they seemed to think I was having some issues. They sent me to several psychologists. I spent some time on a ward, the psych ward, I guess, about a month. They seemed to come up with the evaluation of schizoaffective disorder, personality disorder. You know? And then later it was changed to manic depressive.

I was in denial, you know. I didn't want to hear that I had some kind of psychological problem. I would be so depressed I wouldn't even want to get out of bed. I'd sleep to like 12 o'clock in the morning, or 12:00 in the afternoon. And didn't even want to get out of bed, and would be getting drunk a lot and abusing drugs, you know? And trying to self-medicate.

I had gotten certified for massage therapy and then opened up a business doing that, and I was working out of my apartment at the time in center city. And my landlord, she says, "You know, Robert, when I gave you a lease, I gave you a lease for, it was a residential lease, not a commercial lease." You know, and then she wound up taking it to court. She was the owner of the property. I was just a tenant, and, so, the judge sided with her, basically. So, I lost my business, and I lost my income, and I lost my housing.

I heard about this transitional housing for homeless Veterans. Three weeks after I put in a request, one of the people from there contacted me and interviewed me and I got it.

They gave you a social worker, and I felt that very helpful. You know? He went over my history and everything that was going on in my life at the time, and I found it to be very helpful. You know? I mean, you kind of need some—at times when you're at a low point in your life, I think it's a good thing to have some kind of support.

As far as the behavioral things, the mental health issues, I was, I went for the empowerment program there. It's to help you gain your self-esteem back and help to deal with mental health issues you might be facing. I like the group interaction and you're able to, like, vent, ventilate, and kind of get things off your chest by talking about them.

I'm trying to replace those, those negative feelings and, about my self-worth and self-esteem, with positive thoughts. Be patient with yourself. Be gentle with yourself. God isn't done with you yet.



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