

Today I'm sober for 31 years

John: My name is John. I served in Vietnam in 1967. I was 21-years-old. Never been away from home. I was actually wanting to go to Vietnam. It became very real right away. I came on home and tried to put it behind me.

What I used to do to anesthetize myself and forget about Vietnam was drink and doing a lot of things that I regret. I was just fortunate enough to meet the lady who would be my wife about nine months later. I have to tell you I put her through hell. I loved her but I didn't know how to love. I didn't know how to feel. I was never home. I was out drinking with my friends. Even on the weekends, being a bricklayer, I did jobs on the side, and she was raising the kids. She was the soccer mom. She was the coach. I was not there for my children or her. We had an attached garage and I put a lock in there on the door so my family couldn't bother me while I drank and ruminated and thought about Vietnam and the guys we lost. Hearing old songs on the radio triggered a lot of emotions. I got in a fist fight with my son in the house on my daughter's birthday. Punching, ripping clothes, and he left for two years. He never came back, we never spoke. You know those are things that I regret. I didn't know I needed help at that time. I just wanted to be left alone.

I saw a person at work get sober and I asked that person for help. He introduced me to a 12 Step Program that I've been a member ever since. A few years later the Desert Storm Conflict hit. I started getting kind of squirrely. There were two old timers who took me outside and they directed me to the East L.A. Vet Center and into a sober group. Not only for drugs but alcohol as well.

At first I was nervous to be in there. Then when I heard them sharing some of their experiences, I said "Well I did that. And I did that. Oh yeah, I was there." Slowly I became part of the group and we could identify with each other's experiences in Vietnam and I started feeling a part of something again.

I was going to a lot of meetings and I was trying to figure out what I can apply to my own marriage that I had heard in some of the meetings that I had gone to. We started living life to the fullest. We were going out dancing every week. Today I'm sober for 31 years and it's been a blessing in my life, my children, and my wife. I learned how to love.

Take the time to do it. Try it at least. You might find what you're looking for in one of these groups.



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