

## **I was able to regain things that I lost**

**Frank:** My name is Frank, I served in the United States Marine Corp from 1987 to 1991 and immediately after that I served in the Army National Guard Reserve from '91 to '93.

When I got out of the military I was not prepared for what life had in store for me. So you know everyday was a struggle for me. The loss of sleep, you know having flashbacks of what has happened to me in my past, loud noises, certain things bother me, certain smells reminded me of some of the stuff that I had seen and some of the stuff that I had been involved in.

So, I felt like an outsider and I basically became a recluse. I stayed to myself a lot. I did what I knew best I went to drinking. Drinking would like numb my feelings. Soon after drinking it graduated to marijuana. At the highest level I experimented with cocaine also just not having to deal with my issues or anyone else issues just using was a way for me to escape. When I got my first DWI that wasn't enough to make me want to stop. That started a snowball effect, I think I got arrested every week for 5 weeks. It had a lot to do with using. I cannot remember a time that I have ever been arrested, beat up, stabbed, shot or whatever if drinking or using wasn't involved. I wind up homeless, I wind up going on welfare, I expected to be dead the way I was going. My wife now, but my fiancé at the time of my arrest you know she gave me an ultimatum she was like, "either you do something about your problem or there is going to be no more us."

And I agreed to go into a DETOX. I went into Montrose VA drug and alcohol DETOX center. They strongly suggested that I go to the inpatient PTSD unit and I agreed. We had to get up and speak in front of the groups that we were in. That was my first indication of that there was help out there for me. After seven months of being clean I picked up and started drinking again. My father passed away. And I knew my father was terminally ill and it felt like a good idea to numb myself again and I received my second DWI arrest. This time I was in Veterans Court.

Drug treatment court is available to Veterans who have non violent charges. You have to maintain a journal of all self-help meetings you have been to. You have to maintain some type of employment. You have to go to outpatient treatment and they expect you not to use. The mentor I had was also in the military and was also a Marine Corp Veteran. There was so much identification because this person that became my mentor was also a former user. So just having someone that understood everything that I felt made it much easier for me to accept help from people. From the time that I went in there to the time that I graduated my life changed substantially. I was able to regain some things that I have lost in the process of using and most importantly was my family. Once my family seen me doing the right thing you know the trust started coming back. The good times started happening all over again. I was invited to come back as a mentor.

Volunteering for me is very important because you know just to see the progress, to see the smiles on peoples faces that never smiled before, it just gives me a feeling that I don't think money can buy and by me giving back it kind of helps me to stay green and I want to be an example to them because if I can make it I feel like anyone can make it.



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