

Finding complete recovery years after serving

Monty: Hi, my name is Monty. I served in the United States Navy. I was an electronics technician on ballistic missile submarines. When I joined the Navy, it was the tail end of Vietnam. Morale was, was pretty low, so it wasn't a good thing to do was to join the service in, you know, whether it was Army, Navy, whatever. I just wanted to get out of town. I wanted to be something different.

When I got to my first ship, that camaraderie lended to going out to bars and drinking, and throughout my career, it started causing problems.

I'm a gay Vet. All right? I knew I was gay long before I joined the Navy, but I wasn't about to say that I was gay. If I did, you know, my chances of getting in the Navy was zilch. For the longest time being, being a **NAV ET** on a, on a submarine, where I had to hold a high clearance, top secret, and that, I had to completely deny and stay in the closet.

The transition from civilian—I mean from military to civilian life was really difficult for me. I still hadn't overcome the power of drink. I drank even more heavily, trying to adjust to civilian life. And I went back to my hometown, tried to get into school to use my GI bill, but my drinking increased, and finally I started to lose everything. So, I drove myself over here to Boise, to the Boise VA, and I entered their RSAT program. That time it was 30 days, you know, it seemed to work. I stayed sober about a year and a half. But eventually I ended up drinking again, working odd jobs, getting more DUIs, and then finally getting a felony DUI where I entered Veteran's court.

Veteran's court was a life-changer for me. I got in, I started getting **a program** I got a sponsor in my 12-step fellowship. I started listening, I started learning what the treatment program here was doing, I was getting involved in my OSAT group up at the VA.

I have a person that's a confidante that knows me, knows me, that they're trained, you know? They're trained to help. You know, a sponsor, all a sponsor is a guide, is a guide to the steps. They're trained to help you. They're trained to say, "Okay. Have you looked at it this way?" You know.

So, the counsellor is there to, not more than guide, but teach you and have you look at the world a different way. They take not only your medical, what, what's going on medically with you, what's going on mentally with you, but then, for my, my counsellor, also took in some spirituality.

If you complete an RSAT or a group therapy, stay connected with the VA. Stay connected with your sober friends. If you don't get involved, you don't get a sponsor, you don't take the steps that your recovery program suggests that you do, and you don't stay connected, it's just a matter of time that my addictive thinking says that it's all right to have just one. Well, I know in the deep bottom of my heart, I can't have one.

I accept myself today. And that was part of the, part of the, working with the VA and the Veteran's treatment. That one issue there that I wouldn't address, because I had, so fearful of being in the closet and, and what I had gone through in the service dealing with that, and that once that band was lifted, you know, that, that gave me the freedom to complete my recovery.



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