

Finding sobriety after reaching out for support

Gerald: My name is Gerald. I served in the United States Marine Corp in 1968 through 1969. When I got to in country, we went to Amwaj. We received rock and mortar attacks okay. I think in country about 30 days and I caught shrapnel in my legs and was sent back to the rear for the shrapnel to push out. They don't dig it out or surgically removal shrapnel although a number of people were dying around me, I don't know what it was, it was just something within me that I'm going home one day. I'm going home.

I came back with a debilitating disease of addiction. One drink was too many and 1,000 wasn't enough, same thing with drugs, marijuana, whatever I could get my hands on. It was all due to my trying or attempting to forget the experience that I experienced.

We came back from Vietnam and you know, we had never been kind of conditioned, okay to leave that situation okay, and come back into this situation, which was you know, life and when I came back I went underground so to speak. I did not wish to deal with any of the people whom I had left behind. The alcohol and the drug had me you know, for many years and I didn't seek any help for I would ay about 20 years. It was 1969 when I got out and it was 1989 okay, when I went to seek help from the VA.

I went in and they evaluated me and shared with me for the first time that you know, I can recall or to the first of my understanding they you know diagnosed me with post-traumatic stress disorder. It was kind of scary but at the same time, you know like a breather because I kind of understood what it was I was going through. I couldn't keep a job, relationships were neural. My children and I and their mothers you know, were kind of at best to say separated. I went to Coatesville for the Drug and Alcohol program and you know, once I was released from that I was accepted into the post-traumatic stress disorder program. It allowed me to find myself.

I went to weekly counseling sessions. I'm going back to my beginning or the initial contact. I went back to _____ which had a drug and alcohol group and I stayed with that program for well over six or seven years and it was that along with, because I also went back to church, you know I ran back to church. I also went back to church, but that coupled with my church involvement, the VA groups, the VA therapy, the outside secular groups, the Alcoholics Anonymous, and Narcotics Anonymous. I was pretty successful. In fact, I'm proud to say that I have 25 years clean, you know because that was, yeah that was 1989 and when I came to the VA from that time forward I have not drank or drugged.

I did it because I knew it was available and I knew that I needed to get my life back. I wanted my children back in life. I wanted some form of life. Drop the barrier to you know, like knock down the wall and you know like go and get the help that's available to you.



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