

This Navy photographer was drinking too much

Bill: My name's Bill, United States Navy, 1980-1992. I served on the Board of the U.S.S. Midway which is now a museum. I specialized in Forensic Photography, Aerial Photography. One time I went and photographed a homicide. A Lieutenant came off cruise and thought his wife was having an affair while he was at sea. He took a hunting knife, about this long, and he placed it through the center part of her chest plate and nailed her to a wall. I went back to cover it and I didn't get sick. It's like I had this switch where I just turned it off and did the work. And then I went home and I drank till I passed out.

When I left the military I spent a few years knocking around and I started working at a local production company here in San Diego. At that point I realized I can't show up drunk, I can't show up hung over, and I damn sure can't be drinking on set or on the job. So I became a closet drinker. When work dried up I drank more. The more I drank, the less work I got. It became a vicious cycle. Me and my wife drifted apart.

I'm finding out now as I go through the recovery process that that was just one more symptom of a deeper problem. I came to realize I was over compensating because of my childhood traumas. Sexual traumas at the hands of child care in the early 70s. I was cutting myself off from everybody because I had no capacity to share and accept help. I popped a bottle of pills, drank a half gallon of gut rot wine, just fell asleep, and woke up in the hospital. My wife was there by my side, "We're getting a divorce but I'm here to help you. I don't wish this upon anybody and you need help."

I got a therapist who recognized that I was the victim of child sexual trauma, molestation, and she had been working as a therapist in this very specific field since the 70s, since before it was even recognized. And she knew. She said "Bill, the minute you can talk about your childhood traumas with a matter-of-fact attitude, you will have turned all three corners coming out the backstretch for recovery, because then you'll realize it wasn't your fault. You have nothing to be ashamed of."

The first time I announced in at a 12-Step meeting, nobody looked down at me and that was very cathartic. I could literally physically feel a weight being lifted off my chest and it took six months of intense one-on-one therapy with the therapist at Veteran's Village, to where I sit before you today.

These people at VVSD do not do it for the money. They do it for the love of saving Veterans and they treat it like a life and death fight every day and my friends within the AA community, that's how I'm able to sit here today and smile.

Find a Veteran's group. My thought is if you think you have a drinking problem then you've answered your own question chances are. I would just say "Look, you're not the only one. It may seem like that. I'm with you. I was there. As Veteran friends, we pick each other up when the going's rough and we don't care why. We don't care how. You're down, I got ya."



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