

## Ken found success after opening up to a counselor

**Ken:** My name's Ken. I served in the U.S. Army Reserves and U.S. Army and I was called up for Desert Storm/Desert Shield, and I was over there in Iraq and left in 1990.

I got out of the Army and I knew something was wrong, and I started drinking because that was the only way I could really feel right because I'm not around all those people anymore, around the people I shared this experience with. So, I went back to Kuwait as a contractor. The drinking got worse and the anger. I didn't want to get along with anybody. I couldn't talk to anybody. So, I just, for the next years I just crawled in a bottle.

And I got married over there and we stayed there for a while. I came back. She wanted to come back here. She joined the Air Force and I didn't fit in the United States. My anger got the worst of me and I ended up in jail on Keesler Air Force Base. I never hit her or anything, but I just got drunk and finally she'd had enough. I drank because I was mad, and I couldn't figure out why I was so mad. I just... and then, it amazes me to this day why I didn't talk to somebody then, but I didn't know how to deal with the feelings and emotions, so I dealt with it by drinking.

I got another DUI which was my third one and they sent me to prison for three years. That was it. I decided something needed to change and I knew drinking wasn't going to be it. So, I went through the RSAT Program at the VA here in Boise. One-on-one with a counselor, that helped. They'd open me up and let me talk about things and weren't judgmental, I guess a lot of it. They were very open and positive and then just, they helped me work through things and talk about them. I didn't think I'd get anything out of it. I went in with a really closed mind. I figured it was just somebody just picking my brain and I wasn't going to tell them anything, but got in there and at the first one-on-one with my counselor, it was just like talking to a friend and every day I'd feel better about myself instead of down on myself, and I found out that the anger was going away.

To this day, I got to surround myself with nothing but positive, great people that are going through the same things. I'll always have it, but I have tools to manage it and I don't have to drink or use. I learned how to give of myself, which made a tremendous difference in my life and I do a lot of volunteer work, and I go every Monday to my old SAT groups and I still have a counselor at the VA that I see every week.

Right now, I'm just taking life easy. I don't have to... I can take it one day at a time. I like to ride my Harley. I get to laugh more, I didn't laugh for a long time. If you got something going on inside, talk to somebody, reach out to somebody, because don't go the path I went. It took me 20 years and time in prison, and it wasn't a life. It was a big façade. Get the help reach out to somebody and say, "Hey I got issues. I got something going on. Can you help me?" And there's people at the VA that'll help you, fantastic people. Try and get the help you can get. It'll save your life. It'll change your life.



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