

A VA treatment program was the key to his success

Johnny: My name is Johnny. I served in the U.S. Navy from 1975 to 1986. I went to SEA school and I specialized in radiologic technology. I became an x-ray technician.

So, I came up hot on a urinalysis for marijuana and I was an E6 at that time, so they immediately busted me down to E5. I can't fault the navy for that, I really can't. You know, I was always one who was skirting the rules, trying to get by. But, you know, being human, when I got out, I was pretty bitter.

So, I got certified as an X-ray technician and then there I was again making loads of money and not putting it to good use. I was approached by the doctors that I worked for, and they said, "We think you need to go into treatment." You know, me? I was shocked that they would think that there was something wrong with the way I was living my life. So, initially, I went into treatment to save my job, not to save my life. I would go to work and by the time I got home from work to the program, I'd gotten fired up again on whatever my drug of choice was. I became homeless because I had a severe drug problem. I couldn't pay my bills. I couldn't get to work every day when I needed to. It became so stressful to go to work until I just stopped going, and that was when I got into the VA Mental Health facilities because, up to that point, I hadn't had any interaction with VA Mental Health at all.

I went into this program; it was a VA GPD Program, Grant Per Diem. I could stay at this place where I was in active treatment. They concentrated on the whole person, you know, not just get you stop doing drugs but to understand why you were doing them, and they would give us strategies that we could use when we were in situations that became, you know, kind of dicey. I started talking to a therapist. I talked about my relationship with my parents, with my sisters and brothers, my relationship with God, my relationship with me. You know, what was it that I felt that I was missing that I had to add drugs and alcohol to the mix? And she listened and that was it, you know, someone actually listened and I didn't have to pretend to be anybody who I wasn't. For the first time in my life, I wasn't hiding anything.

Today, life is great, you know, it really is. I wouldn't trade this feeling for the world. I've got my health; I'm taking care of my health issues as they come up. I'm not ignoring anything. I've got a roof over my head, you know. I got money in the bank. I got food in the refrigerator. I got a steady job. Give it a shot. Be receptive. Be willing to listen to what somebody else has to say. Be willing to take a chance, step out on faith and be able to just grab that recovery.



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