

Second Chances

David: My name is David. I was in the army. My MOS was 11 Bravo. After 9/11 happened, I was in high school, and I just always felt like I had to do something and I wanted to serve my country. It definitely takes an emotional toll on you. And a lot of times you're too young or stubborn to realize that's what's happening. I'd never done any counseling before. So, I couldn't really identify that it was causing trauma in a sense. I didn't really have a plan in place for what I wanted to do. I just knew I wanted to be out of the military.

So, I went back to Arizona. I was living with my older brother. He's about two years older than me and he was my best friend. When I wasn't at work, I was usually with him. We'd spend Christmas together. And we're going out to ride our Harley's one day and I decided, I think I was hung over. I didn't want to go. So, he left by himself, and he never came back. He got in a motorcycle accident and fell into a coma and then passed away the next day. I knew I was in no condition to go back to work. I knew that the drugs and the alcohol taken a toll on me. I knew I did not look good. And if I would have even attempted to go back to work, people would have saw me and thought, what's going on? That's when I started smoking heroin, turned into a person I didn't even know anymore. It got to the point to where I had no money. I was broke. I was homeless and I had no way to fill my habit other than to commit crimes. The day I finally got arrested and it all came to a head, it was about five o'clock in the morning here in Las Vegas. I was sleeping in the car, and I'd gotten woken up by a police officer telling me to step out of the vehicle.

When I was in jail, I started taking some substance abuse classes just to try to learn more about it because I really wanted to stay clean. I had a really awesome attorney who himself was a veteran and he knew he'd gotten some veterans into veterans' treatment court. Veterans' treatment court is an awesome program. And upon successful completion of veteran's treatment court, the state would dismiss all the charges against me. I started off with the intensive outpatient program, which was three times a week. I'm in two groups, one at the vet center, and then one at the VA. I'm still in an addictive disorder treatment program and I attend an aftercare group. I've attended NA groups and AA groups. And I like going to the VA just because the relative experience I think plays a major factor in building a support system. Days with my child are amazing. I go into the house, and I hear her running down the stairs and she jumps from the third stairs and gives me a big hug and says dad! To have that interaction with my child, see her looking at me and smiling, the kid loves me so much, it's amazing.

In order to ask someone for help or seek treatment, you have to let go of your ego and that same self-esteem that you've had that sent you a confidence in the military. You have to submit to the fact that you have an addiction. The VA's there to help you 100%. All you have to do is call the VA and ask for help, and they will find a way to help you.



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

**MAKE THE
CONNECTION**