

## A Marine quits drinking for his daughter

**Daniel:** My name's Daniel. I served in the Marine Corps for 10 years, including 5 tours. I was out at Camp Lejeune for the vast majority of my time. I had a lot of anger issues going into the Marine Corps. You know, I was an addict as a teenager. I was very angry and then joining the Marine Corps just kind of, you know, ignited all that as well, and then combat service and doing that just kind of accelerated everything. So it was, it was... I still deal with a lot of that today, you know. It's, it's, a lot of the PTSD and the anger issues and the anxiety.

Every aspect of my life was either at work with Marines, in combat with Marines, or, you know, out at a bar on a motorcycle getting drunk with, you know, Marines and bikers, you know. So, it was, it was always pretty hard and I did a lot of bad things, you know, hurt a lot of good people.

It was very, very hard to come out of that, you know. I didn't, I thought I was a, you know, a war fighter, you know. I mean, you fight hard, you play hard, you drink, you just, you know, life in the fast lane, so to speak. And that's what I enjoyed. And then when everything kind of came to a head, I was driving down Highway 24, right outside Lejeune, headed to New Bern to see a buddy of mine, and it was him and his family. When I was driving there, I stopped, got a bottle of Jamison, which was my poison of choice, and crushed that, you know, or half of that, on the way up there. And when we were there, I was playing around with their son, and I was playing with him really, really rough, you know, because I was wasted. And I was drinking the whole time I was there. And I accidentally hurt him, playing with him too rough.

And I'll never forget the looks that I got from people that I loved and people that I cared about. And I remember just thinking this is not my life, you know. This is not who I'm supposed to be. I have a very close relationship with God and I think that at that time, you know, I got a smack upside the head, like, "What the hell are you doing, man?" You know? And since that day, that was when I got sober.

Well, there's a program in the Marine Corps called SARP, that's Substance Abuse Rehabilitation Program, and that is for people who have ARIs, alcohol-related incidences, and also for people who want to receive treatment. And you're in a class with a handful of other guys seeking help and you have instructors coming in there and, you know, just discussing the different things that, the different challenges you're going to meet while trying to be sober. And then on top of that, when you're interacting with other guys that need help and you're starting to help each other, and you're seeing that and realizing that, that makes you want to do more.

Once I got out in the December of '14, my daughter was born that next month in January 2015. So I left Camp Lejeune. I'm away from everyone I knew, my house, everything like that, and I moved across the country to California because my fiancé, she's a senior chief in the Navy, she was stationed here at Pendleton. So I went from being an active duty Marine to being a stay-at-home dad overnight, in less than 30 days.

Even though I had my daughter, it was still really hard and I had a lot of slipups. And it was, my fiancé was the one who was super supportive, you know, trying to get me help because, I mean, it was, it was...I got cabin fever really quick being a stay-at-home dad. So what I did was I checked into the local Vet center in Temecula and all they do is, you



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know, it's counselling and help with VA benefits, so on and so forth, they do whatever they can. It's all Vet-run. And, you know, got, rubbed elbows with a lot of other Vets, you know, and it's always good to be able to, you know, surround yourself with other good people.

Fighting that stigma that you don't need anyone's help is step one, and that was what helped me was just realizing that help is not a bad thing, you know? Asking for help is probably the strongest thing you can do. Carrying around that emotionally mental baggage, you know, it hardens you, you know? It hardens your heart. And it's hard to be like that when you have other people who have been through the same things you've been through and who have dealt with them in all different kinds of ways, it helps you in immeasurable ways to try to move past all the things that are going wrong. You got to be able to honestly and accurately look at your own life and decide if this is where you want to be, if this is who you want to be, if you want to be a better father, husband, person in general, you know, I mean, there's plenty of other Vets out there that want to help each other, you know, that want to help you when you're, when you're having a hard time, man. You know.

And like I said before, it takes very, a lot of strength to be able to not only admit that but then to seek it.



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