

Finding hope through treatment and recovery

Karl: My name is Karl. I served in the United States Army from the years 1979 through 1982. My MOS was an infantryman as well as radio operator. After I felt as comfortable with the military as I did at home before and after I got out.

The camaraderie of guys I met, you know, from all over the United States, that was one part of it. But then again, too, I guess I got too comfortable. How can I put this? Personal responsibility. Some of us had it and some of us didn't. When I look back on it, I don't think I was one that did.

I went home let me see, it wasn't a good month, month and a half. I was hired by this printing company and then I got involved in not just alcohol but the harder drugs as well, notably heroin. And it was taking me down, you know, a nowhere street. Dealing with the heroin, dealing with the harder drugs, I mean, you're talking about more money, more problems. That's not a road I wanted to go down.

My very first treatment was in-patient. It wasn't, it wasn't at the VA. I had to go to treatment because it was part of my parole. As a matter of fact, it had gotten to the point where I went to prison. Did two years—winded up doing a two-year stretch.

I stayed in treatment for 35 days. And the counsellors always recommend when treatment is over that you start going to outside meetings. It's more or less Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous. You know, first couple times I went around, I might go for a month. Got tired of it. You know, it took quite a few years before I actually got treatment for it through the VA.

I was coming back to the VA for out-patient treatment and mental health treatment because I had a psychiatrist I was seeing. I mean, it was, it was good for me. I kept, I kept good contact with the psychiatrist who was instrumental in helping me deal with my anger. Also, the out-patient treatment, I was dealing with that at the hospital, which was five days a week. I could go to classes there, helping me deal with, like I said, not just my anger but what, you know, the physical aspects of what alcohol does to the body.

You know, as time went on, day by day by day, what helped was in that, by my going to meetings, they helped me get a lot more stable. You know, fortunately, good for me, I'd been off of it the last three and a half years. So, you know, it's, you know, it's wonderful.

And I say, any soldiers out there, look, the help, the help is there. Any fellow soldiers that's in my shoes, I mean, you know, don't give up hope. I mean, I don't know how to say it, but I could do it. You know, you can do.



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