

Persistence to move past drinking and enjoy life

Mark: My name is Mark and I was in the Marine Corps. I enlisted at 17, that was 1984, and I left the Marine Corps in 2005. Drinking in the Marine Corps at that time when I first came in, that was part of the warrior mentality for the most part and most people liked to drink and it was very accepted to drink, work hard and play hard, that's just how it was. I had an old buddy that came through town, we went out in town, came back, I ended up, I got pulled over. I didn't get a DUI, I got a wet reckless and that was a wakeup call and my Marine Corps life went on, some more deployments as a warrant officer and went with my family at the end of my career to Okinawa.

I had a situation one day when I came home and wife and kid were crying and I had bottles, I just found another bottle here or there. I was an isolator when I did my drinking, so I'd be doing a lot of sneaking stuff, to keep my fix. My wife asked me to go get some help, she didn't know what it was, she knew it was alcohol, but she thought I had, he's just got some issues, but it was certainly alcohol was the visible factor and so I said, "Okay" and I went and I spoke with my command, they sent me off to Point Loma, back in the States for 28 day environment with a treatment place with other active duty members. I recognized I had a problem. But I went through the motions.

I had decided I was going retire from the Marine Corps. I was becoming disenfranchised, especially at that level, because I was just around, I just didn't feel the value anymore. I just started isolating a lot more. I was just in an operation shut down mode. I didn't trust anybody, I stayed in my house, I couldn't go outside of my house, I was taking medication for nightmares and being able to sleep, but still... everybody being a threat, everywhere, not being able to do the things, and I'm not really having fun doing the stuff I used to like to do.

The first time I went into the VA, my wife drove me down. I started getting therapy for other issues, for trauma stuff. Things started making a little bit more sense because I hadn't been addressing some other issues. We started doing this In Vivo thing, In Vivo therapy. And it sounded pretty corny and she was basically just saying, "You want to just keep living like this, you can, but these threats, you have to work on this stuff." I'd have to do some work when I went home in between sessions. I had to understand what these issues were, I had to understand how everybody else has got these issues, and why the mind operates and why it goes back to these areas and why there's "these triggers" and why I start feeling a certain way. All these things, if I didn't understand it, it's hard to work on it.

Where I'm at right now, I've got so many good things going on in life, got so many blessings coming my way because it started with accepting the treatment, being around others like myself and just understanding that it's okay and all that stuff that we get, that we've experienced, that's the way it was supposed to be, and this is the journey and this is the path and this is the resource and here's the VA and here's all these other things, but, that is the place that people understand to get you going. You've got to want it, you've got to want it. You've got to just be vulnerable and say, "Alright man, whatever. Let's give it a shot."



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