

For James, quitting drinking had many benefits

James: My name is James. I served in Vietnam with the 1st Cavalry Division, Charlie Company, 1st of the Twelfth. I had two incidents—well, quite a few incidents, firefights, but the one that stuck out was October the 2nd, 1966. A helicopter had crashed near this village. We came in and we lost about 13 guys in that village.

Once I got home the friends that I had before I went to Vietnam, they seemed distant, you know, they didn't treat me like they used to, you know, we were all very vocal at the time we were in school and after school. We had things in common, but that one year in Vietnam changed my whole life forever, you know, so—and then your family don't understand. Some things you want to tell the family but it's so hurtful and it's almost like a horror movie.

The enemy inside of me was alcohol. Intrusive thoughts of murder, sometimes suicide because of the pain that I was going through at that time, not knowing when it would ever end, you know. So obviously, like, "Well, forget the whole thing. I'm just going to take myself out. My wife, my children won't have to worry about me, with my drinking, with my outbursts of anger." I had a habit, 23 years of drinking. I was an alcoholic. I was a functioning workaholic alcoholic. My reason for drinking out of the bottle was to try to forget those things that were behind me that caused me a lot of sleepless nights and a lot of outbursts of anger towards my wife, other people, you know.

When I hit rock bottom I went and I sought help. The treatment I got at the VA, I think it was top-notch, you know. I had a therapist that was understanding. She were very compassionate lady, and as I would talk to her about my issues and she would listen, she wouldn't interrupt me, through her coaching, her understanding my situation, encouraging me. When I started the treatment I was kind of doubtful about—it was going to work out, but through the years it's working out, you know. Each day is a new day for me starting from the worst day when I came into the VA up until now and it's working. I love my wife, I love my children, I love my grandchildren. I'm a brand-new person.

To veterans who have not seek help after all these years, you know, let that wall down, let it down, you know, take that step, go to your nearest VA hospital, ask for help.



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