

Taking the right steps for recovery

Joe: The name's Joe. I was in the U.S. Army. I served from '82 to '88. I was a Bridge Crewman. I served at Fort Benning, Georgia, and I was in Europe.

My wife at the time, well, I was in Europe at the time. And she really wanted to get back home to the family. I sided with her, you know, decided that I could take my ETS, get out. And adjusting was rough.

So I ended up down in Florida. Had a hard time down there. I found myself going from job to job and it was difficult for a while. We had our second child, my youngest daughter, and it still continued to work but it just seemed like I could never really find myself down there.

We separated. We're on decent terms, but I decided after a few years of just one mundane job after another, I decided to move back up into the Pittsburgh area where I'm from originally.

Got up here, was up here less than a week, got a job. It took me a couple weeks. I was living in a shelter for close to month.

When you're bored and you have nothing to do, and you have time on your hands and money in your pocket, it's so easy to give into temptation. I think that without having that structure and without having a normal routine to your life, yeah, it was easy for me to turn directions that I shouldn't have turned.

I had a drug problem. And through the VA, they were very helpful with counselling. I mean, they really made sure that I could talk to someone about it, I could see someone about it. So, it was nice to be able to talk to somebody and get some stuff that was inside me that I let sit inside me for a long time, get it off of me.

But I moved in with a couple friends and was able to apply for a housing situation that ended up working out and I've been there ever since. There were, all kind of people that applied for that, and the VA people really were able to get all of us in and in that program, and it was really a great benefit that was available to us.

I have opportunities here where I live to do the things that I enjoy doing here. I have a relationship with my family. I have a good job. I like where I live. I don't hesitate to go to the VA at all. For the little time that I did as a Serviceman for this country, I've gotten back tenfold, easily.

I made a mistake with drugs. I can't say that I'm still not battling that. I know in ten years I'm going to be battling that. I think the rest of my life I'm going to battle that. But with the aid of family and with the aid of the VA, I can handle it. I know I can handle it, because they give me structure. They give me reason. They give me options that are positive options, and not negative reinforcing the negative that's already inside myself.

The counselors that I dealt with at the VA, you just have a chance to sit down and talk with them if you want. I mean, it's there for you. And there's really no reason not to do it. I mean, if you feel out of place or things aren't going well, don't hesitate. That's what they're there for. I mean, you earned this. This is what you did. And your service was



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