

Renz Addiction Counseling Center
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Jim's Friends: Alumni Spotlight

From childhood, Dave identified himself as emotional and said that it continued on into his teenage years. Early on, he experimented with alcohol and marijuana and was rebellious to the point that once he turned 18, he moved out on his own. Looking back, Dave says that his substance use was continually progressing, but he did not see it. He was drinking heavier than ever and his alcohol use was daily by the time he was 19. He attributed it to being able to do whatever he wanted, having very little consequences, as well as living the punk rock lifestyle.

By age 21, Dave was married with two children to support, which he says only fueled his drinking because he used the stress as an excuse. Dave describes his marriage as toxic and volatile with domestic violence being common in the household on both sides. In 2009, Dave was divorced and his drinking escalated, as he wanted to isolate and bury his unprocessed feelings.

Early into Dave's thirties, he began having medical problems, including intestinal infections and high blood pressure. It was not enough, for him to stop drinking, as he had accepted death and he believed was not going to live past the age of 38. The real shock came after Dave completed routine bloodwork for his high blood pressure. On November 6, 2014, the doctor called Dave early in the morning and sent him immediately to the emergency room. What Dave did not know for the first few days was that he was in acute kidney failure because of his drinking. At that moment, he knew that something needed to change and that the only chance he had at a life was to surrender. At the hospital, he was given a list of treatment centers and he contacted Renz Center to get his new life started.

From the beginning, Dave was invested 100% and attended everything asked of him by the clinical staff. Dave began the intensive outpatient program, individual counseling and completed a psychiatric evaluation. He took everything in like a sponge and credits a lot of his success to one group in particular, Exploring Safety-a group that allows people to safely express feelings once sober. He also began attending Alcoholics Anonymous groups, which was particularly difficult for him to open his mind to as he is agnostic and was initially against anything "God-related." His first meeting was "horrible and made [him] want to drink." However, he was encouraged to attend a different AA meeting and listen to the similarities, not the differences. Currently, Dave is attending at least two AA meetings per week and says that "treatment saved my life; AA gave me life." AA is a place that he can be "100% him and never be judged." He is also working through the 12 steps a second time with his sponsor.

With almost two years of sobriety, Dave still struggles with the consequences of his use. He still has struggles with repairing relationships and communication with his ex-wife, children, and family; however, they are noticing the positive changes he is making to better himself and the trust is slowly returning. Dave credits a lot of his sobriety to his strong support system, comprised of his family, friends, and girlfriend.

In an ironic twist of fate, Dave is now able to have much more freedom in sobriety, which he longed for when he was drinking. He is enjoying experiencing things for the first time as a sober person, such as motorcycle riding and camping and his obsession to drink has been lifted. He thinks about drinking from time to time, but is able to tell on himself and hold himself accountable and refuses to miss his AA home group each Wednesday. Dave says that "getting sober was easy, maintaining sobriety is hard sometimes. It gets better and better and easier with time." But through his meetings and support system, he is able to take it one day at a time.