

Angelo's Story

My journey to health and wellness has been a rollercoaster ride. At 10 years old, I was an alcoholic living with a family of alcoholics. I accepted an opportunity to move in with another family who did not use alcohol or drugs. Though this did help me stop drinking, I ultimately ran away because I was being physically abused. I then joined the Army and abstained from alcohol and drugs until I was deployed to Iraq. Men in my unit drank a lot to cope with the war and the constant stress of being shot at and bombed.

I was honorably discharged from the Army and sent back to the United States. I searched for a job, but quickly became discouraged and continued to drink in excess. After about a year of living in the states, I met someone who was a recovering addict and attended daily Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous meetings. I felt that I could trust her, and her success in recovery encouraged me to stop drinking and to continue my job search. She stood with me while I began my journey toward recovery and was always there whenever I needed to talk with someone. With her support, I never gave up.

Key Tip: Surround yourself with positive people

It is helpful to have positive role models who are friends, family, neighbors, peer support staff, people at your behavioral health organization, members of your support groups, or others that you trust.

Key Tip: Don't give up even after a relapse

Recovery and self-management can be difficult, and you may relapse. Forgive yourself, and work with a therapist on goal setting and action planning to get back on the road to recovery.

For seven years, I did not drink or use drugs. However, I later relapsed and had a nervous breakdown. Money had been tight for a while, and my behavior during this relapse led to my arrest and eight-year prison sentence. When I was in prison, I did not have access to alcohol or other substances and I again attended Alcoholics Anonymous meetings and participated in mental health treatment with a therapist. My therapist helped me make sense of what had led to my relapse and

imprisonment and work towards long-term goals by setting short-term goals and taking small steps.

Support from friends, peer support groups, and my family, along with action planning with my therapist, set me back on the path toward recovery. Today, I am no longer in prison. I have enrolled in school again and am studying to become a pastor. I have learned to budget my money wisely and I am getting better at saving money. I surround myself with friends, family, therapists, and peer supports who help me to develop my self-management skills and continue to work towards recovery.

Angelo's Self-Management Strategies

- **Goal Setting and Action Planning:** I work with my therapist to develop both short- and long-term goals. It is helpful to lay out a series of short-term goals that will help you achieve long-term goals. I have also developed an action plan that includes my goals, accomplishments, and who I can call if I need help. To explore different action plans that best fit your needs, view the Resources for Integrated Care Action Plan Selection Guide, available here: https://resourcesforintegratedcare.com/behavioral_health/self-management_support/tool/action_plan_guide.
- **Social Supports:** I have a student counselor at school and a pastor at my church who I talk to on a regular basis. It is helpful to surround yourself with positive people, as well as people who have been through recovery.