

I was born and raised in the central area of Seattle. My grandparents raised me because my mother had been diagnosed with schizophrenia and was receiving inpatient treatment at Western State Hospital. All during my childhood I would skip school and hang out at Garfield Park with my older cousins. They were smoking pot and drinking, and they thought it was cool to see me get high.

When I was 11, my grandfather died. He had been the only real male influence in my life, and I began to get more out of control. When I was 14, my grandmother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease and placed in a nursing home.

Phillip's Recovery Story



Throughout my teen years I continued to drink and experiment with all kinds of drugs. Although many of my teachers, as well as other adults at community centers and church, told me that I was smart and could be whatever I wanted to be, I never applied myself anywhere but in the street life. I equated success and status with the fancy cars, nice clothes, and money that the hustlers and dealers displayed. I started stealing and running dope for the dealers at an early age. My first job was at a candy store in a strip mall. We sold candy in the store and marijuana out the back alley door.

My drug and alcohol use progressed over the years and led to legal trouble. I joined the Army to avoid going to jail. During that time I began to drink heavily and became a chronic alcoholic within a short time. After returning from a field training assignment, I went on a 3-day pass – for two weeks. I was randomly UA'd and placed in an addiction treatment program. By that time, I was married and living in Arkansas with my wife and two children. I stayed off marijuana, but my drinking got worse and worse. After almost losing my job, my family, and my military career, I began attending church and an occasional AA meeting and managed to stay clean for several years. During that time I became very active in church and was ordained as a minister of the Church of God in Christ.

Although I was involved in church work and the ministry, I had never really addressed the problem of addiction. After some personal difficulties including a divorce, financial crisis, and a move back to Seattle, I relapsed after nine years of sobriety. This time crack cocaine became my drug of choice, and my life took a nosedive. For about four years, I went through cycles of trying to maintain sobriety. Eventually, I ended up in Detox and in 2005, I went into treatment for the first time at Recovery Centers of King County. At the time, I had no real knowledge about the 12 Steps or AA. Although I had been to a few AA meetings in the past, I never truly understood what recovery was about.

I learned a lot about addiction from the counselors and staff at RCKC. I began to understand it and gain some self-awareness. After my first time in treatment at RCKC, I began to take recovery seriously. The counselors really impressed upon me the need to "work the program" of recovery. I stayed sober for several months, but somehow began to believe that I could safely drink again. Predictably, the result was another relapse! However, this time I had learned enough at RCKC to experience drinking differently. Denial no longer worked – I knew I was addicted and could not get well on my own. I went on to complete treatment in 2007 and have been in recovery ever since.

During my stay at RCKC, I asked the director if he would give me a job. He said that if I stayed clean for one year, he would hire me. On October 1, 2008, I called and reminded him of our conversation. He remembered me and told me to fill out an application. I was hired as an on-call attendant a week later, which led to a full-time position in the Admissions Office. I was learning the skills that others had used to help me get into treatment one year earlier.

While on a lunch break one day, I mentioned to one of the counselors how much I admired what counselors do and that I would like to be a counselor. He took me into his office and helped me apply for admission to Seattle Central Community College. I earned my Associate's degree in Social and Human Services in the winter of 2009. Since I have received my degree, I have been promoted to the counseling department and moved into my own apartment for the first time in six years. These are milestones that I would never have dreamed possible before RCKC and AA/NA changed my life.

I have witnessed lives restored; people who were hopeless and helpless just like me are now in recovery and are leading full and productive lives. I am convinced that if it had not been for the dedication of the counselors and staff at RCKC – and the State ADATSA Program – I could never have come as far as I have. Being able to give back the care and compassion that I received is the most fulfilling thing in my life today. I get to come to work on a daily basis and see lives changed and people without hope transformed and go on to lead useful and happy lives. For that I am extremely grateful.