

For more information about this program and other services available to people living with HIV, please contact:



711 East 2nd St
Des Moines, IA 50309
(515) 284-0245
markh@aidsprojectci.org

The photography model in this story is not the actual story character, nor is he related to the story in any way. This story is based on an interview with an actual member of our community. Names and details have been changed to protect his identity.



A New Beginning

MHCM1

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A New Beginning


MHCM1

The Project's mental health case management program is sponsored by



For information on The Project's mental health case management and therapeutic counseling program, contact Mark Hillenbrand at
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or
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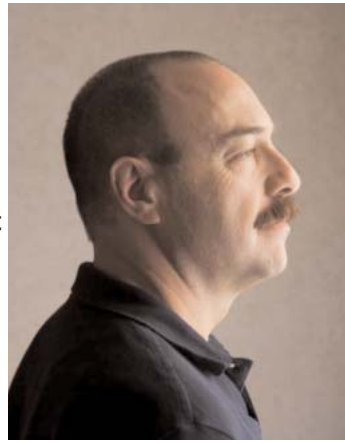
My name is John.

I'm 47 years old. I recently left my partner over his drinking. Then, I just had my whole life turned around because what I had considered my core, which was my family, had completely disintegrated. I didn't understand it. I felt alone and I felt scared. I questioned whether to even continue AIDS therapy.

I was on the edge. I was done with reaching out for help and it not being there. When you live the life that I have lived, you internalize everything and count on yourself so much that the first time you reach out for help is tough. I thought, I can either give up taking pills and let nature and HIV take its course, or I can do what I have always done and get back on track and start asking for help. I had fought too hard - all my life, all my HIV, all my homosexuality, all my career, *everything*. Then, it finally kicked in. I was not going to choose to give up.

There are available services but I just had to go out and get it. That's where being poor is tough. Poverty makes finding help just tougher. I imagine people end up homeless over it, or dead or suicidal. I knew I needed help. I never knew what psychology was. I thought it was like in the movies, you know *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. I never thought that I was a person who could benefit from therapy, but I needed it and it helped.

Before I went to The Project, I already knew I had to completely change. I cannot live on this edge anymore. I had to get help. I met up with Mark at The Project and we started counseling. I had never ever discussed with anybody in my life how disappointed and how screwed up my family had become. The therapy with Mark was working. It was my salvation even though the outside was still bad. It just gave me the strength and the realization that I was still OK and I was going to be OK. I needed it to work, and it worked.



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