

Name: Dave Ferrante
Hometown: Revere
Months Sober: Almost 6 months
Age: 34

OL: Can you tell me a bit about your childhood?

DF: Honestly, it was kind of lonely. I didn't have many friends growing up because my family didn't have money and I didn't have any of the fancy clothes and toys like the other kids had. My father wasn't in the picture because he passed away from addiction. We really didn't have family. All of our family came from money so they really didn't deal with us because to them we were less than. I always felt like they thought they were better than us.

My mother and grandmother did the best they could to raise me but I always pulled back from them. My mother dealt with depression, she wasn't there as much as I know she would have liked, but my grandmother was. She always showed me love, always supported me and had my back, even if I did something wrong. I always had everything I needed, maybe not everything I wanted but everything I needed.

I was molested when I was 9 by the only male role model that I had in my life, my only friend's father. It took me 22 years to actually come out and tell somebody about that.

OL: Can you describe your initial path to using drugs?

DF: Growing up with no friends I always felt alone and I just always wanted to fit in. Even before I started to get the feelings and emotions about being molested, I just wanted to fit in. I eventually found friends but they weren't the right ones. They were the ones hanging out at the corner and skipping school and getting high and drunk before school and staying out past curfew and getting in trouble. They were who I felt I fit in with. Most of them showed me love and respect and loyalty. It was like my family outside of my family. Over the years doing everything we were doing eventually led into selling drugs and using drugs, it escalated. I spent a lot of my teenage years in and out of juvenile detention. Somehow I graduated with my high school diploma—I still have no clue how I did that.

OL: What happened after high school?

DF: Not too long after, I and a childhood friend got together and we ended up getting married and I straightened everything out for awhile. I was the manager of a detail shop and then eventually opened up my own detail business. We ended up having a beautiful girl together and got a nice condo in Winthrop Beach. At 20 years old I had everything I ever dreamed of.

But certain feelings started popping up again. My wife was cheating on me and that was one thing I never dealt well with—feelings. One thing led to another and I got back into drugs and lost everything. My wife left me for another man (she took off when our daughter was 3 months old) and I raised my daughter for the first 6 years of her life while actively using drugs. I ended up losing custody of my daughter when she was 6 years ago and DCF gave me the opportunity to get her back and I had all intentions to but my grandmother ended up passing away and I didn't take that well at all. I



Dave telling his story to 8th graders at Warren Prescott.

relapsed and that pretty much started my last 13 years of getting high on and off. My rights to my daughter got terminated and she got put up for adoption. That was just one more thing to add to my emotional wreck.

I carried that guilt for a real long time. Over the years it's just been hell in and out of jail, in and out of programs. It doesn't matter what happened in my life nothing could seem to get me to stop using. For as long as I can remember I wanted nothing more than to just die but I didn't have the balls to take my own life. I never stopped praying but my prayers consisted of asking God to please let this be the last time and to not allow me to wake up.

OL: Did you have a particular drug of addiction?

DF: Definitely heroin. Once I got my hands on heroin it was the only thing that brought me peace and serenity but at the same time it brought me so much guilt and shame because of my actions. It was a love hate relationship, bittersweet. The longest clean time I've had in the past 13 years was 11.5 months and that was about 5, 6 years ago. I was going to meetings but that was all. I wasn't talking about my feelings or trying to work on myself. I was just going to meetings and working. I don't even remember why I relapsed; I was just not ready and wasn't putting the work in. One day I decided I didn't want to deal with life's problems anymore. Since 2011, I haven't been able to get more than 60 days [clean] together.



Dave enjoying a meal with his son.

OL: How else has your addiction affected your life?

DF: I've always been a hard worker, I've always worked when I was using but it always affected my job. I've done all types of work but I always end up going back to detailing because that's what I know best. I had my own business for awhile but that didn't last because of getting high. It got to the point where obviously nobody wanted to hire me. At the end of my last run I weighed less than 140 lbs, it just showed, all the years of abuse.

OL: How did you get to the place you're at currently?

DF: In the last two years I've been in a real toxic relationship and I put myself in harm's way more times than I can remember just because I wanted to make sure that she was alright. I ended up catching a case because of a crime I committed while we were together to take care of us and I got incarcerated last year. I continued doing what I did on the street in jail—sitting in my jail cell shooting crack, for the first 7 months of my sentence. I then ended up switching jails.

My son's mother has always been a real big support for me. I met her in 2010, right after my daughter got taken away. Things didn't work out for us but we've always been really good friends. She's been one of my biggest supporters along this journey and I'll forever be grateful for that and the amazing job she has done taking care of our son, especially when I wasn't around.

One time after I got transferred to the new jail I called and she told me my son was going to school and beating kids up for no reason. When he was questioned why he said he wanted the police to take him away so he could be with me. I don't know what it was about that but it just broke my heart. I sat in my cell and thought about everything, all the things my son has seen.

Something after that phone call and sitting in my cell for almost two days just made me decide I need to do this differently—I'm tired of getting high. After that phone call I didn't want to die anymore. It was weird. That phone call made me actually start caring. I don't know what it was because my son is five and a half now and it probably should have happened a long time ago but I think it happened exactly like it's supposed to. I decided I wanted to keep seeking further treatment, work on myself, get my life together, and be there for my son.

OL: What did you do when you got out of jail?

DF: That's when I decided to go to a halfway house instead of just coming out of jail to nothing. The day after my release I got a "Get well" job (a job for the early stages of recovery). A month after that my boss called me and offered me my old job back with a promotion and now I'm here, coming up on 6 months [clean] and I'm the manager of a detail shop again, making good money, trusted with people's credit card numbers. I have my own apartment, see my son, go to meetings, and meet people around me. This is something that a year ago I didn't think would happen.

OL: What has changed this time to allow you to stay clean and sober?

DF: Luckily I have people who hit me up because they actually care supporting me. It's overwhelming, the love that I've been getting since I've been home and doing this. I feel like I'm only as strong as the people I surround myself with. These are people who are productive members of society, yeah they got their past, but their fathers, mothers, bosses, employees—they actually live life. They're not just getting the next fix. They are people who care about themselves, which allow them to care about me.

[The key differences have been] putting my pride aside and asking for help and talking about my feelings and emotions. If I'm feeling like I want to get high instead of acting on it I reach out to people and tell them. I never would have done that before. I'm also sticking with the right people and I try to give back as much as possible. I've been asked to speak at Commitments and I'll do that. I do it for me because it's a constant reminder about how far I've come in this short time.

A lot to do with me being where I am now is having the people in my life today that loved and believed in me even when I didn't believe in myself. When I feel like I'm going to fall, these are the people who would carry me, just like I would do for them.