



Recovery Story

Hello, my name is Jeffrey, and I... - By Jeffrey W.

On the outside, everything looked perfectly FINE. Here I was, an Ivy-league educated physician, well respected in my academic community in Michigan, the German sportscar, fabulous vacations, etc., etc. Yet on the inside, I was deeply unhappy and anxious. I turned to the bottle and hook-up apps to numb out. At first this worked...until it didn't. In 2015, with my professional, personal, and spiritual lives on a downward spiral, I surrendered.

Exhausted, yet hopeful, I began my recovery journey in Atlanta and soon returned to Michigan to continue the work. I made wonderful new connections in the recovery community back home. After a year in, I and my trusted circle of confidants, felt that I could make reasonable decisions about what to do next in my life. I was no longer interested in teaching or research, so I headed out west to Washington to start life in private practice. As part of the deal, I was enrolled in the state Physician's Health Program (PHP). One evening, at our PHP group session – serendipity struck. One of our members mentioned that he was taking his family down to IDAA in Utah the following week. Wait! I had off the next week as well. Should I go? Could I go?

Well, surprise, surprise, the answers to both questions were yes and yes. And boy am I so glad I did. During that week in Snowbird, I met so many new people – people like me! I've often felt somewhat, dare I say, somewhat "different" at my local meetings out west. But, here, here were my fellow Unicorns! All decked out and sparkly, and honest (sometimes painfully so) and insightful. There aren't too many other circles where I can be my true self. This was my new home base.

Over the past 6 years, IDAA has truly changed my life. I spent the first few years in Utah and Nevada solely as a participant, sometimes not even making it to all the events. However, my zest for the group really took off when I was asked to present at Knoxville (recordings still available online). Service work, as they say, is the best work. This has led to multiple additional venues to share/support at other meetings and online forums. Speaking of the online experience! I've had the opportunity to reach out to so many people (and vice versa) through the IDAA online meetings – including one that I helped to start.

IDAA has given me so so much. From the connections and advice that I have received from fellow members, I've been able to make many difficult decisions that I could not do by myself. Now, I'm happily married, with a house, a wonderful dog, a repaired relationship with my parents, and am well respected at work.

Hello, my name is Jeffrey, and I am a gay man. Hello, my name is Jeffrey, and I am a doctor. Hello, my name is Jeffrey, and I am a cancer survivor. Hello, my name is Jeffrey, I am an alcoholic, and I am a grateful member of IDAA. You can be too!