



Addiction and Recovery

A Conversation with Kevin Sipple

Tell me about your career as a union carpenter.

I joined Carpenters Union Local 363 (now 1889) in the fall of 1992, I was organized away from the shop I was working for by Randy Meyer. I have worked in residential and the wood construction market for my entire career. I am a working carpenter foreman and a part-time instructor at the Apprentice & Training Center. I teach First aid, residential framing, stairs, rafters and solar. I was fortunate enough to be tasked with the development of our focused solar installation course.

How long have you been sober?

Since November 8, 2003.

What was your vice? Drugs, alcohol or both?

Alcohol, I drank 24/7 365 days of the year. It was common for me to carry several flasks every day.

When did you first realize you had a problem?

In 1998, I got a second DUI. I was aware I had a serious problem, but it didn't stop me from drinking. I got worse and gave up on myself. I even remember thinking "I guess this is the way I'm going to be."

Talk about how your relationships with family and friends suffered because of your addiction.

My parents were always supportive but certainly disappointed and, at times, embarrassed. Alcohol addiction is deeply embedded in my family, and I was no stranger to the first-hand damage it created. When I was drinking I was short-fused, reckless, and even sad. Rosanne and I have been together for 30 years. She left our home because several times of my behavior. The addiction caused me to miss important moments of my life. There are still people who won't speak to me.

Do you think your career as a carpenter suffered because of your addiction?

Absolutely. I lost my driving privileges for over a decade and I couldn't work as a carpenter. No employer would take me on. I was a serious liability! I was forced inside to work as an estimator, purchaser, superintendent anything that required limited mobility. I lost 10 years of union benefits, pension credit, health insurance - things that I will never get back.



Kevin Sipple is a Member of Carpenters Local Union No. 1889, a Delegate, and a part-time instructor at the Apprentice & Training

When did you finally seek treatment and quit drinking?

I believe it was a nurse who once told me, "Maybe boring would be good for you" and that still resonates today. It wasn't until I could finally get my head and my heart to do the same thing at the same time, that the lightbulb went off. My fourth DUI in 2002 got me a two-year sentence to prison on my 34th birthday (I served 8 months) and my dearest grandmother passed away two weeks earlier. Upon my release and subsequent parole. I was depressed but dug in with determination. This wasn't going to be where I end. Finally, really participating in the mandatory therapy sessions and committing myself to abstinence was my final push to sobriety. I remain committed to abstinence.

Did getting sober change your life?

Without a doubt. The freedom it funds and the anchor it removed allows me to be respectful and helpful to others. Being sober was a new beginning and that feeling is priceless.

What advice can you give to other alcoholics?

You are not alone. When everything seems wrong and your life seems overwhelming, STOP, RESET. Start with one change, one moment - one issue at a time. If you need to sign yourself up for an inpatient detox facility, take a serious approach, don't hide it. Remove yourself from those triggers you know people, places, and things. Find or create a support network that works for you.

Over the years I discovered that my support group was the Carpenters Union. The Carpenters Union will never stop supporting its members.