



## **Bio for John Ferris**

### **John's recovery story:**

I got sober a little over 13 years ago after being on and off with sobriety. My first attempt was in 1993. It lasted about 18 months before I decided to do more "research".

I didn't really give it another shot until October 24th, 1999 when I got a D.U.I. the day before. That lasted a few months until my shame and regret wore off and I realized my legal consequences from the D.U.I. would be minimal except for the financial piece. I continued on for a number of years until in 2005 the wheels came off for me and I was homeless and penniless. By then I had an almost 3 y/o son from a failed marriage due to my addiction and I didn't know what to do. I had been consumed wholly by it. I ended up with a scholarship, one of the greatest gifts of my life, to go to a long term treatment center in Jackson, MS. I stayed in MS for a total of 11 months before coming home. I relapsed after that, but because of that a fire had been lit in me. I understood what it was I needed to work on because of my experience in MS. Finally, one morning I woke up hung over in 2007 and said I'm done. There have been challenges along the way, but without question my life has never been better than it's been and continues to get better each day. 12-Step

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Fellowship was integral in helping me lay a foundation. The clinical insights I received have been invaluable in understanding why my addiction had flourished and how to prevent it from doing so again. That's why I love Next Step because they provide the level of clinical to their patients that will actually help them unravel the tapestry of their addiction through their timeline so that they can truly become well. Its profound and beautiful when folks find that clarity in being able to see where it began and where they are now.

### **How John came to Next Step:**

I came to Next Step after having known Susan for a while, at least 6 years or so. She's always been one of my favorite people in this space because of her passion and her unwavering desire to help anyone she can and never bend morally to do so in a self serving way. She's always selfless and I appreciate that. With my own experience personally I understood the model she created to treat men with addictive disorders and knew that it would work well. So, when the opportunity arose to join the team I leapt at the chance. I've worked at a number of different programs over the years, having cut my teeth as a mental health technician at a non-profit mental health facility back in 2006 and gradually working my way up the ladder. I've been fortunate to see to see programs of all shapes and sizes. Next Step is one of those very rare gems you see amongst the hustle and bustle that does what it says it does to help its patients. I love that and that is precisely why I wanted to work with Susan.

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### **John's advice for recovering addicts and their friends & family:**

My advice to anyone whether the addicted, the family or friends is that educating yourselves is imperative in the fight to achieve sobriety. There is no one right way to get sober. 12-Step fellowship is absolutely the primary way folks have been getting and staying sober for a very long time. It worked for me. However, at this point as new technologies and research emerge we must educate ourselves about it and be open to it. In fighting cancer, Parkinsons, etc. we are open to pretty much anything that'll work. Addiction is not a moral failing, but it is in fact a brain disorder. Once patients, family, and friends can wrap their head around this fact and see the patients behaviors as a product of this it can be much easier for them to engage with their loved one and be invested in their treatment process.

### **A little known fact about John:**

A little known fact about me is I met Japanese Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone in the lobby of the Excelsior Hotel in Florence Italy back in 1984 when I was on vacation with my family. He was walking through the lobby with an entourage as we were checking in and he was out front moving pretty quick across the lobby toward the front door, and as we entered to check in I was looking all around in disbelief at how beautiful the lobby was and about mid way in I almost ran right into him. He looked at me kind of stunned and I looked at him while we just stood there. I kind of partially bowed toward him. He did in return. He smiled and extended his hand and I shook his hand and we smiled at each other. He then walked quickly around me and out the door with his entourage. One member of his party

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lagged behind a bit and while standing next to me watching them file out leaned in and said, “that was the Prime Minister”. But Prime Minister of what? As we started to check in I asked the person behind the desk who that was and they said, “the Prime Minister of Japan”. Whoa. Nice. So I got that going for me.

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