



Meet Daniel

well with peers and staff, and even hosts tours to welcome new participants. To name just a few of Daniel's favorite aspects of the program, PROS hosts fun social events, recognizes significant progress, and facilitates a positive environment to learn.

We would like to thank Daniel for sharing such a personal and candid story, and for having the strength to discuss such sensitive topics (e.g. abuse, suicide, and drug addiction). Daniel hopes that his story can motivate even just one more person to reach out for the help they need.

Read Daniel's full story below.

Mental Health awareness is one of Equinox's top priorities year round. In that spirit, we would like to introduce the powerful story of one of our PROS (Personalized Recovery Oriented Services) participants.

Meet Daniel, a humble man who has struggled with mental illness and addiction most of his life. He has now been sober for nearly a year, and is on the journey to inner peace. To Daniel, it is vital to understand that although society may hold a stigma about mental illness, it all comes down to individual perception. The PROS community has helped Daniel maintain a positive outlook and open mind about bettering his life. He has never missed a class, communicates

You Are Not Alone

By Daniel, Equinox PROS participant

Hello, my name is Daniel, and I have a mental illness – bipolar depression. I would like to explain to you how this illness came into my life. It started when I was a child. I was physically abused by my father and was also sexually molested. I was so hurt by it that I didn't tell anyone. By suppressing all of this, I didn't realize that I was angry and depressed. I was very angry as a child. I grew up in the system of welfare, foster homes, and group homes for troubled boys. I didn't realize I had a mental health issue until later on in my life. I used alcohol and crack cocaine to numb the feelings of sadness, hurt, pain, and depression.

I didn't know who to talk to about it at that time, and I was in and out of jail.

I realized that I had a mental illness in 1990, so I began getting the help I needed. The doctors gave me medication, but something was still missing. I was very much rebellious to the treatment. I didn't want to accept that I had a mental illness and that it was okay. So I continued to use alcohol and drugs, and I was in and out of prison as a result of not giving myself a chance. In my lifetime I have been in a lot of halfway houses for alcohol and drugs, and I have been in a few residences for mental

illness. I tried a few times to commit suicide, but I couldn't do it. I have been in a hospital so many times over and over again. Today I am 47 years old, getting ready to be 48 in June, which will be one year since I've been participating in Equinox's PROS.

I have been coming to PROS since last year, soon after I was released from prison in May, 2017. I was last in prison for a parole violation after failing a drug test – I was using alcohol and crack cocaine again. So, while I was incarcerated I did some things as far as attend a drug program. But this time I began looking at my innermost



Daniel with PROS Program Manager, Joanna Terrelonge.

self – my heart, mind, spirit, and soul. In other words, I did some soul searching.

When I came to PROS, my attitude and behavior were humble, open-minded, and ready to learn. It was all about change. PROS has impacted my life today when it comes to changing the way I live. The information that is given to me is uplifting. It allows me to look at myself and accept me for me.

I love myself today. I am learning to deal with life on life's terms, and it's okay that I don't know the answer. I can now reach out for help, and no longer suppress my feelings or emotions. I am a lot better today, because it's all about working on myself. The information that I am given in classes, which I attend five days a week, I take home to review, and I keep it so I can continue to work on myself. That is how PROS impacted my life today.

My life before PROS was on a dangerous cycle. I didn't care about anything except using alcohol and drugs. There were other areas in my life that I

didn't want to accept either. I have a medical issue as well, and I didn't want to accept that. I found out about it in 2008 when I was in prison, and

I tried to kill myself. In prison, I didn't know how to deal with it. I couldn't speak with anyone except the counselor of mental health.

So that was what my life was like before PROS. I feel badly now for hurting my family, especially my mother, putting her through all of that mess. Today, I am much better because of services that PROS has offered to help me deal with it.

My life goal today is to establish a strong foundation in handling my mental health and substance abuse issues. I am a Christian man. I would like to settle down and have a family – to be a father. PROS has helped me along the path of my life goals. First and foremost, the daily classes I go to address my life goals. I take the five stages of change and apply it to my inner life, which helps me to see another day with hope, faith, love,

acceptance, honesty, focus, a sober mind, an open mind, and humility. I am on my way.

If you are reading this and if you have a mental health or substance abuse issue, I am here to tell you that you are not alone. I am also here to tell you that you are so worth it. Be yourself, love yourself, trust yourself, bless yourself, value yourself, accept yourself, forgive yourself, express yourself, empower yourself, and remember the most important thing is that you are worth it. Thank you for your time.



“ I am here to tell you that you are not alone. ”

If you or someone you know is struggling with mental illness or addiction, contact 518.435.9931 or go to www.equinoxinc.org for more information.