



Jerry Kolpien

Provider (Peer Support, Paraprofessional)

I come from a large family. With four brothers and a sister, my childhood home was a busy place. My first experience with trauma was at the age of six, finding my oldest brother deceased in an accident playing in our backyard. My parents divorced when I was nine. It seems that was the starting point for learning some of life's hard lessons. As a teenager I spent the better part of four years in the foster care system as a Child in Need of Protective Services (CHIPS). That experience left me feeling that my family had put me on the curb like yesterday's trash. I was already struggling with what was to become an all-consuming substance use disorder, depression, anxiety, and anger issues. Later, as an adult, those issues were magnified by years of using drugs and doing the things it took to support my addiction. I found myself homeless and doing a life sentence on the installment plan in the county jail.

We do not always get to decide what life on life's terms will be. However, we do get to decide how we react to those terms. I needed help learning how to do that. The thing that helped me the most was finding people who had walked in my shoes. People who had been there and done that and made it through their struggles! It took some profound consequences for me to finally realize I needed to do something different.

If you are facing some of those consequences like I was, maybe together we can find a path to a better way. I got clean in the county jail on July 8, 2009. I still don't have all the answers today. But today, the rage inside me has subsided along with the need to self-medicate my depression and anxiety. One of the most important things for me to remember through all of this is that change takes time and effort, and it doesn't happen overnight, but it CAN happen! I am living proof!

Today, my partner and I have a preteen son who, like many of today's kiddo's, plays too many video games and doesn't want to clean his room. The hardest thing I have found in being a parent is disciplining the behaviors that I am all too well aware that he learned from me. Together, with his mom, we are raising him in this imperfect world. In my free time, I keep busy being involved in the local recovery community. One of the things that brings a great deal of fulfillment to me is volunteering in the local jails and prisons. What brings me the most joy is spending time with my little family and our extended family. We are making memories one day at a time. I also enjoy working on what seems like an endless "honey do list". We own an older home and there is always something that needs fixing or upgrading. I also enjoy spending time at the gym, fishing, hiking, and anything to do with the outdoors.

CCS Service Arrays

Peer Support

ISDE

Wellness and Recovery

Psychoeducation

CLTS Service Arrays

Parent/Unpaid Caregiver Support

Empowerment and Self-Determination

Counties Served

Chippewa, Dunn, Pepin, Pierce, Polk, St. Croix

Buffalo, Rusk, Barron, Washburn, Burnett.

Speciality Areas

Substance Use Recovery

Peer Support

Outdoorsmanship

Ex-Offender Reintegration

Parent Coaching

