



“You can’t fail if you don’t quit.”

– Michael, Southwest Network Member

Stylish, talkative, and refreshingly quick-witted, Michael faces life with remarkable candor. He’s honest about his condition, open about his needs, and inspired about his future – characteristics that have propelled him on his recovery journey.

For more than 30 years, Michael has struggled with schizophrenia, a serious condition that affects how a person thinks, feels, and behaves. Yet in the presence of his approachable personality and demeanor, you’d never know he had a care in the world.

Michael was very young when his challenge began. With his parents divorcing when he was just 3, some anger and isolation had always seemed normal. But as he hit his teens, the feelings of depression, along with hallucinations and voices, became overwhelming.

Michael suffered through multiple hospitalizations, years of excruciating medication side effects, and a ventricular tachycardia event that required him to be implanted with an internal defibrillator. But he never let the setbacks conquer his spirit. Rather, he learned to “reframe” his thoughts, think positively, and find ways to overcome his obstacles and be productive.

“You can’t fail, if you don’t quit,” says Michael, citing the need for commitment. He persevered for years, finally discovering the resources and motivation he needed to succeed.

Indeed, by getting the right support and services, Michael is well on his way to building a great life for himself. He gets regular counseling from people he trusts. He actively participates in support groups and has built a network of friends and allies. He’s developed impressive coping mechanisms and self-redirection skills. He’s been employed for over a decade. And, he hasn’t returned to the hospital in 5 years.

Previously reluctant to medicate, he’s worked with his doctors to find a regimen that makes him feel like his best self. And this has eliminated the stigma. “Cancer patients aren’t ashamed about taking medicine,” says Michael. “Why should I feel any different about taking a pill that helps me?”

Most impressive is that Michael has grown to respond to life’s curveballs. When the pandemic derailed his employment, he fought hard to secure new opportunities and stay on track. Now he’s more inspired to transform his experiences into gifts he can use to help others. He starts Peer Support Training later this month, with plans of pursuing a career in peer support on mobile teams that are deployed in crisis.

As to his advice on recovery, Michael offers, “Be honest with your counselors, ask for help when you need it, and help others. These things are the keys to success.”

“But be honest with yourself first.”

**Share your Recovery Story by emailing
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