

RRP 126 — Ben M. / Triumph Over Trials, Part 1: Revisited — From Addiction to the Courtroom

Presenters: Julie P. Lewis and Peter B. Dowell Episode Length: 1 hour 16 minutes Release Date: August 7, 2026

We're revisiting one of the most popular episodes in Real Recovery Podcast history. Ben M. first sat down with us in April 2024 as episode 7, and his story resonated with listeners more than almost any other. Next week, Ben returns for an update — over six years sober now, with three new sponsees and a spiritual shift he calls "seeing the world with new eyes." But first, here's where it all started.

Ben grew up the only boy in a big Hispanic family in El Paso, Texas. Spoiled, loved, and surrounded by three older sisters. At 13, everything changed — first pot, first blackout, first time meeting men off the internet after his family got AOL. He came out at 14. He calls what followed his Pinocchio story: on the way to school, he met a fox, followed it to the circus, and woke up with a donkey tail.

From skipped classes to adult bookstores, from law school to psych wards, from a lost law license to a single glass of wine on a flight to San Francisco that undid three and a half years of sobriety — Ben's path is a raw, honest account of what alcoholism takes. And what recovery can give back.

Key Points

- [03:50] Julie introduces Ben — Sunday night meeting partners, she's the Zoom host, he's the in-person secretary
- [07:00] Growing up in El Paso and Dallas — only boy, three older sisters, "I got anything I wanted"
- [10:00] The Pinocchio metaphor — meeting the fox, the circus, the donkey tail
- [14:00] Age 13 — first pot, first blackout, AOL chat rooms, meeting men off the internet
- [22:00] Coming out at 14, skipping school, developing a secret life
- [24:30] Moving to New York City at 18 — September 11th scared him sober for a while
- [30:30] Law school — daily drinking, suicidal in blackouts, the Franzia and Golden Girls years
- [43:30] First DUI, first major collision, jail, psych ward twice in one week
- [57:00] The relapse — three and a half years sober, then one glass of wine on a flight to San Francisco
- [61:00] Oregon rehab, finding real sobriety, treating alcoholism as a life-threatening illness
- [65:00] Sobriety date May 5, 2020 — "If I don't stop, I'll be 50 with nothing to show for it"
- [72:30] His husband, Sunday night service, and the life recovery built

Websites Discussed

- MCC Portland — <https://www.mccportland.com>
- Alcoholics Anonymous — <https://www.aa.org>
- Real Recovery Podcast — <https://www.realrecoverypodcast.com>

Listen: <https://mdcr1.com/126> Blog: <https://mdcr1.com/126b>

"Once I put alcohol in my body, I have to be willing to throw everything away — I cannot control whether I'll even be alive in 24 hours." — Ben M.

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