

RRP 108 — Jerry B.

Flammable: What It Really Means to Be Sober Without Being in Recovery

Presenters: Peter and Julie **Release Date:** April 3, 2026 **Episode:** 108 **Runtime:** 1:42:32

Episode Summary

In this episode, Peter and Julie welcome Jerry B., a Portland-area member of Alcoholics Anonymous whose recovery story is unlike most you'll hear. Jerry grew up in a family shaped by sobriety — his dad has 53 years in the program, his mom found her way there when Jerry was young — and yet he still spent years deep in addiction to crystal meth and alcohol. What followed was a law degree earned at Lewis & Clark, a 17-year caregiving job he eventually lost to a drug test, a DUI arrest in Forest Grove, two rounds of outpatient treatment, and more than a decade of staying completely sober without once being in recovery. Jerry has a word for that period: flammable. He talks openly about isolation, atheism in AA, the difference between being dry and being free, and the night his mother died — the moment he had always been certain would make him drink.

Key Points

- **[00:08:02]** Jerry introduces himself as an alcoholic and meth addict. His dad has 53 years of sobriety; his mom got sober when Jerry was around 8 or 9.
- **[00:09:39]** Early childhood memory: Jerry couldn't sleep and would find his mom watching TV late at night. After she returned from rehab, the unpredictability disappeared — and so did his insomnia.
- **[00:13:31]** Jerry's mom relapsed when he was a junior or senior in high school, became addicted to cocaine, and was gone for days at a time. Jerry made excuses for her and couldn't acknowledge what was happening.
- **[00:14:43]** A defining moment: during the relapse, Jerry's mom told him "I hate you." He never believed it. "I knew it wasn't true — she spent my whole life showing me how much she loved me."
- **[00:26:41]** By his late twenties Jerry recognized he was probably an alcoholic. Around the same time he was working to connect with the gay community and joined a bowling league where he met his only serious relationship.
- **[00:33:33]** Jerry applied to Lewis & Clark Law School at 29, was accepted in 1998, and started in the fall. First semester was poor academically.
- **[00:35:30]** During Christmas break of his first year of law school, Jerry tried crystal meth for the first time. He immediately felt "things were right all of a sudden."
- **[00:44:12]** By the time law school ended, Jerry was fully addicted to meth. He graduated in 2001 by the skin of his teeth, failed the bar exam, and never took it again.

- **[00:54:24]** Using heavily during overnight caregiving shifts, Jerry began hearing voices. He accepted that he was “past the point of rescue” and going crazy.
- **[01:05:14]** In 2007, without any dramatic consequence, Jerry decided enough was enough. He told his sister first, went to outpatient treatment at Caremark (later merged into Kaiser), and got clean from meth.
- **[01:09:29]** The night he graduated from outpatient treatment, Jerry stopped on the way home and bought two six-packs of microbrews — because alcohol wasn’t his problem.
- **[01:13:31]** After a year clean from meth but still drinking, Jerry called his old dealer and started using again “more responsibly.”
- **[01:19:15]** In 2011, Jerry was pulled over in Forest Grove after a family birthday. He failed a field sobriety test badly — the officer thought he might have Lou Gehrig’s disease. He was arrested and spent a day in jail.
- **[01:25:35]** Jerry’s boss at his 17-year caregiving job — rather than firing him — invited him to come up with a plan. “He kind of saved my life.”
- **[01:29:00]** Second outpatient treatment through Kaiser. On the night of graduation, Jerry again bought two six-packs of microbrews — because crystal meth was his problem, not alcohol.
- **[01:30:21]** Spent two years off meth but became dependent on alcohol. Routine: go to work, come home, drink until asleep. Repeat.
- **[01:33:42]** The wedding moment: Jerry planned to quit drinking before his best friend’s wedding in New York to lose weight. He kept pushing the date back until he decided to stop eating instead of drinking. Didn’t lose a pound.
- **[01:34:39]** Went to three weeks of inpatient rehab at Kaiser in 2013. Last drink: November 20, 2012. Has not drank since.
- **[01:39:34]** When working his first steps, Jerry told his sponsor he was sure he’d drink when his mom died. She passed away suddenly in December 2013. He went to a meeting that night and sobbed. Two months later he realized he’d never thought about drinking.
- **[01:41:39]** After a couple of years, Jerry drifted out of AA and spent seven to eight years sober but not in recovery — isolated, not engaged, going to work and coming home. He calls this period “flammable.”
- **[01:42:16]** His dog of 16 years passed away at the end of 2023. The grief and loneliness pushed Jerry back to his home group.
- **[01:48:39]** Jerry connected with a friend doing 90 unique meetings in 90 days. Jerry ended up doing 176 meetings in 90 days, including about 70 on Zoom. “It was the best thing I’ve ever done.”
- **[01:53:34]** For the first time, Jerry started hearing similarities rather than differences. He found a sponsor, started step work, and finally understood that recovery was more than just not drinking.

Guest Quote

“I was so dry by then, I was like flammable. I was exactly the same person as I had been when I was drinking — just without the alcohol.”

— Jerry B.

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Websites Discussed

- [Lewis & Clark Law School](#)
- [Smart Recovery](#)
- [Fora Health Treatment & Recovery](#)
- [Real Recovery Podcast](#)

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