

Forgiveness Held Open a Door to a Richer Life, and Tommie Casey Walked Through It

By Bill Coan, OSAT Mentor



OSAT Mentor Tommie Casey has a gift for speaking from the heart.

When he enters a room these days, people notice the way he carries himself. When he starts to tell his personal story, they stop shifting in their seats and become attentive. Afterward, they come up to meet him, shake his hand, or give him a hug. His account of wretchedness, redemption, and service to others has brought some of his listeners to tears.

“I come from a good home, with a good upbringing,” Tommie says. “But starting in high school, peer pressure kicked in, and I allowed myself to be introduced to freebase cocaine. That took me to a lifestyle that I never saw coming. I did not see it coming.”

Today, looking back on more than twelve years of clean and sober living, Tommie credits his family and friends and life partner, Deb, for not giving up on him. At a time when he thought his future was a closed door, they held the door open and invited him to walk through it. “I was trapped in self-centered, self-obsessed, self-destructive patterns, and it went on for years,” he recalls. “The people in my life told me I had a choice to make.”

Tommie credits a spiritual awakening for helping him make the right choice. “These days, I get up every morning and talk to God and to my savior, Jesus,” he explains, adding, “For me, this is a personal relationship.”

If it was love and forgiveness that opened the door to a satisfying and productive future, and a spiritual awakening that enabled Tommie to walk through that door, it was Old Pueblo Community Services and Narcotics Anonymous that provided practical support and know-how.

“These are circles of goodness,” Tommie says. “I stay connected, because those are the things that helped me.” One of the ways that Tommie stays connected is by serving as an OSAT Mentor for Old Pueblo Community Services.

“The cool thing is that I’ve got the freedom to do it,” he says. “I can share my time. I check on my mentees, and I ask them, ‘Do you want to hit a meeting? Hangout? Grab a bite to eat?’ If so, cool, we’ll do that. If not, that’s okay, too. I talk about what’s going on with them. I ask what their plans are.” Tommie doesn’t rule out offering suggestions, but he doesn’t insist that his mentees follow them. If a mentee finds a suggestion helpful and acts on it, that’s fine. But if not, that’s fine, too.

“I try to get my mentees to see that there’s a new way of life,” Tommie explains. “Because that’s what it’s all about. That old way has to change or else we’re going to get the same results.”

When one of Tommie’s mentees needed a job, Tommie took him to one of his own former employers and made an introduction. The mentee was thrilled, and now the mentee is working and saving his money for a car.

Although Tommie goes to meetings and is becoming known as a speaker at conventions, he doesn’t feel that every mentor has to have his background. He feels that anyone who has goodness and kindness in their heart and doesn’t mind helping people would make a good mentor. Good men who are hard workers have all the qualifications needed, he says. And being a mentor needn’t involve elaborate activities. You can go to the movies, go to the mall, go fishing, or even just go for a drive.

“One of the most valuable things you can give someone is a little bit of time,” he points out. “Someone who can talk to. Someone who will listen and who cares about them.”

Asked to name something surprising about being a mentor, Tommie has a ready answer. “I’m helping them, but they’re helping me,” he says. “Any time I think about someone besides myself, I’m being helped to a richer life.”