

Ed



*Engagement /in'gājmənt/
The action of participation or
becoming involved with something*

For thirty years I made a decent living. I worked in the food industry, designing million dollar restaurants, and then I transitioned to working in IT. Every day I came home smiling. I was on top! I had a couple of houses. I was seeing my kids every other weekend, the usual divorce visitation thing. I was running every day and in great shape.

And then one day I went to do my usual pick-up with the kids. My youngest son was acting really strange. I knew something was wrong, so I followed him into his mom's house. When I walked into his room he was standing there with a four-foot katana sword. Next thing I knew, he'd stabbed me right through my leg, mid-calf.

I spent the next three and a half months in the hospital. I had a nicked femoral artery, a severed artery, and major damage to my perineal nerve. One evening a man came to tell me that there were 250 people praying for me, because I needed help. I was high on painkillers, so that's all that I remember of the conversation. But I do recall thinking later that with the 250 people physically working on my case that meant there had to be at least 500 folks working on me, trying to help me.

Being on the other side of that experience I now know what my mission is in life, and that is to give back what I've been given - to try and touch someone else's life. I want to look in the mirror at the end of the day and know that I've helped someone. Without that, I no longer feel whole.

I'm an advocate for the homeless, locally. I work in Upland, Montclair, and Ontario. I run a program that refurbishes bicycles and gives them to individuals who need transportation, in exchange for them performing community service. I help organize food banks. I do anything I can to help, because I understand how hard it can be to get back on your feet when you are displaced.

I have been homeless. Following my accident, the hospital sent me home addicted to morphine. I was in pain, and I was tired, and I couldn't work. My benefits ran out. I lost my homes. I used up my savings. For the next five years I lived out of my truck, spending my time in the library or the public parks, and bathing in public restrooms.

Someone told me about a Senior Center



“Many African cultures revere the elephant as a symbol of strength and power. It is also praised for its size, longevity, stamina, mental faculties, cooperative spirit, and loyalty.”

This small elephant statue was given to Ed by his three children for Father's Day, following his long hospital stay.



where I could get lunch for two dollars a day, so I started going. One day they brought in some young kids to set up a luncheon for the volunteers, and none of them had any food service experience. I stepped in to help, and it felt good! After that, I started regularly volunteering at the Center.

Eventually the director of the center found out that I was homeless. She called in some favors and found me an apartment. She even threw me a housewarming party. That's ike how I say that if you put love out there, it comes back to you.

I came up in a time where we believed in humanity and we believed in loving people and we believed in truth and honor and respect. Dignity. It wasn't a trend, it was actually a lifestyle.

We got sidetracked, as a country. We started focusing on ourselves instead of others. Politics aside, we're so concerned with who's at fault, and who we can blame, we've forgotten how to live together, to trust one another, and to be strong enough to say "I love you" to our neighbor.

I try not to use the word "homeless." These people are displaced. Your community should be your home. And

when you don't have a place to live then it's incumbent on the community to come to your rescue. It doesn't matter how a person gets there. It doesn't matter who they are. It doesn't matter from what station in life they come from. If they're in that situation, they need help.

If you're in a forward position, you reach back. Someone takes your hand, and you grasp and pull them forward. That's our purpose. We have enough of a foundation in love and energy. We want to be good people. So, we already have the fuel. We just need to spark it. And there is so much that we can do without great effort. I say "we" because I'm right there with you, baby! I'm not separating myself from you. I'm telling you that we have an issue that we both need to work on, together.

Let's not come up with all these reasons why we can't make a difference. Let's come up with a bunch of reasons why we can.