

# Changing My Life

--by Fidel Barela

It all started when I was a teenager. My dad was somewhat of an abusive guy. My grandfather and grandmother were the ones that raised me. My mom was there, but she wasn't there as a parent.

At 13, I started huffing gas. I didn't like that—it got me sick. I had a lot of peer pressure. I hung out with crazy kids, and I was a crazy kid. I went to school up to 8<sup>th</sup> grade. I went to high school for about 1 month. I dropped out as soon as my dad left. I started smoking pot and drinking right away. From the pot, it went to cocaine. I never cared about my education. Even when I was going to school, I didn't care. I hated it. The kids there mocked me. They called me dummy, stupid, and laughed at me. I felt like a fool.

The years went by, and I became an addict. I was a narcoholic by 17. I could never hold a job. At the age of 38, I got into a really bad mess. I got into a problem with the cops. They found methamphetamines in my wallet. I was running for my car, and I was lucky the cop didn't shoot me. He had his gun aimed right at my chest. I went to court, and I signed a plea motion that gave me 18 months of probation. Then, I had a heart attack, and I almost died.

I'm at the point now where I don't want none of that in my life. I want to be a better person. I want my education to get a good job. I quit drugs and alcohol for my sons. My oldest son is 14. He was starting to get bad, but now that he sees me trying to be a good man, a gentleman, he's seeing things a little bit different and starting to understand.

I started 3 months ago with my tutor, Nancy. I'm learning how to read. That really makes me feel good. I still get kind of irritated because I can't get the words right, but I'm doing my best. I enjoy it. I really enjoy getting to know everybody over here. I like everybody.

I'm reading *The Da Vinci Code*. It's a difficult book. I really enjoy it. The characters are different. Silas is into the old Catholic religion. He's a medieval character in the modern world. He seems to be ruthless, but he doesn't want to be. They call him "the Bull" because he bulls his way through everything. He seems to be ruthless, but he seems to be intelligent. He's getting down to the core of things. He's asking just the questions he needs to ask.

I would like to get my GED. I like manual work. I'd like to get a job at an arena shoeing horses. I like animals. I like horses, I like dogs, I like cats, but especially horses. I want to see my children grow up. I want to help them in this world to make the right decisions.

