

THIS ARTICLE WAS PUBLISHED ON THEBLUEMAGAZINE.COM IN AUGUST 2020

Exclusive Interview: Jeremy Spencer

Five Finger Death Punch founding drummer Jeremy Spencer talks to Blue about the perils of being a rock n roll star with an addiction to drugs and alcohol

By *Eddie Molina*

There are many things law enforcement officers are good at; solving crimes, responding to domestic violence calls, driving like a stunt man. But one of my favorites we're good at- partying. Although closing bars are a thing of the past for me (thank you wife and children), I manage to get my fun time in with a few cold beers on my regular days off. But there's a limit. How much is too much? At what point does it go from casual and social drinking to problematic and disturbing.

Anyone that wears a badge knows what goes on in the world. From dealing with decay of society to working odd hours, there are more than enough reasons to grab a beer after a tour of duty.

Sometimes that does go too far. If the only way you cope with a stressful day is to drink alcohol and it's affecting the people you love most, you may need help.

I boasted to a couple of officers in our department about how I landed an interview with a rock star, founding drummer of Five Finger Death Punch Jeremy Spencer. I told them that the focus of the interview was his rehab stints due to his drug and alcohol addiction. They *each* responded with, "oh yeah, I went to rehab too." It was a sobering moment and a stark reminder of the seriousness of this issue.

Jeremy Spencer chronicled his life in a book entitled *Death Punch 'D*. He talks about having his first drink at the tender age of 6, his daily black out drinking, smoking and snorting anything worthwhile and his two near death experiences. It's a classic tale of struggle, success, fame, struggle, and rehab... twice.

Now he's clean and sober and took the time to tell Blue Magazine about his journey.



Blue: Officers experience a lot of stress from the job, which is often mitigated by alcohol abuse- some go to rehab because of it. What is your advice to get through rehab, and more importantly, stay clean afterward?

Jeremy: Personally, I wanted to go to rehab and get better. That's kind of what it boils down to. Do you want to get better or not? It's all a choice. Humans are resilient, it's just a matter of sticking it out and opening yourself up to be helped and staying with it no matter how hard it gets.

Who, if anyone, do you blame for your drug and alcohol abuse? Family? Friends? Touring?

I've been addicted to everything my whole life. I blame no one. It's easy to look for an excuse to blame our using on, but I take full responsibility. Those people are a blessing because they helped mirror what I needed to fix about myself and without those situations I wouldn't have grown and learned.

Many addicts have childhood trauma connected to their adult behavior. In your book, you seem to have a healthy home environment growing up. What happened?

I think I'm just one of those people who can't have chemicals in their body, it doesn't mix with my brain chemistry for whatever reason. I also had some self-esteem issues, not unlike most people. I didn't consciously use to feel better about my low self-esteem, I just used because I thought I liked to party and have "fun".

What were some of the warning signs of drug/ alcohol abuse that you recognized but chose to ignore? What's the most important warning sign you want to tell Law Enforcement officers to look out for?

Every time I drank or used, I wanted to keep going and have more. I never wanted to be done. I loved drinking. I would drink until I couldn't anymore. During the day I couldn't wait to be able to drink at night when I was done with my responsibilities. Some might say that's a functioning alcoholic, but I was still abusing myself.

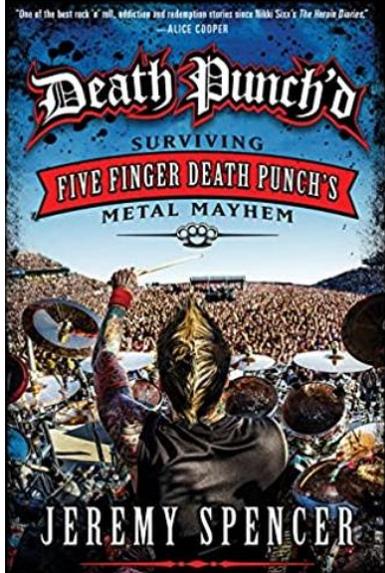
We all know someone with an addictive personality. They tend to replace one addiction with another, good or bad. Since you gave up drugs and alcohol, has anything taken its place?

I was addicted to chaos for a while, pretty much any way I could get the juice. Be it through relationships or anger or whatever. I finally have a handle on that and am living the most peaceful life I've ever lived.

How important is family during the rehabilitation process?

It's very helpful. You need as much support as you can get. It's a fragile time when you're trying to get sober and the more support you can get, the better.

Since you've been given a second chance at life, do you give back at all?



I talk to people when they seek me out. It usually just happens. A lot of people have said my book *Death Punch'd* helped them with their situation.

Was there ever a time you wished you had a regular life- a simple job, happily married, an addiction-free personality, etc. Would you go back and trade everything for that?

I've experienced what many consider a normal life. I wasn't born into playing sold out arenas, lol. I worked day jobs I didn't like, I was married, I felt trapped with no hope of having my dreams realized, etc. I wouldn't trade any of it. I'm where I'm at because of it and I'm happy with that person.

A lot of people dream of fame, fortune and a wild rock n roll lifestyle. Is it overrated?

It's an amazing life. It's everything I hoped it would be and nothing like I thought it would be. There's so many perks and so many pitfalls. But it basically enhances what your problems are, so if you're a troubled person, it's magnified ten-fold. Life is in a fish bowl, so if you're messed up, the world gets to watch and that's not easy.

Several of your music videos feature scenes showing support of first responders and the military. Where did this support come from?

We were always supporters of the military and first responders. Some of us came from families of service men and women. It was always a cause we wanted to support because we know how important you men and women are.

Have you had any interactions with law enforcement as a result of your behavior?

I was a young, dumb kid who got drunk and tried to steal stuff from a convenience store when I was around 15 years old and got arrested. It was humbling and embarrassing. I just remember my mom crying when she came to pick me up from the police station. That affected me the most. I got sober a few months later when I checked myself into rehab.

You understand the addictive behavior. What do you want to tell any officers that fit this profile?

You're not alone. There's always help available. You have to want it and accept it. I know it's a tough life and addiction is a tough period, but it's something that can be worked through. It's all a choice, no matter how difficult it seems.

Suicide is also a growing concern within the law enforcement community. Your book hints at it a bit. What do you want to tell someone who's thinking about taking his or her own life?



Things may seem so bad that there's no way out except to take your life and that's so not true. There's help available at every turn. The people that kill themselves permanently solve a problem that could have been so temporary and everyone else in their circle that was close to them still living has to deal with the suicide the rest of their lives. It's an awful situation, but talk to someone, it all starts there. Help is available and no matter how it seems today, it can all change tomorrow. Suicide doesn't have to be the answer.

Is there anything else you want the law enforcement community to know?

Thank you for everything you sacrifice and do for the world. Its people like you that make the world a better place and a lot of people don't even know how much you do so they can live their daily lives. I truly thank you for your service.

Jeremy's incredible life was brilliantly captured in his book *Death Punch'd*. It's a perfect blend of what it's like to be a rock star coupled with a serious drug and alcohol addiction- all leading up to a happy ending. Jeremy has since retired from drumming due to medical reasons. He took up singing and started a new band called Psychosexual. It's that same great hard rock sound complimented with music videos... with a bit of naughtiness. Subscribe to his Youtube page Psychosexual and follow him on Instagram @officialjeremyspencer and @psychosexual

About the writer: Eddie specializes in leadership and writes articles for the law enforcement, first responder and military community. He also supports the End of Watch with Bootsy and Sal podcast, links available on www.eddiemolina.com