

## Reaching out was good for his health and career

**Sam:** My name is Sam. I'm a Staff Sergeant in the Army Reserve. I've been deployed twice since September 11, actually three times since September 11. Before I had left for Iraq, my wife and I were having issues and it was just a hard time. I had tried to see someone while doing the train up to go to Iraq, but there just really wasn't time and then when I actually got to Baghdad, there was an opportunity to go to the Combat Stress Center or Unit and I saw people there. I was actually having a hard time sleeping, but my mother, she's dealt with depression, manic depression actually and so I knew what to look for and I was realizing I was having other problems too so I went to, first of all to get to sleep 'cause I knew if I'm not sleeping, I'm not gonna be any good to anybody. My dad had been in the Navy as well and he had dealt with depression and he had dealt with the stigma too and he said that he wound up going to get help on the outside. He never did tell the Navy that he was having trouble, but he basically said, "What it comes down to is, it's your life. You need to be happy or at least functional. That's more important than any career."

I went to a Vet Center 'cause they did when we were coming back through Fort Dix, they do the out-processing stuff and one of the guys represented the Vet Center up there and he said, "We got them all over the place if you need some counseling or whatever, come on in." It helped me deal with the stress of the Law Enforcement Academy 'cause it's like boot camp all over again. I didn't really notice the anxiety until I got back from the academy and I was, probably just a natural reaction, but it seemed overblown to me that like getting stuck in traffic, I was getting so angry and I realized that that wasn't cutting it. So, I found a doctor up here and got that under control.

Since coming back from Iraq and getting help and realizing that it's not going to ruin your career that I wanted to make sure that other people knew that; that people could get help and not worry about it. I have a security clearance. I have a law enforcement job. I'm with the government. I'm in no danger of losing that because I got the help. If I wasn't getting help, maybe I would be in a much worse place doing something stupid, maybe drinking too much, drugs; who knows. But this is helping so I got the job. I got security clearance and I'm not worried about it and I want to make sure that other people know about it too.



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