

Overcoming depression with family support

Robert: I think one of the saddest parts of a Serviceman getting out the service is they don't take any orders anymore. People might not realize this, but military people have been conditioned to take orders, and it's almost like when you get your discharge papers you are even asking the last time, "Are there any orders?" It's amazing because it didn't really hit me to any significant degree until I got out that here I had these military discharge papers, honorable discharge, given the address to where the VA services were and to go on my own or find out if I need to check in, you know, but nobody was telling me anything to do, and that was probably one of the most depressing periods in my life, and I think a lot of soldiers might not ever admit that as honestly as they need to be, but we kind of look for more orders.

And so there I was coming home and at this time my grandmother, who had had experience with my father who was in the Army, he was a career Veteran who had problems in the service, and they didn't even have those kind of support bases, and she took care of my father, got him stabilized and made sure he understood that the support base was at the family first, and I think she saw it in me, because my mother again had a relapse, she was ill, so my depression was growing on me to the point where I probably would have gone back to the drugs. I probably would have gone back to the streets, so to speak, was where I came from, and at that point my grandmother one Wednesday, with a cane, she was 81 at the time, took me to the local church around the corner where I came up as a child.

I hadn't been there in years, and they had a Wednesday night prayer and Bible study. She sat me down, she said "I want you to stay here," and I thought that we was just going to stay there, because she gave me an order, and I, a soldier, is listening for orders, and when she said "Stay here," I sat there, then she said "My knees hurt and I'm going to go back to the house." When I got ready to leave, she said, "Stay there," and when she said "Stay there" I just kind of looked puzzled, but I still was following orders. That was one of the best orders that I ever followed, because what happened was she recognized I needed to be in some kind of group of discussion.



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