

Counseling and support for a strong family

Sanford: My name is Sanford. I was in the Navy. I served from 1988 to 91 as active. Right around Desert Storm, Desert Shield there were some training exercises that a couple of the squadrons were going through, two of the squadrons collided with each other, two of the planes and there was about 10 people that I knew and missing your friends and people dying, it's just, it just you know, it takes so much out of you.

The transition from military to civilian can be a rough transition. It wasn't easy anymore, it was harder. It was harder to find work. It was hard to find a job. You don't get treated with the same respect as you're supposed to be getting treated for you know, people that are willing to put their lives down on the line for this country.

I started going to counseling after I moved back here to Pittsburgh, back in 85. The death of my son's mother who was you know, the love of my life, we were together and married for a while you know, 7 years. She died of cancer and for her to just be gone all of the sudden from one day there to the next day not, and then leaving me with boys, two boys.

My second marriage, which was right after that because it was the rebound, she ended up being a heroin and crack addict so therefore I found myself taking the responsibility again and taking my son from her, from that marriage and now I have three sons that I'm raising. I've been through counseling several times because I just feel that I need to have some type of structure and if I can't talk to anybody and I don't know where I'm at then you know it just goes crazy. I've always had a strong faith in God, and I knew that you know, he's not going to give me anything that I can't handle. When you get people that rely on you, you gotta make your way happen. You gotta make something happen without the Navy.

I met a lot of good friends, a lot of good people. I still keep in contact with a lot of my friends and we keep active, talk to each other from time to time. Believe it or not, it's a support group. You know, we're supporting each other because you know, a lot of us have gone through a lot of different things in our lives and have moved on to bigger and better things. Some people have not moved on to bigger and better things, but have actually been in some rut so, you know try to just uplift each other and try to keep each other at a great state of mind.

Whenever you're going in battle or doing whatever you were doing you did it because you wanted to fight for your country, for your freedom. Taking that first step, going to see somebody to help is going to also help you to take that first step to get your freedom back. You gotta fight for who you are and what you are, and if you don't do that then the enemy's won.

As hard as I'm struggling right now and I am, I know that eventually my days coming and my times coming and I'm going to look back and say, "Wow, that was a rough time and that was a rough era, but you know what, I'm out on top."



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