

## VA was there for me

**Antonio:** I'm Antonio, and I was United States Navy, Boatswain's Mate. Well, in the Navy as a Boatswain's Mate it's the oldest rate in the Navy. You really can't escape it. It's not like you can just leave the ship. Especially when you're out to sea, you can't just leave and just say I don't want to deal with this today. You have to deal with it. You're like an angry dog in a cage being poked at. After a while, you have your breaking points. Sometimes there'd be fist fights and such. That's how we release our anger. But some people didn't do fairly well. Some people just broke down after a while.

My command had noticed basically he's getting very aggressive for no reason at all at times. And it was just the job itself that really kind of just kept pushing at you. I'd have anxiety attacks, like speaking out. I had a hard time formatting a sentence. Just always so nervous like I was going to make a mistake. You know and being shot down or chewed out because I screwed up on something.

After leaving my first command I started to realize that hey, yeah, you're not getting anywhere. You're not achieving anything. You're only getting yourself in more trouble and more trouble. So, when I had shore duty I worked with the chaplains and such. And the chaplains are basically a religious rate. They understand religion and just help you in terms of spirituality.

I had received some counseling in the service from my first command. That was with anxiety and depression. Just basically just the job itself because it kind of really got to me. But after I got out, I had a number of the issues still.

I'm not gonna lie to you. When I left the military, I was excited. Because I just wanted to be... I wanted that civilian life. Things that I had seen outside, I wanted that life. But it was pretty difficult at first, trying to adjust. Waking up at six wanting something to do. I would create activities for myself to do or routines to get things done. Actually, the first thing I did when I got out of the service was I went right to school.

My aggression could be understood in the service. My aggression outside the service was misunderstood. Yeah, I did. I think I lashed out at one of my professors. Yeah. It was a geography class. I remember. Yeah, I lashed out at him. He just calmed himself down, which was I realize, you're not looking too well Antonio. So, then after that I just went and sought the help.

The VA was great. They're very, very helpful. I mean, a lot of things I just didn't know what to do or needed help within terms of medical, they were there. They were there. I can honestly say that especially the post 9-11, the GI Bill, how they had changed that, it helped out a lot because they pay off your tuition. They gave you additional money for books and gave you money to live off of.

It did a lot of social good for a lot of Veterans to just get a higher education and on top of that, to have the ability to call and say help yourself. The help is needed. A lot of us don't know what to do when they get out of the service. They really don't. They don't even know what kind of career path they want to go into. And they just need the help. They need a better understanding. And actually, the VA helps them to understand what it can be like in civilian life. Not to struggle as hard. And I'm happy that the VA does exist to help those who are in need.



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