

## Regaining confidence after counseling

**Jonathan:** My name is Jonathan, I served in the Army National Guard when I deployed, spent nine years, active Army and now I am doing my last little hitch in the National Guard AGR before I retire. It was 3:00 in the morning, and we were directly under a bridge and all of a sudden we start hearing the chanting, at 3:00 in the morning and as soon as the chanting started, an RPG flew over the front of my vehicle and it landed in the dirt, maybe about five yards in front of our vehicle and there was just a plume of dust. It didn't go off. From that point on the fear was gone, but having a young girl, barely nineteen, end up getting hit with an IED and suffering for a couple hours before she was lost, that was pretty tough on us all. But again you drive on, you've got missions you've got to do, so you do what you've got to do.

My buddy when he ended up committing suicide himself, I felt, you kind of feel like maybe you could have done more, you could have been there, and it made me want to be with my kids even more, which was real tough, so I started withdrawing from everybody, I didn't want to talk to anybody and it was my personal problems, nobody needed to know. Holding all of the secrets in, holding all of the pain inside, you know, it kind of made it harder to assimilate into the family. They say Soldiers change when they come back, and for me it didn't seem like I had changed. It seemed like everybody else around me changed, the whole family changed.

I went to the gym and I was playing racquetball a couple hours a day. I dove right and hit the floor, the wall, my back popped and cracked and everything else and ruptured a disc. I went from being super-active, doing everything around the house, now for 12 months I was more of a burden on my family, so I've kind of felt more like a failure as a father and I just kept feeling more and more worthless and that's when I contemplated starting to take my life. One day one of my kids said something to me that made me realize I need to get help, I need to be there to help them, and that's when I went and sought out some help.

The VA crisis line was the first place I called and then I started trying to meet with a Counselor. He coached me to knowing what I needed, and that was extremely important, for me, so just working those small things first until you feel comfortable and build up that trust, then I was able to talk deeper, more to my heart. I saw him for several months, and each time I just felt better and better.

After I started seeking the help the work performance started to increase again. I started believing in myself, started getting more confidence. It was a lot easier to do my job, do daily things. Now I'm doing extremely successful with what I'm doing and, I wouldn't be here doing this or be in good accord with the military right now if it wasn't for seeking help. The help truly, it was everything. Whether you're in combat, whether you're support, you go through different things. You go through tough times, it's not always in the military. By hearing different people's stories and what they've gone through and what they did to get help, that's crucial and critical to building up your own confidence to get help.



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