

## A 2/7 Marine moves on from his lowest point

**Noel:** My name is Noel, and I served in the United States Marines. I was stationed in Twentynine Palms, California with 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion 7<sup>th</sup> Marines, and I served in Afghanistan in 2008. Most of the incidents during the Afghanistan war when we were out there with 2/7 can have long-term effects. Over there, there are certain roads and types of terrain that you already know are going to have roadside bombs and devices of that sort. So, we kind of ran into the terrain we call watties. It's kind of just this old dried out riverbed. As soon as we got to that watty, I said I feel that something is going to happen here.

That's when I saw yellow at first and then I saw white and then I heard the sound. Just this really loud pop. I was very, very fortunate. I only had a few bruises and scratches. I found out my platoon sergeant died. And when my platoon sergeant died, I immediately got up, woke up and I knew, I was like, man, did I do something wrong? Because I was the one that got blown up. I'm like, man, I should have been the one that went.

For myself, it didn't really get hard until I transitioned out. I realized that everybody is just scattered and now I'm kind of doing it on my own. Some of the symptoms that I noticed immediately for me were the restlessness, not being able to sleep at night. I started realizing that I wasn't trusting anybody. I was isolating myself from anything that could be associated with good. I had a hard time trusting people.

There was a certain time where I didn't want to live anymore. I just wanted to die. It was the weirdest thing; I was sitting on my couch one day and I just started crying. I just kind of balled up into a corner. And all of a sudden, it was like a little kid, you know, I just couldn't stop crying. And I just hated myself so much at that very, very moment. And I just didn't want to be here anymore.

I started texting a friend, a very special friend to me. I was trying to find a way to say bye without saying bye so that he doesn't think anything of it. But he caught that. I mean, immediately. He called the police. They showed up at my house. It made me realize that I cannot be lazy with taking care of my mental health.

One on one counseling is my favorite method for therapy. And that's because when you find someone that you can trust you talk with them and it seems like someone is there, someone actually cares. The more and more you get comfortable with them, the more and more you might share something that you were very uncomfortable sharing before. The biggest fear that I see for a lot of people is that as soon as you get labeled PTSD, I'm not going to be able to get a job. I'm not going to be able to be a cop. Which I found out is a lie. You can still do things like that.

Second Battalion 7<sup>th</sup> Marines is my family. I identify myself with that number wherever I go. But at the same time, that deployment that we went on with 2/7 in Afghanistan was really, really hard. We lost a lot of people there and then we're losing people here to suicide. I think 2/7 has the most suicides in the Marine Corps. It's been all over the news in the past recent years. Whenever you have a lot of brothers that kill themselves like that it's always hard. But it's your family.

That's why I love advocating so much for my friends. Because I know how important this therapy is for me, and every time I talk to them, I'm like, you know, I know you haven't



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admitted it to yourself, but you realize that there's some underlying issues. You try to humble yourself right now, try to be humble and go there and seek some help.



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