

Treatment and recovery with family support

Dan: Hi, my name's Dan. I joined the Army National Guard in 1990. I started the service as a Calvary Scout. Through my career I was 11 Bravo, an Infantry guy, and then I finished off as a Combat Medic. The last deployment I had was to Iraq in 2004. It was an 18 month deployment. We flew over to Kuwait and then I drove from Kuwait to the top of Iraq, to Mosul. I saw a lot of injuries. I guess it was good for a Medic because you know, I was busy all the time.

I met my wife there. She was in my unit. We didn't really start dating till after we came back, but that's where I met her. We became really good friends.

I was a Medic for the chow hall bombing in Mosul. Across the street, there was a fire base, Marez, and an Iraqi guy walked in and was strapped with a bomb and blew himself up and killed 18 or maybe 19 people died that day, I forget. There was like 200 injured and that day sticks out, cause I can remember exactly what I was doing two seconds before the bomb went off and then all the way through.

My Platoon Sergeant, one of my best friends, he got blown up in a mortar attack and I was one of the first medics on scene and I didn't know I was working on my Platoon Sergeant. Then I looked over for just one second and this pale guy looking at me, who's my Platoon Sergeant and a great medic, is like, "Dan, is it bad?"

So you didn't have time to think about it then you know, and then you put it in the back of your head and you just work and work and work. Then you come home. Then for the first couple years you don't think about it, you just talk to your friends. Then it hits you two or three years later, four years later and you're sitting there eating dinner and you just start crying for no reason. Then everything just starts coming back.

Drinking was one. I drank a lot and I've cut down a lot, too. I get set off really quick especially if I'm driving.

Before my wife and I were married, she had said that I should start to go to the VA to start a claim for PTSD and I was like, "I don't have PTSD, what the hell are you talking about?" And I'm reading a pamphlet and I'm like I'm not standing vigilant by a door with a pistol at night but I had things like memory. I couldn't remember a damn thing. So I started off going to the Boston VA and they were good. They sent me out to a guy where I'm from, Framingham, so I didn't have to drive as far. Just a Counselor to talk to.

I think there is benefits to having a wife who also is a Veteran and who's also in the exact same place I was. She has seen more than me, I think, cause she used to do a lot of convoys back and forth. She was up at a small little base for a while in the city of Mosul. She knows what I went through. If I talk to my wife more about Iraq I don't think about it as much. I guess that makes sense.

Family is big for me because I live with a big family. I live with my in-laws and my wife and my son. We have dinner every night now at the dinner table. Before, when it was just me and my wife living together we'd just eat in front of the TV, so family helps.

My advice about any mental health issues or PTSD, or whatever you want to call it, is you should be able to get some help. I know that if you're not around military friends



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when you're back and people don't recognize you know you're on the edge, my advice to anybody who thinks they might be going towards that way, would be get some help. Go to the VA. Talk to a friend, someone.



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