

Finding a mentor kept Kevin afloat

Kevin: My name is Kevin and I was with the Air Force, I was in there for about 6 years. I was over in Montana for 3 years but did a year over two tours in Afghanistan and then also was over in South Korea for about two years.

When I was serving you had some autonomy but for the most part it was you have to be here at this point in time, you have to do this, you have to be here. So once you start getting access to make self-determinations about which path that you want to take, that's the hardest thing. I graduated back in December 2015 and with a degree in journalism.

So I ended up getting a lot of temporary jobs in 2016 but also during this whole period of time last year I had a pretty significant family disruption. It was something that compounded an already troubling issue of how am I supposed to get work. So I had a lot of temporary jobs. But as the year went on and I was getting more and more lists or more and more letters saying sorry, you don't have the experience that we are looking for — in particular for a field that is as niche already as journalism is. It was pretty rough.

I had a Veteran Affairs coordinator over there and he was somebody who was a real significant mentor to me. He was former Army himself and he was basically responsible for all of the veteran outreach programs that they had. He was somebody who introduced me to a whole bunch of other good possibilities for jobs, but beyond that even with everything that was going on at home and with me having a lot of free time I found myself pretty regularly going over there and just sitting in his office and kind of discussing with him about some of the stuff that was going on.

I ended up going out for a family get together and one of my cousins, I expressed to my cousin some of the difficulties that I had been having and he mentioned a special program that he was actually responsible for generating that is specifically meant for hiring veterans. So I went ahead and submitted my application and finally after months of hearing nothing I was able to get a pretty decent job and I was able to get my own apartment because I was living with my parents up until that point. It basically completely changed what my situation was. It gave me a job, it gave me something that I can rely on. Something I was able to fund myself with and also just something that was able to help me kind of reconnect with I guess some of the autonomy that I had for some of that section in the military.

Even if you are a more introverted person like me that you don't like to deal with a lot of people the fact is you need to have people in your life. It is those people who can help keep you grounded, that can help you afloat whenever you're feeling like you are drowning. There are a lot of service that are out there for you and just get yourself familiar with them whether it's via going on the internet, using Make the Connection, you know finding a veteran coordinator at a local university. I'm sure that even if you weren't a student there that they will be more than happy to help you out.



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