

Family encouragement got him back on track

Ben: My name is Ben and I served in the Gulf War in the United States Army with the 82nd Airborne as a Tech Unit. It's not like a Hollywood picture. It's now, people getting hurt there. You're seeing real blood. Now you're going, "Oh God, I hope I don't get hit." You're praying that you don't get hit. You have to be brave for your other troops because you've gotta back each other up, but when you see somebody fall down and get hurt by getting shot, that's when it all comes real. I still think about it from time to time too.

I was still going through problems. I was seeing doctors in the military. I fell off a tank and I fractured my back, but then I made it out okay. It's just, I came out in one piece, but my mind didn't come out in one piece. I was on light-duty, because of my injuries. Then I had to retire in 98.

When I got out of the service, I came home and it didn't seem the same, because once you live a military life and then go back home and try to come back to civilian world, it was different. I was having nightmares. I couldn't sleep. I was up at night, all night pacing back and forth and any noise, any backfire or anything, I was jumpy. If I went out, I was always looking around. I was really nervous and still scared to be out in the street.

My family is the one who took me. They said, "There's something wrong with you and you need to see a doctor." And it took them a couple of weeks to get me there because I kept on saying, "There's nothing wrong with me." I guess I got worse because my family couldn't take it no more. I went to a regular doctor appointment. I hear on the speaker my name being called. I'm like, "Why's my name being called?" When I go to the room, there are two doctors there. They said, "Until you're ready to go, we're not releasing you." From there on, I was going to groups, in the ward going to groups. I was ready after the fourth week because they let me go home. But within two weeks later, I end up going back on myself, going back in on myself. I couldn't take it. I was feeling guilt and then I wanted to hurt myself and at that time, I came back out after two months.

I stayed with my sister which she lives up in the country area which is more peaceful and quiet so the doctor felt that would be better for me to go away for a little while, go enjoy a little quietness because he felt that when I first got out, because of the noise and stuff, that was part of a trigger. I was constantly going to the doctor, it was like every two weeks. Every two weeks until they stabilized me. They also put me in a group where other guys who have PTSD. So we all like tell each other our stories and we all get along. We understand each other and I have my counselor and I have my doctor which constantly look after me.

If you're afraid to talk to your Lieutenant, go to the Chaplain because the Chaplain will guide you the right way. The Chaplains in the military, they keep everything to themselves and they'll guide you the right way for help. But I tell them, "When you get out don't keep it built inside. You gotta go seek help. You can't stay home," like I say "In the bunker." "You gotta get out of that bunker. You gotta seek help. You gotta put that foot forward and try to keep going" and the VA does that for you. It took me a while and I got a lot of help and I'm getting better and better, you know, every day. It worked for me and it probably could work for you. Just give it a try.



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