

Branching out for support

Mike: My name is Mike. I was Air Force. My uncles, all the men on my mother's side, father's side were in the military. It was just a passion and I said "When I grow up I'm gonna work on airplanes or helicopters. One of the two."

We were sent right after Desert Storm to an operation in Qatar, and that's where one of the major traumas that I incurred or experienced was. We had to travel to Saudi Arabia to recover some aircraft.

Nightmares would be extremely vivid, reliving a certain fear not just the occurrence that they said would trigger it. Wife walks in and finds you in the closet buried under shoes and your old junk. "You alright." "Yeah I am fine, how did I get here?" For a while I was having those and I was thinking something was wrong with me. What is going on?

I turned to temporary relief and I found it in a bottle in a bar. I was diagnosed at one time, said you are an alcoholic. That is one of the times when I had to look inside. That was a big personal issue. Someone who was in Vietnam, he was a deacon in a local church and he said "Would you like to talk? I am not here to criticize. I am not here to judge. Just tell me what is going on." That is when I started branching out. Not just the friends I had from the different organizations, but talking to teachers and church and finding out hey there are Vets in church here and one of them is a licensed Counselor. He directed me to the Vet Center.

I found individuals understanding. They said we can't get you into a PTSD program until you are diagnosed but we have this avenue, you can see this Doctor. He offered suggestions and pointers and the VA, they have done more for me as far as pointing me in the direction to go even though I have not received a full diagnosis of PTSD, I still seek out the VA Centers. Having a support group for that with other members who went through the same thing and would sit and talk. There was a lot of understanding that really helped me through and get me to the point to realize no this isn't me, we check up on each other. We motivate, have the drive to do it. When you speak with someone and they make a statement, if you need anything call me. That look in their eyes and that tone in their voice you know they are serious. You are standing in the middle of a city you have never been before and you are lost. They will give you a map and it is up to you to read the map.



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