

## Counseling provided tools to cope with challenges

**Derek:** My name is Dereck. I served in the Navy from 2001 to 2004. I was a sonar technician on a submarine stationed out of Pearl Harbor. I did a little time on the Auxiliary Security Force right after 9/11. When I joined the military, I was only 17. I had to get my parents to sign off on me to allow me to join. When I got to my boat I was just over 18 years old and what ultimately happened was at the end of our workday when everybody is supposed to clean up before you can go home, I would be the one cleaning up and they would all be gathered around me yelling at me you know, "Hey, you're not doing a good enough job. You're not doing it quick enough." And this went on day in and day out. It was, I guess you could say it was kind of like a hazing thing, and after a while I got tired of it. I couldn't handle it. It was too much stress for me, so I needed to talk to someone else to get out of the that situation.

I went and talked to the boat doctor and I told him, "Look, I can't handle this, you know I'm going to end up hurting someone or myself if this doesn't stop." So, they took me off the boat and put me in a transient division and sent me to the clinic to talk to a psychiatrist, and that's what I did, and I talked to him for months. I had a really great doctor, he listened to me. Anytime I told him about a different need or something he addressed that. I was diagnosed with obsessive compulsive disorder and cyclothymia. One day I could be depressed and the very next day I could be elated, perfectly fine. The specific treatment for that was basically medication and learning how not to take things personally you know. So, that was really my biggest part was learning to build up a thick skin to deal with both anger and depression.

Ultimately, between the medication and the counseling that I received I learned new tools, how to control my anger, how to handle situations that I wasn't in control of, how to let go. I got married in 2007 and that requires a whole different level of maturity and dealing with a whole different set of problems and my wife and I fought constantly about all the different issues that come with being permanently attached to another person and eventually I went and sought more treatment. I went to anger management classes and then I went to see a psychologist about particularly anger management, you know how to take a deep breath, take a step back, not make rash decisions when you're angry and stuff like that, and I didn't need anymore medication after that. You know, it was just strictly counseling and learning to deal with things in the moment.

The main contributing factor to my second round of counseling that I felt was necessary for my anger problems was my wife was not only, was she a very dominant personality but she also had breast cancer and she got diagnosed with breast cancer right after I met her. It was really hard on both of us. I mean, to sit and watch somebody go through so much pain and trauma and not be able to do anything to help them is really what contributed to my anger through insecurity and basically feeling helpless because I'm not able to help her. She's been 5 years cancer free now, everything's great. I've been at my current job for 7 years now. When I have a problem, I don't just give up anymore. I face the problem, I fix the problem, if I can't fix the problem, I accept responsibility for the problem. VA services at the hospital has been really great. VA services at the college, you know to have somebody there to talk to, they're very receptive at the college as well. You know, they have this little office that I can go into where other Vet's volunteer to work there, and they go in and they're very friendly and very informative and I've used their tools and my wife especially has seen a big change in me in how I conduct myself and handle intense situations.



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