

Connecting to care and relating to other Veterans

Dathan: My name is Dathan, former U.S. Marine, twenty-two years in the Marine Corps. Started off as a field radio operator and I think that the biggest reason why I wanted to do that is because it was in California. I wanted to get out of D.C. and just, you know, go as far away as I could possibly go. And school was in California, so what better place to go in California.

All of the training you go for, nothing prepares you for combat or seeing some of the things that I saw and it was just you know on the one scale horrific, on the other side real humbling just because of my position. You had to be that guy with this level head all of the time, you know, no matter if you had casualties or not. That was difficult for me, because I had no idea, you know. I didn't know how to deal with it and you don't want to ask for help because you're supposed to be the guy that has all the answers.

I think if you'd asked me two years prior to me getting out, I was going to stay for thirty years, I was going to be the sergeant major in the Marine Corps. I was going to just do everything. After, when I came back, that's when I was like "wow, it's just not, somethings wrong, somethings missing." My wife noticed a lot of things that, you know, I was really quick-tempered, I was really quick-tempered with my oldest son and I think that I was seeing him as one of my marines. And they've been through two deployments with me, both combat and you know both seven months at a time, and she was the mom and dad and she was the one that's doing everything, so when I came back I wanted everything, I wanted to have a say-so. I didn't think I had any issues, because I'm the top dog, you know, I'm the guy that didn't need any issues. So, when I got out, I was sergeant major and we, right after the second deployment, was in Iraq, I just didn't think I needed any help until my wife kept pushing me and pushing me.

It was the process of going through the whole disability rating thing, and talking to a psychiatrist in the VA and he started asking me questions like "what life-changing events that you don't think you can do anymore?" and I, that had never been asked to me before, so, it made me think about things that bother me like the Fourth of July. I couldn't enjoy Fourth of July with my family. Fireworks bother me, the booming and things like that, it bothered me.

My private psychologist suggested you know that you get with you know some Marine's or Veterans that share the same symptoms or the same issues that you were going through, and she suggested the Vet center, so I went to some, they call them group sessions, group therapy, to talk about PTSD and any issues that you had. Any addictions or anything like that and there were some that had alcohol problems and some drug problems but the majority of them had some PTSD issues. No matter what age you are, if you can relate on any type of level, you have that connection, and I found that young Marines now that you know got out in 2010, 11, we automatically connect. Now again, in the infantry you're going to have a different connection, however my connection is broad because I've seen a lot in twenty years so, you know I think just talking and being part of counseling, it does help.

I'm slowly getting back to the person I was pre-Iraq and the person that was you know hey, having fun with the Marines, having fun and not screaming at people. It's like a breath of fresh air because for me, again, I had a big wall. I didn't think I needed it, and that's what I wanted. I just want it you know to be peace, you know, but, and deal with



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anytime I thought about or had any type of issues, what to do and if you trust in the system, it does work.

My wife, she didn't give up, she just kept saying "you need to get help." You know, and I pushed back a lot, but if you listen to her and you trust your spouse, you trust your husband, then you're going to get help, so my advice is just to listen and encourage them to get help, because it only helps them in the long run.



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