

Resources to get headed in the right direction

Sam: My name is Sam and I served in the United States Army, and my MOS was — I was a personnel specialist. We went on a tour to Bosnia. When I was in a personnel capacity was assigned to guard duty. As I was guarding the perimeter on the wire, what happened was, all of a sudden I hear bang, bang, bang, bang, and I wasn't sure. I was at the — I was fully loaded, had my M16 ready and didn't know what it was. If it was someone attacking us or if it was just kids playing with firecrackers, so that caused me a lot of stress that I dealt with even afterwards.

I had trouble adjusting cause when I was driving in the street and I'd hear a siren of an ambulance or a car whizzing past me it would sound like the sound of gun fire — that bang, bang, bang sound, but it was really a siren. And then I would stop and I would pull over and then I would realize it was just an ambulance or a squad car, so I was having trouble adjusting in that fashion, just going day-to-day running errands in the car. I had what they called post-traumatic stress disorder. So, I wasn't able to concentrate, having nightmares, kind of being agitated, irritated, and I wouldn't be able to concentrate on anything and then I ultimately, I was referred to get some counseling.

It helped me deal with it much better, so I was able to deal with it better knowing I wasn't the only one that it happened to. It was good that I had a strong support network to go to. When I decided to get out of the Army, to go into the civilian sector and then I thought it was over with — the nightmares, the PTSD, but then it started up again. So then I went to seek counseling again.

I was kind of hiding the situation — what happen, what was happening with the nightmares and the PTSD. I was, I was hiding it, didn't want anyone to know because those who weren't former military I thought wouldn't understand. So, then I built up my support network outside of the military and the others were able to tell me that being able to talk with others is very crucial and then from there, I got enough strength to talk to others, family members about the situation.

It was actually an informal counseling group that I was referred to through the VA and then I made contact and then I joined the next group and then from there, I became a regular member. Made a huge difference because they were able to be empathetic and sympathetic. That was the key and for someone to be able to understand what I was going through.

There has been a huge improvement. I've turned the corner since I've been able to get the support, I've learned how to deal with people more, to communicate, my interpersonal skills have improved and there's a lot of resources and it's just a matter of discovering where they are. The main thing is, you gotta seek help. You gotta use the resources that are there and go and do 'em and get your foot in the door and start doing something and they'll help you out at the VA. They'll make sure you go in the right direction, down the right path.



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