

Support to overcome health issues and depression

Bill: Hi, my name is Bill. I am a US Army Veteran. My MOS was 11 Bravo. I was in the Infantry. I was trained in Fort Polk, Louisiana, and my assignment was in Kitzingen, Germany. Then, just as fate had it, I became the Battalion Commander's driver and I had a jeep and a staff car. It was peace time, and the country just came off of Vietnam. And being in combat arms in the Infantry during peace time is, I mean, that has its own struggle because there's a lot of sort of pent up frustration. But the discipline, the sort of respect and just this whole hierarchy within the Military was really good for me.

Getting out, it was such a paradox because I was dying to get out and then when I got out I was a little lost. I just felt like I had been out on a spaceship for a while and I really hadn't landed, or I was having a difficult landing. You're sort of back to this undisciplined freestyle and you have all this time on your hands and it was like I needed to learn how to fill time and have structure on my own.

I was drinking and experimenting with drugs a little bit. And so, that had its own issues in that I can remember here in Boston I went into the VA and told them that I was drinking a lot. I was having these problems about not sort of transitioning back. So, with the help of the Psychiatrist that I was seeing here, they made some suggestions and then I would have to report back what I did and it was kind of like transposing the structure from the Military onto my civilian life.

I actually, through the GI Bill, I went to Boston University here in town. So, that was good. That was the upside of it. But back then, I was one of the only Veterans in my classes. I remember I was in this one class and this girl asked me, "Have you ever killed anyone?" And I mean, it just really kind of threw me. Because I was in peace time, I'd never really, I was thinking like these people, I wonder how they look at me. So, when you're in this mode of like figuring out where you fit in society and at the same time, I was wondering what they were thinking about me being a Veteran.

Later on, ten years ago, I had big-time liver problems. I had hepatitis C and my liver was going to shut down. And so, at that point, I had to make some decisions. I was treated through the VA Hospital with a drug called interferon, which is a 48-week low-grade chemotherapy and one of the side effects is depression, and it was bad depression. It was depression that I'd never experienced before. I mean, one of the side effects they say is suicidal ideation, and I had it. I mean, at one point, decided I'm either going to kill myself or I gotta get off this medication. But they put me on anti-depressants and then I was seeing a Psychiatrist on a fairly regular basis. And then I just talked to them a lot and it was kind of like all of these thoughts and fears that I was just holding in and they were building up inside of me, I was able to just release them.

I was so like focused on what was wrong with my life, not what was right, that grew out of proportion that when I went in and it just like shrank. It just disappeared, the whole... And I realized my life is really not so bad. It's almost like you have to take a risk when you ask for help, to seek help, to seek psychiatric help, therapy. It's almost like you really need to take a chance to have a chance.



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