

Getting back on track through counseling

Angelo: My name is Angelo. I was in the Navy, I was a cook, and when I was in Vietnam the Marine Corps got hit at noontime, at seven mortar rounds, and there were about 600 wounded and 75 dead and they asked the Navy if they could send some men to replace them for, you know, a short time, and I wound up staying for a year, going on patrol and then everything else. It was rough, it was very rough, very tense all the time. From there, I went to submarines. I was on the USS, um, Sam Houston, went to, uh, Atlanta, Georgia after that for shore duty, and it was a small base, I enjoyed that very much. I had my wife and three children then, and we'd just go up to lakes and go boating. It was very relaxing for me because I was having bad dreams, really bad. When I got discharged I went and entered truck driving school up in North Carolina, and I graduated top in my class and I drove a truck for 13 years, and a friend of mine was already in Iraq and he called me from Iraq and told me I had to get my butt over there because they needed me, and the worst part was to tell my wife that I was going to Iraq. It was very hard and then one day I just told her about three days before I was heading for Texas to KBR, that I was going.

My job was just a truck driver. We were hauling food, Navy exchange supplies, gasoline, diesel, aviation fuel and ammo, and we had about 18 trucks on the convoy and one bobtail. If a truck got hit, we'd pull the truck out and put the bobtail in and we can still move and then pick up the driver and go, you know, just left the truck burning. IEDs, mortar rounds, AK-47s, the trucks got hit, we got blown up, but we only lost one man out of a year and a half that I was over there.

I didn't have any problems over there, I didn't have no nightmares. I had a job to do and I did it. I called my wife one night because I was exhausted, and I was completely burned out, and I called her and I said "Jasmine, I'm coming home." Four days later I was on a plane. Got home, had a nice party and everything, two days later I couldn't get out of bed. I stayed in bed for three weeks. I had flashbacks that made me feel different than other people because it hurt. I wouldn't talk to anybody, I looked down, and if we were at a family group or something I'd just get up and walk away, and there were times that I just got in the car and went home.

The lowest I've been was that I wanted to commit suicide. Then someone told me when I was seeing my doctor, my regular doctor, that I ought to go up on the fifth floor to see a counselor, and I did. It's been about two and a half years and I could tell her anything, and what I did, and it was easy to talk to her. She was fantastic. She started giving me some pills so I could sleep more at night and relax during the day. It worked. It helped me quite a bit.

My son, he didn't understand. Jasmine tried to explain to him, but he wouldn't listen, and he went further away from me instead of coming close. Now we're good buddies, good friends. We go deep sea fishing. He comes over to the house, we have fun and talk and it's great, and had the swimming pool, we used to go swimming and everything in the pool. It's really fantastic, it's great.

The best thing to do is go to the VA. It worked for me, it's working for many people, and it's just fantastic. The doctors up there are great, so don't stay at home, seek help.



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