

## A Strong Routine

**Bennie:** When I got out, it was difficult. People don't know what you've been through. And I felt like the incident that happened to me had a tendency to control me. I absolutely refused to allow that.

My name is Bennie. I was in the Army. I was a 72B20. And I went in 1968, and I had to get out in '69 because I was injured. From the day I went into the military, I thought I was going to be able to benefit my country. I just took to it like a duck to water. I really loved it. I intended to stay in, and I was going to see if I could not get a fast track to OCS because I just felt like that that was a calling for me.

I've always been an outdoor girl. So being in California, I used to run at night at the beach on post. One night, I was accosted by three men. And I think that they actually meant to kill me. My injuries were so severe, and I did have a pregnancy. That was the end of my military career because, at that time, you could not be pregnant or have been pregnant. Even though it was no fault on my own, I was devastated.

I ended up traveling quite a bit. Then I went back to Georgia. I walked into a VA. Here I am, and I've got this head injury. I can't hear on my left ear. I got involved with a lot of the programs. I'm so glad I did that. My doctor is always trying to figure out new ways to work with me. And she knows that I am totally engaged and involved. They have a women's clinic, a mindfulness course, yoga, Tai Chi, everything.

I did a couple sessions with EMVR. I have severe panic attacks. It's so useful. Has the ability to break that. I haven't had a migraine in two years, and I had at least two to three a week. At the VA, something happened, it just snapped in me how blessed I was.

If it doesn't enliven your spirit, don't do it. Just say, no, I want to be here in my heart and my soul. My daughter is absolutely phenomenal. She's driven. She has a purpose. Raising a child alone is a huge responsibility. And seeing me being extremely independent and never giving up, made a huge difference with her. My life has been tough, and I'm so grateful. I've been given tools to make it less tough.

Every time you walk into the VA, you become more grounded, you become more appreciative. Can you imagine how that makes you feel?



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