

Persistence to find effective treatment

Marcus: Uh, my name is Marcus and uh I was in the Army stationed out of Fort Lewis for most of my tour. Um, went to Iraq for a little over a year all over the country. Um, was supposed to be a wheel mechanic, ended up doing that and recoveries and welding fabrication, that kind of stuff. I was for the most of my tour, I'd say the first half, I was probably okay. The second half of the tour, um, was a good bit different, uh, when the losses were not so much from snipers, but they actually started losing lives to IEDs. I started having some problems there, um, and and because of all the losses, the battalion called in some counselors to talk to all of us in mass and whether it was the person that came to see us or I just wasn't ready to talk, who knows, but um, that particular person, I didn't really see a lot of benefit from.

When I came home, I continued having some problems and uh, I sought out help from the, from the Army psychologist and things like that and, I, I was ready for help at that point. Unfortunately the first person that I saw was of the opinion that you can't have PTSD that soon after you return, um and so the general treatment was just, you basically need to suck it up type thing. You know, I did the wrong thing, and I just said screw it, you know I'll just man up and get through it, and was able to kind of do that, um, probably close to seven to eight months.

All my, all my friends had been moved, relocated, I'd been changed in units, um, I'd been moved from an infantry battalion to a rear main support battalion. I was sent out to a mortar range to pick up a vehicle that had broken down and when they were firing, I really started having severe anxiety, um, had a lot of issues. Although they weren't able to get me out of there, I did have an appointment set up **for time (01:52)** I got back. Um, and that therapist helped a lot. It started out you know, kind of the cliché thing of tell me about your experience, and the first several times it was just repeat your experience, repeat your experience. You know, it really did hurt at first because I'd go home and I'd have worst nightmares, um for a night or two after we had talked, cause everything was fresh.

For the longest time, I would have argued and told you it was the worst thing ever, that...and, and it was painful, it was rough, but coming to terms with...it was there was the first step. You know, confronting it instead of trying to hide it or forget it. Um, then the next step was how to deal with the anxiety. The breathing techniques that we went over. Um, relaxation techniques which I still struggle with. Umm, it takes a, a good bit of effort and, and determination to really master those and come to terms and be able to use them. Probably the biggest help that those tools have helped me with, um, and, and, and confronting my experiences as well are when I'm dealing with the civilian population.

I'm 33 years old, you know, I joined the military late, I've returned to college late. I was really concerned sitting in a classroom with 18 and 19 year olds. Um, number one, just the age and maturity, but my life experience versus theirs. I'm a single dad. I got an 11 and a 13 year daughter. I think it makes me a better father for the help I got. I think it's consistently gotten better since I've been home. Um, and I think that's due to the counseling I received in the service, out of the service, um, and of course being with friends and loved ones always helps.



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