

Support helped this Veteran achieve his goals

Todd: My name is Todd. I was an 11 Bravo in the Army, which is an Infantryman. I served my four years at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and then was part of the initial push into Iraq in 2003 to 2004. My father had just passed away months before my deployment, so I was already kind of dealing with the emotional stresses of that. When we got to Kuwait, it was an entirely different world. Someone who hadn't traveled outside of the country, all of a sudden thrust into Kuwait where constantly we were having scud missiles fired at us.

Once I separated from the military is when I really began to notice the problems. The lack of structure from the military, my unit, the support from my fellow soldiers. I was always depressed, extremely anxious. Sounds, smells would put me right back in these different moments that definitely affected me mentally. Anytime I'd hear a siren, anytime I would hear anything remotely close to a warning about a scud missile, my heart would race. I would literally feel like I was going to have a heart attack.

Instead of seeking help initially, I thought drinking was the way. I thought not talking about it and partying a lot or getting angry was the right way to deal with this. I started several different jobs, was never able to hold on to them because some days if I didn't feel like going in, I just wouldn't show up. I wouldn't call. Just very irresponsible in a way, but just kind of a feeling of hopelessness. There's nothing for me. So, I made a big decision in my life that I would follow a job, get myself away from that night life where I was constantly, I guess, almost drinking my sorrows away, for lack of a better term.

A buddy of mine who had recently gotten out of Special Operations came down, and we got a place together. It just so happened that our landlord happened to work within the VA system. And she asked the two of us, "Do you go to the VA? Do you see anyone for different things?" And of course, our answer was no.

My first time walking into a VA hospital, which was here in Charleston, immediately I was greeted by an OEF/OIF liaison. And from there, we just kind of opened up about all the services provided. I was pushed through to get a primary care physician and then would seek mental health services. And quite immediately it was found that I was in need of some PTSD therapy. And the doctor that I specifically dealt with, she and I did a form of cognitive behavioral therapy. I knew that for myself at least, that individual one-on-one PTSD therapy would kind of benefit me the most.

The OEF/OIF office, I believe I feel very fortunate that they have been created within the VA system because they keyed me into all sorts of different options to help me attain or help me achieve my goals. And just last May I graduated. It was something I never thought was going to happen when I got out of the military. They saw me through mental health. They saw me through other physical ailments, things of that nature. A real support team.

You can recover. You can begin a new life. I do believe that I'm living proof that the VA can help you create kind of a clean slate for your life to really begin anew and really combat those traumas that may affect you.



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

**MAKE THE
CONNECTION**