

Dealing with feelings of hopelessness in therapy

Scott: My name is Scott. I was originally from '87 to '89 in the Army Reserve as a TOW gunner and I got out for a couple years, went back in from '91 to '94 as a medic, got back out in '94, and went to work for the fire department, after 9/11 volunteered in '07 and reenlisted as a medic until 2010 and ended up over in Iraq for a year.

We were working like 12-hour days while we were over there, from 10 a.m. to 10 o'clock at night, and I was having some physical fitness issues, my weight wasn't where it was supposed to be by Army standards, and I started to feel more and more depressed. The workload seemed to be getting worse and worse. They were getting harder and harder every day. You know, you stopped enjoying yourself. You stop, you know used to like going to work and working and then it got to the point where I just couldn't stand it anymore and just wanted to wait for a day off.

The suicidal thoughts I had sometimes would be laced with the fact that like I feel like I failed some of the patients because you know, we're there for 12 hours and you have limited access to the patient's because they're all locked up constantly and so at the end of the day everyday you would think about that one or two patients you didn't see, that you said, oh, I'll be back.

So, one day I was just sitting there, you know waiting for the last couple medics to come in from their compounds at the end of their shift to drive the bus back, about an hour later my platoon Sergeant was there and I asked him what was going on and stuff like that. You know, I told him, I said, you know, I just, you know I can't take it much anymore and just day in and day out the same thing. And they took me over to the mental health, they took away my weapon, took me to the mental health counselor and stuff like that and I talked to them, and I ended up talking to the like the psychiatrist over there and they started me on some medication which made me start feeling better and you know, they took my bolt away for a while, like a week you know to make sure everything was okay. And then, about a month after that they finally ended up moving me out of the wire.

Every week or two I'd meet with the counselor and we'd go over like how I was feeling, you know if I have any episodes were I felt like hurting myself, you know what did I do, that if I felt like hurting myself did I tell anybody. You know, and we'd talk about home life, you know were there any stresses at home that would cause, besides being away was there anything at home that were causes stressors to, to make things worse. They listened and you know they helped you out and made you feel better. You know, you could walk out of there and know that you were going to be, I left there feeling better every time.

We came back in September of 2009. I was discharged off active duty October of '09 and shortly after that I got a phone call about, I was up for a promotion, I was going to be promoted and going to be going into a different unit which was actually closer to home. I was there for maybe a year, you know doing one weekend a month, this time we're going to Afghanistan so, within a year of being home I was gonna be going away again, and my mental health started to deteriorate even more. Every day on the highway it was you know kind of considered driving my car into a truck. I was thinking about the fact that we were going to be deploying again. You know, it was putting a lot of stress on my wife and it was gonna, it was definitely going to cause a strain. It was going to cause a



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mental strain on the family and it just made things just get worse and worse. I ended up calling the crisis hotline at the Army one day and talked to them for a little bit. You know, talked to my platoon Sergeant and stuff like that and then you know I ended up seeing an Army Psychiatrist and you know we went over what was going on. How I was feeling and they found that it was best that I get out.

The psychiatrist and psychologist I see right now is actually through a private practice just because I, you know I had hooked up with them pretty quick when I got out. I see the VA for other things, like my hearing. I have hearing loss. I have hearing aids from them. I have sleep apnea which I see them for. If I didn't have something, I know the VA would be right there for me, to give me the help I need but you know, I happened to have private practice that does it right now. So, I just stick with them. I see a psychologist every 3 weeks. I see a psychiatrist once or twice, every couple of months for medication and stuff like that and I'm still here because of it. I work fulltime as a firefighter. I'm using the GI Bill. I go to school for photography. Sometimes you just need somebody to talk to that is not gonna judge you. You know, get the help you need, talk to somebody. You gotta, you know live and just you know and get better. If not, you know no matter how bad it gets there's a way to get, there's a way to get better.



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