

## Therapy for PTSD helped Kenny open up

**Kenny:** My name's Kenny. I served in the Army for eight years, did three tours in Iraq as a Combat Medic. When I got back in 2003 there were nightmares all the time, I drank all the time. My wife and I, we fought a lot. Then in 2005 when I deployed again, things got so bad over there that I just shut down emotionally. Angry outbursts, never anything physical, but certainly, you know, a lot of yelling. You know, me just being mad for kinda no reason sometimes. The biggest symptom for me is kinda emotional numbness. It became really hard to kinda reattach emotionally to my family. At the time, my son was three and raising him was a struggle. Just day-to-day interactions with my wife was a struggle and it kinda went on like that until I deployed again in 2008.

It was my assessment for mental health during my QTC VA visits where the Psychologist said to me, "I think you're experiencing the classic signs and symptoms of PTSD," and what I said to him at first was, "No, I don't have PTSD. I wasn't out on the roads all the time. I didn't get shot at all the time. There's soldiers out there that are way worse off than I am." He saw that I was resistant, and he said, "I'm not here to convince you to go and get treatment, I'm just here to let you know that the treatment is there for you." After that, I went and started getting therapy at the VA and I've been in treatment with my Counselor for I guess four and a half years now.

The biggest thing that's helped me is something called Cognitive Processing Therapy. I had gone in to see my Counselor and she said, "I think we're going to try to do this therapy with you, and what I want you to do is I want you to think about an event that really haunts you and I want you to go home and I want you to write it all down." That started the ball rolling of being able to kinda talk about that incident and how I felt about it now and being able to talk about the dreams I was having. The dreams are still there but they're manageable now, and I think they're more manageable because I've become more comfortable talking about the patients. I've become more comfortable talking about what it was like over there.

My treatment's been effective and it's helped me kinda bridge the gap I guess that I needed to bridge from military service to being a civilian and how to deal effectively with these memories that I have. To recognize that, you know, if I'm having memories about the war, or if I'm having memories about patients that I treated, to realize that that could be a trigger that makes me emotional and that I could have the potential to turn those emotions into negativity. That's very helpful. To be able to recognize that this is a normal thing that Veterans go through. You're not just flying off the handle because you're crazy, you're flying off the handle because you have some real emotional events in your past that you need to deal with and you need to be able to process that kind of stuff.

There's a million routes out there that a Veteran can take, but they have to be willing to take that first step. It only benefits, your family, your community, your country if you're doing better. If you feel disconnected, connect.



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