

Support and understanding to overcome challenges

Nathan: I'm Nathan and I was in the Marine Corp for 8 years, and I joined right after 9/11, that was when I was 17 and then I spent 8 years in the Marine Corp as a combat engineer.

Nathan: At the time I was just excited to do my job, should be interesting. My first deployment was just incredible. It was just stars in my eyes, wow this is crazy stuff, I'm like living in a movie, adrenaline rush.

Nathan: For my second deployment, I was in Combat Outpost, Ramadi that was not a fun deployment that was my hardest deployment. We had a lot of casualties, and destruction and I had to relearn who I was, because I lost myself out there, and most of my friends died in OIF II, except for one who ended up committing suicide about 2 weeks after we got back.

Nathan: Not deploying again, I was relieved on one hand, but also the other hand, every combat Veteran that I'm around, that I know, they still want to be a part of the fight, they don't want to leave their brothers over there.

Nathan: After each deployment, they sit you down in those PTSD briefs and of course, just like most Marines, I rolled my eyes and went, right, PTSD, not me. I had a lot of reasons why I didn't think it would ever affect me. Looking back 20/20, it was affecting me already.

Nathan: I felt like a stranger in my own home, let alone everywhere else. At least when I was in the military, whether I was in training or whether I was just working a normal schedule, I could go to work and people got it, people understood. All of a sudden, I wasn't surrounded by people who got it, my wife, my kids didn't understand why I was different, and I didn't understand them anymore. I couldn't understand the petty complaints, so I pulled away when I first got out, I thought it was everyone else's fault that they didn't get me. I was on the computer one time for 54 hours without sleeping, I didn't want to eat, and I didn't want to take a second to think about my life because that's where my life was at at that point. So as you could imagine, that could cause so problems in a marriage when you're ignoring the other person, your significant other, and so my wife said, very plainly, "Look, either you get help or I get out." I did get help. I ended up finding help through the Vet Center. They also did marriage and family therapy with me and my wife a few times.

Nathan: When I first got told that I had PTSD I actually went into a deep depression because, I mean here I was already having problems, then somebody says I have a disorder, and that word weighs heavy, really heavy on a person, and for me that was hard to hear. Understanding that that disorder doesn't have to be a part of your Post Traumatic Stress was a big part for me, and admitting that I had an issue, because then it's just a natural reaction, that's all it is. It's a reaction you're supposed to have to a traumatic situation. Those images are going to be there, those memories are not going to go away, but it doesn't have to completely destroy your life, that's all in how you deal with it. Now that I understand it better, that was my first step in creating a better household, understanding myself better, being able to understand why they didn't understand me.



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Nathan: So many people think that. “Oh, well you just need to suck it up and don’t ask for a hand out.” It’s simply the VA fulfilling the contract that you signed when you went in, because you said you were going to give your everything, and then they said they’re going to take care of anything that happens to you in the service. I’m not asking for a handout when I go in and ask for help with my TBI, my PTSD, back issues, chest issues, IBS, I’ve got many different issues.

Nathan: This is something that would happen to anybody, any Marine, and there’s many other Marines who are seeking help, and that also helps too, because once you see that, okay, I’m not alone in this, it really helps to kind of forward that thinking on.

Nathan: Now that I understand why I was feeling the way I felt, I was able to deal with it better. So loving my kids is easier, life is getting better, and just choosing one thing each day to improve on and just one step at a time getting better.



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