

## Paige found a new perspective through treatment

**Paige:** My name is Paige and I served in the United States Navy from 1987 to 1991 and I was in the reserves for another four years and I was also in the California National Guard. I was a radio operator in the Navy and military intelligence in the Cal Guard.

I dealt with sexism on a daily basis and that is like a hostile work environment. It's like the water going over the rocks every day in the river, it's slowly just wearing away. I think I had issues for a long time, and I was oblivious to having issues. When I got out, when I came off of active duty, I went back to school, I was working and going to school, but I had relationship failures and I think there was some underlying issues that I just couldn't quite see at the time. But being younger and keeping busy allowed me to kind of push through, kind of a military mentality. So, it wasn't until some life circumstances, kind of the bottom dropping out and getting a little older, that I finally kind of hit, what I call, a bottom with things.

I really wanted to get married and have children with the man that I was with, and that wasn't working out either and so I was sort of at my wits end as to what was my purpose in life. I found myself in a pretty dark place for a pretty long period of time and just feeling sort of trapped in a way, just not knowing exactly what I should do next.

I had a weapon, one of my boyfriend's firearms I had been kind of carrying around with me for a period of time, and so I guess I must not have really wanted to do it, because I ended up calling suicide prevention. Suicide prevention talked me into the local emergency room, and it was there that I found out I was eligible for VA benefits. But I ended up going into a day program at the San Francisco VA. It got me away from my home environment which was kind of a constant reminder of what's not working in my life, and they also put me on serotonin, a reuptake inhibitor in low dosage, but that anxiety was as much a problem for me as depression was.

The medication sort of evened me out, and the program gave me a neutral place to be. I got to see a therapist on a weekly basis for almost two years and through that process, I really got to dig a lot deeper into some things. I learned about cognitive behavior, behavior therapy and the opportunity to kind of pause and step outside of myself. This thing where I'm just in this body and my mind has all these habits and plays all these tricks and everything, and if I can just kind of step aside and examine all that and see it for what it is.

I think it was the combination of the chemistry between me and the therapist, but it was, a lot of it had to do with my dedication to the process and my openness to the process. It's being present with whatever you're feeling in the moment and it started out in therapy, I'd spend the last two minutes of the therapy session being present and by the time I left, I actually would be able to start the session being present and talking about my feelings. I had to want it and I had to figure out what's really important to me and what was important to me was to not repeat the same patterns in relationships, regardless of what those relationships are, whether it's with my family or a significant other, or even my relationship with myself.

For the last five or six years, not only have I not had depression, but I've also been happy, which I didn't even know what that meant. It's my perspective. I picked up the tools that were...some were laid out in front of me and others I had to trip across, or



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seek out, but there's a lot of different tools out there and it's not the same for everybody. The biggest piece of advice is to say yes. Is to let go and to say yes. Not everybody's got the same answer and there's a lot of different answers out there, and just be open. Just be open to all different things and you'll find the one, the things that work for you.



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