

Reaching out can help with the transition

Tim: My name is Tim, served in the US Army from 2004 to 2008. Our mission, we were trying to keep the enemy from coming in from Pakistan. We were right on the very northern part of Afghanistan. It was a life-changer, you learn stuff about yourself you never thought possible and do things you never thought possible. It plays a factor for the rest of your life.

The transition back to civilian life is extremely difficult. It seemed like everything you try to do, you try to compare it to what you used to do, and that's impossible. And you start finding out little things that maybe you're not qualified for, and then you start getting down on yourself and then it makes everything else come back up and makes it all worse again. That whole mentality of like my dad, old school Army guy tells you, "Put it in the back of your head, forget about it...just self-medicate, drink, you'll be OK." And I tried that, but I would just get angry and do stuff that would make it worse. My wife, I couldn't even admit to her that something was wrong and when she seen it firsthand and I would tell her there's nothing wrong. She saw me do things that I never thought I could do. Waking up in my sleep and acting out things that could potentially harm her. Your family's got to deal with it just as much as you do, if you self-medicate and you don't know what your doing, they do, they see it, you don't. I just knew I was going down a wrong path. It was either "I'm going to kill myself" or "I need to talk to somebody."

I was sitting on railroad tracks, I got, self-medicating and I was ready to just call it quits and, I don't know something clicked. Said, "This isn't the way I need to do this", and decided to go to the VA and started from there, started fresh, started all over.

If it's your first time going, you keep it to yourself, you don't want to let it out. But they ask questions and it pulls it out of you and it's a huge relief when you do say it. One on one's I find to be the best, just because there's no one else around besides you and that person and you, once you go a couple times you establish a connection with that person and you feel comfortable talking to them because you're going to tell it to somebody that you know is not going to judge you about it, and that's something that you can't find anywhere else besides going to someone like that and talking with people that are trained to do that.

The hardest part for me was learning that I need to learn new skills. I have to adapt and overcome. I've got a new normal, that's what it is for me. I have to deal with the TBI and the PTSD and that's more than what other people have to deal with but if I get the right training, get the right help, it's going to work out fine. I could look at myself in the mirror and know that I'm doing the right thing and I'm getting better every day and I'm going to succeed no matter what the economy is, no matter what I'm dealing with. What happened to me has happened to millions of other guys and if I'm sitting here then they know that there's hope.



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