

Opening up in counseling to overcome depression

Amanda: I'm Amanda. I'm from Texarkana, Arkansas. I was in the Army and stationed in Baumholder, Germany. I was a medic. I did two tours with the combat engineers, one to Iraq and one to Afghanistan.

In Iraq, it was pretty hectic. We had three platoons. We all went out separately. I would go out once a day under normal circumstances, because we had one medic per platoon. And our job was just to go out there and find IEDs.

It was probably 10:00 at night and somebody came and got me and said, "We got incoming. So, we need all the medics to the aid station."

I get there and they said, we didn't know what unit it was that they were bringing in, you know, injured guys. So, I'm just waiting it seemed like forever. It probably wasn't a few minutes. But they finally started bringing casualties in.

The first guy that they brought in, I started helping to work on him. They took his dog tags off and read his name and I did know the guy. It was a guy that I drank beer with every day in Germany and so my heart kind of dropped, but I held it together and kept working.

And then I turned around and one of my best friends from Germany, he had taken most of the blast — it was an EFP. He was a gunner. He ended up losing both his legs above the knees.

You know, whenever you're in Iraq, you just can't wait to get back. Take your leave, no problems. Everything's great. But then you get back, and probably over the next two to three months, I just noticed that I had a lot of anger issues. A lot of anger issues. I didn't really know where to channel them and I'd never been in trouble in the military, and it got to the point, I could tell I was probably going to get in trouble, just as far as lashing out at my superiors.

So, I decided, maybe I need to go to mental health and maybe I can figure out what's going on, because I didn't really understand why I was so angry. And then I went to mental health, just talked with a counselor. I went over the course of probably about six months total, but immediately it really helped because I didn't even realize how much I was holding in.

And at that point in time, just when I'd tell her my story, I just, I'd just start bawling, and I really hadn't let anything out at that point. And she explained to me — She diagnosed me with depression. It felt really good just to talk to somebody. They would just listen. They didn't have to say anything back, she just listened. So, it actually helped a lot.

For about the first two or three months, I went weekly. And then after about three months, I went about every two weeks. After that, I felt it was a lot better. I went periodically. I would still go to mental health just to vent, more or less, so that I wouldn't get that anger built back up.

It's really just given me some inspiration that things have been tough on me, but they could be tougher. I was glad that I reached out there and got the... I just needed a little



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bit of help, somebody to give you a little bit of encouragement, just to listen, to vent. And it really seemed to help me a lot.

I think that my experiences in the military helped, helped me as far as being a student and really just in everyday life. I'm a lot more self-disciplined and I have a job — I just got a job starting next week.

Now, when I look back on the military, it's a really positive experience. It was the best thing I ever did. I wouldn't trade any of it for anything.

Any Veteran that is even thinking they may need help, don't look at it negatively, like, it's not a weakness. It's just, like I was once taught, it's just a, a normal reaction to an abnormal situation. It's your life. It's not anybody else's life that it's affecting. It's your life that it's affecting. So, just get out there and do it.



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