

## A lot of us who have PTSD are in denial

**Michael:** My name is Michael, and I was in the U.S. Navy for two and a half years, damage control chemical warfare. First off, we went for our med cruise and then we got some things done in Panama, first. That was one campaign. The second campaign we went to Libya where we did some stuff there. And then obviously, Kuwait was invaded while we were out there.

Well, it first started off with my knee. It gave out. They call it steel deck syndrome. I have deterioration in my left knee. So, after everything was over with, I got out and a couple years later I was classified as having chronic PTSD.

First off, a lot of people were against what I did, so that didn't help any. I remember filling lots of applications out. People were getting ready to hire me until they flipped the back page over and said, "You're in the military." And I said, "Yeah." "Were you in the Gulf War?" I said, "Yes, I was." And they said, "We'll call you." Nobody would ever call. A lot of people were totally against the war. I got a lot of people that talked down to me quite a bit. It was pretty difficult.

I would wake up in cold sweats just screaming or something and yelling. I drank quite a bit actually. I was drinking about three 6-packs of beer along with whatever else you put in front of me. I was smoking quite a bit at the same time. I knew something was wrong but wasn't quite sure what.

I experienced a lot of road rage. Getting angry for no reason, getting sad for no reason. Crying, waking up, like I said, thinking somebody was going to attack me. I hated nighttime. I couldn't stand it. I knew that during the night those dreams would come to me and I was trying to do the best I could to get rid of them by drinking.

I don't like nighttime still. I don't like it. I sleep in the middle of the bed. The blinds are closed and that's it.

I have physicals every 6 months at the VA hospital. One day the nurse came in asked me, "We're supposed to ask you these questions now. Do you feel suicidal? Depressed? Anxiety? Crying a lot?" And I kind of looked at her and said, "Yeah, a little bit." She goes, "Are you willing to see psychiatry?" And I said, "No, because I'm not crazy." And she said, "Well, we're not saying you're crazy." She kind of pushed me towards making appointments to see a psychologist and psychiatry.

A lot of people deny having PTSD, and the ones that do have it are in denial with it. I think they're a little bit hesitant to go and see a psychiatrist because it's something new that you've never had to do before. But in the long run, you're probably going to put yourself in a position that I was in because I used to drink a lot and I almost died from it.

So, I think anybody out there who thinks they need to see somebody, please do it now because it gets worse and worse and worse. You have to come out of your shell eventually because it's not going to get any better. I think that if you have PTSD or anything else that came with the military, you shouldn't be ashamed to get help out there. Because obviously, I didn't want to get help at first, but I was talked into it. And I'm damn glad I did because if I hadn't gotten help back then I wouldn't be here now.



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