

I don't know what would've happened without VA

Josh: My name is Josh, I was in the Marine Corps from 1994 to 1998, got out the day before 9/11, went back in in 2005 until 2011. I served with the Marine Corps, around Fallujah Iraq in 2006.

I was a turret gunner, we were heading on patrol down to Abu Ghraib Prison and I was in the fourth vehicle and an IUD had went off and I'm not positive what happened I just know there was two bad guys I seen on the side of the road and the last thing I remember I was trying to shoot them. I was unconscious and ended up in the drivers lap with my head in his lap so thank goodness, with flash burns and a little bit of debris in my head.

I have a traumatic brain injury. At first I realized when I would try to walk because my balance was off, my equilibrium was really bad and my vision was blurry, then my ear drums were swollen from the explosion as well. So I was having a hard time hearing and I knew there was something not ... wasn't right, but I didn't want to say anything because I knew what they were going to do. They were going to either stick me in the rear or they were going to send me home. So I didn't... I just sucked it up even when I got back home I was still having a lot of symptoms as are as you know always sick, nauseated. Sometimes when I would be walking I would feel like I was going to fall off a cliff or you know driving even was a little bit of a task.

I was just having a lot of problem as far as like my body, you know back I have two lower crushed discs in my back and you know I have arthritis really bad in my hands and so you are sitting there wondering like is this going to get any better you know. What should I do? That is not even like including the TBI and the PTSD, you know what I mean. So I am like well I don't know where to start with this.

Me and my wife actually split up during the timeframe and you know I wasn't the same person anymore. She wanted me to get help and I was sort of fighting that a little bit and so you know there was a lot of problems. I distanced myself from all of my family, everybody, I didn't talk to anyone even friends. I even distanced myself from guys that I served with even, you know. I used to love football and always go the ticket to watch all of the games, I love the Colts and I haven't watched a football game since 2007. I never got the ticket again. I didn't realize that at the time, I'm like, wow, I am not even...I am not watching football. That is just nothing, it doesn't mean anything to me. I love boxing, I quit watching boxing. I just...I quit everything like all at once and I didn't realize it myself that I had done that.

The VA came in because I was in the reserve status and I had to go back to my civilian job to do my job, which didn't work out too well either because I was having a huge problem with the transitioning and you know when you are not feeling well and you are sick and you are waking up every morning like that with a brain injury you are not really want to get up and do anything. So I started missing a lot of work and I was getting very agitated and there was a lady that came to the VA to talk to us. I guess I broke down to her and just told her I don't know if I can handle this anymore. Then she immediately got me into the VA system.

I ended up getting a case worker like I said at the VA and she was wonderful. She did a lot to help me. If it wasn't for her I don't know what would have ended up happening honestly. I did therapy through the VA and I did it numerous times as well and I had



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multiple psychologists. A lot of it was how could we...how could the VA help me in adjusting to get at least back to sort of normal of my daily life.

The first psychologist that I had she was really good, like I felt you know there was a lot of trust and stuff and she was able to get a lot out of me as far as like talking about it and I have been in anger management classes and you know I have been thrown all of the different classes which you know I think has helped. I am glad I experienced it. You know it has helped me a lot in trying to understand myself and I don't think anyone wants to admit that they have any problems either so that is like the biggest thing is to get over it, you know to understand that you do have a problem. You need to get help now, you know it is better to do it now than wait 20 years to get help and ruin every relationship you know along the way on the path of destruction. So I always try to get everyone to the VA. I always carry extra cards and hand them out you know to say hey this is what it is for, this is the time to get help. You know you have already been through hell so what is this...how is this going to hurt you. It can only help you.



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