There is hope. You can become well.

Richard: My name is Richard. I was in the United States Air Force during the Vietnam War. I was at Hamilton Air Force Base near San Francisco. I was Disbursement Accounting Specialist, so I was in payroll. So, because of that I didn't have to go to Vietnam. I coasted through the tech school and I didn't learn how to do the forms to fill out to do payroll. So, when I got to the base, I couldn't perform my job, got depressed, went AWOL three times and they said, "What do you want to do?" and I go, "I want to stay in." So, they booted me.

I was having a problem sleeping and I was anxious, and I was sort of screaming and that sort of stuff, voices. I got a lot of, "Do this, do that; that sort of thing." or, "Don't do that." It got to be pretty noisy. So, my dad asked my minister to take me into CMH, County Mental Health, which he did, and they said, "You're schizophrenic and we'll give you some medication and that should take care of you."

It didn't work but it helped. It dealt with the depression; that helped too. And then from there it was just sort of an uphill grind. I don't think I had successful medication until a year ago to be honest and as to practical solutions CBT and CPT helped me catch the voices before I was getting medication to control them. CBT is cognitive behavioral training and it's, catch it, check it, change it.

So, it you hear a voice say, "That guy's trying to get into your pants or he's trying to make you look bad." Then you go, "Is that real? Well, maybe not. Well, do I want to change that?" The strength behind Peer Support Specialists are that they are mentally ill too and they've been through the problems and they can help become sort of like a person of hope for someone until they become able to provide that hope for themselves. With the Peer Support Specialists, they've changed the outlook on mental health. They've said that, "There is hope. You can become well." So, I'm saying, get hooked up young if you can. Be responsible and live your life.