

A commander reached out to him

Darin: Hi, my name's Darin. I served six and a half years in the Army. I was deployed to Iraq in '06-'07. It was post-9/11, so there was real high patriotism at the time, and I just felt like it was the best choice at the time for me.

We'd get caught in a little town where we'd have to try to snake all these 18-wheelers through just a tiny village. My truck was blown up one time, completely disabled. There were other times like that out there. Numerous ambushes.

When we finally made it back to Kansas, they had a big ceremony for us. All the units had turned out to welcome us home. All our family was there. It was just really good to be home.

I started having nightmares and it was hard to sleep. I had the hardest time being in any kind of a public place. It was just terrible. The mall, even waiting in line at the post office, I just felt confined and like something was going to happen.

Memory loss, I mean, like short-term memory loss. I had a real hard time focusing. I tried to talk to some people about it, but it was just kind of like well, you know, this is normal. I started hitting the bottle really hard because that was the only way I could fall asleep at night and not dream. So I started drinking pretty heavy. It got pretty out of control.

We were going through a really hard time. Our son had been diagnosed with cancer. A few months later they got him into remission and then about 6 months after that he relapsed again and never recovered. So, it was a lot of ups and downs and lot more downs than ups.

I was talked to by my command about how out of control my drinking was getting. I had gotten arrested but let out for fighting outside the bar. And when he called me in front of him he said, "How much have you had to drink?" I was like, "I don't know, 7, 18 beers?" I explained to him, I was like, I'm trying to keep the nightmares away. And he was like, I understand that, but this isn't healthy. He said, "I would really like for you to get some help." It was the first time really that I had had a commander that wasn't just like going to mental health is a weakness. Getting any kind of help is a weakness.

I had to check myself into an ASAP and get straightened out. And I probably owe him my life. I mean, who knows how far down that road I would have gone. When we moved from Fort Riley to Fort Lewis I went and decided to try to talk to the mental health again. They really sat down with me. There I had a counselor that was a psychologist and I had a psychiatrist. It helped me out a lot.

I'm off the booze. Trying to live a more healthy lifestyle. I throw myself into passions that I have, so that kind of helps to fill up free mind time. But all in all, I think I'm...there's mental and emotional scars that'll be there forever probably. But they're healing up pretty nice.



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