

## There is help and hope out there

**Jersey Jeanne:** My names Jersey Jeanne, and I served in the US Airforce from 1976 to 84. I'm in a wheelchair because I'm a T12 paraplegic, incomplete. I still have some left leg movement. I also have multiple sclerosis in both from my time in service and that was the end of my career in 1984.

I had nightmares. I would see things and think men were coming at me, and just had, just things would bother me. I'd go off, anger, anger management was horrible. I would get depressed pretty often and then come to find out down the road it's the chicken or the egg thing. They kept saying it was in my head, go see the shrink.

So, I went to see the shrink and down the road we find out I had multiple sclerosis. It literally was in my head. I had lesions up there. I actually went in to like five years of agoraphobia. It was like horrible. I didn't want to go out of the house. My therapist would call me on the phone, come on, you need to come in, because I was so, it just felt like there was no hope.

I had to go the VA for PT because I was getting really bad to where I was needing the wheelchair and when I went there I would go see her and it was just like, I can't be around people and it was really bad. And, you can come out of it and what really pulled me out of it was sports, and my Psychologist was, he was wonderful. He supported me. He says, "oh Jean, you have issues, we worked on them," and it took a while. I mean, behavior modification, he was awesome. If you get a really good person in the VA, it will really help a lot of people.

I will say, the VA system is probably the best Healthcare system in this country right now currently and I wish our government would take kind of like a clue from them. I mentioned this to a cousin who's a congressman. I said, "use it as a model," I'm very privileged to have or actually to have earned the VA Healthcare and it has gotten, like I said, very good but I started with the mental health and my Psychologist was great. Every time I see a woman Vet, I say, these are the services that are available to you and they are getting better. We can see more and more funds coming for the women's centers, they're opening up more.

The big thing is losing your identity and I kept going forward and kept trying to be better and better myself instead of like some people who just sit in a chair and malt. I always tell other Veterans in the hospital; you have to learn how to be assertive because that's what I did with behavior mod. My therapist helped me get to be more assertive, not aggressive but assertive but to tell them, "speak up for your rights, get the right chair for yourself, get the sports, this is really going to save your life." You won't have to go drink or do this or do drugs or whatever and actually a lot of times if you get out and work on it, and I always tell them, you see what I've done, I had a choice.

I could've been just like drinking and kind of just really in that state and never leaving the house, but you need to get ahold of your disease. You need to accept it and I never really did until I heard El Tommy Duckworth say, "you have to find your new normal." There is hope out there and help, you just have to ask for it.



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