

Treatment healed Jon's invisible wounds

Jon: My name is Jon. I was with the 82nd Airborne Division, 1504. My first combat tour was in Baghdad, Iraq. My second combat tour was in Ramadi, Iraq and my third was in Bagram, Afghanistan.

When I lost my friend, what had initially happened was I came off 48-hour patrol. I was exhausted and he had the same job as me and they were calling me back out and he volunteered to go out so I could stay behind, and he went out and walked by an IED, that was it. When I came home all I could do was think about "What if?" You know, the questions everybody asks themselves, you know, "What if I would have gone out instead of him?"

I was in a watch tower. The rocket hit two feet below the floor, and it blew the whole floor out from under us. We crashed about 30 feet. I pulled the other guy out of the tower that was with me and we both sat down, and they said I passed out for a minute. I don't remember, but I remember the medic shining a light in my eyes and said I just got my bell rung.

When I first sought help, I was home on leave. It was early morning, I was getting up, putting the shoes on my oldest son and I had like a little time lapse, and I woke up in the bed. And there was paramedics in the front room, and I started throwing up and they told me I had a seizure. And, you know, I just couldn't put it together. How could I have just had a seizure? And went to the hospital and they said it's just a freak accident, you know, I came home that night, had another seizure and went to Riverside, and that's where they found out that I had a traumatic brain injury.

Looking back, the signs and symptoms that I overlooked was I was to the point where I'd walk out to my truck and completely forget what I was doing. I'd come home from the company area and have to call my wife and ask her how to get home. The nightmares weren't too bad. It was kind of a memory of that incident happening. But I would get aggravated and really enraged over nothing. When they found out that I had a traumatic brain injury, I still had time left on my contract, and so, they just let me finish that out. But I couldn't deploy anymore, I couldn't jump, I couldn't do any strenuous activities. With the seizures and with, you know, not dealing with a lot of the stuff I dealt with overseas, I got into drinking real heavy. I couldn't sleep at all. I couldn't focus on anything. You know, I was drinking to mask what my true issues were.

So, I went to the VA and through their SATP program. I got the help for my alcohol addiction and I got the mental health that I needed, and they really helped me out as far as my sleep issues, how I felt about losing my friend. In the group counseling, they had me with the AA meetings and stuff. They had me with veterans who were my age talking about, you know, PTSD symptoms and they had me with a family counselor with one-on-one just basically teaching me, you know, how to learn to live with my wife and my kids again.

With the VA, I was able to get, you know, channel where the anger's coming from, the aggravation. I'm able to get a good night's sleep now. When I do go into a place and I feel those feelings like I'm going back a little bit, I know what's coming on, I know how to relax myself and just step away from the situation. I'm in school right now in the human services technology to be a counselor. I just received my CDCA license and I want to



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keep the message going on that the VA's helped with me. My passion now in life is to help other Veterans.



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