

## The Road to Healing

**Robert:** Maybe it was a metaphor or something, but I left it out in the road. It ended up being beneficial for me.

My name's Robert. I served in the United States Army, turret mechanic from 2000 till 2003. I didn't grow up in the best of neighborhoods. Getting involved in gangs, juvenile halls, youth camps. In and out since I was 14. Following that, I joined the military. I ultimately ended up deploying to Iraq. You get your eyes opened to a snapshot of the rest of the world. There are some things that happened that I regret it and that I struggle with.

When I went home, I followed a series of steps. I went from my outpost to an airfield, from an airfield to an airport, and from an airport out of the country. Seven of my brothers took the same route on a different date. They went the exact same way, and unfortunately they didn't make it home. Knowing that some of the people that I served with didn't make it home is something that has played in my mind countless times.

After coming back there are some things that happened. Definitely has not been easy for my wife. She's seen every side of me. I realized that this was a problem. I was working as a mechanic for U-Haul. A Vietnam veteran saw my old unit shirt, asked me if I've ever visited the VA. I had no idea what that was. Couple of weeks later started the whole enrollment process.

Several weeks following that, and I still had PTSD. The staff were just there for me. They're legitimately trying to help. I was doing one-on-one for most of the time, and then I was told that there was an OIF and OEF group. They meet every Fridays. Gave it a shot, and I ended up meeting some really great people. Just being around someone that was in my shoes, it was such a sobering feeling. It's something that I look forward to coming to every week. It wasn't really to get somewhere. It was just really just to be there.

That was the same feeling I get when I ride my motorcycle. I started riding for a few years, and the more and more I started riding, the more I started seeing a lot of bikers, especially around the veteran community. It was something that they saw beneficial for them as well. I asked about it and looked into it, and I ended up joining. Kind of sounds cheesy, but feel like your bike is a part of you.

I'm proud of have a wife that has stuck by me through everything. Proud to be a member of the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association. It just clears my head feeling the gears shift, going faster or slower, or making that turn. It's really not a destination. It's just the experience of it.

I would suggest that you have to take ownership of your own health. Don't be afraid to ask questions and seek help.



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