

Reaching out for help led to a better life

Interviewee: I didn't want any help from the VA. I wanted to leave it for the guys that needed it. I didn't think I needed it. It wasn't until years later when nothing was changing that I realized that I needed more.

Interviewee1: It doesn't go anywhere. It's there. You're gonna run, but all you're going to get tired sooner or later and that problem is gonna be there. If you've got an opportunity to go talk to somebody, you need to go do it.

Interviewee2: Eventually I had a family member who worked at a VA hospital and I talked to her and she encouraged me to go check myself in or to go with the idea of checking myself in. It turned out to be really, a very positive thing.

Interviewee3: Before I had left for Iraq, my wife and I were having issues and it was just a hard time, then when I actually got to Baghdad, there was the opportunity to go to the Combat Stress Center or Unit and I saw people there. I was realizing I was having other problems too, so I went to get to sleep because I knew, "If I'm not sleeping, not gonna be any good to anybody."

Interviewee4: It was only in 2004 because of another Veteran that I filed a claim for the PTSD because I realized I couldn't hold down a job. I still could not adapt to society when it came to employment and so I started reaching out for mental health help in the county I was living in.

Interviewee1: A friend of mine that I worked with, his dad came into town. He was the one that told me, "You need to get with the VA. You need to go see somebody. You need to get help." And I was like, "Nah, you know, I don't need that." And he was like, "You do. You really do. I'm telling you now you do." It's like he knew something that I didn't because he had already been there.

Interviewee5: At one time, depression just set in. I don't know where that came from, but I was going to work one morning and I could not stop crying and I called my daughter and I said, "Look, I don't know what's wrong, but I need something, something's wrong." And we left Buford and went to the VA in Charleston that day.

Interviewee: I went to the VA and sought help. At first it was just for physical help, but then as I got into the the psychiatric programs in the VA, I realized that it was more than physical.

Hector: I remember sitting in that chair the first time and doctor looking at me saying, "Hector this is very hard to hear right now, but I need you to really listen because you'll remember." And he said, "You're gonna be a better man because of this."

Interviewee6: Just listening to other guys with the same problems, with the same thoughts, with the same issues they were dealing with personal lives, with their relationships, with their kids, with their jobs. I'm saying, "Well, I'm not alone."

Interviewee7: Life is so much better now because I know that I have someone that I can call. I know that I have someone that I can speak to and it really feels good to know that there is someone that's there who's waiting on me, who will be there any time that I



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need them just to talk, just to get that emotion out of me. There's always someone there for me and before I never knew about that.

Interviewee8: I think that makes me a better father for the help I got and the longer I've been out, the more I've adjusted and the more I've looked back, the more I can see how helpful the counseling has been not just for the PTSD.

Interviewee9: Going to counseling and dealing with what I did doesn't make me less of a Soldier, doesn't make me less of a man, if anything, it makes me a stronger Soldier and a stronger man because I can now deal with those issues and problems as they arise quicker.

Interviewee10: Don't wait like I did til I was almost 55 before I got help.

Interviewee11: Just start it and it's always hard to start something new, but once you do, once you take that first step and all the odd parts that you can't visualize and all the parts of it that were scary because you weren't sure what it would be like set into place around you and you say, "Okay, this isn't weird. This is okay."

Interviewee1: Let's get some help. Let's do this.



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