

Cognitive processing therapy worked well for Gene

Gene: My name is Gene. I served in the United States Army and the United States Marine Corps. In the United States Marine Corps I was a scout sniper instructor and a scout sniper. I served in 3rd recon out of Hawaii. When I was in the Army I was in infantry, the infantrymen. I served in Iraq and Afghanistan and also the first Persian Gulf War. Within 30 I was there I lost my company commander. So the training and everything that we did prior to that kind of in the realities of combat and the realities of war became very all true.

I got out in 2011. I retired. And I found myself in this, in a change of identity trying to figure out who I was after a 21-year career, not really sure what I wanted to do. I didn't have the structure that I had before. I turned to self-medicating with alcohol. Depression, anxiety, suicidal ideations. It just felt like I really didn't know where I fit in anymore.

I found myself alone. It felt like I was isolated. It was 2012. I had been going through a lot. Just really kind of beating myself down. Lost confidence and things like that.

I ended up reaching out, a friend of mine. And then we went to the VA and I did a self-admission. That's when I came to the realization that I have to face up to these demons in my life and not let the demons control my life.

I've been diagnosed with PTSD, TBI as well as major depression. The VA got me on medications which helped me to be able to regulate my moods so the highs weren't so high and the lows weren't so low.

I saw a psychiatrist there who...phenomenal man. I mean, he's been doing this stuff for years, 20, 30 years. I liked him because he was kind of like very cut and dry. This is what you need to do. Where do you want to go from here and how do we get there?

When I started going through treatment, I went weekly. I did some cognitive processing therapy groups. It looks at the most, the biggest impact or the biggest trauma that you went through and helps you develop an index mark. And that index mark helps you put into, kind of put into perspective everything else that has happened in your life.

Individual helps you with whatever specific trauma that you're going through. So, it allows you a little one on one time in a conversational style session. Group allows a supportive kind of network that allows you to listen to somebody else's story and realize that you are not alone. Groups are good because it helps you support your fellow Veteran.

After treatment, I started looking at the vocational rehabilitation through the VA. They really removed a lot of the stressors and the roadblocks towards achieving my educational goals. I didn't have to worry about feeling confused and am I learning the same way I did when I was doing my undergraduate. So, I went to an occupational therapist and a speech pathologist at the VA who helped me develop study habits so that I met all my goals, my exams, my finals, my papers. And it was phenomenal support.



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Just because you have a diagnosis, you are not your diagnosis. It's part of you, but it doesn't have to control you. It doesn't have to regulate you. It doesn't have to stop you from doing anything that you love to do. Professional athletes have psychiatrists. They go see therapists because of their stressful jobs. Well, we've got a job and we've had jobs that are 100 times more stressful than that. So, why would we be afraid? Why should we be afraid to go see somebody about it?



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