

## Ken learned to manage his thoughts and anxiety

**Ken:** Hi, my name is Ken. I was in the Navy. I was signed up to go to an aircraft carrier outside of Nam, and then I was discharged. They just let me go. I don't know an Honorable Discharge or Honorable Character. They just, I don't know, they didn't say anything, just boot me out.

It was a new experience gettin out on my own. The first time I'd been on my own for a while. I noticed that I was nervous, I lost my nerves more afterwards than when I was in. I'd get anxious, my stomach would turn on me. I couldn't control my thoughts. I was always racing. I couldn't concentrate, and then I would... I haven't done this for years, but I would see guys with bullet holes in them, so like hallucinate. So, then I felt like I was cut in pieces, sliced in pieces, and it was all in my mind. I would notice that other people was acting different around me, and that wasn't paranoia. I mean, it was they were reacting to me and my mood. That's why I needed to change.

Years later, I was at a Bible college and then that's when I was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia, that was years after the service. When I first started going to the VA, my doctor was... I didn't know at the time, was a doctor of MHICM, Mental Health Intensive Care Management, once I realized what it was and got the help I needed, the counselor I needed, then, I could say, "Okay, this isn't real. This is not happening. It's just whatever in my mind or whatever." They had me on a pill and that was a good medicine for me. So, we had to find the dosage. Once we found the dosage, then it was all right. Well, years later \_\_\_\_ came along, so they put me on \_\_\_\_ and it helped control my thoughts, my nerves, my anxiety. Without the meds, I couldn't do it. I've been flipped out and that's helped me tremendously with the therapy I've been having. I haven't had racing thoughts or something like that for about two years now.

Now, I meet once a week with my counselor one-on-one and then there's a symptom management on Wednesday's after lunch and I go to that. And that has helped me keep my thoughts straight with the meds or it calms me down. As the meds do its things, then I had to work on myself. I'd realize, "Okay, what's real and what's not? This is not real. I'm sitting in this chair now. I'm not cut in pieces." So, I had to work on that mentally and I guess I learnt self-talk over the years and that did a lot to me.

So, I go to the VA with mental plus physical and they've treated with me nothing but good. They respect me, they respect my illness, and they don't look at me as a no person, they look at me as whole person, a complete person with these symptoms, with these triggers, and like I said, once those triggers came up, wait a minute just, take a deep breath and go on. At first I was kind of leery about going to a psychiatrist or a counselor or a social worker because I thought they were against me, paranoia; and I thought the whole world was against me, even my folks, paranoia; and racing thoughts, schizophrenia. Without the VA, I couldn't have found those things out. I would say give it a try. From my point of view, it'll help you. It helped me and it's got me to the place I am today.



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