

Overcoming anxiety and PTSD with VA support

April: My name is April and I was in regular Army. I went in when I was 32 years old, was at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri for basic training. My first duty station was Fort Polk, Louisiana, and I was a 71 Lima, admin specialist. I loved the service. If I could do it all over again, I would.

I got medically discharged. They said on the base that I was 10% disability, bilateral retro patellar pain syndrome and stress fractures in my calves. I had gotten out of the military, out of the Army, in 2002, and in 2009, I started receiving health care benefits. So, once I had received the benefits, new patient down at the Claremont VA, they did an overall physical. And, that's when we discovered, some mental health issues. They discovered that I had PTSD, some related to the military, a lot of it related before the military, depression and anxiety disorders. The one main one was the anxiety. I would get hellacious attacks at night while I was sleeping, and I started seeing a psychiatrist and a therapist. You can set up your own schedule with the therapists, it is on, it is up to you ultimately to meet that appointment, but once you do, you explore the situations in your life that caused some of these issues that are going on. As for me, I had a very traumatic childhood. We touched on that and just the things that I was faced with in my life at such a young age. The counseling session is about a half an hour to 45 minutes. We talk about how the medication's working, have I had any anxiety attacks or just stuff like that. They have a couple of exercises, there's a breathing exercise that you do, they tell you to count to 10 before you take any harsh actions.

I'm also receiving some type of therapy at my college, because now it's starting to affect my schooling. Because there was a point where I got so overwhelmed that there was a lot of negative things that was happening to me, and I try to be a very positive person, but when I have so many different negative things coming my way, that's when my mental issues come into play. I'm disorganized, can't think straight, I can't fix the problems. They had posted these posters around school about, it's what they call campus counseling and it says, "Are you overwhelmed? Is this bothering you? Is this bothering you? Is this bothering you? Come and see us," We just go over how my week's gone, they have services there. It's what they call disability services. It's a discreet program. If you get accommodations, you let the professor know that you have accommodations.

The advice I have is take advantage of what's out there to help the Veterans. Once you become in the Veteran community, it's a nice feeling. Try and take advantage of what's out there to help.



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