

## Group support helped turn his life around

**Edmond:** My name's Edmond, I was in the Marine Corps from '98 till 2006, and my MOS was satellite technician. I was deployed to Kuwait and then we went to Iraq from there. That was probably the most intense time in my life. We went up there on this convoy and we go through these areas and you're nervous and terrified because you don't know what's going to happen. Being overseas and in combat, you feel different when you come back stateside. You feel a lot better, you feel a bigger appreciation for the small things, you know. You're not so in a rush, but the problem is you're not motivated to do anything because here everything is kind of generated by money and materialistic things and stuff like that, but over there you see people are dying and starving really for water and food, so immediately when I got back it was "Okay, I don't really feel like doing anything here because it's not worth it, you know, there's not anything to do it for, there's no reasons."

A few years after that my family started noticing differences like temper, attitude, kind of, like, not really wanting to go outside or deal with people. I was really social before and then once I got back was kind of, like, an introvert, not really too social, not many friends. I didn't sleep, I just stayed always up. Anger issues, I was always angry or on edge, expecting something and always waiting for something to happen, easily startled, loud noises, relationship-wise just didn't want to relate with anyone, couldn't understand, like, what someone would cry about and the emotion. Like "What are you crying for? You're not bleeding, you're not hurt, there's no reason to cry."

No one really understands what you've been through or where you're going, and no one—you can't say "Okay, you know how it was in Iraq" or whatever because they weren't there, so you're not going to get the perspective that you got, you know, when you're there, so everybody don't understand, and then as a Marine especially, or as a man, it's hard to ask for help. You're trained to adapt and overcome, so whatever comes up I "okay, I can deal with this or I'll figure out away around that."

I was there for about a year, so for a year you're on pins and needles and terrified, you don't know what the hell's going to happen. So then you come home and there's a feeling of relief but then you're—I don't know if it's, you know, something within your body but you're craving, like, "Okay what's next, like, this is—this feels wrong, to feel this way," like, to be at ease or, you know, you're just anticipating the storm.

I had a daughter in 2009, and, like, right before she was born my mother was telling me, like, you know, "You should get checked out, you're having a daughter, you need to make sure that you're fit to raise her, that you're not having any issues or there's going to be some problems later," and then when I mentioned it, you know, I was passing the idea over other family members and they were like, "Yeah, we've thought this for a while now, it's a good idea that you do go."

Initially I called the VA and I was looking—I kind of just sat in, like, those...they have these groups there and they have, like, a group session where everyone sits around and they talk about, you know, their emotions and feelings and what's going on with them, and it was a PTSD group, so I went and I kind of sat in the back for a while just to hear what was going on, because I was like "If this doesn't make sense to me I'm not going to go any further," but then as I go in there and I start hearing, like, the guys talk and I



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could relate to all of it. Like, I'm sitting there and "Okay, I understand that and can't sleep, I understand that, nightmares, I understand that, you know, being up all night, finding all kinds of things to do, you know, having to always be involved or thinking of something so that way your mind doesn't wander." And I could identify with a lot of what the guys were saying, so then I got the instructor's card, because you pass them out, like, at the class there and take them, and then I called there and made an appt and then I went down there and talked to her and then they set me up with a, like, an evaluation. They recommended medication and that I did, like, one-on-one counseling sessions and I've been doing it ever since.

The biggest improvement overall is now I go to sleep, which is, you know, it sounds small to somebody else, but to be able to know that you're going to go to bed in your room and go to sleep is a big deal. If I'm going to raise someone else, I should at least be...make sure that, you know, I'm okay.

You know yourself better than anybody else does, and if you know there's a difference or if you even think there is, then just go and take a look. There can't be any harm in just researching or checking it out, and that's how I did it. I went in and I went to the group and I sat in the back and I just listened until something that struck me as, you know, like, "Okay, I'm going through that too." You didn't go into the military alone, and there's—you're definitely not the only person, and that's ultimately how I had to look at it. There's other people who are going through the same thing that I'm going through, and just to kind of give them, you know, if nothing else they can see that there's something else for them and that there is hope.



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