

Army Veteran finds new purpose after treatment

Stone: My name is Stone, United States Army. I served between June and July of 1996 through June and July of 1999. I wasn't bred to be in the military growing up and no one ever expected me to go in, and when I went it, it was a shock. Culture shock completely. I went to Fort Riley thinking I would never get deployed anywhere and the minute I got to Fort Riley they said, "You're going to Bosnia". It's not until you get home, back on to the base where you start to really feel the effects, like oh this could have taken my life, oh this bullet could have went this way.

Getting out of the military you are still gung-ho, chest puffed up, I am a Soldier, I did my time. I don't think I really realized the PTSD until about a few years later when I was married and I didn't realize I used to go to bed above the covers with my jeans on and everything else. Like I couldn't sleep without a noise, I had to have noise. I think the noise was always just either drowning out the quietness in your mind from running and once I got married I guess my ex would roll over and touch me and I would scream bloody murder and she felt like I was going to kill her.

But I think ultimately what really led to the end of my marriage was the PTSD. It all accumulated I think one night my ex and I got into a big fight, I was in my car and I just broke down and I was trying to figure out where to go and the only place I could go to was the VA. I literally called them and said I need help and they pulled me in as quick as they could and they checked me out and everything else. Then a Psychiatrist came in and saw me and I think they gave me some anti-anxiety medicine in the beginning to quickly work and then constant visits for I the next two or three months just to make sure I wasn't over the edge, tipping over the edge. The medication started working and after the divorce was done things started to closely even out.

It took about two and a half years but my life turned around, my life changed. I have been able to sleep under the covers. I have been able to sleep in the dark. I have been able to sleep without sound. I think it just took some time for my brain to process everything it was going through. Really now what I try to do is I try to focus on work, I try to focus on our nonprofit. My president was in the same place I was. Went to Bosnia just like me. I can talk to him, he can talk to me, so because he has been there, he and I are able to bounce off each other and it makes life a lot easier.

The military is such a structured life you always have things to do, you are never alone, there is always a soldier around you. It is when you get out and you start to mature is when you really start to recognize that you need your brothers and sisters more so than ever before. So now I have more Veteran's around me, more first responders with PTSD or without PTSD. Someone I can talk to. Someone if it is 2:00 in the morning they are going to answer the phone and go "I will be at your house or I will meet you for coffee, let's go." They are not going to let me sit there and dwell in my own thoughts.

Saving a Soldier, saving a Veteran from doing something drastic, becoming friends, becoming family with another Veteran or another Soldier, knowing that they are now part of your extended family that makes me happy.



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