

You are not alone. Reach out

Dan: My name is Dan and I was in the US Navy from 1994 to 1997. I grew up on a Navajo reservation, a place called Chinle, Arizona. During the service I hid my sexuality, basically, because it was during the Don't Ask, Don't Tell time, because I knew what would happen, and during my time of service, 94-97, it was basically during peacetime and I noticed how a witch hunt would begin amongst enlisted and officers and basically they would go after people who were different. At that time I was treated differently mostly because of the color of my skin, and once they found out that I was Native American then the Native American stereotype jokes would come in, the racist jokes would come in and would just continue from then on.

The way I felt, I would say that definitely led to more of the drinking in the Navy, and at that time there was only two options if you didn't have, really, a support group, it was just drinking or going out whoring, and I couldn't go out whoring in Don't Ask, Don't Tell days and I didn't want to, so. I went on a bender probably halfway in and basically it ended up coming back to bite me, then I was court martialed. Eventually I had to deal with it and come face to face with it and I was able to find some friends who were my support. I slowed down my drinking tremendously and basically I was able to overcome it.

The most useful and helpful thing I would say was probably just talking with my friends and finding alternatives to work through my problems and work things that were just in my mind. I do feel there's a change and I feel that I'm more mature and also that looking at all the positives and taking that and just redistributing it to my fellow Veterans. The advice I would give is an advice given to me from a friend when I was in the Navy, is that "You are not alone. There is another person who has almost gone through the same thing that you've gone through," and "Reach out."



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