

PTSD is a challenge you can overcome

Mike: My name is Mike. I served in the Marine Corp 1960 to 1968. When I got out in 1968 there was no PTSD in the DSM. So, didn't know what the heck, I didn't even know that there was anything wrong with me. I've had 40 jobs in a 20 year period after I got out. I've never been fired, never been laid off, but every time somebody wants to promote me, pat my hand, or shake my hand because I'm doing a good job I walk out the door.

In Chicago Heights, Illinois I was a line mechanic there for years and years. In a dealership you got an air hose that your wrenches on, take the engine apart, whatever you got to do. Well, here I am, the new guy and I go in there and one of the guys didn't know anything. I didn't know I really had PTSD. I just got out of the service, they didn't know I was a Veteran, nothing. All of the sudden somebody popped the air hose apart and I went flying underneath the car, and they're, "what in the hell's he doing?" It was when I got close to people. I'm getting close to people and I just think everything's cool and somebody just flips my cork and bam, we got some big problems, and I usually walk out the door and slam it on the way.

Looking back, I worked because I didn't want to have my mind just sit there and be idle and think about all this stuff that I went through, and I'm sure that's the reason I work that hard but the other reason would be because I had to live. And nobody's going to give me anything to live unless I do something for it, like earn it, get a job. So, that's what I did. I was driving semitrucks around Northwest Indiana area in Chicago and driving down the road, the Interstate 94 up there and just tears rolling down my face man. What the heck's wrong with me? I don't drink. I don't do drugs. I don't do this and I don't that, I can't get it together. What is wrong with me?

My sister and my wife at that time knew that there was something wrong so, they took me to Hines VA in Chicago. They labeled me a PTSD chronic and acute and I said, "what is this PTSD shit man." I never heard of this which I hadn't and they tried to kind of explain it to me but didn't make a lot of sense. So, I did a bunch of homework on it. I got in with the VA outpatient clinic in Crown Point, Indiana. They really had good people and they treated me good. Hindsight, it's the best sight, you've heard that saying and as I look back on my past I can see why I did a lot of things that I did. I had a volatile temper like you wouldn't believe. I've got PTSD. I've lived through it and I can have a pretty darn decent life now because this hospital here is probably the best one I've ever seen. They're not, what do I want to say, magic. It's a two-way street. They can help you through it if you talk to them.



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