

## Support can help you reconnect

**Anthony:** My name is Anthony. I was in the US Army from 2001 through 2005. I did a tour in Kosovo in 2003. I deployed to Iraq in 2004 and returned in 2005. I joined out of high school, looking to get the GI Bill. You know, travel, see the world. Kosovo was a peacekeeping mission. It was really we were there just to make sure that no one was being harmed.

Iraq was a different story. Iraq we were same MOS, but that was right after US Army and US forces came in. So, we saw a lot of action in Iraq. Pretty much anything you can imagine, we saw it. They had put an IED and covered it up with garbage. Unfortunately, we parked right on top. I got knocked out. I had a concussion. I was taken to Baghdad and had a few tests done.

When I first got back, I noticed I was angered real easily. I had a big anger problem with family because when I returned home, I lived with my family. I just had a tough time having a normal conversation with somebody. My friends would call me to go hang out and I would always make up excuses. I just really wasn't in the mood. They would always ask me questions. What did you do in Iraq? And I wasn't ready to talk about it then.

I had a real big disconnect with just people. The thing I noticed a lot is I just didn't feel anything. I isolated myself. I pushed everyone away to the point where they just stopped trying. Obviously, I wasn't the same person when I returned, and everyone was looking for me to be the same person.

I had a drinking problem when I first got back. I noticed when I returned, I just had a lot of anger that I had to deal with these things. I just got really aggressive, got in fights. But later that year around December 2005, I had a panic attack, a full-on panic attack. And I still don't know what I was doing at that time. I wasn't drinking. I wasn't doing drugs. I wasn't in a stressful situation. And there's really no way to make it go away. Heart pounding, shortness of breath. That's probably just irrational thinking. I just got to get out of the situation. That's what it felt like for me. I called one of my friends. I said, "You have to drive me because I can't even drive." That was my first time going to the VA.

It takes a couple visits. They assess what issues you're dealing with. After a couple months of dealing with the same psychiatrist they make an evaluation. They diagnosed me as having PTSD since most of my symptoms, panic attacks, depressed mood, trouble sleeping at night were related to my experiences in Iraq. I was recently diagnosed as having issues with TBI related to the blast. Light sensitivity, I get migraines, trouble concentrating. I had a perforated ear drum from the blast, so I do have hearing problems.

I was really happy that I did get a diagnosis because I thought there was just something wrong with me and something that I'm dealing with alone. And I'm not. Recently, I got on Facebook and got in contact with pretty much everybody that was in my platoon. And they told me that once you deal with this it does get a little bit better. So, that really helped me out.



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I'm in the process of starting a cognitive processing therapy, which is weekly. And that's where I just have to recount every little event that I feel has changed me and pretty much get everything out in the open. I do talk to a counselor every week. She's just there to listen. You know, any issues that bother me.

My wife pushes me. Obviously, she doesn't want to be at home for the rest of her life, and neither do I. Having that person in my relationship that pushes me along with the therapy, that's helped me out. And that's what I think has been helping me out the most, having that drive to get better. I have people motivating me to go and seek the help that I need. So, I think that's the great thing about being in the military and having that comradery and connection with the other Vets.

You need to go out and get help. It's going to make you better in the long run.



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