

Meachelle's story of strength after sexual trauma

Meachelle: Hi, I'm Meachelle. I was in the Navy from 1998 until 2003. I was an SK and also did funeral services. For me, doing the military funeral services was one of the most exciting and rewarding things. To be able to give them a funeral service with dignity and pride, it made me feel just amazing.

It's about being a sailor. It's about being in the military. And you work together as a family and as a unit. So whenever I was asked to do anything extra, I always did. Then you kind of get to the point where I had an officer who would ask me to stay late or to come in early and help set up the meetings and stuff like that. And I was like, okay, that, that's cool. I'll do that. And then I walk in one day and he's masturbating and you just kind of freeze and you're embarrassed. You're like, oh, God, I caught him in a bad situation. So, I turn around and left. And I just was so uncomfortable. And he just kind of played it off like, oh, sorry about that. I just got through talking to my wife.

And then it would happen again. And when you're a female in the military, a lot of people will say things that aren't true about other people. And I just didn't want to be that kind of sailor. I wanted to be the kind that works hard and is known for that. That's my reputation. My reputation wasn't known for, oh, this guy did this. Because you always hear remarks. You're around it and that's the life of it. So, I felt so uncomfortable saying things about it. And then it would get to the point where I couldn't disobey him. I had to go in there. I had to still do my job duties.

I found myself just depressed and avoiding going to work. I would make up stories. I would stay in other sections of our unit. Just anything I could to stay away from him. When I would be at my desk he would come by and put his hand on your back or just say uncomfortable remarks, like do you want to have fun.

You don't even know sometimes what all the symptoms that you go through are part of it. Where maybe you just can't get out of bed or you can't function with your children or go to school.

I wasn't focusing at home. I couldn't take care of my kids. I felt ashamed and just really sad. Just really emotionally drained. I wouldn't go out in public. I wouldn't try to be around other people. And when I did, I never looked them in the eye.

I went to the VA and I explained to the doctor what was going on. And she was really great. We talked, and then I got put on some medication for the depression and the bouts of unbearable anxiety, and with some support groups. I still continue to go to those support groups.

I like that it's okay to say something. I like that you don't have to be ashamed anymore. And possibly you can help someone else feel more comfortable to deal with thing and then they find their inner voice and their inner strength to get help.

When you're in a situation similar to that, you feel really alone. You don't know who you can talk to, who to trust. And then when it comes out, some people who you think are your friends will turn their back on you. So, to be able to go to these groups and...in my support groups, and get the support from other people, it is a really uplifting feeling. You have to reach up and say something. Just to find an inner peace in yourself.



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Now, I love to go out. I want to meet people. I want to talk to people. It's given my voice back to talk to other people about it and relieve myself of feeling guilty and ashamed. Be brave enough to go and get some type of help. Reach out and take hold of your own life.



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