

Someone listens to you, and you don't feel alone

Ryan: I am Ryan, United States Marine Corp, ten years, Infantry. Four deployments, two to Afghanistan in two years. I was hit by an IED, 30 pounds. I started getting that direct pressure and getting ripped apart. It just kind of tossed me. I tried to walk back with my squad, pretty shaken up. They put me on a bird and sent me home.

With the TBI, it is just a blur. The short-term memory – going to the store and all of a sudden you are in the aisle and you don't remember what you are looking for. You are present and you have the conversation, there will just be a piece of something that will get lost. I just felt stagnant at that point. It had a huge affect on me. It was a sharp and quick decline.

It started as anxiety and not being able to sleep and some insomnia. Grew into a pretty dark depression, I didn't even want to be around anyone. I was happy barricading myself in and just being alone in the dark.

I was able to get cleared back on full-duty and re-deployed in 2012. You don't have time to think, you are just working 24 hours a day, nonstop 24/7. Then you get sent on Quota, you get a break and now all of a sudden I have this free time. I have time to think and reflect. Before I knew it I was doing some fairly reckless things. When I would start to drink or I would go out or just disappear for a couple of days at a time, you scare yourself. I was sitting in my CO's office at the drill field and he just saw that there was something wrong. He was like, what is going on with you, what is up. I just kind of broke down at that point, I am having a hard time. He went and talked to the Colonel and him and our Battalion Commander they got me in to get help. Really that first push to do something different and help myself. So now I am in that transition over to the VA.

What helped the most at first was someone listened to you and someone understood that you didn't feel like you were alone anymore. That initial support of having one say it is normal, this is what happens. Your body went through something and this is the healing process. You make sure you have the tools you need and the support system there. I know when I am having a tough time I know what to do. I have the tools and the pieces in place to catch it.

I go to a lot of events, we do a lot of networking in the city with different Veteran organizations so I am constantly around these guys and that feels good to stay connected. One of my friends had decided, hey let's do this event for Veteran suicide after losing one of my close friends and him losing another one of his Marines. We put together this hike and it really turned into something overnight. The feeling of helping other Vets, like helping out my other brothers, that turned into be the best medicine. You do something nice for someone. You take care of somebody else. You do something selfless. You make it not about you. You are going to feel better.

Whether you are Army, Marine Corp, Navy whatever branch you are at. Officer enlisted, ten years or four years, at the end of it we all share the title Veteran. If you are having a tough time we are here, we are family – reach out.



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