

It was like I just didn't care anymore

Scott: My name is Scott. I was in the Marine Corps from '93 to '99, and then I reenlisted when the war broke out and spent... reenlisted in '04 and went through '07. You know, I left my two kids behind when I went over, right, and they were 15 and 12 when I came over, and for me it was really hard because within the first few days, you know, we were attacked a bunch of times and, you know, we had a few RPG shot at our helicopter flying into Fallujah before we even hit the ground, and I had a lot of guilt, a lot of guilt. You know, I kinda thought, "I'm not coming home." You know, here I am selfish dad going off to play, you know, like a little kid and be a war hero. This stuff is no joke and now I'm not going home. I couldn't let that effect me, because ultimately what was important was the Marine on my left and the Marine on my right, and that's what I need to remember. And that's why when I say I flipped a switch, that's what I did. They were now my family. You know, I had a family back home, but this was now my family.

The first few months after I came home, it was nice. It was fun, you know. Everybody comes up, and it's like, "Hey, nice to be home." You know, "Good job." Whatever, "How was it?" You know, blah, blah, and you're like this big war hero, and then after everybody's done that to you, everybody's come up, and you know you've said it to me, you don't say it again. So, once I've, you know, went through that group of people, it's like all of a sudden now I'm just every other guy on the street you know, and that's when things started to really kind of hit me.

The home life wasn't too bad. I mean, my kids understood. You know, it was kinda okay. My youngest one would kinda laugh about it. She was real proud. You know, she was real like you know, "My daddy, my daddy," you know, and they would laugh about it, because the way I would drive when I came home and stuff, but you know and then I think as time went on, they started to see the nasty side of it. You know, I'd come home, and I didn't have a lot of patience. I still don't have a lot of patience for people, and they would see that side of it, and they would see me you know, "Why didn't you do this?" There was no like middle ground. It was just like zero to 100 yelling, mad, upset, couldn't handle it, and the hard part for me was the whole time I'm doing this, I knew inside it was wrong, but I couldn't stop it, and I think that was the big thing for them, that maybe effected them.

Where I really started to feel it was when I went back to work, you know and I noticed going back to work for me was really, really hard. I felt like people were looking at me like I was strange, like something was off, and I don't know if it was something personal that was going on inside of me, but I just started to feel really isolated. And you know, some of the counselors told me that was probably my own, you know, kinda like feeling that way was something that was going on inside of me. People usually don't just look at people like that. And so, I kinda isolated myself at work. I'd go in really early. I'd sit in the dark, do my work, and leave. You know, I didn't have a lot of social interaction at work. There was times I would just leave work and I would walk down the middle of our, you know, corridor thing and, you know, I would just... people were walking at me, and I'd walk right down the middle, and I'd just think to myself don't hit me, don't touch me, if you touch me, I'm putting you down. You know, and I've tried to adapt, and I tried to kinda function as a normal person, but you know there's not a day that goes by that I don't crave that normalcy that I had at one time, you know, because I don't have it anymore.



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Since I've been back, I've acquired kinda like a compulsiveness. I never had any of this before I went to Iraq. It's all, I believe, it's all a direct result of something that happened when I came back. I would get up and check the doors multiple times. You know, I mean I would go physically unlock the door, lock it, and be like okay, it's locked, go upstairs. Go back down, did I check it? And go down and check it again, and I did that a lot. I would try to sleep, but just never could get to sleep. Any noises would wake me up, you know, and then the nightmares came and I kinda was like if I go to sleep, I'm gonna have this nightmare and I had a lot of reoccurring nightmares, you know. And that's when Josh finally called me a few months after we got back, and he finally got a hold of me, and he kinda talked to me a little bit about it, and said, "Hey, we gotta get you in." And so, that's when, you know, he kinda hand walked me into the VA and just started the process.

I mean, I knew the VA existed. I just didn't know exactly what they had to offer me. So, when Josh called me, he was like, "Hey, we gotta get you down there," blah, blah, blah. "We have this thing called a case manager... Combat Case Manager. You know, she's really nice. You know, I'll call her," so on and so forth." So, within a couple hours I believe or maybe it was the next day, I had a phone call from his case manager, and she said, "Come in as soon as you can."

They got me enrolled in the system, which is a process. You know, get you enrolled in the healthcare system. And then she kinda screened me and she said, you know, she's like, "I believe you're suffering from depression, PTSD, anxiety, you know everything that goes along with it." She said, you know, that people with PTS kinda of operate, you know, you go to that scale from zero to ten, and you know the normal person might operate at a 0 or a 1, you know, and they might get a little angry and it goes up to a 3 or a 4, but then it just kind of goes away. To where people with PTSD or PTS, you know, they operate at that 7-8 level. You know, so when they get... something happens, they go to a ten like instantly and that's rage, and that was a pretty good analogy of me. I mean, it's like I can feel very calm, but there's no in between.

If you don't feel normal and you feel like you're starting to isolate yourself, because like that's one of the big things, then you need to go down to the VA or a Vet Center or find a Veteran organization, seek help, and at least talk to somebody to find out, you know, what it is you're going through, because you're not alone.



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