

Tried to avoid emotions, but they resurfaced

Jim: I served in the Air Force from 31 July 1991 to 2009. I was in Desert Storm, Enduring Freedom and several other deployments in South America and the Middle East.

I knew it was gonna to be some stuff that I'd see. I was young so I was looking forward to it. It never made sense to me, like man I'd see something, but it didn't really affect me at the time cause I would kinda push that stuff away.

In late '98 when I was involved in the Phoenix Ravens we went South America on a mission and I don't know exactly what was going on but there was a skirmish or something and so, we pruned out and got ready for this attack and I guess some guerillas had gotten in the fence line or something, I don't know. And they were about to attack us so, we were down there about 20 minutes waiting for this and my reoccurring nightmare, it's taken me years to figure it out. The nightmares that I have are from being overrun and being without help.

It actually triggered in '99 when I was at another base and I had to respond to a car accident. This girl ended up dying but she got cut in half by this car laying on top of her and I didn't really pay attention to my nightmares, but about a week after that I started having nightmares and I never told anybody about it. I figured I could handle it but then it got worse. I guess it's just over the years, 17 years of that your mind kinda pushes stuff away but then it catches up with you.

I always said, "Nah, I don't have PTSD." I didn't see anything that would cause me to have it. I just figured, I always rationalize it as I don't need help, this is not a big deal.

I was laid off. I didn't have a job for months and my wife was working. So, I was just sitting at home thinking about stuff and I checked out she was getting more and more concerned about me because I was having erratic behavior and I was angry all the time and she called the Vet Center she found online and there was a Counselor there named Heather and she called Heather and they talked and then Heather said, "Well, give him my number and have him call me." So, I called her and talked and she's trying to encourage me to come in. After the third session I started "Do you think I have like a mild case of it?" And she was like, "Oh no brother, you've got a full-blown case of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder." So, yeah its, kinda opened my eyes. I was like whoa, maybe there is something wrong.

My dad died and that really pushed me over the edge because I didn't have a job, full time job, and the guy I was calling all the time to talk to and encourage me died. And I got back into counseling and I just totally committed to it. The Vet Center was there for me. As soon as I told them I was in trouble and I needed help they went into action. I wanted to go to a small private place and that's what the Vet Center is.

Now me and my wife are both in counseling once a week at the Vet Center with marriage counseling. So, I'm not only getting individual counseling but also marriage counseling through there. My wife and I are working through the issues and so, they've been there. They're a Godsend.



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