

## **Bipolar management improved Mike's family life**

**Mike:** My name's Mike. I served in the United States Army in 1992, I got out in 2008. Two weeks before I came home on my first tour I got blown up by IEDs. Went back my second tour, got blown up again, and when I came home for vacation, I ended up having a seizure disorder from it. That's ultimately what led me to being medically discharged.

When I came back from Iraq, it changed me as a person. I was really angry, really mad, just a totally different person. I am a happy-go-lucky person, always joking around. I had trouble sleeping, anxiety, any little thing would set me off, it just really upset. It was hard for my kids. I expected civilian life to kind of be like military, you always have somebody that watches your back and you don't have that.

I started drinking and once that happen it was like a flood or a gate wave that released all of these hidden memories, this built up regression and anger that eventually came out. I started to see that I did have PTSD, I did have anger, but there was something else that was building up inside of me and I felt like I was on a rollercoaster going back and forth and on top of that I ended up having bipolar. Me and my ex-wife just – she was wanting to be there, she knew something was wrong, but I wasn't getting help and she felt that I wasn't doing everything I could to get the help.

Eventually I had enough and I ended up taking a bunch of pills and drinking a bunch of alcohol, tried to commit suicide and ended up in the hospital. It was a civilian hospital and they are the ones that diagnosed me and that is what made it better after that was getting help from them and getting put on proper medication and actually feeling like it mattered.

I joined a men's group at a local church and we used to meet every Monday. What I found out is when you get men together, one they are going to talk more openly and freely about stuff; but a lot of issues they had were the same that I had. It wasn't at the same extent, none of them had been to combat, but they all still have, depression, guilt, anger, anxiety. It is just in a different way and I was able to relate to them without having the combat in the back of my mind.

When me and my ex-wife got a divorce I got mandated to go to an anger management class over in Chandler and it was probably one of the best classes. A civilian class. I got to be around a bunch of other people that were angry and mad for different reasons, but it made me see that I am not different. The biggest thing is just finding peace within myself to know that I don't always have to be angry. Going to church was a big part of it. I go fishing a lot. I go to sporting events. I had to actually sit down and look at myself and see where I want to be, not who I was.

I grew up without a father and I feel that that title is earned and not given and I have earned it from my kids. When we are together it is because we want to be together, it is not because I am their dad, it is because they actually want to be around me and they miss me. Before when I as going through everything, they did care and they did love me, but you could tell that there was a separation between us. There wasn't a connection.

I thought I was going to die and now I am looking forward to doing better things in life. Growing old, having grandkids and being a positive influence with them. So that is probably one of the bigger things. I look more towards the future and a happy future



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instead of seeing a darkness and a what-if. It is one hell of a fight some times, but in the end it is better.



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