

## PTSD treatment helps this Veteran live well

**Ernest:** My name is Ernest. I'm from Birmingham, Alabama. I served in the United States Navy on board the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower from 1989 to 1993 and I was a Cook. We did Gitmo training off the coast of Cuba, the Miami Straits and the Mediterranean Sea. That was one of our primary go's as med crews. On our way home from Haifa, we were about midway back to Norfolk and Kuwait was invaded, and so we had to turn around and go six more months. It was a different experience man; I'd never been there before. We were in war man, this was war, people were dying.

When I first got out of the Navy, I was mentally drained. I was tired. I became moody, I became very sheltered. I didn't want to be around a lot of people. Not so much as fighting, but argumentative. Just having run-ins with the law, just having wrecks with people. Sometimes I couldn't breathe and I would see red. So getting out of the war and remembering bits and pieces of it, sometimes it happens it nightmares, and wake up sweating. I have to change the shirt or change the sheets, that kind of thing. I never wanted to let anybody know I needed any help. I didn't talk to anybody until I started opening up to my masonic brother Veterans who had been in Vietnam and things of that nature. And so, I would go to the VA. At that time, it's a bunch of Veterans giving you scenarios as per what's going on with them in their daily lives and what adjustments they're having to make as for civilian life now coming from the military. And that's when I first got the premise of Veterans helping one another.

The Doctor, my Psychologist, he and I established a rapport with one another, and I felt really comfortable with him. He was just trying to get me to open up to him, and I did, and I would continue today although he's in Kansas City now.

I was diagnosed with post traumatic stress disorder in 2006. I was also diagnosed with depression. I was also diagnosed with anxiety. To get the diagnosis back and to finally pinpoint a particular aspect of post traumatic stress disorder was great. I'm the kind of guy that I always like to figure stuff out, you see what I'm saying? And not have to guess at it anymore. Whether that be with just group sessions or whether it be with group sessions and/or medication. I never wanted to tell anybody I needed a pill for nothing, but, I just think I just might, so, I gave it a shot. I'm sleeping all the way through the nights, most of the nights now. I'm not sweating as much, I'm not having night sweats as much; it's helping me out a lot. And I really appreciate the Psychologist and the Psychiatrist taking time out to try and talk to me and get a handle on it.

I've finally had enough courage to go to my Alcoholics Anonymous groups, my cocaine anonymous group, my narcotics anonymous group because the way I would handle my depression is through alcohol and drugs. I didn't worry about it anymore, but it didn't go anywhere, it only manifested itself into me becoming addicted. And now, learning that I do have a cocaine addiction now is great. At least I know. Now, it's OK. I don't have to walk around with a banner, I don't have to be ashamed anymore, the Lord has blessed me man, to meet some really, really, really, really good brothers and sisters.

Well, my final thought to Veterans that may be pondering whether they should go to the VA, if you're feeling uncomfortable at home, I suggest you talk to another Veteran about it. We've got a big 'ole fraternity of us out here man, it's a whole lot of us. Please, please go to the VA and talk to somebody. Please take the first step and we'll take the rest.



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

**MAKE THE  
CONNECTION**



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

**MAKE THE**  
**CONNECTION**