

Compassion and Forgiveness

Bruno: Even though there's a lot of suffering and even though that people do certain things, there's so much compassion out there in the world. I am Bruno, United States Marine Corps. I was an 0331 machine gunner and a combat instructor, and I served from 2001 to 2008. I joined in June of 2001. We got to Baghdad and it was just a very intense day. We were in a fire fight where people were injured that were not supposed to be injured, and we were the cause of that. It was a family of a father, three sons, the mother and a daughter. They were trying to escape from their home in Baghdad, and the only ones that survived were the mother and the daughter.

I didn't know what to do with that for a really long time. I mean, I was only like 19 or 20 years old at this time, so it was just hard on me coming home. I was drinking a lot. My anger was just through the roof. Anything would trigger me. I didn't treat my wife the way that she deserved to be treated. This ship is going to where it's not supposed to be, man, and I got to make sure I change directions.

One of my friends, he reached out. He's like, "I think I found a family that might have been the family that was in those cars that we shot up." We attempted to reach out and we made contact. I remember getting to the doorway of this little lady who was probably like 5'1", and she embraced us. I just went up to her and gave her a huge hug. We met the daughter who we shot through the shoulder. Then they cooked dinner for us. We talked. We laughed. If they can move forward with their life and embrace people that took so much away and still love them, if they can do that, then I can too. It truly changed my life, and I think that's part of why I do a lot of the things that I do now, because of that moment.

After treatment, it's just been great. Nobody else outside of the VA system really knew what to do with combat veterans and PTSD and all of this stuff, so I'm glad that I did it. My family's just the center of my life. Being a good example and being open for them to teach me, listening to them, doing everything that I do alongside them, that's what it's all about for me



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