I feel alive again

Brent: My name is Brent. I was in the Army from 2004 to 2012 and I fought in Iraq and Afghanistan. I drank every day for probably about a year after my first deployment. I used to drink to fall asleep. I didn't really know how to deal with a lot of things so I just kind of buried it whether work or other activities with friends or drinking, just anyway to not deal with it or take inventory of the problem.

I got back from my last deployment, I had a year left in the Army. My wife got pregnant immediately, my dad got diagnosed with brain cancer, then I got out and just all of the stress of being a civilian and re-integrating into society. I avoided a lot of like social outings or family things to avoid crowds like not taking my kid out for you know the Christmas fair, or whatever, just because I didn't want to deal with the crowd. Things would get a little bit better and it would stop and just try to ignore it all again and just go about life, but it had a habit of catching back up to me.

After I got out the stresses of everything finally caught up and my wife left me, and it was like a huge driving factor. Like, okay, I had to really re-evaluate myself and a lot of the things that I was doing, and patterns of behavior I was acting out I guess. I started going back to the VA originally and I couldn't find a counselor that I felt worked for me, it wasn't necessarily like their method or the person I just didn't connect with them. And then I decided to try out the Vet center and found someone there I could talk to and relate to and something that just works for me.

Cognitive processing therapy worked for me in some ways. I got a lot out of it. It definitely helped highlight some of the things that I was just couldn't get my head away from or the things I was stuck on. Like I had a lot of guilt about a lot of things that had happened or I had seen or done. It gave me like a new way of looking at it I guess. Kind of detached myself and looked back at and experienced objectively through you know a third party lens or tried my best to and really kind of re-evaluate the causes of some of the things or why I was feeling a certain way about certain experiences. My entire life has been improving, just like every little piece of something I etch away at like it is just less off of my shoulders and I feel less burdened by it. I am able to go out and meet people and talk to people and actually I feel alive again.

My relationship with my son has definitely improved. Like when I take him out in public I am actually able to concentrate more on him and what I am doing with him versus everything that is going around and the other people around me and the situation I am in and just being less stressed about that gives me so much more focus on him. I have been reconnecting with a lot of old friends that I just ignored for whatever reason and with my family too. I always kind of held them at a distance emotionally and just there was always this barrier between us and between myself and them. Taking that barrier down, getting help has kind of helped me to reconnect with them and actually have a better relationship with everyone in my life.

There are definitely times in my life where I didn't know if I could go through another day. I just couldn't see past the pain of the moment. You know you just kept putting one foot in front of the other one, you just keep moving forward and always forward and then you wake up one day and you are like what do you know I am here today and this is where I am at and I have overcome this and then you look back and are like, "what can't I do?"