Mary's son saw that she needed help

Mary: My name is Mary. I served in the United States Army for 22 years. My job in the United States Army was communications. I got picked out of thousands of people to be a drill sergeant, but that was a great experience. I learned a lot about my stamina, my leadership skills.

I'd always been good at everything that I thought I was and met every challenge until we got to the rifle range and I could not get 23 out of 40 into that target. And I remember my drill sergeant came and he spoke to me about it. And I froze. I literally froze in that fox hole. Once I realized I was going to fail that day, I went off in a state of panic. I had never experienced failure at the time. That's what I thought it was, just failure. I'm getting more responsibilities and each time something comes up and I can't do it, I'm in a panic. I'm not thinking about a mental health issue. I'm thinking about I'm not completing my mission and people are depending on me.

Anxiety built up in every area of my life when I got out of the military. When you're a military person, you've been in charge and you had leadership skills, people look at your resume and the first thing they say, "I want her to be in charge." And I remember one time I had a job. I had to turn reports every day, and that meant somebody was looking at my work. Of course, I'm panicked. I'm freezing whether I'm doing it right or wrong.

I developed a drinking problem from the stress. I'll take a drink and I'll be fine. And then it got out of control to the point where my son said, "This is not you." My nephew took me to the VA because I was telling him, he works…he's like a nurse practitioner. So, we went there, and they said, okay. But you have to go into substance abuse recovery first. That was the first thing I had to do because he knew I was drinking too much.

The final day was I got…I wanted a new social worker because I didn't think my social worker was listening to me. So, I went to a new social worker and she noticed all my nervous moves: scratching my hair and twitching and not being comfortable. And she said, "What I'm going to do is send you to a psychiatrist."

He called me in and he said, "Mary, you have anxiety. You have an anxiety disorder." And he put me on medication about a month ago, and I've seen a significant difference. I went to another great program for the mental health department is WRAP. WRAP put me in a group of other people who have mental health disorders, and WRAP helped me become a more complete and calm person every day.

I knew something was wrong. I've known it for a long time. Keep telling someone. Set them down and make sure they understand it. There is something going on with me. I need help. Will you help me? Take me to the VA. Talk to someone. Because something's going on with me.

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