

## TBI doesn't have to take over your life

**Brad:** My name is Brad. I was in the Army. I was Eleven Bravo infantry. I joined in 1998 and left in 2006. I was in a Stryker Unit 15 infantry before they went to Alaska. I was out of Fort Lewis, Washington, so we were their favorite things to attempt to destroy. I've gone through at least 12 IEDs. How many times was I unconscious? I couldn't tell you. I didn't really recognize that I had a TBI.

I got home and things were different. I come home and before I went to Iraq I wasn't married. Well, I was married but I didn't live with my wife. I come home, I'm married, live with my wife, live with my daughter, and now I have a dog and my wife is pregnant. So, that was a fairly quick change. I mean, going from literally absolute balls-to-the-wall destruction to the caring, loving husband and father. I would have problems with my anger. I would just, I tore a screen door off of our on-post housing, and one day I was just really, really pissed off and I was just, I wasn't handling real well.

**Dani:** He was extremely angry, extremely hypervigilant, constantly looking for the dangers in every situation.

**Brad:** I get depressed, very depressed. I've had friends kill themselves over depression and what they've done and seen in Iraq, and I really don't want to follow suit but I've come pretty close.

**Dani:** So, he all of a sudden was thrown into the civilian world and he was completely lost, didn't know how his skills translated to the real world.

**Brad:** It sucked. It absolutely sucked. I've gone through five, six jobs.

**Dani:** He would lose a job every three or four months, right when we were about to get insurance benefits, and after about a year and a half of that, I said, "I can't take this. I need more stability. You have got to just work on yourself," and so he agreed. We were already in the process for disability benefits. One thing that did help him quite a bit is he was in the Voc Rehab Program, and he was going to school and he was having a really difficult time with some of his college classes.

**Brad:** Yeah, school was really hard because every class I had new people.

**Dani:** And the VA put him through a brain training program, and that program was actually pretty tremendous for him.

**Brad:** They helped me with my word recall. Eight months ago I wouldn't be this good with my word recall.

**Dani:** He used to have a stutter all the time and that has gone away. He used to do a thing where his eyes darted back and forth really fast when he was trying to have word recall and his brain wasn't getting the word out to his mouth, and that has almost gone away.

**Brad:** I do one-on-one counseling. I've done a little bit of marital counseling with the wife.



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**Dani:** We went to mental health together and he said, I need you to come with me. And so, we went in for counseling services and we went down to the Denver VA and he actually got placed with a pretty amazing counselor, and she saw him individually for a while and he had me go with him until he felt comfortable seeing her alone, and then she also has done some couple's counseling with us.

**Brad:** I love my wife and I'm in love with my wife. My wife and kids are the only things that keep me running on that straight arrow.

**Dani:** He was learning a lot of skills that he didn't have before. He was learning a lot of different ways to deal with living in a family, basically. It's all about communication and the way that you deal with each other.



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