

Getting Your Life Back

Kelley: Kelley, Air Force. I was Security Forces and also Vehicle Maintenance Control Analysis from 1997 to 2003. Work was very stressful for me and it's just not a great career field for women. And it was a little bit hard being a black woman as well, a few challenges there. Towards the end, I got physically ill. I had a lot of pains at the time. And I knew that some of the feeling that I was getting was because I didn't want to go to work because work was so stressful. So, I knew that had something to do with it. They told me I had fibroids and if fibroids go untreated, they tend to grow and grow and grow. They're hard fibrous mass and they were in my uterus and that's what was giving me all the pain and making me so miserable.

By the time I realized I'm addicted to my pills, my brain understands that my body won't let me stop. The withdrawals were like unexplainable. The withdrawals were like, I wanted to peel myself out of my skin. Well, 22 days into withdrawal, I just felt like this is it. If I don't get some professional help, I don't know what's going to happen. I called the VA. And when I went in there, they said, "Do you want help?" It was a blessing that I actually went in there and some of the people were phenomenal. That's how I got my life back on track.

The focus that the VA has now is spot on. The first few years, I had male doctors. There wasn't even a woman's clinic at that point. And we've made so many strides since then. Even though that we served as well as man, and we want to be looked at equally and the same, we are different. We have different challenges physically and mentally. But when I go into the women's clinic, I'm there because I'm a woman veteran and they treat me as such. To walk in somewhere where you feel comfortable with other people who have similar experiences, just because they are women, it takes a lot of that anxiety and anxiousness away about what's going to happen.

I specifically wanted to see a black woman. I did get one, and she was phenomenal. That whole 60 minutes I have with her, even though she wasn't a veteran, there was no backstory that I had to give her because there were things that we had experienced, similar enough that I didn't have to go into it. You have to be more responsible for your own care. Make sure you get into the VA system and then try, try again



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