

You do have somebody

James: My name is James. I served in the United States Army from 2009 to 2014. I was deployed to Afghanistan, Kandahar, and that was in May 2011 to May 2012, and I just remember hearing an RPG, boom, and it lands, like, right beside me. I remember freezing up, I remember that RPG, I think it killed a couple people, and my sergeant was like, “Yo, go, go, go, go, go!” And I’m, like, just frozen, like, I didn’t know how to react to it. We don’t really to feel that necessary fear in that moment because you have so many of your buddies, you have a weapon, you have so many components, so many—your mind is always thinking about the mission, so you don’t have time to, like, process what just happened in those moments.

May 2015 is that’s when my life changed completely in my opinion. I was on the train on the path coming to New York, going to school, all of a sudden I hear a big boom and my heart starts racing and I go into a full blown panic attack, and I just remember correlating that RPG that same sound was so familiar it was like reliving it almost. I’m like “I don’t know what’s going on with me,” I just started, like, shaking and then started crying and it’s the worst feeling in the world.

I remember being so freaking scared of getting out. I remember my sister walked me, literally by my hand and I said, “I can’t go out there, I feel like something bad’s going to happen to me,” and nobody in the whole world didn’t understand at that moment, I’m like “I feel scared, I don’t want to go out there, I don’t want to go out there, I don’t want to go out there. I just want to go home and lay down and, like, cover up in a ball and just cry,” and all these emotions that I had bottled up from my deployment are coming out, and I don’t know how to deal with them, and I’m like “Well, that’s not cool, I need help. I need help.”

I just got set up with a therapist from the VA. They diagnosed me with PTSD, started confronting all the stuff that I endured throughout my deployment and other stuff as well that’s connected to that, and when I started to accept that and be okay with what I experienced and be myself, I started to feel better and make a different change in my life. These tactics, these resources that I needed which are medication is one, psychotherapy analysis, EMDR, to go and confront that, not by yourself, with somebody in courageous and helping you through the process at your pace. Meditation, they encouraged me in meditation, they gave me apps and helped me out with that. Exercise and nutrition, all these things have, like, just built a new me. I feel like I can do anything.

Random fireworks, like yesterday I heard one, I just—you startle, that’s just a normal reflex now. I’m not in danger, I’m not in Afghanistan, I’m not getting shot at, it’s just a firework, even though your body sometimes, like, starts elevating the heart rate and stuff like that, but I’m able to manage it more.

With the right positive attitude, with the right people you can overcome it, period. That’s the formula, but you have to seek these steps, you have to go seek this help. If you’re homeless there’s VA programs, if you’re depressed, man, they’ll get you, put you in a 60-day program and get you right back. If you’re lacking money there’s financial advisors that they have. If you don’t have nobody, that’s a lie, that’s a lie you’re telling yourself. You do have somebody. The VA’s there. People are here, Veterans—I’m here. We have the resources. It’s out there.



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