

## Every day he gets a little bit better

**Matthew:** My name is Matthew. I have two family members that served; my father was in the Army and my brother, the Army National Guard. He was big brother; I was little brother, so there was the typical fights and struggles and stuff like that, but we also got along. I always saw him as a pretty cool guy. He was a great athlete and I had a lot of respect for that. I learned a lot from him by looking up to him and looking at his friends and saying, "Okay, well, this is what it means to be older, what it means to be an adult." He was incredible in the military. He graduated at the top of his class in basic training. He was a fantastic soldier and a good soldier, a good man.

After he had left for the service, he came back. I saw him being deeply, deeply troubled. It got a little scary to me when he started to detach. He would act sometimes as if he didn't know us or that he didn't trust us. He felt as if we were attacking him a lot of the time and the more this happened, the more frequent it became, and the more distant he became, the more we realized that there was a problem. He's always been a loving guy and to see him distrustful and angry and suspicious, it just wasn't him. We spent weeks at a time having no idea where he was. He walked across the United States on foot and back. At his real low points, when he got really bad, he wouldn't even take a shower because he felt like there was acid in the water. It's just jaw dropping. I couldn't even imagine what he was going through and it was terrifying, it was terrifying, and it really took a lot out of me. It took a lot out of my father.

He went into a long period of lockdown at the VA Hospital. I'm forever grateful for what they did for him and for getting him on that medication and making sure that he stayed on it because otherwise, he wouldn't be in the good situation he's in today. Steve is doing a lot better now. He's discovered a lot of things about himself, a lot of his own talents, a lot of things that he never knew that he could do before. Through the VA, he got a loan for a home, so now he's living on his own, doing his own thing, and that's been really good for him too. You know, every day, every day he gets a little bit better. Every day is a new journey, but I really, I'm blown away with his strength. Everything that he has been through I couldn't even imagine and here he is still standing. I'm so proud of my brother. I don't think that anybody who has this illness is going to be exactly like my brother and it's a very, very individual process. It's a very complex illness. You can reclaim your old relationships that you had before this person essentially disappeared into this illness. You can find it again, but it takes work. Be strong and be patient and make sure that they have the medical attention that they need.



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