

Phillip needed structure, so he found VA support

Phillip: My name is Phillip. I served in the United States Army. I did a few years of active duty in Georgia, peace time from 1999 to 2001. After a three day break in service, I joined the California National Guard. I extended with them several times until deploying to Iraq with the 184th Infantry Regiment. So I did a lot of guard duty and I also did some combat patrols.

I think what may have affected my well-being, my emotional well-being coming back from overseas is the regimental aspect of serving. The idea that everything needs to be done a certain way and a certain time, at a certain place, in a certain manner with this certain amount of immediacy, just doing the right thing, the chain of command and none of that was available. I started to lose my military identity and I was struggling to maintain that. Then I felt like I would have to probably try and switch careers, so I went back to school which wouldn't have been my first choice in life. All things considered, I went back to school to get enough college credit to put in an application with the local police department. That put a lot of stress on me.

I was starting to become very irritable “starting to pull out a, not a drill Sergeant shtick” because that's not really what it was. But there was no clear chain of command at the house. It was just an uncomfortable environment for me to function. So there are probably some things “That were beyond my control” which were irritating, I just couldn't get a handle on them. And I didn't know what else to do except for start complaining. The only thing I started to do is elevate my temperament and I actually turned it on on-purpose.

I was reprimanded by the courts to attend anger management so, I didn't really have a better place or way to survive except for to come back to where I came from out here to California and the judge in the matter authorized that it would be okay if I came out here. I was attending counseling two or three days a week at one point and along with anger management, along with stress management, I also went to this Vet Center. Surprisingly, I found when I was attending an anger management through the VA, that there was a room of 12 former combat soldiers basically, all of us were theoretically temperamental or had tempers or had at least shown signs of temperament in the past. What I found interesting was every single former soldier in that room was very peaceable.

The VA caught me in a big way when I really needed it. They caught me before I fell flat on my face and in any number of ways, they caught me in terms of if I needed major help with housing, they were there. They caught me financially, they caught me with medical treatment and counseling.

I absolutely would recommend that people, when they get out of the service, enroll in the VA healthcare system. Even if you don't need any VA help, you should get enrolled just in case. There's a very good chance that you really might need VA help. You certainly at least extend yourself the option of getting proper care and treatment and the only real way to do that is communicating with other Veterans.



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

**MAKE THE
CONNECTION**