

## Managing schizophrenia with VA support

**Keith:** My name is Keith. I graduated from high school in '87 and I went into the military not knowing what was going to happen, how things were going to go. Before the Navy, I had a little scholarship to go somewhere and I decided to go in the Navy, but I hurt myself. When I hurt myself, we were in the barracks and somehow my leg hit the bunk and this leg right here, swelled up to about that big, so I did get a medical afterwards. They sent me home. I had a little bit of money, so, you know, it wasn't a bad transitional thing to go through and I guess life just went from there.

I see myself losing ground by the way I used to work-out and what I used to do. Things wasn't the same. It was different. It was like, you know, just going through things, you know, and having people to talk to you about certain things, sometimes it just sends click I mean like that so. I had a deeper ambition to try to make it through this thing because the voices came.

My ex took me to the hospital because she thought that something was wrong with me and I couldn't figure out why. When I went to the VA, they talked to me about certain things, "What should I do? How should do I it?" They diagnosed me to be a schizophrenic. They helped me a lot. They tried to see through the picture of what's going on instead of saying, "Well, I've just got to put them on that type of medicine, you know, leave it there." What they did is actually talk to me, get to know me a little bit. We can sit down and chit chat about anything and if you talk to your doctor and let them know exactly what's going on, I think it would be better for you. Now once you first get in to the system, you should tell them exactly what's going on and how you feel and don't be ashamed, you know, because from PTSD to depression, schizophrenia, schizoaffective, I mean all these things, if you have them, go to the hospital; talk to them and sometimes, you know, they have places where you can come to for groups. You have to understand, you know, your illness I think a little bit because schizophrenia is, I mean, once you're schizophrenic, I think, you know, it's hard enough to recover but you can. I mean, start listening to the right things. Like the voices come, you've got to understand which one is real, which one is not. Sometimes your thought pattern has been going, make your mind just keep going and going and going over things that you did and you know, if you're hearing voices at that time, I mean, that's another pressure point on you. I believe in recovery for that is that you need to do the right thing for yourself. Right now, the medicine that I'm on, you know, I can work-out. I can do things. I can maneuver like how I want to. Even if I want to go hunting or fishing or even being with a girl, things like that. For me, they tell you anything that I think is best, get help. Go to your nearest Veterans Affairs person or Veterans Hospital or, you know, get some help from your family; let them try to give you some advice to move in a right direction.



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