

When Mike's anger got out of hand, he got help

Mike: My name is Mike. I was in the North Port Army National Guard. I was deployed from mid '03 to '05 to Iraq. My Humvee got hit with a roadside bomb. It was right up under my door. We were very fortunate, my whole crew. We didn't lose anybody, but we all got a concussion injury.

Your body is still on some of the safety mechanisms that you have during combat when your mind is helping you not show the signs of PTSD, showing the signs of stress. I'm home, I'm safe, having a grand time reuniting with my family, my kids, my wife, my mom, my friends. I seemed pretty normal to them.

All of a sudden, "Oh, what's wrong with my chest? What is wrong with me?" I can't figure out what's going on. "What is happening?" All of a sudden my hands are shaking and I'm starting to cry. "Why am I crying? What is wrong with me?" I feel like I'm grieving somebody's death, I feel like I'm being attacked, I feel like I need to run, I feel like I need to fight, and I feel anger. I mean, I feel every emotion possible all at the same time.

I would lose time and no doctors could figure out why. I would dig a fighting position, I'd camouflage myself, and they weren't gonna find me. At one point when I was lost like this, I did \$8000 damage to that house on Christmas Eve. My wife's outside with my two kids while I'm thrashing around yelling and screaming, tearing everything up. She knew I wasn't right. She'd been telling me forever, "Mike, something's wrong with you. Mike, this is more than PTSD. Mike, please get help. Mike, it's time to go to the VA."

I wouldn't hear of it. I kept saying, "I'm not going to the VA. I'm not doing this, I'm not doing that. I'm not going to the Vet Center." I've got my buddies Andy and Ed, you know, they don't have legs right now. They're hopping around, they're fine. They're doing awesome. I talk to them all the time. They're not complaining. But, here I am. Tearing this house up. I'm out of my mind at that point.

So she calls the police and by saving grace, the policeman that shows up is a Vietnam Veteran. He said "I've been there." He explained he is a Vietnam Veteran and he said he had plenty of problems when he got back. That's when Jackie stepped in and she took me straight to the VA and that's when my life was saved.

I'm telling you if she would not have taken me to the VA that day and I'd have kept on that same road, I had a plan to kill myself and I would've executed it. I would've done it. I was in enough pain and mental anguish, I was tired, and I was exhausted. I would've done it. They got me to the VA and that team took me in and it was a team concept. It was Primary Care, it was Mental Health, Neurology. They all jumped on it. Fair, quick assessments.

So if you don't feel right, go get care, because it's only getting worse. You're only breaking down even farther. It just gets worse with time so just get care. By waiting it is just absolutely only making things worse on yourself and your family. Now I'm totally dedicated towards helping other Veterans not make the same mistakes that I made. Catching this earlier and getting care and being able to live full and long lives.



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