

Finding inner strength and fortitude

Leslie: I felt very ugly. I felt disfigured. I felt deformed. In fact, it was so bad that I wanted to never come out of the house. I wanted to wear a snowsuit so no one could ever see my leg or the uneven parts of my leg. I mean, I literally wanted to hide. I, I would have paranoia that people had x-ray vision. This is kind of how crazy your mind starts to think, that they could see through your long pants that, you know, is covering up your prosthetic.

And it works on you to the point where that feeling of just, that ugliness makes you want to hide and withdraw. You don't feel like yourself. You feel like no one is ever going to, say, like you or think that, that you're not...again, a deformed person.

You don't get a manual when you have an amputation. There are so many different feelings, emotions. You have anger, you know, sadness. You cry. You want to scream. You want to throw things. You don't understand. There's so many other things that just come along with it.

And it was a battle for, for me, to get over all of that, and I finally decided then to say, "You're going to have to change this, this thought process." And I actually did reach out to the Vet center through the VA. I found a whole new inner strength, a whole new fortitude, that I didn't even know that I had. And it's amazing because everybody has it. But once you challenge yourself with that and you have that, more or less, that belief and faith in yourself again, things do turn around. And I still, I still see my counsellor and still to this day, I thank him all the time. I'm like, "If it were not for you, I would not be where I am at today."



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