

Professional support to get back on track

Richard: My name's Richard. I have 25 years between the Army and the Army Guard. For me, the first Gulf wasn't much. It was a lot of sitting around waiting but the OIF that I did recently, 04-05, that one's where everything got really scary, a lot different. I was getting shot at there probably within 2 weeks of me being on the ground, and then this last deployment I came back and it was killing me.

I had an altercation that I don't remember with my wife, and I went to the Army and said, "I need help." And then, since I was National Guard and still on active duty orders they sat here and says, "we can help you until you're out, once you're out then you're going to have to go to the VA." I didn't even wait until I was out. I just went to the VA.

When I went and had my rollovers, my IUD strikes, and what have you, during 04-05 there was no "let's test you" to see if you got TBI or concussion. That was never even a term that we'd ever heard.

I haven't been diagnosed with traumatic brain injury yet. So much of it overlaps with the PTSD, the posttraumatic stress and all that. So, it's hard to discern which is what. I've always been the guy that says, "hey, if I need the help or what I need to do this," this is what I do. I'm not one of those that tries to hide from it. If I know I've got a problem then let's weigh out options. Once that incident happened, there was no questions of, I need help. It was, I screwed up, and I need to go somewhere to get something straight and I didn't care what cost. You know, my marriage means more to me than that.

When I was able to get into some anger management classes and some PTSD and sleep management classes, which were groups at the VA. You learn just to make life a little easier the best you can. If it reduces stress it will help everything out in the long run.

Now that I'm out and retired, that's taken away a lot of stress. So, I'm able to do more things. If you thought that you need to go talk to somebody get out and do it. It doesn't matter if its the VA itself or any organization, just somebody. The military stigma of "I can't have a mental issue, I've got to be strong". Straight up, everybody has problems. It doesn't matter if it's mental, physical, whatever, you gotta get help for it. If you break your ankle, you go to the doctor right? Well, here you've done something inside your head. You've got to go to the doctor. It doesn't matter if it's a real doctor or PhD, counselor, chaplain. You've got to talk to somebody and if they're good at what they're doing, they're going to help you get to where you need to go.



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