

Counseling for PTSD leads to a work study program

Rochelle: My name is Rochelle. I was in the Army, served August of 2000 to December 2010. I was a medic, started out as 91 Whiskey which was a basic combat medic and then I transitioned over to 68 Whiskey which kind of helped medics become more versatile meaning that we can work the field and also in a hospital whereas before if you were a combat medic all you saw was field time.

We went to Iraq. We deployed in 2007 for 15 months. There was always loud noises and bombs going off outside the line, inside the line. I didn't know, I was affected by it until we were playing dominos during our down time and one of my buddies slapped the dominos on the table and I was just like oh, and I freaked out, and then from then on I just started noticing different things affected me a little bit more.

I lost a really good friend out there. He was a medic as well. I just couldn't sleep. I was always thinking about different things and I saw a lot of stuff as a medic, but nothing really affected me like my friend passing away out there.

I got into trouble. I was in Iraq for just having a lot of anger and not knowing how to deal with it. I felt fragile, like I don't know what's going to set me off. It could be someone screaming or a weird noise or just anything just seems to affect me if I'm not ready for I should say.

I have headaches every now and again, trouble sleeping, I sleep maybe four hours a day. I was going to see a psychiatrist on base, and he told me, you know yeah you have some posttraumatic stress syndrome and when I got home, I just started being really withdrawn. Other people told me I was weird so, that was their way of saying I wasn't myself, I guess. So, I blew them off and when it started affecting me with school and trying to find a job and just everyday things that you have to do, I decided to go get help. I went just when I wanted, which is what I'm still doing, one-on-one and he just listened to me which was good because a lot of people don't understand you. He understood what was going on with me. He assured me that you know it's going to be all right and I trusted that which to be honest I hadn't felt that way since I've been out. I felt alone like no one understood what I was going through and no one could help me. Before I even told him what I was experiencing it felt like he knew how to help me and that was good.

I can be in social settings better now because I'm thinking more about being more social and I care about being more social whereas before if I didn't want to do something, if I don't want to be social, I just didn't do it I just stayed home. I did the VA Works Study Program which is through vocational rehab. I still have a job there which I go to Work Study 30 hours a week and I also do the Chapter 33 which is the Post-9/11 GI Bill. I'm going to school fulltime doing that and through vocational rehab or Work Study they allow you time to go to school, make a schedule if you want to work, what hours you want to work, and it really works with school that you're not burning yourself out.

I feel like I'm on my way just being open to a lot of new things, everything is a new experience.



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