

You need to talk to somebody

George: When I got out of the military in May of 2004, when I separated, again, I already had a lot of these issues as far as drinking and they progressed. I didn't start working right away, couldn't find a job, couldn't find anything related to what I was doing in the military, and the alcohol just got worse. It was ten months after I had gotten out, I was involved in an auto accident that involved alcohol and I lost everything that night. I lost my vehicle, a place to live, family cut me off and it was a moment that I had to realize what I had to do in life, and I was confused. Started having real bad anxiety attacks which was something that I had been dealing with for some years, but I didn't know that they were anxiety attacks.

So I decided to go to the VA. I thought I was having a heart attack, I thought I was done. The VA did some tests and they told me what was going on with me and it was more anxiety than anything else. At that point, I asked them what do I need to do. How do I get rid of this? They told me, "you need to talk to somebody."

They offered some help. You can see Counselors here at the VA, you can go to some church groups or confide in some friends and the biggest problem is you're afraid to talk to your friends, you're afraid to tell them what's going on and what happened to you and why you feel this way because of how they're going to react. You don't want them to look at you as less of a person, as less of a man. So I decided to go the VA. I started seeking help there and actually helped me out a lot and to this day I still go on regular visits, go talk to my therapist so that they can see what's going on with me. Because the problems still persist and I still have to talk to somebody about it, because if I don't, sometimes I just feel like there's no end to the problems that I've had and no resolution and it's a scary feeling.

What I really liked was there was options. It wasn't you had to do this. No, it was "we have group sessions. If you don't feel comfortable sitting in a group environment, we can do one-on-one. We can make sure that the Counselor that you're sitting with fits with you." It wasn't so much like it was in the military where it didn't matter how you felt about the process you had to go through with it, it was more along the lines of this is what we can do for you, this is what we want to do for you. Will you accept that?

And for me, it was I didn't want to be in a group because again I still had that fear of being judged and when they were able to match me with a Counselor, it was much better for me because I felt comfortable with that person. I was able to open up and tell them everything that was going on with me without having any fear of them judging me or telling me what I was doing wrong.

Not once has my therapist ever told me, you're wrong. What you're doing is completely wrong. What he's done is he's lifted me up, he's told me about his experiences, similar instances that he's gone through and what he's done to help himself.



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