

Finding ways to deal with feeling on edge

Justin: I still had a lot of trouble sleeping and still do at times with just falling asleep. My mind constantly going, just kind of feeling that tense on edge feeling.

Bill: And I couldn't understand what was wrong with me because I always felt nervous, I felt I was tapping my feet all the time. I couldn't sit down, but I was always watching everybody and whenever somebody came into a room or something, my head was, I was watching them before they saw me.

Marcos: I couldn't go anywhere with, with having my back exposed. With people walking behind me that I didn't know.

Casey: When you're in large crowds or there's a lot of chaos and a lot of things happen it's hard to keep, you have to keep an eye on everything because you don't know where a potential threat is because after you see things as like a life or death matter your #1 goal is like I'm always going to protect myself.

Hector: Everything on your world becomes a potential threat. You're paying attention to everything. You can scan, scan, scan, everything is triggering something inside of you.

Bryan: I was the jumpiest guy you could possibly imagine and still to this day, when there's a loud noise I instantly become very angry for a split second and then I realize I'm in public and I make myself calm down again.

Don: Loud noises or claps or sudden bangs would startle me. Everybody gets startled, but I get startled and scared. I would actually shake.

Tracey: Anytime any of the firecrackers or fireworks go off, I think a lot of people look at it and think oh pretty, 4th of July, patriotic, but I look at that and still think, okay here are these missiles coming in from out of nowhere, are we going to get blown up tonight, are we not. It's still unnerving.

Mike: Driving's an issue when you first get back. Any little piece of garbage over in Iraq for a period of time could explode and blowup and kill you or your friends.

Melissa: Driving on the road, roadside trash was not nice, to this day, if a vehicle's is broken down on the side of the road I will get as far away from it as I can.

Reagan: I actually got pulled over one time for failure to maintain a lane. There was a bag in the road and I just didn't even think about it. I just assumed it was an IUD, subconsciously I swerved to miss it. There was a police officer right behind me, flipped the lights. He wanted to know what's going on and I didn't even tell him that, I just told him I don't know, I didn't maintain my lane. I didn't



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want him to think I was crazy. I didn't want him to think, wow what's the deal with this guy. But that's when I started realizing, wow. That was just weird to me.

Casey: It takes a long time to shed that alertness. Once it's there, and you depend on it to stay alive it's really hard to lose it once you've been back.

Chris: What really helped me was just talking to people that knew what I was going through. Talking with the other guys that were going through this and they've made it past it. That helped a lot and then they did teach me tricks. I found out if you look at the fireworks it's not as bad. So, if you're going to be going through it it's better to sit back and look at them.

Hector: I still had feelings of slight agoraphobia, not wanting to go out and public but I was processing it finally. I was talking about it and somebody was normalizing it for me, telling me, what you went through is not normal and therefore what you're going through now is normal. That's brilliant. So, it all started making sense. I started learning about myself and about my experiences and my reactions to it.



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