

The power of support from women Veterans

Kim: My name is Kim. I was in the United States Air Force. I started off at Grissom Air Force Base as a Medical Lab Technician. There ten years and moved on to Minot Air Force Base five years and from there, went to Langley Air Force Base three. Finally made it to overseas at Misawa Air Force Base.

Things got difficult for me in 1992. I had a baby and postpartum I think kicked in. I did not realize I was going through postpartum and I think it went unhidden for years. I was going to the doc and he asked me, "are you depressed?" because I started crying. And I was like, "I don't think so," but every time they'd ask me that question as I was going to the doctor, I started crying. I was starting to feel lonely, withdrawn from family, from friends and the typical signs and symptoms of depression. I came home from work, crawled into the bed, got up under the covers. There was a reason for that and it's like, I thought that was all in my mind.

So they would give me an antidepressant or something short term. Took it and I stopped. That went on for years it seemed until I actually got diagnosed finally in 2002 that I had depression. They talked to me about it, these are the symptoms you've been having, and this is why this is going on, you don't do the things you used to do, sports and reading, and I used to be pretty athletic and I withdrew from all of that.

I got out of the Air Force in 2004. I was very happy to get out of the Air Force. After doing 21 years, it was kind of like a career, ready to move on, do something new, something different. I thought it was a good idea to stay home with my daughter and just spend more time with her. I started getting counseling officially 2002 when I was diagnosed at Misawa, Japan and going to see a Counselor at least every week, every other week sometimes. I was able to seek VA. VA was the next step so, I made sure I continued to seek counseling and kept going then and that was on a monthly basis.

You had just your women's group, depending on what your diagnosis was, that's the type of groups they would break us down into. They would work it however we needed to do, and to this day, I am still going to groups which is twice a month. That's what I need to do, and some of us just use it just to get together, just for the camaraderie still.

For me, me dealing with depression, one thing that I found out for us is, we blame ourselves a lot for things and we're not assertive, we put everything on us. We need to speak out and get it off our chest and not come out explosive like a lot of people describe it as zero to 60. So now I just speak tactfully and let you know you're hurting my feelings, just get it off my chest. So, we pick that up a little more and they support you more, the women. They tell me, "Kim, you should try it this way" or, we suggest ways to try different things and I think we support each other.

I'm feeling so much better in my life. One time I was so low and now that I'm talking to folks and getting it out there, I feel so much better. I've always had this smile on my face, but now I have a genuine smile on my face and people around me can really tell the difference. So, go on out there and get that professional help. It's the best thing that you could ever do.



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