

## Once you take that first step, it's a huge relief

**Todd:** My name's Todd. I was in the Army National Guard for eleven years. I started in '98, got out in 2009. I was deployed in Bosnia and Kosovo in 2003 to 2004. And then I was deployed to Iraq from 2005 to 2007.

I was on a patrol with another Humvee. It was just us, our Bradley, and a Humvee. And we rolled past a checkpoint. We were in an area where there was some suspicious activity going on. So we went to check it out and we happened across a checkpoint after that was over and the Humvee behind me hit a — I think it was a 200-pound IED that was in propane tanks, buried pretty deep in the ground. And there was five people in that vehicle. Two ended up dying. One guy was a double amputee. The other two guys had a couple scratches and some concussions, but that was probably about the time where everything started for me, as far as changing my life and my way of thinking and when I did things.

Then I got home and it was weird because the excitement of just being home and not having to worry about each day, whether you're going to still be around or not. So, the actual excitement of being home overtook everything for about, about eight months to almost a year. And then after that, you start feeling, you start recognizing, you start trying to deal with the changes that have been there the whole time. You just didn't realize it until then.

It got to the point where my wife at the time and I, our values were different. We were never on the same page on anything. What was important to me before really wasn't that important to me anymore, and what was important to me wasn't really that important to her. She told me several times, she was like, "you know, I kind of like the old you," and I said, "Well, that guy, he's long gone."

The hardest thing is accepting that you're going to have to somehow adapt to that new guy. And a lot of times you don't want to which is a lot of times you just resort to different things like anger and, yeah. It was a pretty tough, bumpy, bumpy road.

I just felt different about her, and about our life and about the things — like, I always knew I could still be a good dad. And I still am. But putting, 110% into your kids and then putting 20% into your marriage, well, that doesn't work out so well. So, I guess I tried to just put it under, not deal with it. Just think to myself, "It'll pass." But she would continue to wanna to help in certain ways and I didn't, I didn't want it. And it got to the point where we basically just had nothing. It wasn't even a marriage.

I was going through the divorce. We had separated out of the house. And kind of being there alone. Just being by yourself and just realizing, you're like... It wasn't until just recently, like, maybe back in February or March, that I wanted to go and get help and get some of the — I mean, that's four years of being back and saying, "It's no problem. It'll go away." Never does. It never goes away.

To better the future for your family and your kids and a future relationship, you have to find it within yourself to say, "It's time."

I went to the Vet center and I talked to a therapist there. Talking about stuff at the Vet center was really, really helpful. She found certain things that I need to just lay it all out



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on the table and one by one, you just kind of, sort of set it down. You just sort of put it down. You, you really dig inside yourself and say, "It's going to be tough, but in order for me to get better, I need to drop some of this weight that you carry around." The road is not easy, but I tell you, the end result — like, I can see it, you know what I mean? I can see myself in a much better position in life.

Like, once you start doing all that stuff, it's just you've already dropped all that stress and all that anxiety about it. Even the fact of just getting help, being anxious about just getting the help itself.

As soon as you take that first step, it is a huge relief.



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