

## Setting up for Success

**Laura:** My name is Laura. I've served in the US Navy. I was an aviation electricians mate, and I served from 2012 to 2015.

I joined the Navy for a number of reasons. My father was in the Army. So I've always had a curiosity about it. I was also a really big tomboy.

I met my husband. He's a tattoo artist in a tattoo shop. I did not start tattooing myself in any heavy capacity until I was in recovery. I feel like it's almost like trauma relief to get pieces that mean a lot to you.

When I was in the military and addicted or still bingeing and purging and drinking, I think it affected and basically crippled me and crippled my relationships.

As a young person, I was bulimic and wound up not eating, drinking a lot, to the point of blacking out on a regular basis, and woke up in one instance where I was being raped by two young guys. And it's hard.

I started seeing therapy not long after being out of the military because my husband told me I should go seek services. He'd been seeing therapists his whole life. And I think he just knew that I could probably use a little bit of support. And I just knew he was right.

After seeing a number of therapists, I did get a diagnosis from an intake counselor that I had PTSD. I was fortunate because I went to an intensive therapy session from the Denver VA that was for women. That was really eye-opening to me because while I was the only person there that had sexual trauma from outside of the military, my issues were very similar to those people.

Seeing my therapist on a semi-regular basis has been really helpful. One big element that was helpful for me was this idea of questioning the thoughts in your head. In my brain oftentimes I'll be automatically frightened of young good-looking men. And the deal is that's not the case. So just that idea of you're thinking logically and not just purely emotionally or out of fear.

One of my favorite things to do is go running. And running is one of the things that just help me get through and outside of my eating disorder. It's been an incredible tool also for my husband. And just recently, he started running. Any type of physical activity someone can do teamed with a good therapy practice, you're just setting yourself up for success.

I think today I'm most proud of the fact that all the things I thought bulimia was helping me with, like keep having control of all the things around me, it actually was doing the opposite. I had no control over anything I was doing. But these days I've found this really healthy balance of having control, but not needing to have control all the time.



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These days, I'm not terrifically triggered by much. I've done a lot of work to get to this place. My sobriety today means the world to me. It means I can wake up with a clear head, that I can be proud of myself, that I can stop hating myself for a lot of things that weren't necessarily my fault.

I think it's important for all veterans to seek out the resources they need because they're worth it. They've done this great service to our country. Do the service to yourself. You can go out and save everyone around you. Save yourself. It's just you're worth it.



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