

Moving forward with family support and VA

Adam: My name's Adam. I was in 864th Engineers out of Ft. Lewis, Washington. I was in Iraq from March 6, 2003 to February 21st, 2004. It was hard. Being the first ones over there, opening up the berms for the war start. Obviously, we were getting hit left and right. Pretty much every convoy, something happened. The main incident that happened to me over there that really sticks out was my truck got hit with an IED going from Balad to Samarra. We were driving, there was seven of us in the Humvee, and all of us had a feeling something was going on, because there was Iraqi police directing traffic to the left, and they waved us on to go straight, and it was dead silent, and I mean everyone just had an eerie feeling, and then all of a sudden, the IED hit and pushed the whole Humvee over to the left side of the road. I mean, we shot over two lanes, windshield smashed, all of us just covered in dirt, sand, gravel, you name it, it was on us.

When we left Iraq, we got back to the States, and I actually had to check myself into mental health, because my unit didn't want to help me, because I was constantly angry, falling asleep at one in the morning, waking up at two, wanting throw my T.V. out the window for no reason. Once we got back from block leave they just started to get all the equipment ready again, because we knew we were coming down on orders for Afghan, but my back was severely jacked up from the IED. They gave me the option of either reclassing to basically a paper pusher with a permanent profile, meaning can't be deployed again, or Med Board. My unit got deployed to Afghan, and some of the guys that I helped train didn't make it back. So, I couldn't do that the rest of my career.

I wound up getting out in May of 2005 and I bounced around to about like five different states when I got out not knowing what to do. I hit the bottle pretty heavy and pretty much just drank the next couple of years away. My wife kind of made the decision for me to go back to the VA, because some fireworks were going off in the neighborhood, and fireworks do something to me. I don't even really know what it does, but it's kind of like I guess flashbacks. She saw what happened, and she kind of forced me to go seek mental health. They just diagnosed me with moderate-to-severe PTSD, where anxiety's part of that, because going in large crowds, I still don't like. I still avoid fireworks, won't watch certain movies. Insomnia's a big thing where before there were times, I'd be up five-six days straight with nine hours of sleep. The psychiatrist said that's part of the hypervigilance, where just your minds going, going, and you can't really shut off what happened out there, so you're still kind of on edge. He helped me to learn different ways of coping with the anger, anxiety, pretty much every emotion that you have with PTSD not even really knowing what the emotion is half the time. He taught me basically don't say or do the first thing that comes to mind, stop and think if it's logical or not, realizing what's going on in my head before I just act helps out a lot. A couple of the times, the wife came in, and he was giving her some things to help me out as well.

Right now, I'm in school full-time for criminal justice. I'm going through the vocational rehabilitation program, and they'll get you all the materials you need for school. They got me a real nice laptop to do all my projects and stuff on. They got me a printer. They'll get me all the ink that I need while I'm in school, the paper to print up everything on. They pay the school directly, and you can also get the post 9-11 stipend with it, where you're doing the vocation rehabilitation program, but getting the post 9-11 pay, which is a huge bonus. I'm one semester away from my associates, and then after that, going on to my bachelors.



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I still, to this day, do the one-on-one therapies. For awhile, I was going two-three times a week, but now I'm down to like one or two times a month. Actually, going to get help from a trained doctor in this, it's not a sign of weakness. To me, it's the same thing as using the patch to help quit smoking or anything like that. It's a tool that's used to help out a Veteran. Go get the help. Swallow your pride, go, there's no shame in seeking help in anything.



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