

There is light at the end of the tunnel.mp4

Lisa: My name is Lisa. I'm a two-time Combat Veteran. I served two tours overseas in 2003 and 2009. One of my soldiers was killed overseas. The PX was bombed and he was killed. The guilt that I felt was horrific. Why wasn't it me? It could've been me. It should've been me. When I came back, I feel like I had escaped death. I actually was happy because of all the horror that goes on overseas. I considered myself fortunate to make it back home but in reality, everything was collapsing around me.

A lot of times I didn't notice but the people that were around me noticed. I was very short tempered. Sometimes I would cry, and I had no idea why I was crying or someone looking at me the wrong way I was ready to just brawl with them and that's not the kind of person that I am. I had many panic attacks on the train, at work. You have tightness in your chest; you start sweating. All of a sudden, my hands would start shaking and I would feel like everything around me was going to collapse.

The day that the specialist was killed, I couldn't get the sirens out of my head. I would be on the train in the middle of the day coming home from a dentist appointment and all of a sudden, I hear sirens and start sweating and I feel like something's going to happen on the train; we're all going to blow up. And I said, "I'm definitely losing my mind now. There's something wrong with me now."

And that's when I started going to the VA for help and explaining to my therapist, "I think I'm going crazy, I hear things and I see things; all this stuff that happened overseas but it's years later. Don't you just forget and just move on?" But you don't and it doesn't mean you're crazy it just means you need to talk to somebody and that's what I did. I went to therapy and they helped me. I was diagnosed with PTSD and I had so much support, just so much support, "It's okay, we'll get through this." It was never, "You'll get through this." "We'll get through this. What do you need me to do? How can I help you?"

I went to therapy for the anger issues as well. We had groups where fellow Veterans would sit and talk about what they experienced overseas, and I learned from the other Veterans in the group what they did to help alleviate the stress. Some took up boxing, some did yoga and when thoughts like that come into your head instead of acting upon it, maybe just punching a wall or screaming or something. Maybe just take a moment and regroup.

I'm still in therapy today and I think it's helped me a great deal. I'm fortunate, I have love from my family and my friends who accept me as I am and when I feel like talking about something it's like, "Okay, this is a serious moment. Give it to me." And then I say, "Oh I feel so much better now."

Mental health is a serious issue and I wish everybody would just be able to go out there and get help and know what programs are available. There definitely is light at the end of the tunnel.



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