

## Moving past job stress and anxiety

**Dietrich:** Hi, I'm Dietrich. Initially, I was in ROTC in college as a cadet, and then commissioned second lieutenant in 1989, and I served until 1997, and then I was in the Ready Reserve, and I continued to work in the same area in defense at civilian companies afterwards. My first initial assignment in the Air Force was actually really, really cool. I was on the space shuttle launch crew for the Inertial Upper Stage program.

Where I worked, mental health was already a big topic of concern for the leadership. The pressures of leading a life where you're not telling your loved ones, your families, those that are close to you, where you're going to be, when you're going to be back, it's really invasive in your personal life, this type of tasking, this type of work specifically, the mission, and you think it's normal. That it's fine. That's what you bought into, and you think it's alright, but you felt the stress, and every once in a while, somebody would disappear, and no one would know why or how. When you worked, you often worked in a cell-like structure, where you only worked with so many people, and everyone else didn't have a need to know. So, you were compartmentalized.

I got out of the military in...in 97. I was 30 years old, and I kept going pretty hard, and I think when I say pretty hard, I meant I kept working and keeping myself very, very busy and doing things. And so, now that I'm 45, a lot of the things caught up with me that didn't catch up with me earlier, because if you keep yourself really, really busy, a lot of these things might not surface and be that evident, at least in my case they weren't. I really think it was just the years and years of being a machine. I was like water dripping very slowly, and just that bottled up not being able to communicate out or share or feel like there's any others that feel the same way, and for me the way it came out initially was through depression. And then, further down the line through some anger, some frustration, bad dreams.

They basically had a social worker at my place of work, and who I spoke with and talked about my different areas, and she took me about as far as she could, and then told me that I would need to see someone professional. So, I went to see this person. For me, it was like, I'm a big you know military guy. I don't need to go see someone. Plus, I'm smart. I can read about this. I can figure this out on my own. I've got other friends. We'll figure this out. How's she going to help me, but okay. Keep an open mind. Go. And so, we met at first once every week, and then once every two weeks for about three-and-a-half-four months.

One takeaway was that it's not uncommon that other people have gone through this. We're just we had some things that we couldn't talk to our wives about, couldn't talk to our girlfriends or friends or whatever. And so, I think it was as simple as seeking someone to bounce ideas off of and relieve some of the pressure and whatever form it takes to help fix those areas of depression and stress. For me, it's that I can go throughout my day and not feel inflicted by or kept from doing the things that I want to do.

One of the areas that really helped me out too was that I had friends that weren't even military actually. They were civilians that have had traumatic brain injury, that have had bipolar, that have had their own PTSD. It's not just the military guys, but there's other people in the community too that have at least the same type of issues or similar issues



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that have great groups that you can reach out and talk to and that will also motivate to perhaps go to certain medical professionals for help.



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