

## Becoming whole and healthy after treatment

**Marina:** My name is Marina. I was in the Army. I served from '94 to '99. I was stationed first at Fort Campbell for a couple of years and then I went over to Germany to finish off three more years, a total of five. It was a rude awakening when I started at Fort Campbell. I had no idea what I was getting into. I had a really, really hard time beginning with Basic Training because I am not physically inclined, I really struggled with passing my PT test. One of the first things that affected me the most was the consequences for being two seconds late to formation. That was when my sleep disturbances – my problems with sleep started. It didn't matter if I had five alarm clocks. They could not allay my concerns that I would not get up and make it to formation.

The depression – I can definitely attribute it to my treatment in the Army and my superiors, specifically a couple, who just decided that, to make it their main mission in life to torture me and harass me and just abuse me.

By the second year I was seeing a Psychiatrist in the Army and I was successfully treated with an anti-depressant. Bipolar is notoriously difficult to diagnose because sometimes it takes years – 10, 20 years maybe after you've probably been self-medicating. But it wasn't until when I got out that in retrospect I knew that I was going through full blown mania. Just going out every single day, literally six nights a week on three hours of sleep, and then I hit rock bottom. I like crashed and that's when my mother took me to Cook County and she said they help. And then they realized I was a Veteran and they were like Why don't you go to the VA Hospital down the street? and I was like "I can go there?" I had no clue that I could go there. I went and I was like "Oh my God" and so that's where the whole process of healing and trying to get better started. I was attending an intensive treatment program where it's not like a 24-hour thing, but you go for a half a day, do group sessions, and one-on-one with a Therapist or something.

I do not make it a secret to my friends and none of them have shut me out for it. I think nowadays, I think it's more acceptable and more accepted because more people are speaking out and saying what they're suffering from. We all know someone who is going through the same thing. They're just not talking about it. I think you should hold your head proud and walk into any VA and kindly demand the treatment that you're due and they are more than happy to help you out.



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