

Support got Josh past his combat experiences

Josh: My name is Josh, and I served on active duty in the Air Force from July 2003 to July 2010. So, for about seven years. I was a Security Forces member. A volunteer assignment came up through the Air Force to go deploy for a year in support with the Army. It was called an ILO or in lieu of assignment. So, I volunteered and almost everybody saw direct combat at some point. The Humvee I was driving took an IED hit on my door. All I remember is it went off. It felt like my ears were ringing and then there was a big moment of silence. And then all of a sudden, my truck commander is yelling at me, screaming at me to keep driving.

One of the guys I was stationed with at Minot he was riding in the turret and he was giving his gunner a break because he was a truck commander and an IED went off maybe 30 feet away, but somehow a piece of shrapnel just got between his goggles and his helmet perfectly and it penetrated into his brain. It was just really hard at the time because personally, I had known him because we had been stationed together at the same base. And we had known each other before the deployments. Knowing that was just a bomb away was really tough.

The normal things that people experience in post-deployment have been pointed out and I think although I was young, I think I was smart enough at the time to know that they're probably true. Instead of me trying to take, I think the biggest step was instead of me having that hard-ass attitude about you know what, it's true for everybody else. It's not true for me. The not ability to sleep well for a long period of time, probably the drinking, and then the attitude for survival in Iraq is different than when you come back home, and you have to reintegrate with civilian life. That to me was the hardest part.

I had my dad drive with me the first few days I was back in the states here in Boston, but I would just blow through like red lights because I wasn't even looking for them and paying attention. My dad would be screaming, "Red light! Red light! Red light!" And I'd be like, zoom! My mother's a nurse and she knows a lot of people who do this kind of thing. So, she also kind of checked in on me when I got back here to Boston. And she recommended some of her friends to talk to.

Then I had a couple of other friends who had deployed and they kind of were the best resource initially when I got on leave to just sit down with. So, after talking and seeing people who specialize in that, so the alcohol has definitely gone down. I'm more of a social drinker now. But the hypervigilance, that has stayed around for a little while because I find certain things, I will still pay attention to no matter what. So, I can be in crowds, but I know that when there's a lot of people around I pay way more attention to who's there.

I think that I sit here today in due part because it was offered to me. And even though I didn't take it at first, I definitely listened. And then the pieces that I needed I took later on. You actually have to actively go take what they're offering to you at the time that you come back. Because when you're upset and you're mad from a deployment or you're frustrated, then in a few months once you've internalized it and thought about it, then if you need help at that point you take what you need or you go get advice.



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