

Veterans' Voices on Transitioning from Service

Calvin: I think everybody, when they're about to get out, they kind of have this idea in their head of the day they get their DD214 and, like, the sun's shining and the birds are chirping and everybody throws a parade for you. But I remember getting that and kind of walking outside and the world's never really seemed so big before.

Jesse: It was very difficult. I no longer had equipment to maintain, I no longer had to have accountability of my soldiers, I had nobody to lead. It was an abrupt stop to a lifestyle that I'd been living for the last seven years.

Daniel: I lost an identity. I lost who I was. I lost this huge—my entire life was being an Active Duty United States Marine, a leader in the Marine Corps. And now I'm not.

Lisa: I was still on the level of, "I'm a soldier, I'm a Sergeant, I deployed overseas, I tell you what to do." But in reality, everything was collapsing around me. And it took, like I said, a very, very long time to adjust to being back home.

Calvin: There was just kind of a general sense of anxiety and, "I'm not really doing enough," and you kind of just shove it down. I just kind of wanted to hang out and be by myself and try and figure stuff out.

Jesse: Not having anything to do, no purpose, no mission, no task. So it was really frustrating and I didn't know what to do with myself.

Lisa: I just didn't feel like I was me. I would cry for the silliest thing. I would go off the handle for the simplest thing. I was going through a lot, and I didn't really know what was going on, but two years later, you're still adjusting, you know? My friends are like, you know, "What's going on with you? Like, you just don't care we had plans and you just blew me off?" I could care less.

And that's when I started going to the VA for help.

Calvin: I went to the VA and talked to one of the mental health, and just made an appointment and everybody seemed to, like, really, really care about me and nobody was judging me.

Jesse: Cognitive behavioral therapy, it was EMDR therapy, reliving those past experiences, and them listening to me as far as allowing me to vent. And I found that that's the best way to heal is to vent and relive it, because when I relive it, it doesn't numb it, but it helps me get over the intense emotions that I was experiencing.

Daniel: Talk to your boys, talk to your buddies. Bring them back into your life because it really does, it... Having my brothers back in my daily life has drastically improved my daily quality of life.

Lisa: And I had so much support, just so much support. Seeing my therapist, every day I felt a little stronger, and I'm talking about years. This just wasn't something that happened overnight. And I'm proud of myself.



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Jesse: Now that I have another purpose, I feel like I'm on top of the world again. I have battle buddies that are depending on me. I have family that cares if I'm there or not.

Calvin: There's so many opportunities to work with people who are in your similar situation and kind of not feel alone again.

Daniel: Surround yourself with the people you care about and those that care about you and it helps out a lot. It really does.



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