

## Support eases the weight of multiple deployments

**Frank:** Hi, my name is Frank, and I served with the US Marines. I started out as a tank crewman, working my way from a driver all the way up from a loader to a gunner to a tank commander as well to a section leader. I also had the opportunity to go to Iraq and Afghanistan between my eight years in service from May 2003 to September of 2011. I just got used to deploying. I kept telling myself if you plan on going to war, plan on dying.

I started to notice effects when my wife brought it up to me in 2008, I believe, when I was still in the service. She kept telling me I'm always angry, I was always irritated. What's going on with you? I talked to my medical officer at my BH. I said, "Hey, I need to talk to somebody. I'm angry. I'm just angry. Something is wrong with me." I could barely sleep, and I can't be happy. So, they sent me to a psychologist where she taught me some techniques how to stay calm, how to release some stress out of you.

I went through more deployments and I was able to deal with it and I still had help and all that. And then this last deployment in August of 2011 is the one that got me most. I saw more tragedies, dealing with more IEDs. I even had friends in tanks who were grunts who got blown up. It was just one injury after another. I went to go try to see my same psychologist just before I was getting out. She could tell I had no emotion in 2011. It's like, you're a different man.

Of course, I didn't have enough time to see anybody. So, when I got out, me and my wife would just be arguing. What are we going to do? What's going on with you? Find help. So, I went to the VA. They told, "Tell me what's wrong with you. Tell me everything you need to know. What are you having issues with?" I pretty much gave them a whole list. I'm angry. I'm mad. I have nightmares. This is going on. That was going on. All right, not a problem.

I went to go see a psychologist and a psychiatrist to see what was going on. And probably the best time I've ever had to help me get through. They challenged me. They show me ways and techniques to make me better, to show like, hey, it's okay. You're not alone.

They wanted to do a ten-week session for me, and it helped. Every week I could hear myself like a weight got off my shoulders. I can talk about it. And it was great. You can't get rid of the memories. They're always going to be there. But how you cope with them is a different story.

We go through a lot. We've been through a lot. We sacrifice a lot. But our loved ones as well. We're not alone. They're with us through thin and thick and they're there to support us and try to figure us out. They'll probably never understand, but they're there to support us. So, let them be supportive. Be patient. Take advantage of what you have. There's things out there that any member from the armed services, Marine, Army, Navy, Air Force. That we rate so much stuff that we are taken care of that they don't realize it.

So, I say go take advantage of your benefits. Go online. Go speak to a VA rep. Get on top of that right now. Take advantage of it because they will take care of you and you will be taken care of.



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