

Schuyler | Checking Back in

Schuyler: My name's Schuyler. I was in the U.S. Army from 2003 to 2009. I was army infantry, and I deployed to Sadr City of Southeast Baghdad in Iraq. And again, in 2008 and '09, I went to Nasiriyah. So in the past 10 years, life's changed a lot. There were some pretty serious mortar attacks that we had. Had a lot of casualties. I think my vehicle got blown up directly, maybe four times and indirectly, a handful of times.

I think the overall experience of being in a combat zone stays with you forever. I found that I was having trouble controlling my emotions sometimes, my anger. It took a lot of other people coming up to me and telling me, "Hey, I think that you have things going on that you need to talk about or you need help with."

So I went down to the VA. That was one of the best decisions I ever made. I've struggled with everything from alcohol use, depression, hyper vigilance, feeling violent, feeling like I didn't have control of my emotions. But it was ultimately therapy, introspection that made me realize that if you're unhappy, acknowledge those feelings. Don't run from them. Do the right thing, do the courageous thing, engage it, and fix it. Become a better person.

I graduated from college, University of Colorado. A great experience there. I got my degree in psychology. Coached a lot of youth sports because I got kids. Really, really, really rewarding. For many years I went to the Boulder Vet Center. It was one of the best organizations I've ever worked with. Recently moved to Illinois and I'm excited to start therapy with a vet center.

Mental health is probably the most difficult, but I think also the most rewarding. The hardest things I've had to deal with probably had the simplest answers and maybe took the least amount of time. But often I had to dig the deepest. Like I'm proud to say after 10 years I feel like a better person. I don't think that mental health is ever something you stop working on. There's no completion because you can always be a better person and not just as a therapy patient, but also as a therapist for somebody else. When you share with other vets, you get a response of, "Thank you. And thanks for showing me how to do that." Because that's incredibly beneficial.

My passion for the outdoors started as young as I can remember. After talking with the VA counselor at the vet center, I really got back into outdoor recreation. I felt often like summiting a mountain was maybe the best feeling in the world. To do something you think you can't do and accomplish that task is mind blowing. I can't think of a better way to get cardiovascular exercise, to improve your fitness, and be in touch with nature. I don't know why you'd want to be anywhere else.

One of the greatest things that I learned from therapy, if you're depressed about something, your body's telling you, hey, you need to fix this. And I struggled with that for years. Therapy made me a better person. It made me a more emotionally mature



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person, but it also made me a happier person. And that made me a better dad. It's your job to continually look inside and say, "What can I do to improve?"

And reaching out is part of that. As a veteran and as somebody who's continued therapy for over a decade, it's the best thing. We should all do it.



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