

## You're not the only person going through it

**Tommy:** My name is Tommy and I served in the Navy and then from '87 to '95 in San Diego, California. When I got out of the Navy, thinking... not knowing that my life is not washed up, but starting to think, "Well what am I gonna do?" I done spent eight years in the military" and suddenly things weren't going so well. When things start... aren't going so well, that's when I started thinking I had lost, you know, my life. I'm washed up, you know. And so you start thinking well, "This is how my life's gonna be," and you get depressed because you're looking at the goals that you thought... you haven't accomplished or you can't accomplish, so I was overly thinking things that weren't true. So that led and compounded and just kept compounding on me 'til your brain is being stretched. My brain was being stretched, I couldn't take no more.

If I felt depressed or felt like I was getting stressed out, porn shop or go on 'em phone number things and you gonna to meet somebody. I'm going to meet somebody, I already know that. When you have a sex addiction, your next person you're trying to conquer or trying to get in the sack, it's like a hunt, you know, and then once you conquer then you go on to the next, and then you're not trying to build a relationship.

I kept that away from my family. They'd just figured I had changed. They didn't know I'm struggling with depression and sexuality, you know. And then I kept that away and nobody don't want to hear you're what? You gay. Maybe you fell on your head. They don't want to hear that and, you know, let's not talk about it, especially mental health. You like ostracized. People don't... that's a no no. That's a taboo.

I started spending a lot of money. I had came into some profit share money, so I spent all this money and that led into a downward spiral. Top it on with all my stress, so I was losing weight and I didn't know why I was losing weight and the lady said, "You're depressed." I said, "I'm not depressed. Depression don't make you lose weight." And she said, "You don't understand depression."

But I had went to New York and I couldn't find the bridge. I couldn't find the bridge... I was going to go to the bridge and jump. I told myself, I'm gonna commit suicide. I'm not gonna to do it in my state because everybody know me here. I won't embarrass my family. And then I thought about it. I said, "Well, I just have to get real with myself." You know, I have to stop overthinking things because like the doctors were telling me, "You're not the only person that's going through this." Now do they have a magic wand that's going to get you out of it overnight? No. You're just gonna to have to go through it, but you gonna have to learn coping mechanisms which they gave.

The VA talk therapy, it really works. You're talking about your life and you go around the group and share and you see other people, that you're not this lone ranger dealing with depression. You're not by yourself dealing with this. This is common stuff everybody dealing with, but we as men, we put up these exteriors so nobody get to see that we're dealing with these things, and then when you open up, you're like, "Oh okay, this person deals with this too, and this is how they came out of it."

It's great to be always buff and rough and strong for everybody, but at the end of the day, who you fooling? You know, who you fooling? You're hurting yourself. So, you got to have some emotion. This is just a short thing I'm going through. Go through it and



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then I can help somebody else. So I have that mindset. If I go through this, I can tell somebody else, "This is how I came up out of it."

You're not alone. It's people that're there that's not gonna to judge you. Open up, show your human side. Stop trying to be a robot. Show your soft side. Be vulnerable. Open up. It's people there that's willing to help you and will go overboard to help you. The solution may be not solve it overnight, and you might not got in that problem overnight, so it's going to take a process. Be willing to go through the process.



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