

Back on track with help from Veteran resources

Jasmine: My name is Jasmine. I was in the Navy. I served in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba and I was also in the Reserves from 2008 to 2012, and I was a Masters-at-Arms. I was 19 to 20 years old. Something that stands out to me, is that the female to male ratio in Guantanamo Bay is about 15 or 20. So for every 20 males there's one female. It's kind of hard to get acclimated to that, especially being young.

Things didn't come to surface when I was active, because you're too busy, too focused. Once I got off of active service and I went into the active Reserves, that's when I fell into depression, having a hard time readjusting. I felt like I was tired all the time. If I wasn't out running I was sleeping, which of course is very militaristic, you work or you are sleeping. Also I began to start to use wine as a pacifier. The biggest thing for me is that I felt very out of place. I am in a college environment, I am working with kids that are my age, but still feeling like they are perceiving me as being this very hard military girl and I was trying so hard to get out of that and I couldn't no matter what I did.

October of last year I was in my senior year of college and I became very, very, very overwhelmed very quickly. I was becoming almost depressive, sleeping to avoid class and it just got to the point where I eventually sought help through my school because I thought there was more issues than just me transitioning. So, then I went to the VA and I went to triage.

My Therapist does a lot of specialization with transition issues. At first it was just trying to, not necessarily treat me, but try to bring out issues that could have been the trigger to why I am having issues. A lot of things that we do is just coping mechanisms. I would say that especially now after seeking treatment I am not always associating myself with, "Well I was in the military that is why I am so high strung, that is why I am so anxiety ridden." It is like, no I have been doing much better at trying to manage my symptoms and cope with them as they happen or even prevent them. And definitely the medication has been working and it helped me a lot getting through school, finishing my degree. It makes it much easier to be able to talk to people about what I was and not just come up to them and be like "Oh I was in the military," kind of reformulating your identity again which is definitely healthy therapy. The interpersonal relationships have definitely strengthened.

If it wasn't for the Vet Center I don't know what would have happened. I couldn't afford health care when I got out and went to the Vet Center. They set me up, my primary care, everything is through them and it has helped tremendously.

Make sure you utilize your resources because there are people that are there to help you especially at the Vet Center itself, people will always praise you for having Veteran status and they will want to use you as an example, and that really helps boost that confidence that I feel like gets stripped away when you are just a Civilian. I would say make sure that you empower yourself and don't just think that you are broken from the military, 'cause it is not the case. You are very valuable.



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