

## Now it's time for me

**Joseph:** My name is Joseph. I served in the U.S. Navy for eight years and Desert Storm for two.

My inspiration for science... I wanted to become a robotics technician so I decided to study robotics throughout the Navy.

I was on an auxiliary oiler which is a starter ship, my first command. It was also my first experience with a man in my life. One night that I was on duty and he was on liberty by himself. A mutual friend of ours had said that he had tried to take a shotgun and try to kill himself. It turns out that he was being harassed by somebody that actually saw us together. This is the man I swore to love and protect, and without bringing attention to what we were doing or our relationship, I had to turn him in to save his life or what I thought was going to save his life.

They escorted him off the ship immediately and they just turned him away. I called to check up on him and found out that he had already committed suicide. I was just numb, physically and mentally numb. I didn't know what to do. I'd failed him and that destroyed me.

I made a decision, a conscious decision, to live a heterosexual lifestyle. Shortly after I got married, I was awarded... I reenlisted and they gave me SEA school, something I was dying to go and do. We were on a second tour in the Persian Gulf. I was doing repairs on an ammunition elevator. They had had a full pallet of five-inch 54 ammunition. The break was not set. I came up, the ship had taken a roll, ended up severing my right foot. That one instant, my career was over. That was my second failure. Everything I had worked for, all of it gone.

Well, at this point now, I've had two failures in my life and I got a note stating that, "well your wife is leaving you" and "oh, but your son is born." I was like okay great. I went into a frenzy. Now with the divorce and everything else going down and now no job, food was basically my drug of choice and I packed the weight on. My foot... I couldn't walk properly. I tried working as a security guard. I wanted to find work. I mean, I looked. That's when I became my darkest.

I was losing my mind. I had felt so alone and out of hope. I was sitting there holding these syringes ready to just go ahead and just go to sleep, just knock them out. That's when it hit me. I failed three times. I'm not going to make it a fourth. I need to pick up my shit, dust myself off, and get going.

My elementary school teacher plays an integral part of my life when I was ten years old, the one that got me inspired with science. She opened a place in 1986, the same year I joined the Navy. It was a place for Veterans and they had... it was a holistic healing center. I went into counselling, went into a group support, and met some other Veterans. All of a sudden, I wasn't alone anymore. I had that support system that I had left behind back in place.

I started to feel better about myself, my confidence was starting to rise, now it's time for me. I started a business. I got my degree in computer information systems and I started



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to lose weight with a fantastic team and a wonderful husband who's got my back. I am a new man. I have been transformed.

Anybody that's sitting there ready to give up, do something. Talk to a Vet, call a buddy. There is somebody listening and we are here to help.



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