

## Take advantage of the help that's there

**Stan:** My name's Stanley. I was a Sergeant in the United States Marine Corps. I've been deployed three times.

We were about to do a dismount. And we were going under a bridge, and I remember seeing the bridge—I had been under it a dozen times—and there was a white flash and there was a bang. It never occurred to me for a second that I was hurt until I looked down and my right leg was, I would say, right about the knee was gone.

I was in surgery every day for about two weeks. You feel helpless but you can't do anything. You can't hardly do anything for yourself. You're kind of just sitting there in a bed.

Once I was done with surgeries, I went to Walter Reed and the therapy there was amazing. And when you get into the therapy room, there's other Veterans in there from various branches and they all got different injuries, and they're all such positive people. And it was great. I mean, the atmosphere was great.

And then once I left Walter Reed and came back to North Carolina, and I went back to school for two years. After being in physical therapy, they really teach you how to think about being goal-oriented. So, having that goal of wanting to be done with school and finish school worked out really well. And I was on the honor roll the whole time and all that good stuff. So, it was a little disconcerting at first, but I think going at an older age at least for me was a lot easier than going as a young adult.

Other than physical therapy, I went and talked to quite a few people from the VA. After I got injured, there was a young kid over there and he was my right hand. And I always felt that if, without me, he's going to fall apart. I think it was a week later, I'd gotten a call that they were on patrol and he got shot and he passed away on the helicopter.

I felt so bad like it was my fault I wasn't there to protect him, for a while, and of course I had to work through that. It wasn't my fault that he got hurt and things like that, and I knew it wasn't my fault, but it doesn't make you feel any better.

At first, I was having flashbacks and stuff. Things of that nature. And one time, one of the worst ones I had, I was in physical therapy, I was sitting down. We were stretching my leg, and I think someone had taken a picture. And I remember the flash, that white flash, it was what I saw when I looked up and I saw the bridge had exploded. It was a white—just like a picture. And for a moment, I could smell the sulfur again. I could see the debris on the ground. I could see the blood on the wall. I could see my leg. And it was literally like I was there.

So, I definitely use the VA. They're definitely there like if I need any counselling. You're telling your story and you look around and you see people nodding in agreement, you see people, they're just, they understand. And then when you hear someone else's story, you can relate to their story, and they're saying how they felt and reliving the experience, and then you find yourself nodding and agreeing with them, so.

It was very nice to tell my own story, but then it was also very nice to listen to other people's stories. And I think that was the goal.



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One of the first things you think about is “Who do I call?” VA. If they don’t know the answer, they’ll get you the answer. And it doesn’t matter, old, young, new Veteran, old Veteran, the VA. They’re there to help you, and you need to just take advantage of the help they’re willing to give.

And some of the guys, they have that pride thing where they don’t want to ask for help. And it’s like, just look at it as you’re not asking for help. They’re offering the help.



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