

My struggle was finding my way in the civilian world

Priscilla: My name is Priscilla. I spent 10 years in the Marine Corp. I was stationed here in Southern California and deployed out of here to Iraq, and then I was stationed in Washington D.C. at Headquarters Marine Corp. I was a Combat Correspondent in the Marine Corp. We were responsible for telling the Marine Corp story as public affairs. I had a very unique experience in Public Affairs. It's the one MOS I think in the service that you really get to see the whole extent of the Marine Corp. I think I faced the same challenges most Veterans struggle. I think, specifically, Marines, we're so indoctrinated to the Marine Corp. For us, being a Marine is who you are. It's your identity, especially when you join straight out of high school like I did. I literally grew up in the Marine Corp.

My struggle was finding my way in the civilian world. And so, the hardest part was the loss of identity. The struggle of navigating this essentially new world. The depression manifested itself very slowly. I don't think I identified it when it came, but I had experienced a lot of things towards the end of my tour just in life in general, a death in the family, a divorce, there were several other factors that I think worsened the depression besides the transition itself, but for me, it was just I constantly felt a weight no matter what I did, no matter what was happening, no matter how good things were going, I always felt I was sad. I was sad. It was honestly about eight months post transition. I was home in New York, and I was driving, and I had my first anxiety attack. For everybody, it manifests itself differently, but for me, my ears were burning, and my whole face felt like it was tingling, and my lips felt numb, and my heart was racing, and my palms were sweating, and I remember just talking to myself dumbly, "What is wrong with you? Relax. You're not going to be hurt." And I was just sitting in traffic, and then I called my mom, and I told her what happened, and she was actually the one who suggested, "Maybe, you should go talk to somebody at the VA." And I did.

My counselor, who's a civilian, but he was so down to earth and connected, and he really made you feel like he cared about you. You weren't just a number. It was very liberating. I always felt like a weight was lifted off my shoulders every time I went. He helped me pinpoint a lot of points in my life and certain decisions I made, and a lot of healing came from it outside of anything related to my military experience. I was able to enjoy my children more. I was able to enjoy my time with my family more.

I really do ask this to almost every Veteran that I interact with. Have you registered with the VA? Are you using the Veteran services besides the GI bill that are available to you? Because a lot of them don't even realize the extent and how many there truly are. No matter what your feeling, somebody else is feeling that way too, and that's really the main takeaway. You're not alone, and somebody else feels the same way you do.



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