

## Support, confidence to succeed in civilian life

**Eric:** My name's Eric, and I served in the U.S. Army from 1984 to 1993 in the active and reserve components. I had graduated from college. Met with a recruiter, and in less than a year, I was at the Defense Language Institute studying the Russian language after Basic Training.

I scored very high on my ASVAB aptitude test. And they said, "These career fields are open to you." And I have an affinity for language and an affinity for communication. And I was very, very lucky. I volunteered for different types of psychological operations to do human intelligence analysis, and it was very, very worthwhile. I thought we were contributing to the greater mission.

I enjoyed the camaraderie. I enjoyed the experience. One of the advantages of the Army, for me, is folks had a common language, a common mission, a common set of experiences.

When I got into civilian world, what I did in Honduras, Nicaragua, Korea, that held no currency in the job market. Very limited. First couple of weeks, I slept in till noon. And I realized, "That lifestyle's not going to work for me."

So, I was on unemployment. I went to the VA. This one fellow who worked for employment security—the Department of Veterans Affairs funds employment security workers in job centers—and he had me on a very structured, weekly check-in process. And that worked for me.

And I was always early for my appointments, would show him my resume, but that transition, if I didn't have him as well as a counselor at the VA, if I didn't make the connection with those two guys, I would have been unemployed a lot longer. But the hospital counsellor and the employment security gave me confidence. And that, when you're looking for work, unemployed, with a struggling family, confidence and hope, I think, are the two often missing ingredients in your life.

I had a baby on the way, a new relationship, and I was pretty much grasping at every resource possible. I would call up the VA, "What do you have for this? What do you have for that?" I've used the housing benefit. I think the housing guarantee benefit is one of the most unsung benefits that soldiers may be unaware of.

There's a transition program for servicemen as well as civilians. Whether that's confidential counselling, dental care, emergency help. There are many services and benefits, whether you're in the service or out of it.



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

**MAKE THE**  
**CONNECTION**