

## Women Veterans' Voices on Managing Depression

**Jennifer:** It wasn't all bad being a female in the Army. I enjoyed a lot of it. Getting out of the Army was a little bit more difficult. I couldn't relate to a lot of people in the civilian world.

**Veronica:** I definitely underestimated getting out. I thought it was gonna be a lot easier.

**Jessica:** My transition was definitely laden with depression and anxiety and it's this feeling of nothingness.

**Melissa:** I wasn't really feeling sad. I wasn't really feeling happy. I just felt very numb. Very numb to the world.

**Pauline:** I started isolating myself from my normal routine. I'm normally a talkative person, out there, happy-go-lucky. I stopped talking and doing things that I originally liked to do.

**Jessica:** I know that if I take a walk around the block or if I go for a run like that will just help, I know that will help me if I do that. But there's no way. There's absolutely no way.

**Veronica:** Stopped going to play softball, I stopped going to play basketball, and I just started like sitting in my house. Like friends would call me, "Hey, you wanna go out?" And then I wouldn't go.

**Jennifer:** I did have a hard time having relationships. I withdrew from everybody. Even the easy everyday conversations about grocery shopping or how the kids were or my nephews, I just didn't like having that conversation.

**Melissa:** Nobody to really talk to. Nothing to do. And this lasted for quite a while.

**Jessica:** Things really came to a head. My poor attendance at work caught the attention of my bosses, caught the attention of my roommate. Just personally how I felt. I was really at the end of my rope. At one point I was considering suicide. That scared me to no end and I realized it was extremely serious and that I needed help.

**Pauline:** I went to the audiologist and through the audiologist he helped me with my services, however, he didn't help me with my self-esteem, how to communicate with others. So I was referred to the VA Mental Health Services.

**Melissa:** Basically I rolled into the VA on a Friday at 4:30 and I was like, "I need to see somebody. I can't. Like I had a full mental breakdown."

**Veronica:** So I went to the VA and they put me in contact with this, it's called the Choice Program. So I was able to see an outside Therapist. She was amazing.

**Jessica:** It was the first time that I had really clicked with a Therapist in such a genuine way.

**Pauline:** She really listens to me. I'm allowed to cry, I'm allowed to just express every need, and want, and desire that I have, that Pauline has inside, and share with her my goals that I want to attain and it really helps.



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**Melissa:** It was a huge, huge deal for me. I couldn't believe how supported I felt.

**Veronica:** I was definitely the person who thought, this is my problem, I have to deal with it. And it's a lot to put on yourself. Like the moment I was able to go and talk to someone, it felt like a huge burden was just lifted off of me.

**Jessica:** I'm learning ways to deal just in general, in life. And not only deal with what has happened in the past but deal with what comes up now, and kind of how that all fits together.

**Jennifer:** I would say things are better for me now versus a year ago because I have a greater understanding of my depression and how to handle that. Same with my anxiety. I can recognize it and pull back from it versus letting it just overtake me. So it's better cause I have...I can see a future.

**Pauline:** There's a big change in me. I became a stronger empowered person. There's people out there that will listen to you, support you.

**Jessica:** That care and that are at the ready to be there for you.



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