

## Recovery resources

**Ponce:** My name's Ponce, US Navy. I've served from 1988 to 2012, I've served in all fleets, literally around the world. When I retired from the military and returned to civilian life the big challenges were, the very things that allowed you to excel while you were in the military. Attention to detail, sometimes perceived to be less flexibility, sending people through extra scrutiny to understand or try to get an understanding of what their intentions were. Another way that it manifested itself was, frankly a business about me, because I was so used to being geared up or ramped up I needed to learn how to be natural and decompress. I found myself at the edge of conformity at times.

What led me to seek treatment was two factors. Number one, a buddy of mine who had been through treatment before recognized some of the same things in me, and I'm glad I had enough sense to listen to him. Then number two, I wanted to be able to come back home, having served my country honorably, and integrate into society and be productive under the expectations here in the civilian world. Like some of our Veteran friends, we find ourselves being reactive, whether it be, finding themselves in contact with the justice system or some strife at home or with relationships, so I found myself pretty fortunate in that matter that because of my buddy and because of the resources that the VA shared with me when I was doing my out processing that I had sources to go through before I got to that point.

Well, you get out of it what you put into it, but even with that thought process it's important because you're really not fooling anybody but yourself. I look back now and I really thought I was kind of fooling some folks, but we had providers from the Veterans and the resources from the VA that took you where you were and fashioned the therapy or fashioned the help in a manner where they can reach me. Group therapy as well as yoga. It incorporates these therapeutic methods and it's something you could take with you for life. It's a very conscious and awareness thing. That's what helped me with the anxieties.

Just about a month ago, a buddy of mine, aggressive driving, short tempered, snappy, demanding. Most folks would think, "That's just the way they are," but I was able to see and I say, "Oh my goodness, I was once there." Either you deny or you try to cover or you become hypervigilant and mask, but what I found is the way that you can get beyond that is use yourself. You don't start off with, for instance, "Hey, buddy, you have an issue." You say "You know, when I was in your place," and then you become transparent, and that gives you some validity, that gives you value, and so with that because I knew him I was able to use some of those same things that helped me to really kind of reach him and guide him toward his local VA in the state where he is.

I don't think that I would have been able to achieve some of the accomplishments right now if it were not for the resources and the care that I received from the Veterans Administration. Graduated from the business school, earned an MBA, I started and have been certified as a service-disabled Veteran-owned business, but another part of that it allows me now to help other Veterans and their families. That's what all of this culminated to. I'm my own client, so I really have the credibility to assist other Veterans and also demonstrate to other Veterans that there's life after the honorable services and these services are available at the Veterans Administration.



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I'm not a doctor, I'm not a trained Therapist, but I can tell you that the resources both medical, recreational work, and the VA has them and the VA's prepared to deliver those services to our Veterans. There is no stigma in seeking help. You served honorably. You're not taking anything or a resource away from another Veteran. These are resources that are available to us and take advantage of it.



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