

Coming home was tougher than Jamie expected

Jamie: My name is Jamie, I served as a Marine Corps officer from May of 2000 until July of 2011. The first time I actually, I sought treatment in the Marine Corps was actually right when I moved from Okinawa to California. I hated Southern California at first. None of my friends that I spent thirteen months in Okinawa with were with me. It was new things. And I first sought out a counselor because I needed someone to talk to about this. I didn't, I felt like I didn't fit in with the, with my peers and it was just, it was the first couple months were a rough adjustment moving back to the United States. Fortunately, I have a strong support system, talking to my mother. For me, part of, part of it for me is genetic and talking to my mom about what she's had to go through and it really sunk in that it is essentially all these things are my brain and I have to take care of my brain. You know, if I had a broken ankle, people would understand that, and I finally said, "you know, I have to take care of myself."

The first time really with depressive symptoms, I was deployed on a ship and my roommate basically said, "you need to see someone." I was sleeping a lot, I wasn't really doing anything for these symptoms, and finally I saw someone and I was referred to someone while we were ashore in Kuwait and I look at my record, I'm like, "Oh, MDD, minor depressive disorder," and the doctor, the therapist was like, "No, it stands for major," and she explained what was going on and, and you know, I worked with her while I was there and then worked with medical providers on my ship.

I had transition problems moving to DC. I had literally come back from a seven-month deployment. The move to D.C. was on a staff job, and as a Marine working in an Air force command, it was a little different. It was interesting being in a military environment since I was 17 years, I had to work with civilians for the first time and that was challenging, and just little things would set me off that people in my office would do, and I wouldn't know, I would get so frustrated, and I wouldn't know how to figure it out and... I think part of it was self-induced stress and I knew I was transitioning. I knew I was getting out, like, "What do I want to do with my life?" And, "Oh my gosh, what's that going to be like?" The big unknown. And then part of it was just, I was still in and not feeling like I was being used to my potential. I have friends that have, don't use the VA, but I went I think about six weeks after getting out. I had nothing to do, I'm like, "Oh, I'm going to go get my VA ID card," and it was great. The woman taking my picture walked me down to the woman's clinic, and the woman at the receptionist, you know, she set me up with an appointment to see a provider, and I got referred to see a couple mental health professionals and we talked, and I actually felt, I felt, three months after getting out I felt more like myself than I had in years before. I think, especially as officers, we're like really hard, Marine Corps officers in particular, you're really hard on yourself and that may prevent someone from getting the help they need and if people see myself, if there's one person that sees this and decides to get help, then it's worth it.



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