

Living well and managing schizophrenia

Eli: My name is Eli. I was in the Army and I served as an MOS with 13B. I entered the Army at age 28, probably ten years older than a lot of people that were. We landed in Kuwait from Colorado, our unit, and from Kuwait met up with our vehicles that came off of a ship and went from Kuwait in our tanks, Paladins and traveled to Iraq. Pulling guard duty, I never made an indication as to our guard post how we would switch out; one man hit me on the shoulder. I guess that was supposed to be a tap, just to let them know we were switching posts. I went and head-butted him; took my helmet off and head-butted him while he had his helmet on and ended up slugging a sergeant with my M16, took it off my back and slugged him and that got me out of the service. I pled nolo contendere and that was no contest. I admitted to what I did. That's what got me out of the U.S. Army.

Back in the civilian world, I'm paying attention to everyone, everybody's idiosyncrasies or how they cross their arms, how they look at each other, how they look at me almost like, my defenses were still up, security was probably in my blood. Just being on guard and trying to catch something that needs to be caught, but maybe there's some paranoia about it. There was quite a bit of things I'm ready for and preparing for at any given time that I'm awake.

I had a spider bite which I had to get checked out and when I was walking out of the hospital, limping out, there was a couple cops in there. They had nothing to do with me. I had nothing to do with them, but I was noticing one of their weapons in their holster on the side of their hip. I really wanted that really bad because my weapon was taken away from me in Iraq and that's when I checked myself in about that matter. I was checked out by a mental health person and she had diagnosed me with Asperger's and some type of form of schizophrenia, I believe.

Medication help me sleep pretty good. It calmed me down, but it calmed me down too much. Once I got adjusted that helped me to be more relaxed, I believe. My discharge was a Bad Conduct Discharge. When I got to the mission, I met with a VA representative and he got me to attend a hearing in Chicago and that allowed me to have a voice and somehow I was able to, through telling my story, I was able to get my discharge upgraded to Honorable Conditions. Got adjusted to medications I had to be on and getting my discharge upgraded helped me to, you know, just stand a little taller than I used to because I know when I got out of the military, I got out in a very bad way and I got to keep that in mind so that I hit a friend, I can't be doing that to anyone else.

You know, the situation I'm in where you had to find people you can trust, just be honest because through that honesty, they'll know that you been through a lot. I'd say being open and honest is good, but it is good for me is. It was worth it. It is.



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

**MAKE THE
CONNECTION**