

## Finding a support system through VA therapy

**James:** My name's James. I served in the Army from 2006 to 2009, and my MOS was 19 Delta. I got hurt in a non-combat-related injury only a few weeks in, the beginning as we were getting ready for our deployment. I suffered a traumatic brain injury and I ended up having seizures. Because of that, I was instantly sent back home for a reevaluation.

Unfortunately, when I got evaluated, they found that I had developed a seizure disorder among the anxiety and the related problems with TBI. So, I was put on a stop deployment. And I ended up having to stay home.

When I got that news, it pretty much crushed my world. Everything that I valued and I wanted to excel at was taken away at that point. I felt embarrassed at how my career was ending, after all the time I put into it. I didn't feel like I was going to be a Veteran. So, I didn't seek out help.

I started drinking, using drugs, anything to make myself feel better. And I just kept going in a downhill spiral.

Eventually, those led to suicide attempts and just giving up in life in general. I lost kind of seeing the point, what my purpose was. I kept trying to find work, and every job that I found I would lose within a week or two from a seizure or having problem with memory.

After that second massive suicide attempt, I started to look at my life and where I was and I didn't want to be there anymore.

Right when I got out here to Idaho is when I went in finally and I accessed the VA. I got hooked up with a doctor. All of a sudden, all these resources started flooding my way. I got mental health, PTSD, and everything else. I got recreational therapy, memory and speech, and doctors for neurology.

They did in-home visits and in-office visits. And they really sat down with me and began to teach me tools and options that I had to incorporate what would work best into my life.

When I got in direct therapy, that was kind of to get me from isolating. That was to get me out and start meeting other Veterans, start finding activities that I enjoyed. I loved mountain biking before my accident, and when I got my accident, I really could no longer just go off myself. I was able to start mountain biking with individuals and actually go on day trips and just spend a lot of quality time with other Veterans.

It showed me that regardless of my medical problems, a lot of the limitations that I felt were limitations I just placed on myself. It's been three years since my main suicide attempt. Even though my outlook on life is different and things are positive and moving forward and I'm doing things that I enjoy, once in a while those thoughts that associate with those high feelings can pop up on me. And even though I'm not there, they still come up. But now through the resources and the tools I've learned with the VA, I have an entire group of people that have developed relationships with me. And I'm able to call somebody up and, with help, I can move past each time those try and pop up on me.



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The best thing is to allow people in and trust people, and to just do the hard thing and ask for help. No matter how dark everything becomes, no matter what point you're at, there are still things in life that you value and there are still people that do care, and they value you. And your life doesn't have to be that way. You can make it better.



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