

Coming home was tough until he got support

Brandon: It was tough coming from constant excitement every day, whether you knew it was or not, because you get used to it over there and then you get home and everything's just at a very, very slow pace. You miss that adrenaline and there's very few ways to find it besides drinking or riding fast on a motorcycle, reckless activities basically. Trying to find safe extreme sports was something that I did, and did a lot of skydiving and I bought myself a sports car.

I had no patience at all. I'd get angry at a gas station because the teller was taking too long or I got, I remember one incidence I was at a grocery store and I actually left all my groceries in the aisle because the guy was asking the teller about the water softener salt, and I just could not take it anymore, I was just so angry that it was taking too long, and so I just left all my stuff and walked out and I was just furious for 20 minutes afterwards. You get really tight in the chest and you just don't know what to do about it, you just got to leave. It just starts off as a small ball inside of you and it just wells and wells until the point where you almost feel like you have to punch something and that was my problem, is I'd get so angry and just so tight in the chest and just, there's no way to let it out other than violence or swearing or yelling.

My wife, me and her had quite a few problems right when I got back dealing with that same issue. The, "why didn't you empty the dishwasher?" And you just, Oh God, I did so many other things today, you have no clue all of the things that I did today, and you're worried about that? And it just, little things like that would just set it off and I'd start yelling and I was never violent with my wife but definitely in the words I chose, I've definitely hurt her in that manner. My family, the same type of thing. They'd get angry over, or you know they'd question me over something really trivial and I just wouldn't understand that it was important to them but it wasn't to me and it just made me angry that they would put so much emphasis on something that just didn't make any sense at all. It was eventually them that told me, "Brandon, you've changed, you need to go deal with this issue."

I don't know what it was that sprung in me that I agreed with my family and friends and said that there's something wrong, but eventually one day I just walked into the mental health unit at the VA hospital and said "I'd like to see somebody" and they hooked me up with somebody right away and my Doctor, I've been seeing her ever since. She never really pried into different exact stories. She wanted to know about my life, where I was at. She wanted to try to figure out why things were making me angry, which we both figured out was just the monotony of day-to-day life without any explosives going off or anything fun to deal with. She gave me some different guidance on different things I could do when the anger came up. Counting to ten, rubbing your earlobes, walking away from the situation because walking away is never really the right thing to do, but at the same time, it's a lot less evil than swearing and yelling and punching somebody. That was my biggest thing is when I get those feelings now, I just walk away from the situation and come back to it five minutes later, because I still have them same feelings, it's just now I know how to deal with them a little bit better.

Besides the different scenarios that she put me through, we also did some anti-depressants and that helped, and my family and my wife noticed a change probably two months afterwards.



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

**MAKE THE
CONNECTION**

The best way I ever heard it said was from my Psychologist, but when I went in to talk to her the very first time, she said “well why do you want to see me?” And I said, “I think I’m going crazy.” And she goes, “you’re probably the most sane out of your entire group because you noticed that there was a change in you” and that made me feel a lot better about the whole situation. It was shortly after that that I let all my friends know that I was doing that. I did get a little bit of flack from the National Guard guys, they’re like oh, crazy guy, watch out for the crazy guy. But it wasn’t too long after that that a couple of them admitted that they were starting to go see some help too, so, it just took somebody they know to say it’s OK, and then they were OK with it, too. I think talking to the Psychologist actually helped me be able to talk to my wife better. You get comfortable telling some, you know, your Psychologist things that you’re, you don’t think that you should tell anybody and then you can start breaking down some of them things to your spouse a little bit easier, and you know my wife’s my best friend and she’s also my Psychologist. She keeps me sane.



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

MAKE THE
CONNECTION