

Deciding to get help ended the dark days

Brandon: I'm Brandon. I was in the Army. I served from 2005 is when I joined and all the way to 2013 when I was medically discharged. As an infantryman, I went on two deployments. I went to both Iraq and Afghanistan. I hit an IED on 13 August 2011. It was about a 500-pound IED. It shattered my spine. L1 to L4 is all fused together. I had re-learn to walk. I was in a wheelchair for at least the first two months.

Once I got home, the structure goes away. You are kind of getting back to the routine of what your life used to be like and, you know, any deployment you go on, you think everything back home goes on pause. Well, you know, as you come to find out, it doesn't. Everything moves on. The focus is changed kind of off of your mission and it's back on yourself. You start to push everybody out.

I have chronic pain and it's hard to get out of bed and at that time, I felt like I had nothing to get out of bed for. So, I would just stay in bed for days and weeks on end. One day sitting on the porch with my wife, she kind of flipped out. She pretty much looked at me and said, you're not Brandon. You're not, you know, the man I married. And it really took me aback. It really affected me to where, you know, I had to find help. I had to get some help. I went back to the VA and tried to get one on one therapy and through the OEF/OIF Therapy Program, I hashed out a bunch of stuff; talked about what my actions were not only doing to myself, but what they were doing to those around me and how those actions are very dangerous and that's the first place that I went. I do go to a pain management doctor.

I think that's one of the most important things that I would suggest to a pain patient, someone that's in chronic pain. You know, if you need medications and things like that managed, that pain management doctor is gonna be the one that you need to go to.

What you need to do is find that niche; that's all I can tell people. Find your niche whatever it is. The VA probably has a program or a way to connect you with a program that does that. The day that I decided to go get help was the next step, the next chapter in my life. It ended the dark days and it began, you know, the life I have today which is pretty amazing.



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