

Things started looking up little by little

Matt: My name's Matt. I was in the Army from 2010 to 2013. I was out of Fort Carson with 4th ID and I served from 2011 to 2012 in Afghanistan. My grandfather was in World War II and he was one of my heroes growing up so that really meant a lot to me. So, I started thinking about joining. So, I walked into an Army Recruiter's office and two weeks later I was getting on a plane to go to Fort Knox.

Afghanistan was an incredibly positive experience. I grew up a lot. I learned a lot of lessons. I figured out who I was. Right before I was about to get out there was another guy who was about to get out really soon. He gave me a call one night and he said, "Hey man, like just feeling like a little alone tonight. Would you mind coming over; to grab some drinks or something?" I was like, "Sure man, I'm a little busy but, like, maybe tomorrow night." And he's like, "Yeah, no worries." And I moved on with my night.

About 15 minutes later he calls me back and he's like, "Hey man, I know you can't come over, no worries dude, but I just want you to know if you ever run into my family or anything would you just tell them that I love them." I was just like, "Oh, okay man, I'll be there in a second." The door is locked. We find a way in this house and we found him upstairs at the kitchen table and he has a gun in his mouth. And so, we talked to him for a little while and we got the gun away from him. But that was a moment that I recognized all those feeling that were within myself and they became very real.

I felt isolated and I felt depressed but I didn't acknowledge a way to address any of that. These are the people that you think of when you think of guys that need help; I didn't put myself in that category. After I got out, I moved to Austin almost exclusively cuz I could go to community college and drink a lot. I didn't recognize the fact that everyone I knew had a drinking problem including myself until after the fact when I recognized it wasn't super normal to drink every single night.

I just kind of woke up one day and recognized I need to do something about it but the only person who was going to help me was me. So, I went to the Vet Center and they really had some great resources for me. They had somebody to talk to. That was a big step for me; it honestly was. Just the realization that I probably couldn't do it by myself.

I was really at step one, square one of figuring out what was wrong with me. I didn't even know what emotions I was feeling other than I just felt like garbage. This particular psychologist I was working with she honestly just let me talk and she guided me in the right direction. And then an hour goes by and you're like, "Wow, I had no idea I had all that to say." And honestly sitting through those appointments a couple times and I'm like, this isn't working and just making it to the next appointment was really hard a couple times but it was so worth it. It was so worth it.

I spent about, like, a year honestly talking to her and I think she saved my life. Things just started looking up a little bit. It doesn't happen all at once but I was able to interact with my friends and my family and just talk to people I didn't know; not about anything in particular. I was just able to hold a conversation again, which was a big step for me. When those sorts of things start happening, I recognized the change that was happening.



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Finding a sense of community is a really big deal. It might not have to be mental health services but find the VFW. Find the local Vets wherever you're at. You know, talk to people if you can. You can find those people who understand what you're going through and those are the first people that I think you should be talking to cause they'll understand where you're coming from.



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