

It's All About Being Able To Reach Out

Robert: My name is Robert, and I actually served in the United States Navy from 1971 through 75. I went in, that's when I first got there, I was a radio man, and then I became, if you want to call it, a communication technician. I actually worked on a NATO base over in Naples, Italy. Italy was good until I got caught up in some stuff where I eventually got arrested, and that's where my trauma occurred when I was locked up, and I was actually raped while I was in prison, which was very difficult for me, especially coming from New York and being a street kid, and thought I had everything under control, and at that time, that was something that I couldn't control, and I never told anybody, because I was afraid. I was afraid of what people would think about me. I was also probably more down on myself that I couldn't stop it. That was big for me, and that's when I started...well, I didn't start drinking necessarily at that time. I just started drinking more, and what happened was I actually got deported from Italy.

And so, that's when I came back to the United States. They discharged me about three months later. I continued my drinking. I continued my drug using, and it was a bad spiral for the next over 30 years. I think the major thing that helped me along, this time what made it so different was when I actually was arrested this last time. When I got arrested where I actually was sent to the penitentiary was when things started to change. In my mind, things started to change. I knew that for whatever reason, I was better than that, and I met a friend, who I still call my friend, and he happened to be an inmate as well, and that's when we started a Bible study in prison, and things started to change. I realized that there's more to life than what I had brought to the table, and that's when I decided to open up, and I actually shared some things with him. So, when I got out, I was able to meet with...to have a therapist, to meet with and be open and honest with them, because I had never been, and that's when you know I started to talk more about my military sexual trauma, if you more say.

I think it's very important that Veterans know that there is a way out of what they're dealing with right now. That you know whatever they're going through does not define who they are. And so, for me, it's all about you know being able to reach out, and like I don't care how that manifests itself, or what we have to go through. If I can reach out and tell one Veteran that to open up, to reach out, to connect with someone, it doesn't matter who it is, whether it's another Veteran, whether it's a family member, and let them know what's going on, then that's, that's the best thing that I can say.



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