

Overcome combat stress by reaching out

Jeff: I'm **Jeff (00:01)**. I was in the Army. I ended up in Taji, Iraq, and Baghdad, Iraq. As a unit, we were engaged daily, absolutely. We would get mortar attacks, rocket attacks, BBIDs, IEDs. 2004, 2005 in Iraq was serious stuff. It took a toll on me and I couldn't sleep, started having nightmares, and I remember telling my Sergeant, I said, "I, I can't sleep, you know?" And he was like, "How long has it been going on?" I told him how long it had been going on and he's, he yelled at me and told me, "Come on, man, that's what the medics are for! Let's go right now!" And I'm like, "What are you talking about?" "Come on, let's go." So, he took me to the medics. I was diagnosed with what they call combat stress. That's what they called it in Iraq, and they gave me some medication which helped me sleep and, and it just kept going on and on.

My wife at the time said that I changed, and I wasn't the happy-go-lucky guy that I used to be, was very angry, very, very angry, and I got divorced soon after. I went to the nearest VA and I was greeted by the OEF, OIF program, who set me up at services and including mental health. And I've been in, engaged in, in services since I've been back. I have a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder.

When I came back from Iraq, I would see a Therapist weekly. I now see one monthly. That is definitely a change. I've met a wonderful woman who has stuck by me and helped me out a lot. She deserves a lot of credit. She's actually the only one that I really listen to when things get pretty bad in my head. She can actually hold me back. It's a team effort, and it's not just the wife, it's also the guys. There's certain things that you can talk to to certain people but you can't with others.

The VA has been instrumental in getting me to where I am today. If there wasn't the services that they offer, God knows where I would be right now. Get that paperwork and head on out to the VA. I'm telling you, that's what I did and that's what I tell all my guys, and not all of them have listened to me. There's just a lot of things that are, that, I don't know if they could be avoided, but there's help out there so that it doesn't get to that point.



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