

You have a full life ahead of you

Lamont: My name's Lamont. I actually was an Active Duty Reservist in the Navy, mobilized in support of Operation Enduring Freedom July 2005. I was actually excited about the joining the Navy. I was excited about giving back to the community. I think everyone at that time, the camaraderie for the Nation was highest it's been since John F. Kennedy era, and I was very excited to join the Navy and wanted to be mobilized, desperately.

I was there approximately eight months in Kuwait and our detail as far as Security, we would deal with all the Army, Navy, Marine Corps exiting Kuwait, going to the airport to come back home safely, and one day I was driving a vehicle and I received injuries and I was medevaced to Germany, to Landstuhl, before I actually came back to the States for more medical treatment. I felt really guilty that I was injured, possibly going home when really wish I'd have been back in the Middle East to support my unit.

I can recall in my kitchen cooking some eggs or bacon, just simple breakfast, and I would question myself, did I turn the fire off? I'd go back to the stove, the stove's off. Ten minutes later I would go back to the stove, ask myself did I turn the stove off? So, I started thinking, thinking, thinking excessively about something may happen, something will happen, and I started to get more worrisome. I would think at night three, four hours into laying down about the past, the future, I would see myself in combat, I would remember being off the plane in Kuwait, I'd remember the desert, I'd remember the smell, I'd remember just things, just destruction. It was like everything at once for three hours was in my head.

I couldn't concentrate and I felt worn down. I would wake up, take a deep breath, and I felt like I was exhausted. I felt like my hands were sweaty. I was hyper, I didn't want to do anything. I felt... let me withdraw myself, and I would just start thinking about Military service, death, someone being harmed. I was very emotional inside where I didn't know how to have an outlet. I didn't know who to speak to.

I think what scared me more when I had read about depression I thought, was depression... it is bipolar, is it PTSD? What is it? So, more and more articles... really it made me more aware that I really need treatment from the VA. I just felt that at my age and what I've been through I have a lot more life to live, but I'm thinking about the past and I'm thinking about life is over. I'm thinking about how can I be capable of living and smiling and enjoying all the freedoms we have in this country? And I said let me get some control and the only way I could get control is to say let me get an expert, let me get counseling, let me speak to other Veterans, either individual or as in a group setting.

I want to give back, I want other Veterans to know that it's capable, we are capable. We have a lot of organizations, we have people who do care, and you say hey, I'm still alone, but no we're not alone.



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