

## Coping with challenges after deployment

**Adrienne:** I'm Adrienne, I'm a member of the Washington National Guard. I've been in for six years. I wasn't thinking about deploying even though they kept reminding us. It didn't really phase me at the time, I was pretty much focused on getting through that day of training and eventually getting home to my son. When we did deploy, my life was kind of a wreck. Being gone for that long definitely changed me. I was an armed security escort, so I worked side by side with the local national's Iraqi people. We would get mortared and we'd all have to report to do a head count, make sure nobody got hurt. That was a little stressful, and I think Fourth of July we got hit a couple times. So, it was like fireworks but a little different. A trigger sparked and I grabbed my weapon, held it close to me like I did twenty-four hours a day anyway, made sure I had ammo, and I told my roommate that night I couldn't sleep, and I said "wake up, somethings wrong here with me, wake up, I need to talk" and she would not wake up. And so, I took my weapon and I sat on this, we have like a trailer with little steps and I sat outside and if somebody were to approach me, I was ready to fire. So, that was a defining moment. The next day I went to combat stress.

I came back to my restaurant job, but that restaurant didn't exist anymore, out of business. So, I had no job. So, I went on unemployment. I was alone a lot, too, and I didn't know what to do with that, so, you know, I drank wine. I was used to talking to people every day, all the time. I wasn't used to being alone. And I didn't want to utilize my family too terribly much, so I referred to the VA. I went to the VA to figure stuff out. I did six months of outpatient substance abuse treatment and that was helpful. There was a psychologist that I talked to. It's just like talking to a friend, even if it sounds weak, it's not. If you want to succeed, you know, don't be afraid. All the stuff that keeps you healthy and happy, we all know. We all know what to do, it's a matter of doing it. Enjoying your family, that's what I wanted to do. Just being happy, like try to be happy.



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

**MAKE THE  
CONNECTION**