

## It was like I was fighting myself

**Sasha:** My name is Sasha. I was in the Army and I was stationed in Korea. I felt like I needed to do something, you know, kinda like get involved and you know defend my country.

PTSD is actually suffering from a traumatic experience. You know, for example, you get into a automobile accident, and you can't get in a car without freaking out, that's some form of PTSD. So, you don't have to just go to combat to have it. I got PTSD because I was raped, you know, and I get flashbacks. I get nightmares. I get anxiety attacks. That incident took place and I had it for years. PTSD for years.

Some people I have informed about the rape, but their response was is that I told them that I was scared, that I didn't want to provoke anymore problems for myself. My thing was stick to myself, stick to my booze, which is all I did while I was there. I thought the drinking just became insane.

As the years went by, everything started creeping up on me. It's like I was fighting with myself. That didn't happen, let it go. It happened in Korea, bury it there. I went back to active duty. That was the biggest mistake ever. Unfortunately, my Platoon Sergeant resembled my rapist. So, I ended up leaving and I went and joined the Reserves.

I was just living a disastrous life, disastrous relationships, disastrous, horrible habits. I couldn't find myself to get up from bed. That's when my fiance was like, "You need help." And it was bad. To me, that was when I said, "Okay, I need to suck it up and I need to get help."

I went to the VA Hospital in New York. And I went in there, I scheduled an appointment to be seen, a regular appointment. I didn't say anything and for the first time, somebody asked me the most important question, the most important question that changed my life. They were like, "Were you ever sexual assaulted in the military?" And I was like, "Nobody has ever asked me. Thank you for asking. Yes, I was." Automatically, they came down and brought down a psychiatrist, and scheduled me an appointment. Within two weeks, I was seeing her once a week, but then after going to see her and getting into the subject, I would change it. I would change the conversation and eventually, I just stopped going. I stopped going and again, I started facing my demons and again things got worse.

I ended up in a VA Hospital. When you're looking at the Capitol Building, surrounded by your peers, by your comrades that also need help, you have all these experienced Veterans here that are grabbing us soldiers by the hand and walking us around, and your comrade is a Vietnam Veteran or a female that was also raped Gulf War Era. You sit there and you say, "I can do this. I think this is gonna work. I think this is gonna work. How do I get there?"

I found out that there's like counseling for couples with PTSD. I mean, there's all these things that I never knew existed and every day that goes by, I find out that there's more programs. There's like all these programs and people don't know about them. You know, they just need to stop being scared and know that they're not alone. Okay. When they walk into that VA Hospital, there's no one that's going to judge them, no one, because we're all there for the same reason. We did our time. We paid our service.



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Okay. And now it's time for them to get back a little bit for them, because we gave whatever we could. A lot of them gave all, their life, you know. Now, it's time for us to get a little something back.



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