

Recovering and living well after physical injury

Speaker1: I deployed to Iraq in the Summer and Fall of 2006 and I was injured on October 18, 2006 and I was shot by a sniper.

Speaker1: He shot me behind my left ear. I went down immediately. In fact, other Marines around me thought I was dead.

Speaker1: I woke up a couple of weeks later in a hospital in Bethesda.

Speaker2: My truck hit a roadside bomb twice and that was probably the most defining event for me was when I was actually struck by a roadside bomb and I was struck directly on the right side of my head when I was a machine gunner on top of a Humvee.

Speaker3: We were going under a bridge and I remember seeing the bridge. I'd been under a dozen times, and there was a white flash and bang and of course, everyone is saying it's an IED.

Speaker3: And it never occurred to me for a second that I was hurt until I looked down and my right leg was, I would say right about the knee was gone. And that was when the pain hit. As soon as you realize you have an injury, then it starts to hurt.

Speaker4: My back got worse. It started causing a lot of pain, which started leading to a lot of depression and I kinda of fought that for years. Didn't really know how to deal with it.

Speaker2: I finished out my entire service of five years and I got out. But when I came back home my life was a lot different, in that I still had ringing in my ears and headaches.

Speaker5: You don't get a manual when you have an amputation. There are so many different feelings, emotions. You have anger, sadness, you cry, you wanna scream, you wanna throw things. You don't understand. There's so many other things that just come along with it.

Speaker6: The transition was kind of long. I'm injured dealing with these emotions and dealing with family life and then also dealing with walking on top of it. It was a lot. And, I think I did kind of shut down.

Speaker7: It got bad pretty quickly. Once my health began to deteriorate my marriage deteriorated as well.

Speaker8: You have marital problems. You have sleeping problems. And, you go through a divorce, all that happens. It just takes a toll on you. It exacerbates your symptoms basically.

Speaker3: You feel helpless. You can't do anything, you can't hardly do anything for yourself. You kinda of just sitting there in a bed.

Speaker5: I felt very ugly. I felt disfigured. I felt deformed. In fact, it was so bad that I wanted to never come out of the house.



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Speaker2: You're easily agitated or irritable. But I tried to prove to myself that I could still do anything. The only problem with that was that I started to notice that there was still issues and I still had headaches and I was still in need of help.

Speaker1: It wasn't just anger but I was feeling emotional at times. If I was just driving in a car and something would trigger a memory and maybe I started crying or I'd feel emotional and I just didn't understand why that was going on. I thought that was 5 years ago, that was 4 years ago, why am I still feeling this way.

Speaker5: And it was a battle for me, to get over all of that. And I finally decided then to say, you're going to have to change this thought process. And I actually did reach out to the Vet Center through the VA.

Speaker9: I have found an opportunity to talk about it more with the group that I'm with. Those are the only guys that I really feel comfortable that I can say what I want, and they know what I feel and so forth.

Speaker9: We were there different times, different battles, but we all have the same feelings. We all endured the same trauma that has brought us to the point that we are today.

Speaker10: Don't let that thing eat you up, you're bigger than it. I said you can overcome anything if you try.

Speaker3: They're there to help you and it doesn't matter old, young, new Veteran, old Veteran. They're the VA. They're there to help you and you need to just take advantage of the help their willing to give. And some of the guys, they have that pride thing where they don't want to ask for help and just look at it as you're not asking for help, they're offering the help.

Speaker5: Once you challenge yourself with that and you have more or less that belief and faith in yourself again, things do turn around.

Speaker5: I still see my counselor and still to this day, I thank him all the time. I'm like if it were not for you, I would not be where I'm at today.

Speaker8: Don't give up. There's always someone out there. Go to the VA hospital, find somebody that can help you, but I guess just don't quit.



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