

## There's no shame or weakness in getting help

**Derrick:** My name is Derrick. I served in the Coast Guard as a junior officer as a Lieutenant junior grade in Alameda, California. Probably the biggest thing that's more or less dogged me my entire time I was in the Coast Guard was when I felt like I was making significant mistakes and others didn't seem to make similar mistakes. I felt inferior. I felt worthless. I felt like I couldn't do anything and had a difficult time managing my negative thoughts and emotions that would bring me down, make me incredibly anxious and put me in a depressive state.

Initially, it was actually brought up that the upper class, the [UNINTELLIGIBLE], they were training us through that first summer. Actually, pulled me aside and actually got me scheduled to see this psychiatrist on base a couple times over that first summer. The next time was when I was going in for some academic assistance for a paper in English class that I was really being really anxious because I was quite distraught that I wasn't doing as well in that class as I would've liked and that I wasn't sure if what I was doing with the papers was cutting it. I wasn't sure what I was doing wrong and I was quite visibly and quite clearly distressed. And I was referred there and I went to some sessions until I started feeling like I could manage better on my own.

These sessions and sessions later would be something called, cognitive behavioral therapy. Just stepping aside and looking at the thoughts on their own and seeing why they arise and seeing if there's a way that I can better put them in perspective to see that maybe what I'm all so worked up about or anxious about really isn't that major a problem in the grand scheme of things. And that if there's a way that I can refocus my attention, refocus my thoughts that I could break that cycle and hopefully have a more balanced and stable, positive mood and frame of thought.

I've had more time to think and put distance between me and the events of the past that ruminating on it isn't so vivid, isn't so present anymore. That it also seems to help but I've also been trying different treatments, getting a little more different perspectives on issues. But it seems that the combination of what I'm going through now seems to be working at any rate.

I think it's important to talk about this because I think there's still, as far as I know, this mentality, this stigma in the military, about being able to tough it out. Being able to be strong, be self-reliant and not really get help even if you really need it. If the feelings and thoughts you have are too difficult to handle on your own. That if things don't seem to be getting any better that there is no shame, there is no weakness in getting help. There is no amount of time that can really be said to be a waste if it's spent in trying to get better.



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