

Finding healthier ways to cope with problems

Brent: When I got out, I had a hell of a time. I drank a lot, every night. And I did it to numb myself or try to forget what I saw and what I did.

Robert: I was seeing these corpsmen, every other day they would die. So, you know, it was almost a way for me to keep it out of my mind. That was the only way I could serve. That was the only way I could do what I could do.

Stephanie: I think that's one of the reasons, too, why a lot of people in the military develop alcoholism and things like that because they don't, they're not allowed to express their emotions, so they have to numb it. It's acceptable to get wasted, but it's not acceptable to cry.

Tony: When I came back and I lived in Alexandria with my buddies, it was, we were basically, every night, we were drunk. We were out at the bars. Of course, at the time, I never saw it as being any sort of issue. But then once I started going back to school and work and stuff, it was like, "Hold on, this has got to stop."

Michael: I was drinking about three six-packs of beer, along with ever else you put in front of me and smoking quite a bit at the same time. And I knew something was wrong but wasn't quite sure what.

Mike: I was drinking. You know, I mean, I was drinking quite a bit. And I don't think that's uncommon for a lot of guys, I mean, you know. People do it all the time, but, you know, drinking to forget about those memories is not the way to go about it, I've found.

George: When I got out of the military, I already had a lot of these issues as far as drinking and they progressed. I didn't start working right away, couldn't find a job, couldn't find anything related to what I was doing in the military, and the alcohol just got worse.

Ten months after I had gotten out, I was involved in an auto accident that involved alcohol. I lost everything that night. I lost my vehicle, a place to live, family cut me off, and it was the moment that I had to realize what I needed to do in life.

Mike: I remember one night I just sat there and talked to my parents at the dinner table, and this was actually kind of a couple heavy nights of drinking and I just said, "You guys, I think I need to talk to somebody. I don't want to be one of those folks that, you know, waited until it was too late."

Robert: Going to the meetings there were bird colonels, chief master sergeants with an alcohol problem—all types of problems. That's when I realized just because you're a soldier doesn't mean other people don't have problems. So, I



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decided that I wasn't going to hold back either. I wanted to be, you know, I wanted to be healthy, and the service was giving me a chance. The military was giving me another chance. I was not going to fail this time.

Jack: I'll tell you this. You cannot deal with the war drunk. You cannot deal with your little issues back here from the war, whatever they are, if you're hiding from them through drugs and alcohol.



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