

## I'm not the same person I was before Iraq

**Reagan:** When I got home, I was doing pretty good. I thought I hit the ground running. My third day home I had already had a full-time job locked on, and I started working every day. I worked actually three months before I even took a day off. I stayed real busy, and everything seemed to be going pretty good until I started to have some downtime. I actually got promoted at my job. I didn't have to work seven days a week. And I think that's when I started noticing a little difference in basically who I was. I was a lot more irritable. I was always tired. I never slept.

I actually got pulled over one time for failure to maintain a lane. It was actually kind of embarrassing to me at the time because the police officer asked, you know...of course, he thought I was drunk or inebriated or talking on a cell phone. And I said, "No." But what had happened was there was a bag in the road and I just didn't even think about it. I just assumed it was an IED. I mean, subconsciously. I swerved to miss it. There was a police officer right behind me. He flipped the lights. He wanted to know what's going on. And I didn't even tell him that. I just told him, "I don't know, I didn't maintain my lane." I didn't want him to think I was crazy. I didn't want him to think, wow, what's the deal with this guy?

And then I just noticed that my relationship with everybody as time went on, it got worse. I was harder to deal with. It got to the point where I was almost impossible to deal with. I was having trouble at work. I ended up losing a job because I was getting violent. I started another job and was getting violent there. I was real irritable, hard to deal with.

What was kind of a come to Jesus meeting with me is a friend of mine that I worked with, his dad came into town. We were talking about the military and my service. He was in the Navy back in the day and we were talking about that. He was kind of telling me, "Do you have any problems?" And I said, "You know, it's funny. I kind of do." And he was the one that told me, "You need to get with the VA. You need to go see somebody. You need to get help." And I was like, "Nah, you know, I don't need that." And he was like, "You do. You really do. I'm telling you now, you do." It's like he knew something that I didn't because he had already been there.

Since I've really started getting help, my life isn't perfect by no means. There's no doubt in my mind I'm not the same person that I was before I went to Iraq. I'm not that person anymore. Now, I came to a conclusion. I can either throw in the towel and fall to the wayside or I can get every bit of help that I can and become the best person I can be right now. I'm engaged now. I want the best life for me and her. We have two kids. I want the best life for them. If it's a struggle with me every day, then it's gonna be a struggle. All I can do is go get the help I need.

We got into an argument one night. I said, "You know it might really help you understand me and some of the ways I am if you understood what PTSD is. It just might help you understand. You might be a little more sympathetic at times. But you're gonna need to know what's possibly going on with me." I wanted her and myself, let's get in front of somebody else. Because maybe I am making excuses for myself. Maybe I'm not. But let's get somebody else's opinion other than mine. So, she did some research on it and then she started to get an idea of what it was. Then we went to the Vet Center in Spring, Texas and we started talking to somebody out there as a couple. Her being



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

**MAKE THE**  
**CONNECTION**

supportive has made a huge difference. Everything's not perfect. We still have our struggles. But when you're educated to what's going on, it's a lot better.

For three years when I got home, I didn't want to talk to nobody. I just stayed busy. I blanked it out. But guess what? It doesn't go anywhere. It's there. You're going to run, but you're going to get tired sooner or later and that problem is gonna be there. If you have an opportunity to go talk to somebody, you need to go do it. Anytime you want, pick up a phone, go to a center, anything. Go talk to somebody. Because whatever you're dealing with, you think you're the only one. You think I'm on this island all alone. There's a thousand more people going through the same thing, and it will benefit you. It will benefit them to talk about it. "Hey, this works for me. What works for you?" Mix and mingle and figure out what's best. And just realize, you know what, the situation I'm going through, it really isn't cool, but I'm not the only one. I'm not alone. This is really normal, and let's get some help. Let's do this.



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

**MAKE THE**  
**CONNECTION**