

I'm a lot more kind, I'm a lot more patient

Elliott: My name's Elliott. I served in the Marine Corps from 2003 through 2007, and I served in Iraq. My transition into civilian life was really challenging. Before I went in, I was really calm. I was relaxed. I was the type of guy who was really levelheaded, and when I came home, I wasn't the same. You know how some people, they say they have a short fuse? I almost had no fuse. If I got angry for any type of reason, I would immediately just chew somebody out as if I was a drill instructor in the Marine Corps.

A lot of the relationships that I had, whether they were romantic, friends, family, were all deteriorating. Me and my older brother got into an argument which ended up turning physical. My mom comes out from her bedroom hearing this commotion, and she freaks out not knowing what to do, ends up calling the police. That was the point in my life where I realized I had a serious issue.

They took me to the VA, and I was put on a 72-hour hold, and that's when I started getting the help that I needed. I went directly to a transitional housing facility. They had counselors. They had medication. They had resources for putting a resume together if you wanted to get back into the job force, and I felt like I was becoming a member of society again.

I started college in 2010. When I was in classes sometimes, I would notice my anxiety levels would rise because of the other students in the room. Going out to like, for instance, night clubs, if I wanted to go out with friends, crowded restaurants would give me really high levels of anxiety, even being in traffic on the freeway. Living in Los Angeles, I felt like somebody might be following me. And so, it started to really have a negative impact on my ability to succeed in school.

I dropped out in 2013. I knew I had issues. I knew I had PTSD, but I didn't know why. I mean, I knew it was related to combat, but I didn't know why I was reacting to certain stimuli the way that I was. So, I went to the Vet Center in Corona, and I started seeing a counselor there. She basically educated me about what was happening in my brain, so that I was able to understand why I was having the reactions that I was having. So now, I could take steps towards actually fixing each individual symptom and recovering from each individual symptom, so that I could learn to manage them. If you're in traffic, and you notice that your anxiety level is going up, you can do breathing exercises. You can roll the windows down and get some fresh air. She knew that I loved to sing, so she said turn on a radio station that you love or play a song that you love, sing your heart out. You know, use your ability to do music and sing as a form of therapy, and it started to really work for me.

I enrolled back in school. I find a major that I actually like. I was happier. I was able to focus again. My energy levels were a lot higher. I graduated with my associates degree in behavioral science on the dean's list from that same college.

Since then, I've been going to counseling. I've been doing the therapy that the Corona Vet Center counselor mentioned. My mom definitely has noticed that I'm a lot more kind to people. Now, I'm a lot more patient, and I'm more positive now than I've ever been. Take advantage of every resource that's out there, go to the Vet Centers, go to the VA, get counseling.



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