



REAL VETERANS, REAL VICTORIES

IT WAS JUST DIFFICULT. YOU KNOW, I DIDN'T WANT TO ADMIT THAT SOMETHING HAD TROUBLED ME. I WAS IN MY TWENTIES, I WAS INVINCIBLE. THREE TOURS IN IRAQ, YOU KNOW, COMING OUT ON THE OTHER END, FEARLESS, BUT THOSE EXPERIENCES DO COME AND THEY CATCH UP WITH YOU. I'M WADE SPANN. I SERVED FOUR YEARS IN THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS, DID THREE TOURS IN IRAQ. THEN I GOT OUT IN AUGUST 2005. FOR MANY YEARS I BATTLED WITH ACCEPTING THAT I SUFFERED FROM P-T-S-D BUT THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE FOR ME WAS KNOWING THAT THERE'S NOTHING BROKEN INSIDE OF ME. IT'S JUST WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO ME. IT'S A STIGMA ASSOCIATED WITH IT, WITH POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER, THE DISORDER PART. FOR ME, IT SHOULD BE POST-TRAUMATIC GROWTH BECAUSE WE CAN ALL GROW FROM THESE EXPERIENCES AND EXCEL IN LIFE AND HAVING, ENJOY A GOOD LIFE FROM IT. FINALLY A FEW YEARS BACK I BROKE DOWN AND DECIDED TO GET SOME HELP AND TREATMENT. IT WAS THE BEST DECISION I EVER MADE FOR MY MENTAL HEALTH AS WELL AS MY WELL-BEING. D-A-V WAS HELPING ME WITH A VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM AND FIND A JOB THAT'S NOT JUST A JOB BUT A REWARDING CAREER. I LIKE WORKING ON MY CAR WITH FELLOW VETERANS, GETS ME GOING. IT'S NICE. IT'S A BONDING EXPERIENCE. BEING ABLE TO TAKE THE CAR ON A NICE WINDY ROAD AND YOU ENJOY A NICE SUNNY DAY, THERE'S NOTHING BETTER. I'M A VETERAN. P-T-S-D IS NOT A WEAKNESS. MY VICTORY IS VIEWING IT AS POST-TRAUMATIC GROWTH.