

SGT Stephen Franklin

Testimony of SGT Stephen Franklin

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My name is Stephen Franklin, and I returned from Iraq on December 15, 2005 after a one year deployment. Approximately 60 to 90 days after my return I started having a difficult time adjusting to life at home. I found myself constantly checking doors and windows to see if they were locked. I could not concentrate and was not comfortable around civilians. I was unable to sleep. I was not comfortable in my civilian job, as I did not feel safe without the protection of my fellow soldiers around, and returned to work for the National Guard.

I went to the doctor at Madigan. The doctor prescribed me with sleeping pills to try and help my sleeping issue, but nothing to help with my other issues. Needless to say, the sleeping pills made me too tired to function the next day.

About a month later, a friend pulled me aside and told me that they had noticed a change in my behavior and work ethic and they were concerned. I had become very short with people, easily drawn to anger, and had to walk away from people so that I wouldn't blow up. I wasn't this way before.

I went to the VA at American Lake with my issues. The doctor diagnosed me with PTSD. The doctor prescribed me with depression pills and more sleeping pills. I told the doctor that I couldn't function in the morning after taking sleeping pills. The doctor told me that she thought I should try both medicines.

Once again, the medicines didn't work. The depression pills brought on side effects that I couldn't stand, including nausea, vomiting and grogginess. The sleeping pills had the same negative side effects.

I joined a PTSD group which met twice a week with anywhere from 2-5 members. There were veterans from OIF/OEF and Vietnam. I attended the group for 8-9 months and it seemed to work while I was there, but once I left I was right back in the same rut that I had been trying to get out of for almost a year now.

Over the course of many doctors visits in the past year and a half I have told the doctor that I felt I needed something to relax me, not to knock me out cold. They continued to raise and lower doses of depression pills and sleeping medicine.

Finally, on July 25, 2007 the doctor at the VA finally listened to me and got me the right medication. I have been able to live with PTSD and my family can now live with me. Throughout my transition home, my PTSD made things very difficult on my family. I had become stand-offish, short tempered, and was not able to give my wife or children the affection that they needed. I was extremely fortunate that my wife was so supportive, as it would have been so much harder to recover without her understanding.

Overall, I feel like the care I received was good, but I am frustrated that the doctors wouldn't listen to me sooner. If only the doctors would have listened to me "The Soldier" and not just categorized me as just another soldier with PTSD I would have been feeling better a year and a half ago.