

THE 22 PROJECT

My name is Mackenzie Verdi and I am a disabled combat Veteran. I served five years in the 101st airborne division as a Military Police officer. During my five years I did two tours in Iraq with the 101st Airborne Division. I grew in the ranks from a private in charge of a 50 cal. machine gun all the way to a Squad Leader in charge of 12 men.

The first time I deployed to Iraq I was a 50 cal. machine gunner. We were one of the first units to go into Iraq and break the Kuwaiti border. I was in a position where I had to act first. After long days full of action and at the same time not having communication from home, it was very hard to cope with on a day to day basis without the support of my family and friends around me.

My second tour to Iraq was a bit different. Our unit was placed in the middle of Baghdad and we were in constant conflict every day. While I was in Baghdad I was a Squad Leader in charge of 12 men. It was a hard and long 12 months. We were constantly in battle with the insurgency. The things we saw and did you would not wish on anyone. But as you are trained it is you or them. We eliminated a lot of bad people off this planet. After my second tour of duty I received a Bronze star as well as an Army Accommodation award with a Valor device.

After returning home I had to deal with the thoughts, sights and smells I encountered over there. I would constantly be on high guard when I was out in the public. My mood went from always being the funny guy to an I don't care attitude. My wife hated the person I became. I did not want to socialize nor did I want to hang out with anyone other than my comrades. My sleep was always disturbed by any little sound I heard as well as dreams that made me relive some of the things I did. I was definitely a changed person.

When I met Alex at the 22 Project and H.O.W. it changed me for the better. I started the Hyperbaric and after a good week or so I noticed I was sleeping a whole lot better and that my mood was changing. I had more focus throughout the day and my attitude was that of someone who cared. I started to go back to school which gave me a sense of direction and purpose. If it was not of these programs I do not know where I would be today. It has severely changed my life for the better and I cannot express enough thanks to these wonderful programs.

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