Veteran/Psychology Research

VFTH

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How do you go from dropping out of high school to pursuing your PhD? It’s happening for a veteran who is finishing up his masters here at WKU.

Amy Bingham has his story in this week’s View from the Hill.

“I didn’t really have a path in life and my grandpa always told me that if I was kind of rudderless I needed to join the service.”

A few years after dropping out of high school, Jeff Powers decided to take his grandfather’s advice.

“I joined to be a medic and I spent six years in the service. Went to Iraq in 2008 and 2009 and I was in Afghanistan in 2011.”

An injury caused Powers to serve his final two years at a Warrior Transition Unit. It was there he discovered his passion for counseling.

“Once I got there I realized all these people that I’d been treating, their physical injuries healed very quickly. Some quicker than others certainly but the mental stuff was not healing that way.”

Prior to joining the army Powers had gotten his GED and spent one year at the University of Louisville.

Now that he was out he was ready to pursue a degree in psychology.

His search for a professor who’se research was pertinent to veterans and active duty service members led him to Dr. Amy Brausch at WKU.

“We are trying to understand how non-suicidal self injury like cutting and burning can transition into suicidal thoughts and suicidal behaviors.”

It took Powers three therapists himself before he found the right one. Now he knows he can use his experience to continue helping other service members regain their mental strength.

“I needed to be there for my fellow veterans because I understood them and I could continue to help them heal.”

With this week’s View from the Hill, I’m Amy Bingham.

Powers received his Bachelor’s degree in 2017 and his masters will be completed this summer just before he’s scheduled to get married. In the fall he will begin working on his PhD at LSU.

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