

Warrior Discovers Freedom on the Other Side of Fear

As Junior Teron neared the end of his Army career, he established a goal to retire from the military at 55.

Several back and shoulder injuries, subsequent surgeries, and a heart attack, however, sidetracked that goal as he received an order to retire at 50. After more than 30 years of service and an unexpectedly early transition to civilian life, Junior experienced the most difficult time of his life.

“During the first six months, I did not leave my house,” Junior said. “[I was very depressed](#). My family tried to help me, and I was in denial all the time. I was constantly blaming myself because of my injury, and I felt like I was no longer good for anybody.”

This darkness continued for several years until Junior established new goals for his life with the support of Wounded Warrior Project[®] (WWP).

The Army veteran attended a [WWP mental health workshop](#) with other warriors who faced similar challenges. When he first arrived, he was quiet and feared reinjuring himself during the adventure-based activities that comprised the workshop. He found, however, that his fellow veterans shared his fear and anxiety, and that they wanted to help guide him to a happier, healthier life.

“When I saw that nothing hurt anymore or that I didn’t need to be afraid, I continued doing the activities, and I wasn’t afraid to talk,” Junior said. “They provided me with confidence and told me how we were all going to accomplish the activities together. The few days there were amazing.”

At the conclusion of the workshop, Junior established three new goals for his life.

After years of inactivity due to fear of reinjury, his first goal was to participate in a Thanksgiving 5K race and reignite his love for running. He trained and completed the race, which his wife documented on video. Upon seeing the video of himself crossing the finish line, he saw happiness return to his face for the first time in several years.

“I was alive again,” Junior said.

Junior's second goal was to walk the Camino de Santiago, a more than 500-mile spiritual pilgrimage from France to Spain, in honor of his son, Yankarlos. Yankarlos is also a warrior who experienced severe depression as a result of a combat injury, and Junior wanted to use the pilgrimage as an opportunity to pray for his son.

Throughout the month-long walk, Junior met several people from around the world who became his "new family," as they also prayed for Yankarlos' health and happiness. After completing the pilgrimage, Junior returned home in time for his son's surgery to amputate his left leg below his knee. The expression he saw on his son's face after the surgery was similar to what he saw on his own face crossing the 5K finish line ... happiness. Yankarlos was free of pain, he told his father.

“I started crying,” Junior said. “All the prayers on the walk, they were all worth it.”

Junior's third goal was to run an Army Ten-Miler in Washington, DC. During his active duty, he completed the run several times and wanted to do it once again. Junior ultimately did so with 10 fellow veterans.

“When I arrived at the site of the Army Ten-Miler, I started crying because I couldn't believe I was there to run,” Junior said. “I was also feeling grateful for the opportunity God gave me to meet so many wonderful people at Wounded Warrior Project who motivated me. It was magical.”

Junior also ran the race with Heather Lucas, a WWP staff member from the mental health workshop that kickstarted the Army veteran's comeback story.

“I can honestly say that the Junior I know today is not the Junior I met at the workshop,” Heather said. “He has been committed to his goals and persistent in his journey, pushing himself each day a little further than the day before. He took a chance by coming to the workshop, and he found what's on the other side of fear: freedom.”

Junior's goal-setting experiences with WWP were part of a [Project Odyssey[®]](#), which is an outdoor, rehabilitative mental health workshop. This WWP program helps warriors learn to manage PTSD, traumatic brain injury (TBI), and other combat stress while connecting with nature and fellow veterans. Following the workshop, warriors work with WWP on establishing goals and making positive progress through a series of

follow-up phone and video calls. As a result of the 12-week program, warriors develop resiliency and increase their psychological wellbeing.

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About Wounded Warrior Project

Since 2003, Wounded Warrior Project[®] (WWP) has been meeting the growing needs of warriors, their families, and caregivers – helping them achieve their highest ambition. [Learn more.](#)

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