



AUTHENTIC TECHNOLOGIES

One Veteran's Story



My name is Cory Vigil and I would like to share with you how Raphael Natale impacted my life. I served in the Navy for 8 years. I spent a lot of time in Iraq, the Middle East, and the Persian Gulf. I have 2 deployments in Iraq, 1 in Bahrain, and 1 in Oman.

During my deployments, I fired on two suspicious vessels in Bahrain. It turned out they were boarded by two unarmed families. This incident was extremely traumatizing for me and changed who I was, not for the better. During the Iraq War I fired on large groups of targets and the results were catastrophic. These actions changed me as a man.

Upon my discharge, I was very angry and ashamed of myself. I isolated myself and was depressed. Eventually I was diagnosed with PTSD, which made me feel weak. My family said I had changed! After my discharge, I finally realized I lacked empathy and this changed my interactions with people, specifically with my son, who felt very distant from me and avoided me. This was very emotional for me because we used to be very close.

I continued to have a difficult time adjusting mentally. I was drinking heavily and looking for that adrenaline rush. Physical confrontations were an unhealthy outlet for me. I have to emphasize that my anger consumed me as a person.

I got married in 2005 and was now a husband. My wife complained consistently that I wasn't affectionate and she was very unhappy. It was true! I didn't open up to her and I wasn't affectionate. I felt she wouldn't understand me and would stop loving me if she knew what I had done. As time went by my marriage failed and I fell into a deep abyss.

One night, my anger caught up with me and I confronted a man talking to my wife and got into a fight. I ended up seriously injuring him and his two friends. Now my legal problems started! Over the next year and a half, my legal problems dragged on. I eventually separated from my wife and lost everything, but I finally realized it was time to come face to face with my anger issues and how I functioned socially.

During my interaction with Raphael Natale, I had a sense of his sincerity and understanding when he talked with me. He didn't use big words and communicated to me with a straightforwardness I understood. I had only a handful of sessions with him, but I learned so much about myself and my negative way of thinking. I knew what my problems were, but he taught me where these thoughts and actions came from. I also learned that I tend to make myself feel like a victim and the effect this thinking has on my progress. Raphael advocated change and a new process. I learned more in a few sessions from him than I learned in several years of going to see professionals at the Veterans Affairs office and Peer Support groups.

— Cory Vigil, 2nd Class Petty Officer

