

## Creating art helps bring joy and relaxation

by KM in Florida

I guess I have been prone to PTSD since I was a child. My father had epilepsy and when his seizures became uncontrolled by medication, he was unable to drive (and subsequently our family suffered financial devastation). My mother decided to divorce him, saying she was only going to date a man with a Mercedes. I stayed with my father and my younger brother went with my mother. I was only 13.

My father and I shared a studio apartment and we could not even afford a phone. Needless to say, I took care of my father when he had seizures. He, despite his illness, always took care of others. When my parents were together and finances were better, my dad would have my brother and I go through our old toys and we hand delivered them to kids in the children's home down the street for Christmas. He coached my brother's soccer team, and when he saw that several of the kids on the team did not have soccer shoes, he bought the whole team shoes, so that the children that needed them could have them and would not be embarrassed that their parents could not afford them. My father was the best man I have ever known. I became an LPN after graduating from high school. School was always a struggle for me as I was always under so much stress, worrying about my father. Shortly after my father passed away from a seizure, I entered the US Army. I met my son's father and during childbirth I came very close to dying. I had my son in a military hospital. The kid that was assisting the doctor had never assisted with a C Section before, much less an emergency C Section. He could not stitch me up and I was bleeding to death. The doctor was screaming and fortunately the anesthesiologist saved my life. I was diagnosed 1 year later with PTSD. After visiting doctor after doctor because of my sleep problems and hypervigilance, I ORDERED a sleep study and also found out that I have RLS (there is some relation to massive blood loss and this disorder). Until I had the study I literally had not slept for more than 2 hours at a time (for 14 years). I worked in a homeless shelter as an LPN, and found so many VETS, and abused women and children with PTSD that are not getting much help. This broke my heart. I decided to go back to college to become an Art Therapist. I was going back to college to help others with this disorder. I did not even know how to draw!

Three months into my first drawing class all of a sudden I could do it. What I found was that in the process of creating art I found peace. I was finally living in the moment. Aside from my wonderful son, the process of creating Art is the most enjoyable and relaxing activity I have ever participated in. I absolutely love it.

I am struggling through college, plagued with anxiety and self doubt, but I am determined to make it through. I should also note during this time that my insurance company dumped me because of my medical disorders so that is a source of anxiety for me as well but somehow I have hope that I am going to make it through.