

SHATTERED

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For more information about the SAGA program to help veterans with PTSD see
<http://www.sift.net/research/health-and-telemedicine/saga>



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What did trauma do to me?

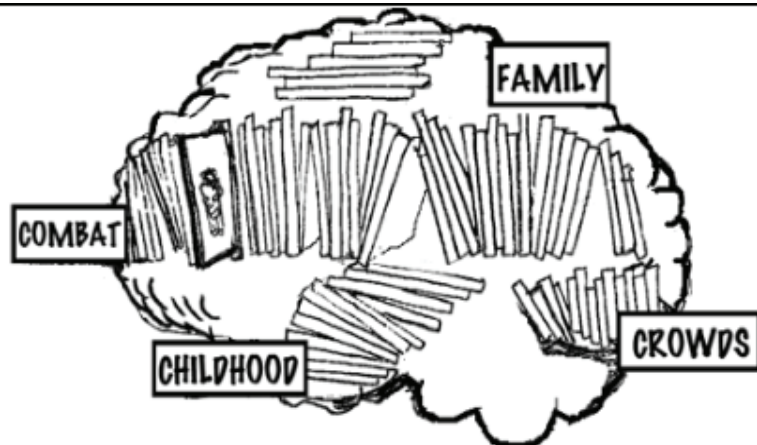
I can explain a lot of things. I could help you side your house or set up your computer, but understanding how my deployment changed me made no sense. It took a bunch of people explaining it, and some breakthroughs on my part before I could understand.

This is what suffering from trauma means to me.

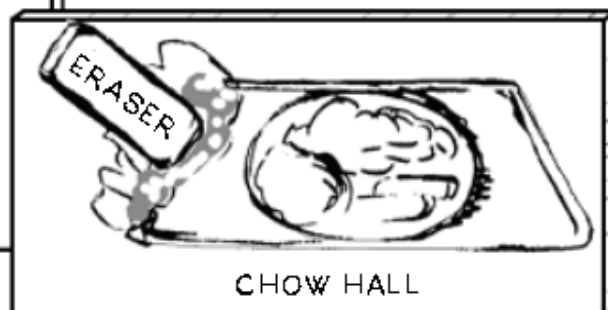
I imagine my memories on glass plates.



I picture my brain as a big pink shelving unit for storing memories.



Sometimes the memory gets stored, sometimes it fades away.

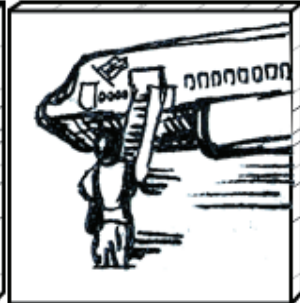


Then one day
patrolling through a
crowded market

...



And the next day I was back on patrol



and months later I went back to the states.

Friends gave me tickets to a ball game, but when I was sitting in the stands.

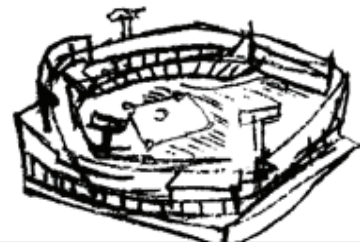


I felt like I was in danger

I started sweating

I couldn't stay.

I think I just walked out, but on the inside I felt terror.



The baseball game incident was one of hundreds that convinced me I needed help.

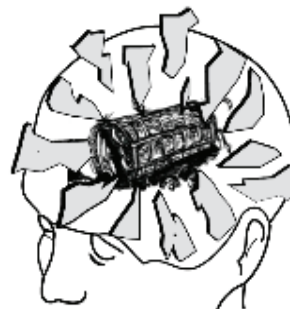


...it's like my memory of that day in the market shattered

and exploded.



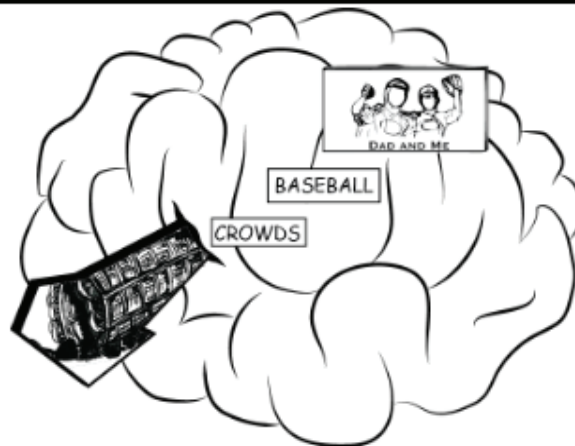
Sending shrapnel into other memories



After I got back, if I tried to think about the market, I couldn't put it back together.



The therapist explained that crowds had become a trigger. My brain associated crowds with the horrors I experienced that day.



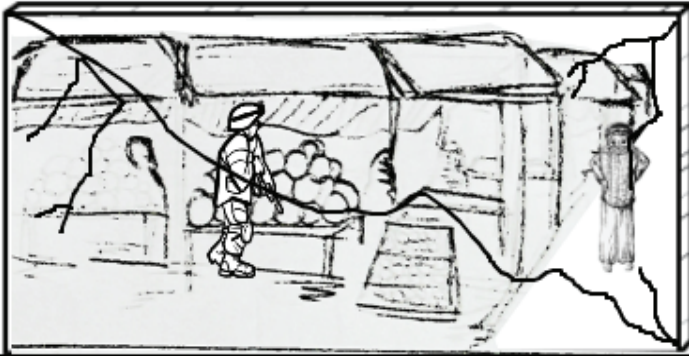
You can't get the "glass" out physically. The best you can do is wear the memory down, rounding off the sharp edges so that they stop cutting you when you go to a ball game.



And wearing the edges off the memory is like working with broken glass.

I had to think about the REAL story, not the one I told my family.





With the sharp edges gone,
you can make a new memory
that tells the whole story.

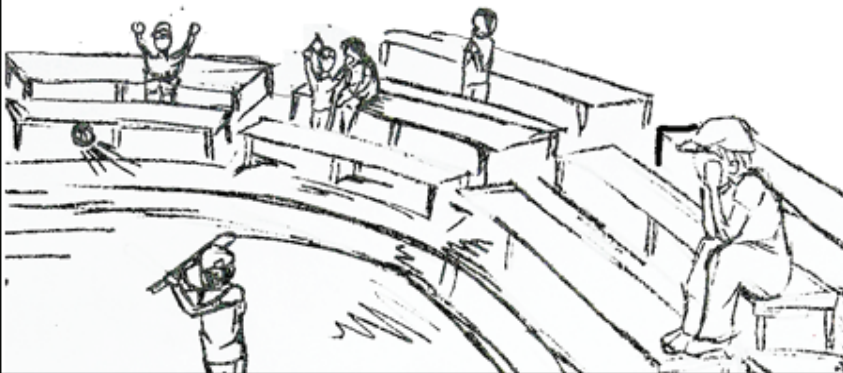
I started doing homework, which
meant stopping avoiding the things,
that made me feel uncomfortable.
but I had to start small.



An uncrowded little league game
was where I started.



and with practice,



I got to see the whole game.



FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT PTSD AND COMICS GO TO SAGA.SIFT.NET