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## Lyle Gordon, Towanda, IL

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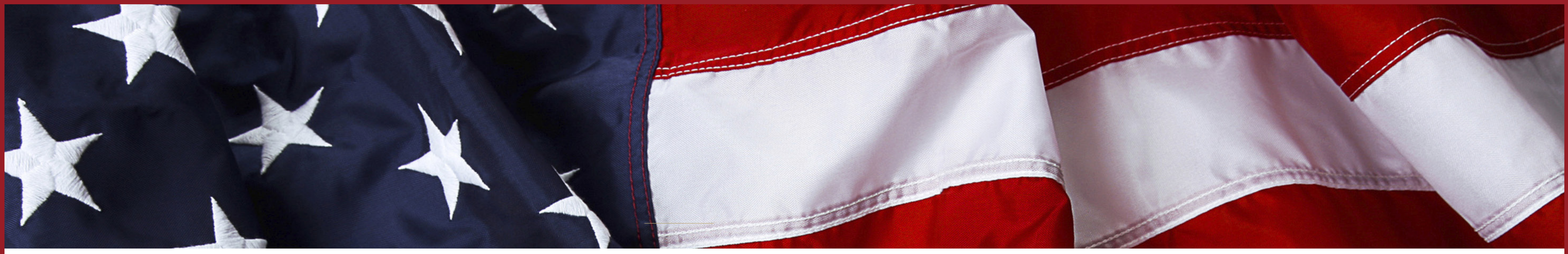
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**Lyle Gordon**  
**Age:** 27  
**Branch of Military:** U.S. Army  
**Rank:** Specialist  
**Dates of Service:** June 2008-October 2011  
**Deployments:** Afghanistan, December 2009-December 2010



# Lyle Gordon

Towanda, IL



*"It's weird. You see the worst and the best of humanity, when you're in war. And it's sometimes at the same time. It's really surreal."*



*"I actually designed this while I was over there. I didn't realize it at the time, but it was this feeling that I had kind of constantly, this constant like simultaneous anger and depression that you have being over there. You know, at the time I didn't realize it, but it was PTSD kind of starting to creep in."*

*"This was a memorial piece for the two guys we lost on deployment. The two roses are for the two guys we lost, and then the snake was kind of a symbol of protection, healing, that kind of thing. I got that right after I got back from Afghanistan."*



*"I was a combat engineer; my job was rock clearance. So basically, just drive or walk down the road real, real slow and look for bombs. The best way I've heard it described is long periods of total boredom separated by moments of sheer terror. We're basically the guys that if there's a job nobody wants to do, we're the ones that get to do it."*

*"I couldn't figure out what I wanted to do and my recruiter asked me, 'Do you like to fix things or break things?' And I said, 'Well, fixing things is pretty cool. But breaking things is a lot of fun.' So he shows this video for combat engineer and in the first three seconds it's just this little 10-by-10 building blowing up. And I went, 'OK, I want to do that.' Because that's a big part of being a combat engineer is demolitions and playing with explosives and stuff like that, but then there's also the stuff they don't tell you ... it's like learning how to properly poke a mine with a stick."*



U.S. Army photo  
 Combat engineers patrol near the Arghandab River during a joint patrol in Afghanistan.

Gordon also wears a hero bracelet in honor of his squad leader, Sergeant Jason McCluskey. *"He was killed on mission on November 4th of 2010. We were on mission, route we've done a hundred times before and came up to a spot that we got shot at a hundred times before. You know. It's one of those things that I mean, we've -- you know, the exact same spot every time, it happens the exact same way every time. To the point where it was almost like a rehearsed dance number, you know? Everybody gets in their spots, we lay down our suppressive fire and do all our stuff, and that one time it just didn't work out for us. He came out of a corner and was shot seven times and killed pretty much instantly. He was like the big brother I never had."*



*"After the military, I spent about three years just kind of working odd jobs and whatnot and kind of dealing with the issues that I had left over from deployment and all that. And generally dealing with them poorly."*

*"Back in 2014 I attempted suicide and that was kind of my wake-up call that I needed to get help, and I did. After, you know, spending about six months in pretty intensive therapy. At the time I was going to the Mattoon VA clinic and they have a fantastic doctor there -- Dr. Levine. The man saved my life. I got really lucky."*

*"It's not something that goes away, but it's something you learn to cope with. You know, a big part of that is just keeping myself occupied, you know, if I'm not constantly doing something somewhere then it gives time for the bad stuff to start creeping in, so I stay very busy."*

## PTSD: The Facts

Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can occur after you have been through a trauma. A trauma is a shocking and dangerous event that you see or that happens to you. During this type of event, you think that your life or others' lives are in danger. When you are in the military, you may see combat. You may have been on missions that exposed you to horrible and life-threatening experiences. These types of events can lead to PTSD.

The number of veterans with PTSD varies by service era:

- Operations Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Enduring Freedom (OEF):** About 11-20 out of every 100 veterans (or between 11-20%) who served in OIF or OEF have PTSD in a given year.
- Gulf War (Desert Storm):** About 12 out of every 100 Gulf War veterans (or 12%) have PTSD in a given year.
- Vietnam War:** About 15 out of every 100 Vietnam veterans (or 15%) were currently diagnosed with PTSD at the time of the most recent study in the late 1980s, the National Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Study (NVVRS). It is estimated that about 30 out of every 100 (or 30%) of Vietnam veterans have had PTSD in their lifetime.

-- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

## Symptoms

Symptoms of PTSD may disrupt your life and make it hard to continue with your daily activities. You may find it hard just to get through the day. There are four types of PTSD symptoms:

- Reliving the event (also called re-experiencing symptoms):** Memories of the traumatic event can come back at any time. You may feel the same fear and horror you did when the event took place. For example, you may have nightmares or flashbacks; you may see, hear, or smell something that causes you to relive the event. This is called a trigger.
- Avoiding situations that remind you of the event:** You may try to avoid situations or people that trigger memories of the traumatic event. You may even avoid talking or thinking about the event. For example, you may avoid crowds, because they feel dangerous.
- Negative changes in beliefs and feelings:** You may forget about parts of the traumatic event or not be able to talk about them. You may think the world is completely dangerous, and no one can be trusted.
- Feeling keyed up (also called hyperarousal):** You may be jittery, or always alert and on the lookout for danger. You might suddenly become angry or irritable. This is known as hyperarousal. You may have a hard time sleeping, have trouble concentrating, be startled by a loud noise or surprise, or want to have your back to a wall in a restaurant or room.

*"What I tell every guy and gal I talk to is to get help. You know, absolutely get help. Even if you don't think you need it. I know I spent a lot of years thinking I didn't need help, thinking that, you know, I had it under control."*

*"It's not something that ever goes away, but it's something that can be managed. It's something that can be dealt with, and the longer you put it off the harder it is to deal with, for sure."*