

## Don't let the enemy defeat you at home

**David:** My name is David. I served with the United States Army Special Forces from '67 to '69. My time in the Army was just a great challenge, I think. It was physically, emotionally, mentally and especially going to Special Forces where you needed all three of those qualities in order to advance.

The things that affected me happened both while I was in service particularly in Vietnam because that's where the rubber really meets the road. You don't eat well. You don't sleep well. You know, it's always raining or it's always hot; the mosquitos, the snakes, the leeches and on top of that, you know, everybody you encounter wants to kill you. So, you do that day after day after day after day, it's gonna leave a mark. When you come out of that and you feel that something's wrong, well, it's up to you to fix it. You're not encouraged to go seek help really. That transition period is very, very difficult even though you do it alone to a certain extent, I was fortunate that I had, you know, a lot of family and friends that were very supportive.

There were the sort-of classical symptoms if you will of PTS. You know, sleeplessness, nightmares, irritability sometimes. I didn't understand a lot of what I was going through, just didn't understand it and I was other focused. I drank a lot when I first came back and as I was working, there would be times when I start drinking on a Friday night and I'd quit drinking Sunday so that I could wake up on Monday and kind of go to back to work and that went on for quite a while until my new wife said, you know, something's got to change here buddy. And so, I, you know, turned into myself. I subsequently got divorced. There were no, you know, great emotional attachments, if you will and so I kept it pretty much bottled up inside, never talked about it, never expressed it.

I finally reached out to the VA; gosh I'm trying to think how many years passed. Decades passed. One of my sisters was very persistent. She was very helpful and urged me. She was very gentle, but I got the message; that I better get out there otherwise you can look forward to a not very happy life going forward. That struck me and I went to the Phoenix Medical Center is where I went and I was treated well. I got the treatment that I needed. They outlined, you know, some different methods and what not and they said, you know, which one kind of appeals to you? And I said, sitting here talking to you feels good. That's okay. And they said, well, we'll just keep doing that. And I started to open up a little bit more, you know, and I was able to talk to friends and family a little bit more about it which was very helpful.

Don't let the enemy defeat you at home. Every Veteran understands that, but you're not gonna do that alone. You need somebody to walk you through it; help you through it, whether it's a family or friend or a spiritual leader or a professor. No matter who it is, make that connection. That's hugely, hugely important.



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**CONNECTION**