

Finding strength and support at a Vet Center

Pat: My name is Pat. I was in the Marine Corp 1963-1967. Vietnam was just another nightmare and I will say that as I've heard several, many times and have read many times, we can leave Vietnam. The Veterans can leave Vietnam, but 40 years later Vietnam has never left us. When I come home back to Pittsburgh things were a little different. Everybody that I went to school with had either graduated high school and went on to college and coming back into society, it's like, it's like my motto or my creed, you do what you have to do.

I used to have very long hair, used to have a beard, and I would wear my old military jacket and people would just shake their head in disgust and it wasn't understood by society what was going on. I must of went through 150-200 jobs. I couldn't relate. I was bitter. I was, I didn't like authority and then finally I did land a good job so, I was a career, 35-year employee for the federal government and my adjusting to society for the first 10 or 15 years of my life was terrible.

Mental health and counseling comes from my local Vet Center, which is very, very helpful. For the first 30-35 years of my life even with my 35 years in the federal service I very, very seldom talked about my experiences in Vietnam. The Vet Center helps me vent. The Vet Center helps me talk about my addictions or my problems or my pain or my anger and it is with fellow brother Veterans. The Vet Center has been helpful to me and my wife who has also sought counseling, and we've had trauma in our life. We've had much trauma. I had a son who committed suicide, and gee, this sort of does trigger some of the Vietnam experience, and maybe been able to pacify, been able to apply this through those tumultuous periods.

We're like everybody else in the world, everybody else in society, we all have our problems and at times you can only stomp on your toes too much and you have to seek outside help or outside guidance or suggestions. So, therefore the Vet Center has helped me and her to a great degree. I would tell the Veterans, the Veteran, both male and female, you have to talk. Keeping it inside does not help one bit. You have to let it out. Life now is a little more stable. Things are starting to get a little more mellow. At least I know when there's a rough sea ahead or the road is rough I can go to my VA, my Vet Center and explain what's going on and the VA is there, and they are very supportive and they are helpful.



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