

## An Army Veteran gained a more positive attitude

**Tom:** My name is Tom. I joined the Army in 1970 and went to Vietnam for nine months. At first, when I got out, I came home and it just felt weird like you didn't belong here, you belonged over there or something, I don't know. But I think it could be because of the adjustment because American society is different than over there, it's a whole cultural difference. I became, I wouldn't say depressed it was just like, geez, I didn't know what I wanted to do but Ed said, "Well, just go get a job." I quit and got fired at all these jobs. Sometimes I actually did it on purpose and it was hell because I had to go get another job. You're happy to go to work every day and then after about five or six months sometimes you just say to yourself, "God, I'm tired of coming in here."

When I found out eventually, later on is I went back, I was manic depressed or bipolar; it runs in my family. But even when I was married, I thought, "Well, geez, I don't think I've got it." But I was in and out of so many jobs I said, "This is crazy." It was terrible. When you're like a manic, you get really excited and then there's times when you get really depressed. It's like going to a party and once the party is over, you crash and it's a bad crash but your life is like that all the time. Sometimes you could have a happy day, like, get up in the morning and suddenly two hours later you could say, "Oh, geez, I'm getting depressed." It just enters your head and says, "You're not going to be happy today."

I was going to counseling way back. They had a private Counselor; I don't know if it was through medical insurance but I never thought about going to the VA. So, the first time I went there, I don't think I had an appointment I just went in. They fit me in some place to talk to somebody and then they scheduled me. I went to the counselor a few times and talked to them and at first when I just told them, I said, "This is crazy, I've been in a dozen jobs; I'm tired of quitting." They helped me out; I have no complaints about... I had somebody to go to talk to.

I think I have a more positive attitude about things then I did and used to be negative. Mentally, I think my head's a lot clearer than it was. If I had to go back and redo it, I'd probably have gone to the VA earlier, when I was like 20 some years old instead of when I was 50 and that's the trouble with a lot of people. If you think your life is not going too well, I think you should get yourself some help; I should've realized that. My wife might have said something but mental illness is like a denial. The VA will help you out.



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