

I didn't know how to talk about this

Arthur: My name is Arthur. I served in the United States Army in 1966 through 1968. I served in Vietnam 1967, 1968. My first day there, when I arrived, within 15 minutes, we got hit. They knocked out two tanks with B40 rockets. They over-ran the position. I had no weapon. It was hand to hand combat. You experience, you know, combat and you lose friends and buddies. You know, you go in a certain way. You have beliefs. Believe me, they change immediately; changed your entire life. When I went there, I was someone else. When I got back, I was totally different.

I was discharged. It was a zoo. It was almost like, you know, nobody cared about anything. I wanted to be back in Vietnam. There was discipline. There was, you know, there was a need to survive depending on the guy to the left or right of you. There was this intimacy, this personal thing that doesn't exist out here. I still feel that.

Well, I was completely lost. When I got home, I got into drugs. I got into, you know, barbiturates and I couldn't adjust. I felt betrayed by society. And here I am, it's like, you know, wow, what the hell is going on here, man? What the guys have been through and, you know, the rejection. You know, that's how I got into drugs and alcohol. I just wanted to bury it all. I tried working, you know, of course you had to fill out an application. What did you do in Vietnam? Right. I said, well, I was in the Infantry. What did you do? Was there a skill? I said, well if you want to know, I'll put it down. I said, I killed people. What the hell am I going to tell him? Between drugs, gambling, and you know, I mean I was just a loose cannon. I mean, I didn't care about anything. I didn't care about my life.

I spent three years in a drug program, mandatory alright and I kind of got my act cleaned up. I've been clean since about 1976. Period. Over. I don't even smoke anymore. I stopped taking drugs and all that, but I didn't stop gambling. Later, I meet my girlfriend, presently. Still, I didn't deal with my anger. Alright, she said, you're scaring me, you know? Why don't you get some help? So, I said, you know, I don't feel good myself. I still have anxieties about things and all that. So, I went over the VA down on 23rd Street. So, a doctor comes out. He says, come on in. I sat down. I spent an hour with him. He did a profile on me. He says, you have PTSD. I said, what? Post traumatic stress disorder. He said, no, no relax. Take it easy. You know, it could be treated. He says, but you need help because you haven't talked about Vietnam and all that. And he said that, we have a group of just Vietnam Vets. And this has been going on for like ten years and I never knew about this and this was only ten years ago. I never spoke about Vietnam years and years later until I got into the PTS program. It's huge because they are all your brothers. They all know because you all experienced some things in many, many ways with each other. And then I see a psychiatrist on a one on one basis.

I'm outgoing now. I mean, I never talked about this. I couldn't talk about this. I wouldn't know how to talk about this if I didn't get this help. My girlfriend tells me all the time, says, wow, you changed in the last eight years or ten years. Changed, I mean completely changed. The government asks you to do something that's really exceptional, you know, and you pay a price for that. You do, you pay a price for it. When you come back, you can get it all together. It's there for you, just take advantage of it.



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