

Veterans' Voices on PTSD

Interviewee 1: As I transitioned out and I looked at ten fingers, ten toes, I was okay, so I thought.

Interviewee 2: It didn't hit me til 9/11, and I didn't know it, and my first reaction was why now and why so many years later?

Interviewee 3: I had no idea that I had post-traumatic stress disorder.

Interviewee 4: At the time I really didn't know what PTSD was.

Interviewee 5: So, I would sleep with a knife in my hand and my weapon on my chest and any noise that would happen, I would jump up.

Interviewee 4: The way I reacted to situations was very aggressive. My voice would be at what most would perceive a yell. People would ask me, "why are you getting so mad?" and I'm like, "I'm not mad, this is just how I talk."

Interviewee 6: It makes you not want to do nothing, and it makes you want to stay secluded in your home.

Interviewee 3: I was raging. I was very angry. There were fights. Just a lot of negative experiences and I had no idea where it was all coming from.

Interviewee 7: I was doing an absurd amount of alcohol and drugs. I was trying to alter my reality, my consciousness because my consciousness was not very attractive.

Interviewee 5: I remember going to the Naval Hospital and they had this giant chart that said all these symptoms of PTSD, and I looked at it, and my heart just broke because I was reading the whole list and I was experiencing every single one of those symptoms. Every last one of them.

Interviewee 2: My wife finally says, "You have to go to the doctor's." Family physician said, "You're going to go to the VA or I'm going to take you."

Interviewee 1: The VA was very good. They had some people that were there that were trained to help me on to that road to recovery.

Interviewee 5: For the first time ever, I felt like, whoa, I can actually talk to a professional that's been in my shoes. Sympathy is one thing, but empathy is actually when somebody has walked through those shoes and they can identify with what you're going through.

Interviewee 1: I felt that I was the only one until I started connecting with other Veterans and I heard their stories. I can breathe.



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Interviewee 7: Therapy is such an important process. It's very hard to shrink yourself. Your mind is so nimble you really can't get in the in between, but sometimes we can see our problems in someone else.

Interviewee 5: They teach you. They taught me how to deal with my problems and how to reduce the nightmares. How to reduce the anger and all the frustration.

Interviewee 4: And after I started receiving counseling, I was able to better recognize my triggers so I was able to understand, you know what? I better step aside, take a breather, walk away.

Interviewee 6: Now I can get through the day without having a flashback and I was finally sleeping through the night where I could actually function the next morning.

Interviewee 1: Through counseling and meeting with other Veterans, I found a common bond, that camaraderie, that esprit de corps that we're taught while we wear the uniform. That is still available on the outside.

Interviewee 7: There's always going to be problems in life. That's what life is, but you can eliminate some of those or you can minimize some of those issues.

Interviewee 6: I still have my peaks and valleys, but I know how to cope with them. There is no way to do it by yourself. I've tried that road and it doesn't work. There's people out there and resources out there to help, so just take advantage of it.

Interviewee 2: You've got to find that link with somebody that'll make you let it go.



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