

Healing through support groups and counseling

Linda: I'm Linda. I served in the United States Air Force. I came in towards the end of the Vietnam war in 1972. I was discharged with a medical condition in 1995.

I've been seeing a private psychiatrist for eight years now, so I've talked to him quite a bit. If I feel like I'm really on the edge, I will give him a call and he will help me. The Tucson VA has been absolutely outstanding. They have a transgender clinic. They've had it for about five or six years. They treat us very well. They're very friendly, they're very understanding, and it's amazing in fact how supportive they are. I'm seeing a psychologist at the VA, and we've worked up a crisis plan in case something happens.

When you live and you're hiding it all the time, you kind of get bitter after a while. I just decided I was 68 years old. I'd been fighting it my entire life. I said "It's time to find peace with this, if this is how God made me, then this is... I've gotta accept that this is how God made me and how he wants me then, and I just can't keep fighting this all my life." So, I decided it was time to come out and be true to myself.

I told my wife and she did not approve, but she did try to understand at first, and after I came out this past September, she said she couldn't live with me, and we ended up getting a divorce last month. There are times when I don't feel like getting out of bed. I can get depressed and have gotten depressed, and I have to fight it to make sure that I don't let the depression take over, because I know how hard that can be. But there have been times when I've even wondered "Is it worth continuing on, should I... would they, would my family be happier if I were dead?" And that gets pretty scary at times.

It's really helpful to have people that you can go to that you feel are real friends who really care about you. Everybody tells me I'm much happier, for one thing. Before I came out, my wife and kids used to tell me that I was angry most of the time, and I don't feel that anymore, and I think a big part of it is I probably had some built up anger that I couldn't really be me, and now I can.

I know how hard it is to be transgender and to be hiding it, and how life can be very difficult in that situation. The VA has a great program where they are willing to help you, and I would highly encourage any Veteran, go talk to your doctor and ask them about it, and I think you'll be very pleasantly surprised in their acceptance and openness with you.



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