

I felt hopeful for the first time in forty years

Larry: My name is Lawrence. I was in the Marine Corp, served during the Vietnam era in 1967 to '71. Getting out of the military that was the easy part. Acclimating to civilian life, that was extremely difficult. I always felt that I hadn't really left Vietnam and I remained in that attitude, that mode for gotta be 20 years. The major issue that I had was anger. I was angry all the time. I couldn't connect with anybody. I couldn't connect with my first wife. I just couldn't trust anybody. I didn't want to get hurt by losing somebody again which was just a constant battle going on within me, within my own mind.

There would be times when I would be talking to somebody and I would be seeing a fire fight in my minds eye. It made it very, very difficult to remain calm. I had absolutely no control at all over my life whatsoever. After my first divorce I started drinking but I gave that up as a bad idea because it just made things worse not better. Then I went onto a second marriage and well managed to destroy that too because I hadn't learned anything.

It was seven or eight years ago, it was a really bad year. The economy was going south, work was slow, my mother had passed away, my second wife wrote me a letter and told me she wasn't coming home, she wouldn't tell me to my own face and bills started piling up. Things just got out of control, I just couldn't handle it anymore, I tried to commit suicide. That's when I moved to Key West to stay with my son because I needed somebody to kind of keep an eye on me. And from there things just got better.

When I was at the VA I was diagnosed with PTSD, I had no idea what it was, nobody ever talked to me about it, I didn't believe it. It took about six months to digest the idea and kinda get used to it, to see what really it was all about. It was up hill from there, it really was. They helped me out tremendously, they really did. I went to a program in Miami, PTSD program, it was an intensive program for four months in house. Once you know what PTSD is, it's easier to deal with it. It's always easier to deal with something when you know what it is. So, they teach you that first and you discussed everything. You are with other Veterans so you are safe and you knew you were safe. And everybody there, they genuinely, genuinely cared. They bent over backwards to help. I felt hopeful for the first time in I mean 40 years, I actually felt hopeful. And I was really glad that I had gone there. I try to get as much therapy as I possibly can. If it's available sign me up I'm going because this is my life and they're willing to help and they are offering to help, I am taking it. They have phone numbers you can call anytime of the day or night because they have a crisis line. You are never really alone ever, even if you live by yourself or you live in the woods you're still not alone because they are always available.

I can't tell you how thankful I am for the VA and how happy I am that I actually went there and got the help that I needed. And if you're a Veteran out there and you need help don't put it off. Get the help you need.



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