

## I'm not a victim anymore

**Robert Yeoman:** I'm a proud U.S. Navy, disabled, PTSD, military sexual trauma survivor. I'm just glad that I didn't take my life. I'm glad that I know my purpose. The guilt and the shame is gone. I'm glad that I can stand tall and talk about it in adversity. I was in during the Vietnam era. I was on a new ship, LST, tank landing ship. We carried marines and supplies and things like that. I made the fatal mistake of walking the other way through the middle of the ship, and when I was walking, they accosted me, and they began to rape me. So, I hid it. It didn't happen. I was walking, and one passed by me, and he said, "If you ever say anything about what happened, we'll throw your black ass overboard." So, there was fear. I couldn't sleep. I started having nightmares. I went home, and I burned everything. I burned the shoes, the hats, the peacoat, the clothes. I burned everything.

I would work hard during the day, and I would hide the drinking and drugging, and it just caught up with me. I started losing jobs. The depression would get me sometimes after the nightmares, and I couldn't go out of the house. I had a nightmare, and I got drunk for a week, and they fired me, and had I had the guts to kill myself then, I would have done it, but I had the courage to dial 1-800-273-8255. That's the crisis hotline, and they coached me for about 45 minutes, and then they took me to the psych ward at John Dingell, and I started with group therapy, one-on-one, UniPsych therapy. It was much needed therapy that I am so eternally grateful that I'm a Veteran. I see my psychiatrist every two months. I take a medication for the anxiety and the depression everyday, and I always say, "They gave me a toolbox. They have a toolbox of life for us." Those tools are in there that allow us to start repairing our lives.

I love living today, and these tears aren't painful anymore. I thank God everyday. I thank Him all day long. I hang my flag out on my home everyday. It flies high. I wear my flag. I'm a proud U.S. Navy disabled, PTSD, military sexual trauma survivor. I'm not a victim anymore.



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