

## Vietnam Veterans' Voices on Managing PTSD

**Joshua:** My battalion was deployed to go to Vietnam right after the Tet Offensive.

I was wounded in a landmine explosion that killed my buddy next to me. That took a toll on me, wondering, "Why I didn't die in the blast? Why did I survive? Why did my buddy get killed?"

**Sarge:** We would lose someone and it would be a terrible event. But once I was a squad leader, it seemed to be my fault.

**Rick:** Everything that happened over there, I camouflaged all that stuff and just buried it. You know what I mean? The feelings, I mean, I became numb.

I didn't speak to anybody about it, not even my wife or my kids. I didn't want anybody to know, because I was ashamed.

**Bud:** I had these dreams of flying in helicopters and crashing in combat. Those were some of the, kind of the nightmares that I experienced.

**Joshua:** I was suffering inside and shaking, sweating at night.

**Sarge:** I would wake up with a start, sit up, and, drenched in sweat, trembling, frightened like a big firefight had just happened. And no, I don't know why.

**Bud:** I would drink heavily. And then I would get in some kind of fight or barroom brawl. And I got that reputation of this Vietnam Veteran that you never knew what he was going to do.

**Rick:** My kids told me that, "Dad, you need to go get some help. We all notice that you was always looking out the window or you are always checking the doors of the house, or you always walking around your," like a perimeter, just... They noticed all that and they knew my temper was pretty high, too.

And so, so I finally went to the VA down here in La Jolla. And I said, "I really need help bad."

**Sarge:** I had this pamphlet and it had ever symptom of PTSD all listed in a row. Every one of them was me.

**Joshua:** I went to the VA down on 23<sup>rd</sup> Street 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue Manhattan. My psychiatrist was treating me. Really helped me through a lot of the issues.

Just talking about what my feelings were, how I can deal with them better.

**Bud:** So I go to this psychologist. He connected me with an alcohol and drug counsellor, and I got involved in a self-help group.

**Sarge:** I was able to say things in a way that didn't trigger my PTSD, but told what was going on.



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**Rick:** I think the group sessions were great. We could open up and not be scared to show our feelings because we knew our brothers understood us. And that's where the healing came from.

**Bud:** From that time on, my life has been getting continually better.

**Rick:** If it wasn't for the VA, I have to say, I wouldn't be in the place that I am today. The past, you can't change that past. It's the future you have to look forward to.

**Joshua:** Find what's available out there. Everyone's different. Try everything, because something will click with you.



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