

Counseling and therapy to get through tough times

Interviewee1: I'm Graves, Vietnam Vet, served in the Marine Corp 65-68. I was at Gray's registration at Dong Ha out of the D med morgue. Everybody you pick up in the field you knew. You know, and the bodies coming in were really, they were just bodies until there was people that you knew. In the field it's a personal thing. You know, you tag a guy, bag them, put them in a chopper. This is one of your brothers that you fought with you know, and that hurt. Coming back from Nam was a nightmare and the only way I could get any relief from the pain was through the alcohol, but not realizing I'm a 20-year-old kid, not realizing that I'm using alcohol as a medication, I started to drink and the pain would go away for a while and then all of the sudden the rage would come out. I was angry about what happened. I was thinking about an ambush I may have been on, and then all of a sudden you know, of course when you're drinking you're with other drunks, and the next thing, a night that you thought you were going to go out partying turns into a barroom brawl and that started happening like on a weekly basis, and, you know, I got locked up a few times.

I was having a lot of flashback and I ended up in a mental reception center, and I was transferred out to the VA Mental Health Center out there in Coatesville where I was court committed. I was transferred to the Philadelphia VA Hospital. I didn't get really much out of it because you know, the place was still, there was still, you know this was in, this was within in the first year of me being back. It's like you know, I don't want to be here man. You know, I was, I was still 20 years old and things started getting bad in my life. I started getting in trouble on the street and eventually I just had to bail on everything. You know, the marriage ended, I couldn't go to the VA. I had warrants on me. So, I started going right back into Vietnam mode and I lived my life just like I was in Vietnam, and I was on the run for like 8 years. I wasn't getting no help.

When I met my future wife, Donna. That was, I met her in 72 and she went through a lot of stuff with me. She called the VA and she said, man, you know my husband needs help. And we went in to see and I started talking to him. So, every Monday I was coming in there. I was like doing heavy duty psychotherapy. I wanted somebody to talk to me and listen to me and that's what they did.

My old lady, I owe my life to her. I mean she's stuck with me through thick and thin. She hated my drinking and I realized, I thank God that I was able to give my wife 10 years of sobriety and you know what man, October the 1st of last year, she died in my arms and you know what man, if I was drinking and/or drugging I wouldn't have been able to give her the care that she deserves.

After my wife died, I did an 8-week thing with two of my daughters, one of the groups and the counselor, me and the counselor became pretty tight. Now, she calls me for Vietnam Vets with PTSD whose wives are in hospice dying. So, now I have a personal one-on-one with these guys. The problem is getting to the right counselor or the doctor. The best thing for a guy that thinks he needs help is to go to your local Veteran's organizations, and then you're talking to guys that are like you.



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