

## Healing emotional wounds by opening up

**Ray:** My name's Ray and I was in the Military from '67 to '70. I was an Infantry Squad Leader. I went to Vietnam in '68. I was there for almost three months and I got wounded. I was in Khe Sanh and I went into the A Shau Valley and I came out of the A Shau Valley and came back to Camp Evans and we had a two-day stand down. We was getting rocket fire all the time from out in the sand dunes so, we went out in the sand dunes and actually that's where I got wounded at. A friend of mine was killed and that was a lot of hatred there for me okay because he was sitting right beside me and a sniper shot him right between the eyes.

And then when I come home, of course the Army just turned us loose, okay. I got a job, I worked for them for 36 years. I put Vietnam out of my mind, okay. I did drink, you know. I never took drugs. I just said, "I'm gonna make something of myself." Okay, so I got into my work, and every job I had, I did a good job on it. And if I get to having too much problems, I actually would take on more work. I worked 16 hours a day at my job and come home and raise a garden, mow the yard and keep my house up.

When I come home, I just was a different person and if somebody should throw a firecracker, I'm on the ground okay. The Fourth of July, I can't stand it. I try to stay in the house because all the neighbors shoot fireworks off. And if... like if a firecracker goes off and I don't know it's going off, my heart starts pounding. And I had an anger problem. Every time something didn't go right for me, I'd get mad, okay.

I retired in 2005 and it was good for about a year, you know. I kept myself really busy doing things around the house that I always wanted to do, okay. And then after that year, things began to change. I began to have the nightmares more often and the night sweats more often, and I'd wake up screaming and hollering. I went to the VA and actually talked to my doctor and she said, "Ray, we can get you in to see a counselor." So, I got in to see my counselor. It wasn't easy for me to go, okay. But you know when you have a nightmare and hit your wife, or you go off the handle on her all the time, and you can't tell your kids that you love them, you've got to get some help, okay. And I realized it, okay. It wasn't easy, but I went. When she started to talk to me, I said "I ain't talkin about no damn Vietnam now, okay." And she says "Okay, we won't talk about it." Well, it took about a couple months, three months, and I seen her about every week. After a while, I finally broke down and told her, and we both cried, okay. And that's when she told me, she said "You ain't less a man because you cry, that's just because you feel for somebody." So anyway, I've been going to her ever since and she's helped me a lot.

I'm in a group a Vietnam group down at the VA in Lawrenceburg. We don't actually talk about Vietnam every time, but when we go in, our counselor.. the counselor there will say "How was your week?" And we'll go around a circle, there's about nine or ten of us in there.

When I go into a restaurant, I'm gonna look for a way out. I don't sit in the middle, I sit my back to the wall, and there's going to be a door pretty close to me, okay. And you know my wife says "Ray, Ray, Ray, you're not in Vietnam." That's what she tells me all the time, "You're not in Vietnam, your home." Used to be we wouldn't go anywhere where there's a lot of people, okay. And there's times that I can't. I still go, but I might not stay, I might leave, okay.



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

**MAKE THE  
CONNECTION**

And she knows why, but me and her, we do a lot of things together. We go fishing, like we got a fishing boat, we go fishing. Everywhere I go, she goes. And everywhere she goes, I go most of the time. We do a lot together. You know, we go to our family functions together. I could tell any of the Veterans, you know, if you think you need help, go get help, okay.



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

**MAKE THE**  
**CONNECTION**