

## Tom's Army buddy was going through the same thing

**Tom:** My name is Tom. I served in the U.S. Army 1970-1971 with the 1st Air Cavalry Division in Vietnam. October 29, 1971 was the mission that I was severely hit which ended my tour in Vietnam. I took multiple fragmentation wounds across my legs and back. I was one of seven men wounded that day, five of us severely. One man was killed. I still have shrapnel wounds and loss of mobility in my right leg.

When we arrived at the terminal military site at O'Hare, loading us on busses, there was still protestors outside spitting on the bus. Our nation didn't want us home, so that's always stuck with me. At the time I just buried it. I put everything into my work. I was a workaholic, driven to success and at the same time back then, at nighttime, was a good alcoholic.

I could never go to Fourth of July things, like that. Just jumpiness. Didn't sleep well, you know. I'd be up at all hours of the night going back to sleep. I'd sleep in spurts, two hours at a time. It was only later when I sought help that I found some of the characteristics I had were attributed to my time in combat.

I had a call back, I'd say back around the 2005 timeframe from a buddy of mine. He was wounded on the same day as I was and we talked for about four hours on the phone that night and did a lot of crying. Found out the things that was bothering him were the same things bothering me. Wondering about your men, the guys who you left behind, and he was looking for help too, and said he was going to therapy and all that. It's from that call that I decided to change my way, so to speak, and try to find some relief.

So I called the Vet Center, made an appointment, and the gentleman I met with he was a Combat Psychologist. He had been through combat. But his questions related to "What do you do with your wife? Do you like to go shopping with her?" and all that, you know. "How's your sleep?" I'm going like, "I don't know, I don't. I look for the closest bar." He said, "Look, we're gonna get you back in the system. I'm gonna see you once a week." He said, "You're having what is based on your experiences and that delayed post-traumatic stress and all that."

It took a while opening up but it became easy because the guy that was treating me was a Vet and from there on, it's been a good journey for me, because I've been able to get rid of some of the guilt as far as ways of dealing with calming myself down or to finding a peace, an inner peace with yourself. So I practice yoga and mindfulness every day. To this day I still go to group therapy twice a month. All Vietnam Veterans, all combat. And yes, the camaraderie of being together it's a relief.

There are people, Mental Health, who are there to listen to what bothers you and there are ways of dealing with it and moving through it and being happier with life.



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