

Don't be afraid to talk about what bothers you

Stephen: My name is Stephen. I served in the U.S. Airforce from November 1980 to August 1986. I had the vision of going back to school, getting a home, car, but I was unemployed, unemployable and going to the VA Hospital on a regular basis with chronic pain and injuries. So, it wasn't easy. It wasn't an easy transition. I still find it difficult. I'm a pretty introverted person and I found through some of the work that I do, my contact with other Veterans as why I'm not as outgoing as I would like to be. There's a big trust factor and not feeling trust from people and that just comes from the training of being trained to be on your guard. I didn't realize a lot of this until I lost my father and my brother about a year apart and that's what triggered my PTSD. So, I found myself in a mental health clinic, talking and I just never imagined that because I had associated PTSD with what I had learned from television and things from Veterans that were in conflict. So, it was kind of shocking, but at least it gave me something that I knew I was working with.

I have chronic insomnia and I spend a lot of time in my studio which I don't have any windows and it's really easy to not go out. I just find myself wanting to cry. The feeling of wanting to cry when I have certain thoughts and these thoughts weren't necessarily associated with the military, but the time that I spent in the military is what I was told was associated with the PTSD.

It's not so easy to say, mental health. You feel stigmatized, but you, a lot of people, a lot of us feel stigmatized just as being a Veteran; that's why we hold it back. I've met several guys that won't go because they say, I don't want it on my record. I say, I don't understand why you would not want it on your record, it's not just to get benefits, but it's going to slowly manifest itself in something else and you don't know your trigger points. So, even if you're just feeling good and don't feel that you have any issues, I would just recommend a checkup on that side of mental health. Don't be afraid to share or talk about what's bothering you.



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