

Recognizing problems and taking steps forward

Roger: My name is Roger. I'm an Air Force Veteran. I was in service for three and half active, two and a half reserve.

Roger: I was an aircraft load master. I was responsible for weight and balance, loading, unloading, air drops on cargo airplanes.

Roger: A lot sticks with me. I mean there's certainly some very stark moments. Particularly, when I got hit, traveling into Khe Sanh when no one else was being allowed to fly in.

Roger: You know I wasn't angry. I was proud of what I did. I was angry at the reception that I got.

Roger: When I was coming back, I got spit on in San Francisco in full uniform.

Roger: I'm walking off the plane, my mother's there, my wife to be is there, and I'm being protested on the ramp. So, it's kind of one of those things that you put yourself into a kind of a different zone. So, it's around you but you try not to recognize it. You try not to let it affect you. Similar to what you're doing in a combat situation.

Roger: I went back to school in the Fall of 69' which was just an ugly time to go school. It was an even uglier time to be a Vet. I spend most of my time really not presenting myself as a Veteran, let my hair grow long, tried to get through classes, tried to stay away from other groups that were speaking their mind.

Roger: And so a lot of it you kept inside and then after while stayed inside.

Roger: And I've had a couple of experiences where it's come up pretty ugly. I was a ski patrolman. I had an individual hit a tree and die and it took me about 4 days to put myself together after that, because some of the stuff I did over seas was moving wounded.

Roger: So, you try to suppress some of those things and all of sudden they kind of fall out of the back closet. And you go back to drinking, go back to whatever you can think of to try to bury them again.

Roger: I had sleep issues. I certainly had anxiety issues. At that point. I'm not sure anybody really knew what it was. So a lot of times I attributed it to, well that must be life and didn't put a whole big emphasis on it.

Roger: There are days that I still had nightmares and I just thought that was what everybody else has. Only mine were a little bit more graphic.

Roger: I dealt with them by myself, which made it even more probably more difficult as I look back, because the more I dealt with it, the more I turned not necessarily inside myself, but the more I walled myself. So, I wouldn't let this out and the more I tried to put on a facade that everything was good.



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

**MAKE THE
CONNECTION**

Roger: I really didn't have any involvement with the VA for 20 years.

Roger: I came out of the war even with being wounded in really pretty good shape. So I wasn't needing medical treatment, I wasn't needing that kind of stuff.

Roger: Once I got to the VA and got to talking to people, a lot of it allowed me to go back and tried to put some things together.

Roger: I got involved with primary care and they recommended some counseling. So, I spent about a year and a half, while I was still working, going through counseling, both group and individual and part of it was learning some of the triggers that set me off. And then as I say, that's when I decided to look back on how I treated my family and friends and gained a little bit of understanding of what was going on.

Roger: And so, it allowed me to make some really big changes, become much more relaxed with who I was.

Roger: One of the things in therapy, what is really probably particularly in the group was just a chance to talk and express yourself. There's kind of somewhat of that reassurance that "Hey, I'm not the only one in this spot."

Roger: The people that I've talked to and worked with is they are most thankful that someone is standing beside them. That not only is willing to help, but also understands them.

Roger: You have to go and seek out somebody. Whether it's someone in the VA... go register and say "Hey, I need help." Or any number of the phone numbers online.

Roger: That's really the critical part to have someone that you will talk to and trust and then take a step forward.



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

**MAKE THE
CONNECTION**