

Coping with loss and moving past guilt

Interviewee1: When you're in any branch of service you're very close knit. You know who's on post, you know who's on duties or whatever.

Interviewee2: You're there, you're there with your friends, your brothers, some of them didn't make it, some of them did. You come home, you feel a little guilty, but you're happy that your home to see your family and your friends again.

Interviewee3: The biggest event that has kind of shaped things for me was February 20, 2006 when my good friend was killed in Baghdad by a roadside bomb.

Interviewee4: We all had to pull certain jobs, one of them was take the Deuce and a Half out and dump garbage. We would just throw it off the truck and I hit this kid, I don't know if he's alive or dead, but I hurt him pretty bad when I, that one always got me.

Interviewee5: I had been raped by my Recruiter and had never told anybody and not ever dealt with that and had just kept quiet about that because I thought that it was my fault.

Interviewee1: I'd never had a Marine die, I mean now, and this is peace time, I'm not in a conflict. I get in and this guy is lying here, he says, "Serge, you promised me you wouldn't let nothing happen to me." He said, "You promised me that we would be all right." And I see that, and I live with that.

Interviewee6: I was in the hospital in Vietnam and my team went out and never came back, and yeah, it's survivor's guilt. I should have been there. If I had been there it would have been different.

Interviewee7: Any wounded Veteran I would say would always tell you, they wanted to go back. We were leaving our team and that wasn't acceptable. We wanted to you know get back in there. It did take a while to get the feeling of obligation to go away.

Interviewee8: He has survivor's guilt that has really impacted our life and our marriage a lot.

Interviewee1: After I got out of the military and I dealt with that with booze and alcohol, ultimately you end up going through a divorce. I was always agitated and irritable, but I didn't know what I was dealing with.

Interviewee3: I just didn't have the same fervor for life, that guilt just kind of dictated what I did and how I felt.

Interviewee2: A guy I worked with, he suggested that I go and get counseling because he noticed a change and that I was having problems.

Interviewee5: And at first, I was extremely nervous about going and the reason I felt, I felt like I was betraying the military. I felt like I was betraying the Marine Corps by sharing these stories.



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Interviewee8: The VA has the Iraqi Veterans in a certain register and they just started calling actually, you okay, you're fine, you can come see us anytime. And that was great, so with me bugging him and the phone calls and the letters, that's kind of how I got him to start going in.

Interviewee7: Yeah, there was a couple people from the VA that would ask me, "how you feel about this, how do you feel about when you know one of your friends passed away, how do you feel about your injury." And they really helped me get a handle on what really happened.

Interviewee2: It felt like a big weight being taken off my chest to sit and finally tell the whole story which in turn I think, enabled the Psychologist now to better treat me.

Interviewee4: You have to deal with it or it's going to take you, and you're loved ones deserve better.

Interviewee3: That's the work that I've done at the Vet Center. Being all right with living my life and being all right with you know being happy about things.

Interviewee5: I never in my wildest dreams, dreamed I could be as happy as I have become and I attribute it to the counseling.

Interviewee1: Get up and get some help. Get into a good program and see it through. If anyone knows how to see something through from beginning to end is a Veteran.



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