

A Sister's Support

David: My name is David. I served in Vietnam in 1968 and '69 with the Fifth Special Forces Group and was assigned to a Mike force battalion.

Jenny: And I'm his sister, Jenny. I'm number 11, he's number 2.

David: My parents had 11 kids in 13 years. I was, had the privilege of leading an airborne infantry unit in combat in Southeast Asia in 1968, '69. My team was responsible for hiring and training Montagnard mercenaries. And we interdicted the North Vietnamese army on the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

When I got home, the issues for me at the time, at that particular time, was just trying to get back to normalcy and getting back to a safe place. So, that was difficult. Years later, you know, struggled with this thing called PTS and probably moral injury, as well. There were some, you know, certain instances and circumstances that ran afoul of my moral code, things that I wasn't prepared for at all. And it affected me for, well, it still does.

I felt like kind of a functional alcoholic. I could drink, but I was still functional on some level.

Jenny: I remember at one point thinking, "He never really talks about his experience there," like, and that was, that was sort of a red flag, like, "Why? He never really says anything about it." You know, one thing was, you know, you, you weren't doing, you weren't taking care of yourself financially. Like, you weren't holding a job for a really, really long time or even like trying to get one. There was a, like, a disconnect between who I knew who could be and who you really were at the time, and there was...

David: There was a lot of denial. I mean...

Jenny: Yeah.

David: Reaching out was, was difficult, if not nearly impossible for several years. Well, what motivated me mostly was Jenny and our conversations and I did eventually seek out some counselling. But it was intermittent, you know. It was like, "Well, I'll put my, put my toe in the water. I'll try this. Well, it's not quite right." So, I'd pull it back out.

Jenny: Finding the right professional help is, is what, I think, deters most people. And just know that, you know, your first or second attempt might not be the right one. And it's okay.

David: You know, it's like buying a house or a suit of clothes. You've got to try on a lot of suits, you know. And so, this should be no different. You have to be



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persistent. You have to, you know, continue the process and, and, and, and keep looking till you, till you find that right match.

I kind of threw myself into the Veterans' community and started advocating for veterans and I felt real comfortable doing that. I, I kind of incorporated my efforts to seek counselling and also get involved in the veterans' community as an advocate, and understood better what, where I was coming from and how I'd been affected through others.

You know, you got to accept who you are and what your flaws are and you got to forgive yourself, and celebrate your family and those who—they, they want nothing but good things for you. So, if you're a family member, I'd say be persistent, be gentle, and just let, let that veteran, that service member, know that you're loved and things will get better. They do.



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