

You're gonna start feeling better

Richard: My name's Richard. I served in the Army in 1969 to 1972. I was in Vietnam two years. Served with First Aviation Brigade 335th Assault Helicopter Company. My main priorities was I was a Door Gunner and a maintenance person.

Well probably the hardest thing was coming back and fitting in, you know. You go to a party and people get to talking to you, find out your background and they would kinda just move away. They wanted nothing to do with ya. There was a lot of people out there that really despised you for being in the military and what you did. So you could clear a party out pretty quick.

I didn't realize that a lot of my behavior was abnormal. I just thought that I was an irritable grouchy person, and I thought it was, you know, there was nothin' wrong with me for not wanting to be in a crowd of people and, you know, to sleep on the floor and to sleep in the corner, you know, instead of in the middle of the floor and different things like this. I just never thought it was abnormal until after I started talking to a counselor at the VA, and they said, "No, normal people don't do that." And you know, after being in the military, everybody comes out with that bit of macho attitude that they don't want to look weak or dependent on anybody and that's a hard thing to overcome, very hard, even 45 years later.

I never knew the VA had changed for the better, and frankly when I walked in there and people were helpful and they're friendly and it's clean, and you don't have the people sitting on the floor lined up anymore, you know. It changed my whole opinion right there and I was more open then. I'm totally impressed. Those people are there for you every step of the way.

For about nine months, I went once a week and I fought it, and after I got involved in it, I really enjoyed it and I got a lot out of it, and now I go about once a month. They kinda started lettin' us out a little bit and then I would go home and talk to my wife about them and she's my comfort zone and that really helped. And she says, "Oh now you're happy, you do more, you're just more fun to be around."

Forget the macho crap that you've been taught and just go in and talk to somebody and you're not going to embarrass yourself, it's not gonna be discussed with anybody else. It's a way to relieve your mind and, you know, once you start doing that, you're gonna start feeling better about yourself and you're gonna move forward.

People need to take advantage of the resources that's there and go for it.



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