

They talked with me, not at me

Phyllis: I'm Phyllis, Vietnam hero, US Navy from 1974 to 1979. My position was Illustration Drafting. My specialty was Technical Drafting. Being a woman in the '70s, in the military was very difficult at best. While you were performing your duties, you were met with outside or inside male mentality of resentment. I, being a woman, had received so many either threats or physical actions where I had to defend myself on and off base.

My mental health challenges was immediately after the military. After transitioning into the civilian life certain signals that I didn't know existed triggered flashbacks. The first time I ever reached out for help was to a VA facility and I was really surprised to discover that I was going through PTSD. My PTSD was discovered by therapists and a psychologist at the VA Medical Center. As I began to discover issues as per her questions to get to know me and at the same time, they talked with me not at me.

The treatment in the past, it was slowly improving my mental perspective. Certain things were less stressful if I follow a procedure that was recommended by our health care professionals. It took me about two years to have a fantastic end result and to have a plan of self-management.

After the military one of my most rewarding occupations was having a private practice on Wall St. It's 'cause I was so frustrated with the prices of art supplies so I had to study money. So, I was able to advise clients on Wall St. as far as art investments, art management and portfolio investments, and art leverages of assets and procurement.

I have found that art touches everyone. It speaks in volumes beyond words. I've had Veterans who come up to my art where they'll say, "This makes me want to talk." While others said, "Is there art within me? How do I find out?" And the therapy of it, I could see it in their faces how essential it was and how it is. It touched the very core of self-healing.

Situations would flare up as far as nightmares even though I have my art to keep me calm, stabilized and balanced in a therapeutic fashion. I still reach out to my favorite therapist primary care person at the VA where they're always a phone call away or inviting me to come down to the clinic. And can immediately give me extra support; that extra assurances that I'm not alone and things that I'm experiencing, other fellow Veterans are going through the same way at different levels. But needless to say, it's the same way and the VA's been there and continues to be there.



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