

I didn't see myself as needing help

Arthur: My name is Arthur, U.S. Army and we served from 1967 to 1969. I was in the field the majority of time. One day, you were literally fighting for your life and the people you're responsible for. The next day, you're in the states. Everybody that got off the airplane was just kissing the ground. We were just so happy to be safe.

I slept with my rifle in my bed when I got home for two months and I would get up several times a night and walk around the house thinking that I heard things.

I went back to college and during that time, that's when the riots were happening. And people, you didn't talk about that you were in Vietnam. And especially, you didn't talk about that you were in combat in Vietnam. Nobody understands, you keep to yourself and you become very isolated.

During the second Gulf War, I became so angry and so upset, I started having problems with the people I was working with on a daily basis. I had problems with communicating with management. I didn't know what was happening to me. I didn't see myself as needing help because I didn't, first of all, nobody understood what I went through and number two, I didn't see myself as doing anything wrong. I pictured in my mind, people that needed help, did something wrong and although there were very serious things that happened when I was in Vietnam, I didn't do anything wrong and that's how I perceived myself. So, I would just hold that inside me. It was so bad, and I didn't understand what was happening to me that I just wanted to commit suicide.

The VA Medical Center in Durham got a hold of me regarding a medical issue. They were non-threatening, and they considered, they treated me with respect, and they started asking me questions about the symptoms of PTSD and I said, yes, yes, yes. And they immediately got me into a Social Worker which to this day, saved my life. And he helped me to understand that it wasn't me, it was the symptoms of what they call now PTSD. When you can look at it objectively, you can cope with it and manage it. It has such a huge impact on me and a turning point in my life, I cannot express it.

Because of my background, I seek out more other soldiers that were in combat and I try to get to them on a one to one basis; let them know that somebody understands and to get help. I'm still alive from the VA Outreach, but more importantly, they have things in place that's impacted my whole family for generations and it's wonderful to belong to a country that provides that service for the Veterans.



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