

I grew so much from just allowing myself to vent

Joshua: My name is Joshua. I served in the United States Marine Corps from May of 1967 to July 1969. I was in Hawaii and then my battalion was deployed to go to Vietnam, right after the Tet offensive. We were the closest battalion to replace the casualties. We lost 26 guys and 41 wounded in a few days from Good Friday to Easter Sunday. I witnessed a lot of death and carnage and my buddies getting wounded. About a month after we had that major battle I was wounded in a land mine explosion that killed my buddy next to me. That took a toll on me wondering why didn't I die in the blast, why did I survive, you know. Why did my buddy get killed and did I step on the land mine accidentally and killed him and injured myself.

The military is a community that is, you know, well run and you have this camaraderie and then when you come out to civilian life it is not there anymore. Adjusting becomes a problem.

I was suffering inside and shaking, sweating at night, just trying to find an answer, you know to feel comfortable with what my buddies and I went through. I don't think they knew what PTSD was at that time, so I kind of self-medicated myself with marijuana, with cocaine, with drinking. My wife then, you know was seeing that I was struggling emotionally. "You have to stop drinking", "you have to stop taking the drugs." For some reason my daughter crying reminded me of those crying kids you know when we do search and destroy missions it brought me back to that and so I was having a tough time with that.

After four years of marriage I left the marriage. I dated girls here and there, but I didn't have a really good relationship. They would always say "Why are you so shut down? You are always shutting down. You don't share with me." Everything is great, everything is wonderful, everything was always great, but I was dying inside.

Self-medicating put me in a better mood. The cocaine, the amphetamines you know put me in a happier mood, but it was short-lived and I fell asleep at the wheel and I crashed into a utility pole and I said "Oh my God I could have killed somebody. It is 8:30, kids are playing in the street." And I said, "that is it, no more, I can't do this anymore."

I went to the VA down on 23rd street and First Avenue Manhattan and I was assigned a psychiatrist. She really helped me through a lot of the issues that I was facing. I grew so much from allowing myself to just vent, vent and vent. I am able to tell someone I am feeling lousy today and this is why I am lousy and for some reason by being able to be honest and relate to that it just dissipates, it just goes away. I am dating a gal now, working on our 4th year and it is probably the first person that I have ever really connected with where I can tell anything to.

Find you know what is available out there. Everyone is different, everyone is different reach out and find a counselor, a good counselor, a good group. Try everything because something will click with you.



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