

## Helping a spouse begin to heal

**Lisa:** My name is Lisa and my husband is Ray, he served in Vietnam. When I first met him, he was smoking marijuana every day. I didn't realize that because he was always well-dressed and looked like this, you know, wonderful businessman. But that's basically how he dealt with, I guess, all of his feelings and he did tell me that he started when he came back from Vietnam. He never really talked about Vietnam. That was just not something he wanted to talk about. I told him he had to choose between marijuana and me, and he said, "Okay that's easy, I choose you."

At that point, he was in group therapy, and someone in his group said, "You can go to AA meetings." So, he started going and I think that helped him a lot. It really helped bring him out and I don't know what they talk about, but he did very well with that. But he still had, you know, rage issues. One of our big issues in our marriage is his driving. He's, you know, he has road rage and we'd get in the car and if I would ask him to slow down, it was like he was somewhere else. A few years ago, we were watching a war movie, and they had to get across the field in Okinawa and I saw these guys racing and realized that you know if they didn't get across really fast, they would be killed, and it suddenly occurred to me why Ray... what Ray goes into when he drives. I almost think he's back in Vietnam.

Someone that he met in an AA meeting told him that they were going to read the names on the wall, and they invited him to do that. So, he went down to Washington and ran into someone that was in Vietnam with him, and he said the next thing he knew, he was surrounded by people that were there with him. One of the guys that he knew from Vietnam, I think it was his... actually his Commanding Officer I believe told him about going to the VA and, so I think it was several years later, he finally started going. You know it's not easy when you first start opening up and talking about things you haven't talked about for years.

Having been in therapy myself, I understand that there's things you have to go through, even when they're painful, in order to get, you know, to the other side. So, I realized he was kind of going through a lot of that stuff all over again, but that's what it takes to heal. And so for me that was difficult. That was really difficult.

Really one of the best things that ever happened was for him coming to the VA and talking to people who were actually there in Vietnam who'd gone through what he went through. Being in a group of men where they were actually there with him and getting to know them has been really transformational for him. He's much more calm now, much more open. I think he's a better friend. I think a lot of guys have problems with friendship and getting close and sharing about themselves. He's much more open to that now. He's just, you know, he has a way to go, but when he goes back every week and he talks to people about whatever little problem comes up, he comes back and he's just, you know, much better with it. There's always somebody there who understands what he's going through.



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