

## An incident at work was a turning point for Rick

**Rick:** My name is Rick. I serve with the US Army 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division from 1967 to 1970. In 1968 I was over in Vietnam at the age of 18. Everything that happened over there, I camouflaged all that stuff and just buried it, you know what I mean? The feelings, I became numb. To me, it was my way of coping skills; of just seeing the horror of war. I didn't speak to anybody about it, not even my wife or my kids. I didn't want anybody to know because I was ashamed. I started getting into drugs and self-medicating heavily, isolating myself. Any loud noise or bangs or something I **tend to** to duck or look over my shoulder because it just triggers.

I started working and burying myself in my work. I did a lot of overtime. I was working for this printing company; I was in my press and I was putting on a plate to print some forms and this guy was horse playing and while I was in the press, he took a rubber band and shot it right through my ear and the next thing I knew a trigger went off. My reaction was, took him by the collar and I slammed him up against the wall and I said, "I'm going to kill you if you ever do that again." I tried to get back to work; I was just shaking all over; I just couldn't function anymore.

My kids told me that, "Dad, you need to go get some help. There's always something wrong with you. We all noticed it; you're always looking out the window or you were always checking the doors of the house." So, I finally went to the VA down here in La Jolla and I said, "I really need help bad. I can't take this stuff anymore." I said, "I'm having a breakdown." So, they took me in right away and first thing that I knew I had a Psychiatrist talking to me.

I never had this help before, through the VA, because back then they didn't have anything for us and then all of a sudden, they started helping me. I was still smoking marijuana mainly, a lot and drinking on top of it to ease the pain and so that's why I went into the VA program for drug abuse. I went through there and came out clean and then I ended up with the PTSD classes in Mission Valley and these classes were for PTSD and they had all different classes to help the Veterans to try to overcome their fears and triggers and everything and the tools that you can use to control it. It was one-on-one at first and then it was group sessions and I think the group sessions were great because we had so much in common. It was something where we could open up and not be scared to show our feelings because we knew our brothers understood us and that's where the healing came from was these classes.

If it wasn't for the VA, I have to say, I wouldn't be in the place that I am today sharing this story without their help. God kept you alive for a reason and that's how you have to look at it. You can't change that past, it's the future you have to look forward to and you can make a difference in your family's life; in your community life. Please get help as soon as possible if you notice that you have this anger issue and you can't deal with it and all the triggers that come with being a combat and infantry soldier or even in war, get help please. It's coping skills that you have to put into play and exercise these skills every day. It doesn't come easy; you have to put them to use but once you put them to use, they're great. You just have to hang on and the only way you're going to do that is you have to cry out and get help. That's my goal, is to let them know that you can get help because it helped me in my life.



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