

Road rage was a sign to address buried emotions

Wes: Hi, I'm Wes. I served in Vietnam '69 to '70. I was a Helicopter Pilot and I flew the UH1H for five months and then the OH6 Alpha for five months until I was shot down for the third and last time and I got hit and my observer got hit.

One time I went into a village and I got a couple of the black pajama that VC, Vietcong and then one of the VC came out and he held a little boy between him and me so I wouldn't shoot him, and when he got close to a trail that went behind the village, he threw the child down and broke his neck. I actually went off mission and that was not the right thing to do, but it frustrated me so intensely that I hunted him down, and those experiences, created a very large sense of remorse for me and when I got back to the States, I had a lot of anger management issues, and very remorseful.

I was very volatile, very confrontational. A lot of road rage. If somebody were to take my parking spot in a mall parking lot, I would fuss at them and a lot of times I'd chase them down the parking lot. I've pulled people out of vehicles. My wife and children have witnessed a lot of that and it was very traumatic for them as well as traumatic for me. I was going down State Street one time and a gentleman pulled me over after he thought I pulled in front of him, and he came at me with a tire iron, and I blacked out. Next time I came to, I was holding the gentleman up, on the side of his cab with his tire iron underneath his neck and he was turning blue. People were honking at me, hollering at me and I let the guy down. He was still alive, so I threw the tire iron in the back of his pick-up and I went from there to the Vietnam Veteran's Outreach Program to seek help.

I went in for two years of counseling. After about a year and a half with counseling for both myself and my wife and my teenage daughter, I figured that was about all they could do to help me. I left and not all of the symptoms had went away, so from there I went over to see the Psychiatrist, and he diagnosed me with PTSD. I try not to get into a confrontational situation. That's difficult sometime, but I have learned that if I pause for just a second, my meds will kick in and I'll go on.

Other folks don't understand what we've been through, so we're reluctant to talk to anybody else. What I would suggest anybody out there to do is to talk to other Veterans, talk to the VA, you can get help and you can get better. You gotta seek that out. Don't be afraid to talk to folks.



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