

Making Contact

Don: Trying to feel things, I think this is something all veterans and families struggle with, the connection. My name is Don, United States Marine Corps from 1968 to 1974. One tour of duty in Vietnam in 1969. I was a wireman. But when I got to Vietnam, they didn't have any wire. So they threw a radio on my back and said, "Here, go on patrol." When you're in combat situation, there's a bunch of us out there. Two, three, four tours of duty. We've been numbed coming home, then all the emotions start coming back in.

I've become very withdrawn and depressed. So, I'm on hold all this time. By chance, I called a helpline and they said, "You need to go to the VA and have them work with you." And I did. And now I'm depending on the VA for support and help. The counselor there, he says, "Well, you have a classic case of PTSD."

I'd found out who I was. They started giving me the medications that I needed and asked me the real question that you're supposed to ask, understanding and supportive. I found racquetball to be one of the most relieving experience. I'm focused on the game, was an intense game. And so out there, I can pound that ball, and I can win that game, and I can win the fight.

When you wake up in the morning, you have to make a decision. Do I want to dwell on this? Or do I want to do something positive? I started getting involved in community activities. Being involved takes some of that negative energy and disperses it.

My wife loves me dearly. I love her dearly. And I'm in a place now where I'm really happy with myself and who I am. If you're lost and don't know what to do, reach out, seek help. The toughest thing to do is ask for it. The VA, it's not just people, it's family.



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