

A healthy and fulfilling life for older Veterans

Jesse: I retired March 1st of 2007 from my job.

Pete: We had built a very successful business and then we sold the business and stayed retired and traveled the country for 5 years full-time living in a motor home.

Valencia: My husband decided all the kids were grown, I want everybody out of the house. So, there was the empty nest, you know.

Howard: Guys now who are retiring being my age start to think about things. You had a kid. You worked. You're retired. Your kids are out of the house. You're sitting around and you think. You go back to certain times, you know.

Marie: He was advised to retire at 59 because he was the principal of a school and he was carrying a projector one day and had a heart attack. So, the doctor advised him with his military experience and all to retire early, and that's what he did. And for a while it was difficult because he didn't want to retire early at 59. But I think it was wise he did.

Ed: When I look back on it, it's like things were hidden, things were put away. I couldn't handle crowds or noise because of my hearing, the hearing loss. But it wasn't until after I retired that it seemed that things just, they didn't crash down, things changed.

Tyrone: And in all honestly, that's the issue right there. Dealing with the change of physical limitations, restrictions that are brought about by injuries in the past catching up with you now as you're aging.

Jesse: I just felt like an outsider. I felt like I couldn't connect with people.

Hugh: And then I didn't sleep well. My wife would explain to me after I got back home, and even after I retired, that I was speaking Arabic at night really loud. I was attempting to choke a pillow.

Valencia: I got to the point where I didn't want to go anywhere. So, I said nothing's really alive, you know. All these negative thoughts going through my head constantly.

Lige: The reason I started going back to the VA, to the mental health is that I realized that, hey, I'm getting on age. I'm 81 now. I said, "I'm getting on," and I said, "I don't want to spend the rest of my life like this." I'm not getting along with my family. I'm not getting along with myself. And I want to do something about it. So, I applied for the VA and immediately they signed me up. They put me right in there.

Ed: This guy that I saw, and still see, I tell people he was my roadmap. He said, "This is what you need to be doing. This is who you need to talk to. This is your next step." And stuff like that.



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

**MAKE THE
CONNECTION**

Hugh: When I was talking to a psychologist, she recognized a need for me to speak to a psychiatrist who then became the best mental health advocate that I've ever experienced.

Jesse: Actually, I started with group and as time goes on, I'm beginning to open up even more so.

Tyrone: I thought it was appropriate to get talking and exchange our ongoing struggles sometimes, thoughts, sleeplessness. I thought it was helpful, very helpful. And I was able to build up a closeness, a comradery that I hadn't experienced in quite a while with other men.

Marie: But I think patience helps. And it isn't always easy.

Keith: A lot of people, because you're retired, you have skills and knowledge that you can still share with others. And that's something that I do. Although you're retired, go to the VA. Get your treatment, but also, share your experiences with those that need it as well.

Larry: My life is certainly better. The groups I'm in, the counseling I still go to at the Vet Center, a good wife.

Tyrone: Whatever you do, you need to construct not destruct. Do not become a burden to yourself. If you get unhappy, you really need to talk to someone.



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

MAKE THE
CONNECTION