

You need to talk to someone

Doug: My name is Doug. I served in the United States Army from 1969 to 1972 with one year deployed in the Republic of Vietnam. It was like nothing I had ever experienced in my short 18 years. Nothing. Nothing prepares you for the heat, the smells the violence. There was no training for it. None of us were prepared for it. Didn't matter whether or not you came from the rural or the city.

When I came home, I was a very angry and bewildered 20-year-old when I got out the Army, and I just shut down. I did not have anything to do with the government, anything to do with the VA and I didn't talk about it to anyone about anything. All I wanted to do was forget, and I did that for decades literally.

I was crossing paths with guys that I grew up with, went to school with and the ones that were fortunate enough to come back intact, we kind of crossed each other's paths and even still we didn't share any stories. We just reveled at the fact that we had made it back alive.

I didn't self-medicate because I'm a product of the **pro-kill (01:20)** schools, so I was scared straight about drugs before I even went to the Army. So, I had to find other outlets. Probably partying too hard, a lot of company, a lot of people that were marginal people that I probably ought not to ever involve myself with. I would quit a job at the drop of a hat, then sit on my duff for a month or two, get another job. So, stability was not really part of my DNA at that point. I probably drifted for the better part of 15 years.

I knew I needed to go see someone. Things started where instead of going casually, like I had been going to Veterans groups, they passed the Affordable Care Act where every American had to have health insurance. I said, "well, they say the VA is acceptable." I went and signed up. I had no recourse; it was the law. And from there I kind of availed myself of the little flyers and the snippets of rumors I would hear. That's when I got involved with talking to the groups and being in the groups.

There were some guys that were maybe 300 miles away from Detroit that were feeling the exact same way you were. They could not or would not hold a job, they had little patience for the dumb stuff, they didn't feel as if they had the wherewithal to speak to anybody, that people did not understand in their little towns/big town. You found out you weren't alone. It's not just me, it's other people, and try as I might I just can't rationalize how is this making me feel better, but it does.

I have night terrors, but I think I liken it to what my therapist says, says, "well you're letting it out. You're no longer spending all that energy trying to hold it in, so whether or not it comes out in your sleep or whether or not it comes out in your voice when you're here at group, whether or not you pound it out when you're doing your walk, you're getting it out. You held it in for years.

I didn't know I was eligible for so many benefits. Free eyeglasses, dental care, we pay nothing for our pharmacy pills or prescriptions. We see specialists, we get hearing devices, mobility aids. I had no clue that they were giving this stuff away and they've been doing it for decades.



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My wife had noticed. She's the one who has had to field what I have put down for the last several years and she doesn't seem to think that it's gotten worse. If anything, I think it's purging of old stuff that probably should've been dealt with long ago.

It doesn't even have to be a VA. Talk to your Priest, talk to you favorite uncle, talk to you coworker, talk to your wife. Take you dog out and talk to the dog. Don't put it off. No good will come of just saying, "the hell with it." It's going to come back. It's never gone anywhere. It's going to come back. You need to talk to someone.



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