

It's never too late to deal with PTSD

Ted: I'm Ted. I was in the U.S. Navy. I was in from 1966-1969. I was a "Kiddie Cruiser," in before you're 18, out before you're 21. I was in Vietnam from August of 1967 to August 1968. I was wounded, spent five days in the Long Binh Hospital. I got two, what today would be called, traumatic brain injuries in less than 30 minutes, and I had superficial shrapnel wounds. I never had any problems with protestors or anything like that, and I just had problems with myself, and the things that went on during the war, such as when one of the rockets would go through your boat, the person that was in the middle of it wasn't a person any longer, and I had a lot of problems with that. I always woke up with a bad attitude, and things just weren't going good. I didn't feel good. I couldn't get my thoughts out of the septic tank. And so, I would just go for days, and it was like I would see people that were happy, I would see people having a good time, and it honestly, I didn't fit into that. I couldn't be happy. I didn't want to be successful. I just didn't care, and after awhile, it just my brain finally told me that, "Hey, you know what, this might not be right."

There was a Vet Center here in town that I went to starting in the 1980s. The counselor there was also a combat Veteran from Vietnam, and he was really, really quite helpful, and he just guided us along a little bit. I went in with great trepidation, and pretty soon, you introduced yourself, and then I would just sit there and listen to what the other guys had to say, and it's like, "Oh, yeah, yeah." I would want to get real excited. "Yeah, that happened to me yesterday, you know." That was probably the icebreaker was the fact that there was other people that had been in combat in Vietnam that felt the exact same way, and that was very, very helpful, and it wasn't long before a couple or three of us would call each other once in awhile, and it was just that comradery that makes things more palatable.

I was recommended to go to a six-week outpatient 8-5 PTSD clinic at the local VA Hospital. You were assigned to one counselor, which was a very good thing, and you met with him most of the day.

I can go into a place that's a crowd now. Now, granted I still kind of stand with my back against the wall and just kind of watch people, but I can still go to the mall. And so, I find that to be pretty appealing.

Fresh PTSD is really not much fun, and it's really quite difficult to deal with, and it just takes time to calm itself down and learn that you're rather alright, and that there's other people that are actually sharing your exact same feelings.

At the Vet Center, some Iraqi vets or Afghanistan vets will show up, and I think the thing that strikes me the most is they've got that same look in their eye that supposedly we had. That thousand-yard stare, and it's like, "Hey, look. Things are better. You know, you can get this done. It ain't gonna be simple, but there's a lot of help out there. It's just you need to take care of yourself."



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