

It's Ok. You're not alone

Don: My name is Don and I served in the Marine Corps from 1968 to 1974, one tour of duty in Vietnam. I was serving outside of Da Nang about 50 miles southeast. Each and every day, we got mortar noise and explosions and the bullets. And so, you were always running for cover or waiting for the next mortar to come in. So, you were always like, "When's this going to happen? When will you get showered with incoming?" But all of a sudden, it's time to go home.

It was hard to show feelings and emotions or love, even for my own children, who I love dearly. I'd just go in my bedroom or I have a little office with a computer, and just hide out there, so I just didn't have to be around people. It's not just people, it's family. You want to be around family, because it just feels good, but I never was able to adjust to that.

The easiest thing was self-medication, drugs and alcohol. I became addicted to cocaine, and the cocaine would just give you a feeling of numbness, which I needed. I didn't want to feel anymore pain and agony. It was getting to a point where you need more and more and more, and I just couldn't take it anymore. So, I decided one day just to quit. Then, all the emotions started coming back in and I started feeling very lonely and depressed, angry, angry outbursts, and I just became a horrible person.

So, I went to the Vet Center and I was talking to the counselor there and telling him what was going on, and he says, "Well, you have a classic case of PTSD." And I... "What is that?" And he started to explain what happened. Why I did some of the things that I did, why I feel the way I do, and we're going to work with you on a weekly basis, and then in group counseling. Once I was in the VA, they started giving me the medications that I needed for the depression and for the anxiety attacks. Then, I started getting quality of life.

I make much better decisions now. I have a new wife. We've been together seven years now, and she's understanding and supportive. I joined some of the Veterans organizations, and I started getting involved in community activities. That really helped. So, being involved in something is the key. Seek help. That's the hardest thing in the world to do is to tell someone you're broken. It's okay. You're not alone. There's a bunch of us out there. We want to help.



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