



MAKE THE
CONNECTION

www.MakeTheConnection.net

Shared experiences and support for Veterans



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs



Every day Veterans and their families are discovering ways to lead fulfilling lives, by ...

... reaching out for support

... addressing health concerns for themselves and their loved ones

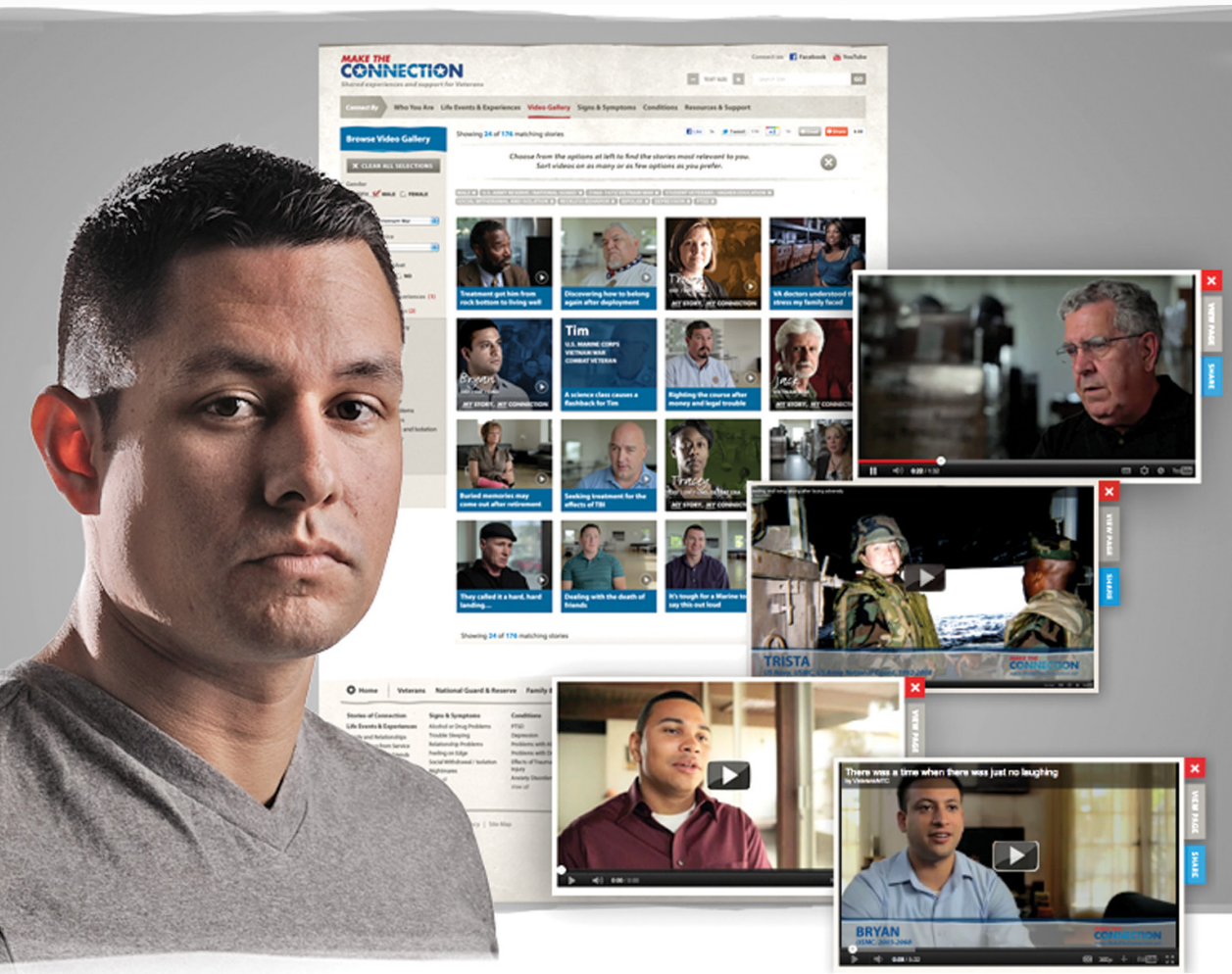
... finding solutions to important issues and overcoming challenges

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) created *Make the Connection* to inform Veterans, their families and friends, and members of their communities about the resources designed to help Veterans live well.

Service members have been trained to work through difficult situations together and to surmount obstacles that stand in the way of a successful mission. Veterans can use the skills learned while in the Armed Forces to address and overcome personal challenges they may face after leaving the service. And, just like when they were in the military, Veterans don't have to go it alone.



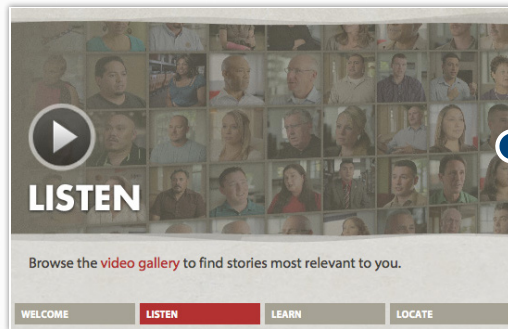
Introducing a new, interactive resource for Veterans and their families



At ***MakeTheConnection.net***, Veterans and their loved ones will find information, insight, and the support they have earned. In this dynamic, interactive, and confidential environment, visitors can view candid testimonials of Veterans who have dealt with and are working through a variety of common life experiences, day-to-day symptoms, as well as mental health conditions. Visitors hear real stories from others like them who have overcome challenges such as transitioning from service, trouble sleeping, and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

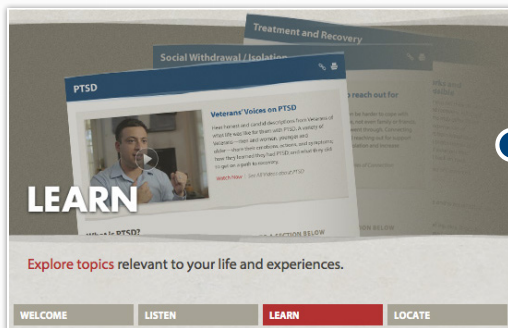
Click anywhere on the image to play the PSA *Veteran Strength and Connection*.

At *MakeTheConnection.net*, Veterans can:



Listen

Browse the video gallery to find stories most relevant to them.



Learn

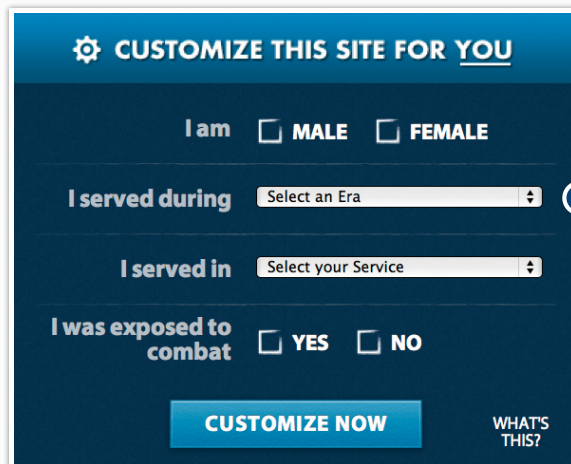
Explore topics relevant to their lives and experiences.



Locate

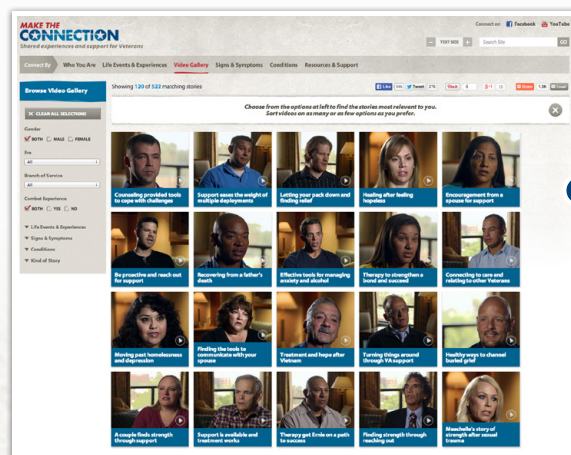
Find resources near them that can help get their lives back on track.

Veterans and their loved ones can hear from **people like them**.




A dark blue form titled "CUSTOMIZE THIS SITE FOR YOU" with a gear icon. It contains several input fields and checkboxes for user customization. The fields are: "I am" with checkboxes for "MALE" and "FEMALE"; "I served during" with a dropdown menu labeled "Select an Era"; "I served in" with a dropdown menu labeled "Select your Service"; and "I was exposed to combat" with checkboxes for "YES" and "NO". At the bottom, there is a blue button labeled "CUSTOMIZE NOW" and a link labeled "WHAT'S THIS?".

Customize content using an optional filter to easily find stories similar to their own.




Browse over 400 videos of Veterans sharing true stories on a full array of topics.


Transitioning from Service

[SHARE](#)


PTSD


[SHARE](#)

Social Withdrawal / Isolation

[SHARE](#)

Treatment and Recovery

[SHARE](#)



Treatment works and recovery is possible

Hear Veterans just like you tell their stories of strength, resilience, and recovery. Although their individual problems may differ, these Veterans share similar experiences of reaching out for support from loved ones, fellow Veterans, and the professionals at VA. They all were able to find solutions that worked for them and get back on track.

[Watch Now](#) | [See all Stories of Connection](#)

VA specializes in the care and treatment of Veterans. In recent years, research from around the world has dramatically increased our understanding of mental health conditions and how to treat them. Many Veterans have gotten treatment for mental health conditions and found solutions for improving their lives. Whether Veterans have recently returned from deployment, were stateside throughout time in service, or have been home for 40 years, it's never too late for them to get professional support for the issues they are dealing with. Treatment works and recovery is possible.

When Veterans and their families need support, reaching out for assistance is a good first step. ***MakeTheConnection.net*** makes it easy to take that step and provides information and resources.

***MakeTheConnection.net* covers a wide range of topics including:**

Life events and experiences

- Transitioning from service
- Family and relationships
- Retirement and aging
- Student Veterans/higher education
- Financial and legal issues
- Death of family and friends

Mental and physical health

- PTSD
- Effects of traumatic brain injury
- Chronic pain
- Anxiety disorders
- Effects of military sexual trauma
- Thoughts of suicide
- Depression
- Physical injury

Common signs and symptoms

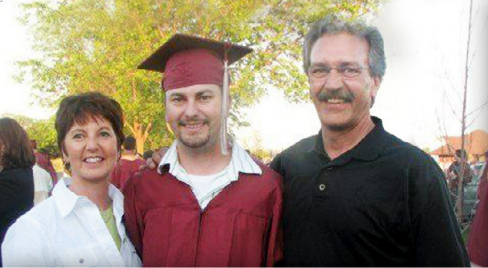
- Nightmares
- Anger and irritability
- Flashbacks
- Alcohol or drug problems
- Guilt
- Feeling on edge
- Relationship problems
- Trouble sleeping
- Stress and anxiety
- Loss of interest or pleasure

Personal stories of recovery

- Video testimonials from Veterans and their loved ones who share, in their own words, their experiences facing and overcoming challenges
- Compilation videos, searchable by topic, featuring a wide array of Veterans and their loved ones who discuss their experiences with various challenges and life events

Treatment tools and resources

- Immediate steps Veterans can take to address the issues they face
- Details on treatment options and processes
- A resource locator to help users easily find VA and other resources near them



On the following pages are a few of the hundreds of inspiring, true stories from Veterans and their loved ones whose lives illustrate resilience and paths to living well. These courageous individuals have shared their stories because they want all men and women who served to know that support and resources are available to help Veterans live healthier and more fulfilling lives. Hear their stories and find out how Veterans can find effective solutions and treatment.



Nicole

US Army, US Air Force Reserve, 1990-1993; 1996-Present



While overseas, Nicole did her job and focused on surviving. She patched her lieutenant back together when he was injured by an IED. Afterward, she felt detached. Nicole's husband, also deployed, narrowly escaped death in an attack on his vehicle. Although he provided emergency medical care to his wounded comrades, he still felt guilty for surviving. Back home, their children were affected by the stress of having two military parents deployed overseas. When Nicole returned, she came face to face with her family's challenges and had to deal with her own issues, too. Many of the things her civilian friends cared about seemed unimportant and even irritating. She realized that her friends hadn't changed; she had. She reached out to VA to get herself and her family on a healthy track.

Hear Nicole's story at www.MakeTheConnection.net/NicoleMTC

"VA doctors understood the stress my family faced."





Mike

USMC, 2003-2011

Mike served in the US Marine Corps for multiple deployments during Operation Iraqi Freedom. When he returned to civilian life, memories of his experience made driving a car a source of stress and anxiety. Mike's stress increased with feelings of guilt over not being deployed again with his buddies. He felt that his life was aimless. He began drinking and was often irritable and on edge. With support from his family, Mike reached out for help from VA. He discovered his challenges weren't unique to him, but instead were experiences many Veterans shared. He realized that living a healthy life and looking out for his own well-being were fitting tributes that he could offer to the memory of the fallen. Mike put these insights into action and found ways to bring his life to a better place.

Hear Mike's story at www.MakeTheConnection.net/MikeMTC



*"You owe it to the guys
who didn't come back."*



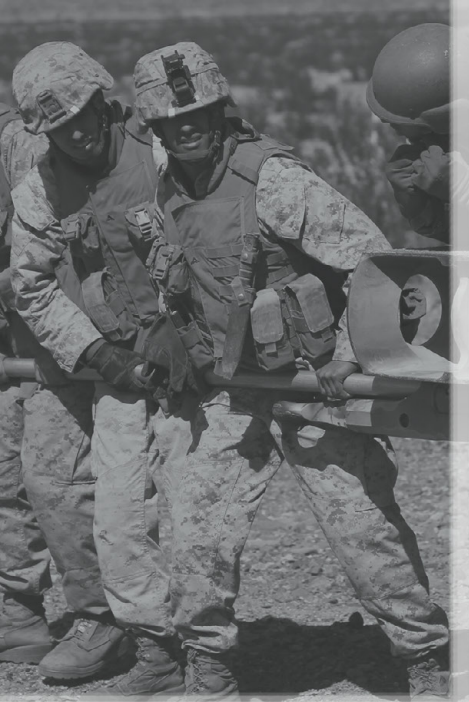
Don

US Army, 1965-1968

Don, a US Army Veteran, returned from Vietnam with horrific memories and felt alienated by people who looked down on Veterans. For years, feelings of guilt and memories of his traumatic experiences silently took their toll on him, without him realizing it. Then 9/11 triggered nightmares and angry outbursts, though he didn't understand why. Like a lot of other Veterans, Don felt other Service members had it worse than he did and his issues weren't worth mentioning. Instead, he drank a lot to try to cope. His wife encouraged him to seek help. Don had never talked to a mental health professional and wasn't sure what to expect. His VA doctor provided him with specific steps to manage his symptoms and move forward. He tells his story hoping it will encourage other Veterans to reach out for support.

Hear Don's story at www.MakeTheConnection.net/DonMTC

*"You've got to let it go.
Don't wait 40 years."*



Richard

USMC, USMC Reserve, 2000-2010

Richard, a recent combat Veteran who served in the Marine Corps, experienced serious service-related wounds, which left him with a severely injured arm and hand. Beyond his physical wounds, he also experienced invisible injuries. He couldn't sleep, kept having flashbacks, and disliked being around groups of people. Seemingly little things triggered negative reactions. Everyday activities held no more interest for him. He missed the structure of military life and found adjusting to the civilian workplace hard. His wife, a fellow Marine, understood what he was going through and said, "Enough is enough." Richard knew he couldn't do it alone, and VA helped him find ways to manage his PTSD symptoms and get back on track.

Hear Richard's story at www.MakeTheConnection.net/RichardMTC

"VA taught me how to manage my triggers."



John

US Navy, US Army National Guard, US Navy Reserve, 1980-1993, 2005-2008

John survived a helicopter crash during a mission to Fallujah. Despite severe injuries, he was able to walk back to camp in full battle gear. He went on to finish his time in the service and transitioned back to civilian life as if everything were OK. It wasn't. In addition to experiencing chronic back pain, he was diagnosed with PTSD and a traumatic brain injury (TBI). Living with frequent nightmares, constant pain, and being separated from his fellow Navy Seabees, John turned to drinking in an attempt to dull his physical and emotional pain. His commitment to taking care of his children helped him realize he needed help. Now that he's reached out and gotten support, his connections with his kids, his battle buddies, and other Veterans at VA help keep him on track.

Hear John's story at www.MakeTheConnection.net/JohnMTC

"They called it a hard, hard landing. We called it a crash."



Tiffany

Fiancée of a Veteran

When Tiffany first met Reagan, her fiancé, she knew he'd been in some difficult situations but didn't understand their impact on him. Eventually, she realized that his problems also affected the rest of their family, and she got him to understand that reaching out for help was the right thing to do—not just for himself, but for his loved ones as well. As a family, they discovered the importance of supporting him. They all learned more about what Reagan was experiencing, and they all discovered healthy ways to face those challenges. Now they are living a more fulfilling life together.

Hear Tiffany's story at www.MakeTheConnection.net/TiffanyMTC

"To be the spouse or loved one of a soldier takes a lot of backbone."



www.facebook.com/VeteransMTC



www.youtube.com/VeteransMTC



www.google.com/+VeteransMTC

Spread the Word

The success of *Make the Connection* depends on support from everyone who interacts with Veterans: friends, family members, and people in communities nationwide as well as Veterans Service Organizations, community-based groups, and local health care providers that have direct contact with Veterans every day. We need your help to build greater awareness of *MakeTheConnection.net* and the numerous other resources that are available and improving the lives of our Nation's Veterans.

Visit www.MakeTheConnection.net and hear these candid stories of courage and recovery. Then choose from a variety of materials you can download to spread the word about this powerful resource and start supporting Veterans today.



Join the conversation today.
Explore our Facebook, YouTube, and Google+ pages.

Link to **Make the Connection** online

Download a variety of online banner ads and badges to use on your website and link to **Make the Connection**. Banner ads and badges are available in standard sizes approved for VA.gov sites as well as public sites.



Print and share information

Find a range of **Make the Connection** materials to print and distribute or display.



Access videos of Veterans

To request high-resolution versions of the **Make the Connection** PSAs and compilations on a variety of topics, please contact info@maketheconnection.net.



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