

Learning to move on from a painful experience

Cloyd: I'm Cloyd and I was in The United States Army from October 1973 to October 1976. I was in combat support and as soon as I got there, I was eight months in service, they made me a platoon sergeant. I took care of them and I went TDY, teaching national guard and that sort of thing.

I had eight months left in the service; I had put all my equipment in the... Well, I had put it all in the shop. It had to be worked on and we had a major that was just out of Vietnam; he was right, fresh out of Vietnam and I went in to get my sitrep. He physically attacked me. When I told him that my equipment was in the shop and I believe, myself, that he had a flash back. So, anyways, he attacked me and I was screaming how I was putting the other guys in jeopardy. So, when we got back in out of the field I walked in and turned my stripes in and I told them I wasn't fit to command and from then on... Well, my battalion commander sergeant major, he came over and gave me my strips back and just told me I was going to drive for the captain for my last eight months.

So, I went ahead and ETS; from then on, I would get a job and I'd quit and any time they tried to give me responsibility I would walk away. I kept trying to prove myself, that I wasn't a coward. I started drinking. The problems don't go away and drinking definitely didn't help the problems that just complicated things. I had instances where I thought, well maybe if I just drive into that wall everything is over with; I don't have to worry about it anymore. And I figured that the only way to deal with it was to just deal with it head on. I had to live life on life's terms. There's no easy way out.

It took quite a few years for finally one doctor, and I talked to him finally and told him what had happened in the service and he says, "Well, I think you have PTSD." which was kind of a relief to find out really what was wrong after all those years and that everything in my life had followed through because of that. I joined what they called MHICM, which is a mental intensive care case management program. It's a group of guys and women and we all just kind of go in we have lunch and then we have a session afterwards where we can all go in and we talk about how our week was. Then we discuss our problems with the group and they, kind of, give us feedback.

And it isn't just PTSD, it's also other mental illnesses and that sort of things and I feel really comfortable there. It's given me safety and security. Learning the coping skills helps a lot and talking to the other guys and listening to what they're doing helps me out 100% because if I had to do this completely by myself, I'd still be drunk and I wouldn't be a very good father. I've been told I'm a real good father. I mean, she's a great kid and she wouldn't be that way if I wasn't coping with these problems in a different manner than I was before she was born.

I really hope that me coming in here and talking will inspire maybe somebody else to think about what their life is like and what their experiences are and maybe they can relate to something I've said enough that they will go and talk to a counselor. I just hope I've said something that someone really needed to hear.



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