

Expressing himself helped Ian feel better

Ian: My name is Ian. I was in the Army from 2004 to 2010. During that, I deployed to Toorak from 2008 through 2009. My whole family has served. My mom is a Lieutenant Colonel. She's in the Nursing Corps. My dad was in during Vietnam. Both grandfathers were in World War II, both on D-day. My great-grandfather was a Calvary Officer during World War I; goes all the way back. So, it was kind of a family tradition.

The first time I went to D.C. when I was 11 with my dad, we got onto the mall very late at night and we went to the Vietnam, to the wall and I knew that he was in the Army. I never knew he was in Vietnam and he sat down and went to the register of names and started looking to see which panel, the names. And he looked up 13, 15, 20 names and we walked through, and he just went through and line by line and found all these friends and I was looking at him. I was 11; I didn't know what it was. And I asked him, "Well, what is this?" And he said, "Well, this is the Vietnam War Memorial and these are the names of everyone who died." He refused to talk about it for years. He was not embarrassed by his service, but it was just the stigma from when he came home. When he came home from Vietnam, he changed out of uniform in the airport. Dad never slept much. He was always up in the middle of night and I never understood why until I got back.

So when I went home on leave, I found the both of us up late at night and so we sat down on the couch and we'd just, we'd talk for hours every night and most of it was him actually. I think it was more useful for me. I wasn't ready to open up about anything at that point, but he broached the subjects. For the first time, I think in his life, he opened up about those experiences.

After I got back, I didn't seek help because the Army says that, "Oh, there's not a stigma for seeking help anymore. That's just not the case." There is the stigma especially among, I was in the Infantry. A bunch of Infantrymen, it's just, there's that feeling that you go to sick call to fix a sprained ankle and you're looked at as you're weak so let alone, "Hey I need to go to my weekly appointment," even though we've got mission to make or we've got this thing or that and you just don't do it. So, you cope with your friends and when I got out, that was gone. That support network that had helped me get through everything and so I just didn't deal with it for a couple of months.

So I set up an appointment with the VA and I thought it was actually going to take a really long time and it was pretty quick. I called my dad and I was like, "Hey, I'm going to go to a counseling session." And he's like, "That's awesome. That's great." And I didn't really know what to say because he didn't seek help for years so I was kind of apprehensive to it and he was just like, "No, you need to do it. You absolutely need to do it." And so, went in and the guy who I saw was a Vietnam Vet who was A) Really cool. Like, he was easy to talk to. The depression went away and it went away fairly quickly. It really took getting the issues that I was going through off my shoulders, like just getting it out there. Sleeping has gotten a lot better. That I attribute directly to going to counseling. I rarely meet a Veteran that hasn't in some way, shape or form sought help or seriously considered seeking help and in the Veteran community, seeking help is exactly, like everyone's going to push you there. There is no stigma in that community and so having Veterans help other Veterans is just a continuation of I guess of our service. We have a commitment that extends from our service to help one another.



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