

AN OPEN LETTER TO MY BROTHERS

For the past few days I've had a thought bouncing around in my head in writing an open letter to my fellow Vets, but have been unable to find the time. Then I realized this is something that needs to be shared and I needed to make time! So here goes.

To my fellow veterans, whether you identify as a jarhead, doggie, squid, flyboy or coastie, I'm talking to you. For the past 8 years I've been directly involved in the handling of likely over 400 veteran deaths or hospitalizations. Each one is a different story and some have been very convoluted. Two recent events have driven me to reach out to you all. Due to laws, I am unable to include full details and names, but many will recognize them by their stories. The gist of the following involves PTSD, and alcohol.

Case 1, a veteran committed suicide at a young age. He had PTSD very bad and became involved in a combative relationship. Although no one will ever know for sure why he decided to take his life, one thing is abundantly clear, he had many demons in his head and around him. He had physical injuries with which he suffered on a daily basis, but many of his mental injuries weren't as easy to see. After an evening of drinking, and a domestic dispute, he locked himself in his quarters and was found dead by his own hand by police a short while later.

Case 2, A veteran with severe PTSD, was at a bar, with a few other veterans and a disagreement ensued, so he walked outside the bar, right into an oncoming vehicle. His injuries resulted in head trauma and some other damages which are less life threatening. Part of his skull had to be removed to relieve swelling and bleeding and he remains in ICU in a comatose state. There is no way to know at this point if additional physical or mental damages will present themselves.

What we do know is neither of these cases had to happen. It does appear that alcohol may have been the trigger that moved them along to the final outcomes. One fact that is undeniable, is that PTSD and Alcohol do not mix well. Would the results have been the same minus the alcohol? Best guess is YES! Many of our fellow Veterans live with PTSD in their daily lives and do well until a trigger pushes them into memories they don't want to have, and can't repress, or pain and torment they never wanted. My opinion is we all have it but deal with it in different ways. I also believe from personal experience that your early environment dictates how we deal with the trauma we experience later on. If you were the average kid and you lived a leave it to Beaver Childhood, then when the trauma happens you have no mental protection or life lessons to draw upon. Those who have had traumatic episodes in early life usually fare better. I know it's a long read so I'll cut to the chase. You are not alone! Our Vets here seem to

have a very high percentage of PTSD. If you are having a problem Seek help. We all know there is a Veterans Crisis Line thru VA, USE It! Talk to a fellow Vet, we all speak the same language, and many share the same experiences and feelings. We need to be available to each other as a release. We are in fact an unbreakable brotherhood. If alcohol is adding to the problem, seek out meetings and other vets who have shared that disease. Please I plead with you, don't become one of the guys I have to notify the family you are hospitalized or dead. Thank you for taking the time to read this. Please stay safe and alive, my brothers from another mother.