

From Anthony Weisher:

Thank you for your work on this issue. There is a comment in the hearings about promoting those who work on their mental health issues. That is an excellent way to help the public and military understand that we are in much better shape in recovery. It is the ones who are riding it out or fixing it themselves who are likely to give up. I have PTSD and flashbacks; I am a survivor of multiple types of abuse. When I entered counseling, I was worried about losing my children because of the mental problems. I found out that the courts see the treatment as a positive, that I am a better parent. One of the best arguments for promoting recovering soldiers is that they can see who is in trouble. We see it in their eyes. We have been there and see the despair and emptiness they carry. You probably know this already: when we enter the last phase before taking the final step, we become fantastic actors. We also become obsessed with the issue(s) driving the impulse. The rest of the world does not exist, spouse children, family friends are blocked out. We are in total isolation with our hell. There is nothing anyone can do because we make sure you have no clue. It makes me feel so sad for the living who carry guilt when a loved one decides to end the pain.

I have been active in a couple of support groups for 16 years. I try to give back the gift of life/survival I've been given. I am not anonymous, because men tend to hide their problems. When a 6'2", middle aged man who looks like an ex football player shares these experiences, it breaks down that wall in others who are suffering. I have even passed on my recovery experience in health seminars at work. My coworkers were shocked. They never sensed what I was dealing with. That said, you can post what I wrote. If it leads even one person to seek help, we have saved a life. I am a proponent to the starfish theory. You recall the story of the kid putting a beached starfish back in the water? I try to pass on my experience to help when I can.

I don't think I mentioned my career. I'm retired DoD, so I know the mess you are dealing with. I was a systems analyst, but I worked with the customer service people and took calls at times. I learned about depleted uranium from the Gulf War I vets and that has been my mission since taking a buyout/early retirement. Like PTSD, radiation poisoning has been killing veterans and maiming their unborn.

Thanks for helping the soldiers and all of us with PTSD.
You are helping yourself by making a positive out of a very traumatic event in your life. Some would just fade away in despair.