



Khobar Towers Bombing Survivors Association

September 2013 Newsletter

Struggling with PTSD

Vet Centers

I started off to write about the Vet Centers which are under, but different from, the VA Hospitals. I put down a bunch of dry information about mission statements and talking points. But let's skip all that for now because there is something more important that has been on my mind.

Over the past year I've gotten to know many of the survivors through my quest to help start this organization, and many of you shared details of what you experienced after the bombing and what your lives have been like in the 17 years since that night. What I've learned is that while many were able to return to normal, there are a lot of us, me included, who developed Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

People with PTSD experience three different kinds of symptoms. The first set of symptoms involves reliving the trauma in some way such as becoming upset when confronted with a traumatic reminder or thinking about the trauma when you are trying to do something else. The second set of symptoms involves

either staying away from places or people that remind you of the trauma, isolating from other people, or feeling numb. The third set of symptoms includes things such as feeling on guard, irritable, or startling easily.

Most of the survivors I've gotten to know have told me they know they suffer from PTSD and they have either not sought treatment; or have spoken to a mental health professional once or twice.

That's why I thought I should write a more personal story about how I have gotten help at the Vet Center.

To back up a little bit, being a PTSD Vet as many of you are, I have seen more psychologists than I can count, pretty much with the same result. The last private psychologist I saw, our visit ended with "I'm the best friend you have." I had two choices leave or put him through the window, and I chose to leave. The last psychologist I saw at the VA Hospital was, get this, a sex therapist, a bit of advice don't take "first available" you have no idea what you will get.

I had pretty much given up on finding a counselor, out of desperation I thought, "Hey, well, maybe that Vet Center place."

I have driven by the Albuquerque Vet Center everyday on my way to work for years and had no idea what they did there. I imagined it was a bunch of old guys sitting around drinking coffee and eating donuts. I was completely wrong.

On my first visit, I couldn't have been more surprised. What I found was a place that SPECIALIZED in treating emotional trauma in Veterans and their families. I honestly feel I have found a home at the Vet Center and I believe my PTSD is far better in control. I would highly recommend searching them out in your area of the country.

I would be remiss if I didn't cover the mission of the Vet Center, which is only for Veterans and their families who have been deployed to combat areas. So what are combat areas? Simple enough if you were awarded (I will skip the decorations prior to Desert Storm):

SW Asia Service Medal

Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal

Kosovo Service Medal

GWOT Expeditionary Medal

Afghanistan Campaign Medal

Iraq Campaign Medal

You are eligible, at no cost to receive services at the Vet Center.

Additionally, the Vet Centers furnishes bereavement counseling services to surviving parents, spouses, children and siblings of a service member who has fallen while on active duty, including the Guard and Reserve.

The Vet Centers also offer a 24 hour a day call center for combat veterans:

877-WAR-VETS (927-8387)

For more information, please see:

<http://www.vetcenter.va.gov>

For Locations:

http://www.va.gov/directory/guide/vetcenter_flash.asp

Did you know...

I have recently found there are a large number of Khobar Towers Bombing Survivors and Families that didn't know the 4404 (P) Wing received the Air Force Outstanding Unit with Valor.

This was authorized under GA005.

There was also an additional Air Force Outstanding Unit award which you may qualify for.

Please see <http://access.afpc.af.mil/index.htm>

Additionally, it has come to my attention that many of you were written decorations which were downgraded or not submitted. This is of a grave concern, these awards are not presents, they were earned on 25 July 1996.

As the President of the Khobar Towers Bombing Survivors Association I am very concerned that all survivors receive the proper decorations of which you earned.

Please, email me, if you felt you did not receive the decoration which was submitted or earned at mschooley@me.com

ktbsa.com