Returning Veterans Helping Other Returning Veterans

Jason Ridolfi, Sgt. U.S. Marine Corps Vets4Vets

American Public Health Association Session: Improving Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services To Returning Veterans from Iraq & Afghanistan and Their Families. November 6, 2007

This is War to us



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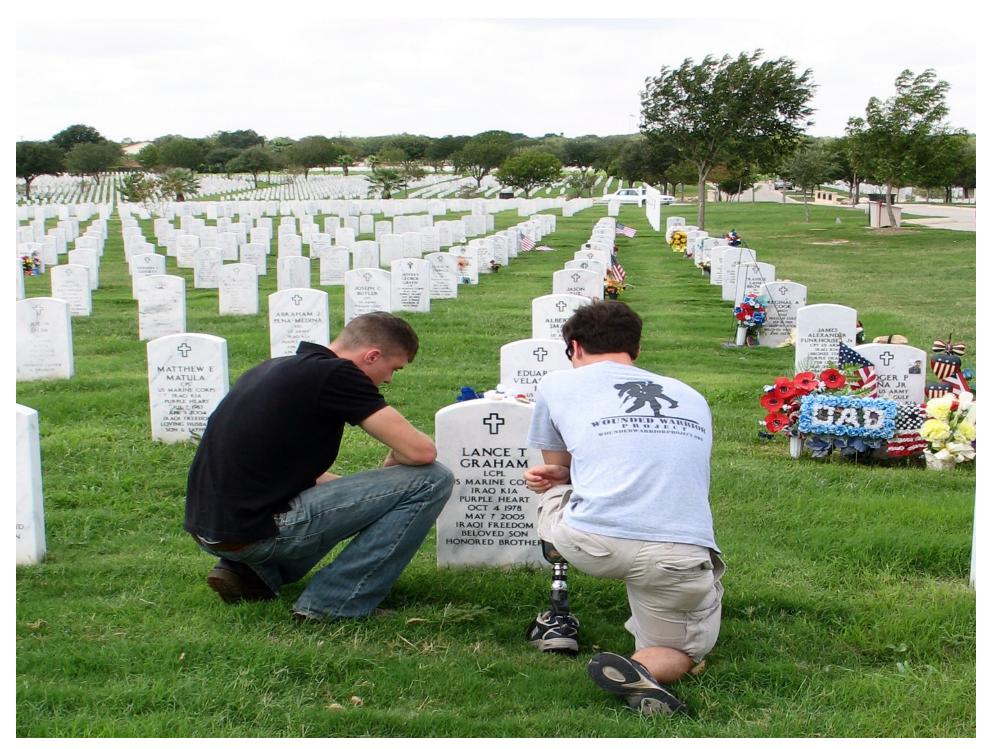




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Why them, not me?

PEER SUPPORT

FOR IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN VETERANS

It's Importance

By: Jason Ridolfi

Topics

- History
- Definition of Peer Support
- The Importance
- New Roles in Today's Military
- Personal experiences
- Vets4Vets

History

Alcoholics Anonymous, 1935

Operated under the principle that persons who had experienced and overcome alcoholism would be more effective in assisting others who were trying to do the same.

History (cont'd)

No official results

It's Estimated that there are nearly 2,000,000 official AA members in 100,000 groups in 150 countries.*

^{*} www.alcoholics-anonymous.org

My Point: People Like it! It Works!

Definition

- No generally accepted definition of peer support.
- One common element is that peer support is provided by, and for vets dealing with negative issues.
- Promotes a wellness model which considers clients to be normal, as opposed to a medical model which considers clients to be sick.*

The Importance

- Trust
- 100% knowledge of the content
- Eliminates the feeling of being looked down upon

The Importance (cont'd)

- Feeling of not being alone (Fellowship)
- A tool to help reduce risk behaviors

New Roles In Today's Military

Today's wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have aspects that we have not encountered in past conflicts. Because of this, there needs to be an understanding that today's veteran is different from previous veterans and require new standards of care.

New Roles in Today's Military

■ No lines. Everyone is in danger



Many more injury survivors than in any past war.



Unprecedented use of National Guard and Reserves for overseas combat





Women in combat

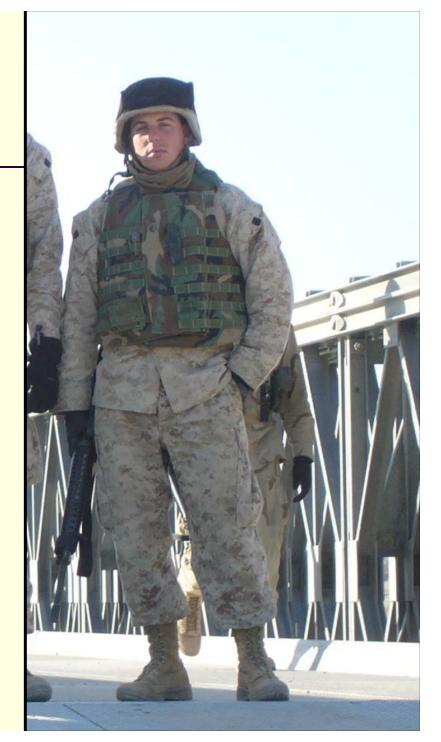




New understanding of PTSD/TBI

Personal Experiences

- Being understood by people for our reactions
- The highest emotional and adrenaline rushes, then back to normal life
- Having to accept death before it happened



Vets4Vets

- Brings veterans together
- Teaches how to speak and listen
- Self-supporting community relationships

Vets4Vets

▶ 100% free for the veterans

Want to work with other organizations



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Wrap up

- History
- Definition of Peer Support
- The Importance
- New Roles in Today's Military
- Personal experiences
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THE END

