

## **DON'T GIVE UP!**

As a veteran's wife for almost 42 years, I can relate to the temptation to give up on your spouse, the system, VA, and the world!

Most of us have heard the phrase "Burned Out!". ALL of us have lived it.

Living in a relationship with a veteran who has numerous health and mental issues, would make it really easy to RUN.....RUN....RUN. I have on several occasions.....but I always went back. Why? One would question the logic in this situation. If you are so unhappy why not just start over? Your ONLY answer is "You're not happy with them, but you are not happy without them!" Once you put distance between yourself and the drama, time to think makes its appearance. And THINK you will. Your will rehash all the terrible problems your marriage has experienced and all the mental anguish of which you just wish "would go away". And it always does for a while. Veterans can be the "best partners" in world for a while, but the inter demons always seem to burst their way back to the surface. As the thinking process continues, you will then begin to remember all the GOOD things about this person you are connected with. When the Vet is not battling traumatic issues, they are as NORMAL as everyone else. As loving and caring or maybe more so than the average person. They truly LOVE deeply!

Questions have run through my mind a million times. I guess the only reasonable answer I return is Love. Oh bull! That is what most folks would say. Protect yourself, start a new life without all the drama!. It appears in a lot of marriages to veterans, the spouse is the more stable one and the Secondary PTSD eventually gets to them too! But if the stable one can get a small break and regroup themselves, then the road back home is always open. The veteran rarely will close that door, simply because they NEED you! And THEY REALLY DO LOVE YOU! They would even kill to keep you. The stable spouse is the only thing the veteran has been able to DEPEND on since their return to what should be a NORMAL life. The problems is.....for a veteran of war.....life is never NORMAL again. They will hold things together for a while but under pressure, they will eventually display those on going issues again and again. Even the strongest of men can carry the burdens of war for 30 40 years only to find themselves "falling apart" after having held it together for so many years. And so it was this way with my Vet.

As a spouse of a veteran, I only wished I had found support in the early years of my marriage. Since I married at a very young age and my husband had returned from Nam only months before, I was thrown into a world I did not understand, drama. I could not get away from it there was no one who could direct me or advise me about it issues we would both face for years to come. The man I thought I was married was still there, but heaped upon all the good traits was ALL the emotional issues and scars of war. The man I married would not talk about Vietnam. Thus, the problems he was trying to deal with sank deeper and deeper into his heart, soul, and spirit! Not a good thing for the Vet or his family.

Now after 42 years, my Vet is doing much better, he is on medication and can sleep at night. He is not so depressed and anger for "no reason"! He would never have ask for help, I don't think. On a regular prostrate cancer check-up at a local VA Hospital, a very smart and caring doctor detected a man in trouble. A man who was ready to kill himself and feared killing others. He probably thought he should be

strong enough to “handle” it by himself. Funny, how the “Man Upstairs” watches out for us when we have no sense of direction!.

I am not a Professional Counselor and do not claim to have all the answers. I am not advising anyone to place themselves in danger or saying they should following my path. Believe me, I stumbled my way down this lonely road. I am just a woman who has lived through the horrors of untreated PTSD, and issues of war veterans. My words of encouragement would be: THERE IS HELP OUT THERE!  
I only wish I had found it 42 years ago. Don't give up.....seek out any possible ways to help yourself and the Veteran you love! Do Not Take NO for an answer.

Need to talk....send me an e-mail. Talking will always HELP.

Carrie P. Finley-Alabama  
[cfinley@bellsouth.net](mailto:cfinley@bellsouth.net)