

Taking Life, Changes Life

You may ask “Will I ever be the same?” My answer is simple. Hell NO! So you may as well get that in your head right now, deal with it, and start working on the New You. Having killed, or having been witness to it, having been in any life threatening event where you walked away and others didn't, has changed your life for the rest of your life. You will never be the same person that you were before that experience.

Think about it. What were you like before the war or other life threatening experience? What things did you like? What made you happy? Where did you like to go? What kind of music or movies did you enjoy? Did you like a lot of friends around? And the list goes on. I'm gonna guess that most of that stuff is ancient history now, and that's all right, so are You!

I really wish some old dumb ass Marine would have said to me, “Boy! There's nothin' wrong with who you are, you just ain't who you use to be! Now drop down and give me 50, while you think about it!”

So what does this mean? It means you now have to find out “Who” you are, “What” you like, and who you want to be around. It really isn't that hard to think about, if you're honest with yourself. But that may be difficult to do, if you're living your life the way other people want you to live. Chances are, if this is the case, you're miserable anyway, so why not make a few changes?

The long haired, brain-fried, acid freaks in the 60's would have said “Man, this is a righteous gig.” That means, it is a great chance to do whatever you want. Some Vets I knew went off the save the world and finally figured out they had to save themselves first. Some went off with a crystal hung around their necks humming through the woods until they found some poor unsuspecting tree to hug. Others joined biker gangs (I mean "clubs"), preferring a taste of outlaw company. Some changed jobs, or went back to school for a new career. Many dropped out of society completely. And a few even changed their names. The point is, you can do whatever you want, and you can decide, just for you alone, what's gonna bring a little joy into your life.

Unfortunately, many of the old Vets like me, learned the hard way. Over the years, we slowly and painfully tried to pretend we were the same as we always were, the same as everyone else, while dragging our families and dip-shit friends through our rage and nightmares. There were a few exceptions however, and a few Combat Vets did finally manage to get along with female companions of like mind; crazy people like crazy people? But, I was the usual slow learner in that battlefield, and it wasn't until my third wife divorced me that I finally figured out that maybe I'm better off being single.

You see, no matter where you end up, as long as the choice is yours, and you're making your own honest decisions, it's OK! You're gonna fit in somewhere, so just decide where. Hell, I'm not center-of-bubble at times, but when I stopped pretending, my life worked out great. Better than B Street in Okinawa on payday (you'll have to ask a Vet about that one, or check the glossary).

If you haven't got the message yet, you may be lookin' at a whole new life. That may mean friends, jobs and locations, the whole enchilada. Believe me, it's a lot better to find out who you are right now and start your “new” life, than it is to experiment for nearly 40 years. I've had over 60 jobs, 4 major career changes, three wives, lived all over the country, and it took 6 colleges and 20 years to get a degree I never use (toilet paper?). It sometimes takes Marines a little longer I guess, at least this one.

Now, part of the reason I had so many jobs was because a gear slipped loose in my Brain Housing Group, and there wasn't anybody around to identify it and send out for replacement parts. You're not livin' in that same empty, un-staffed supply depot.

You may find it a tad unusual that I've had so many jobs. But this is actually the norm and not the exception for many Vets from my era. I think the record in fact was held by another Recon Marine, who got "left" in North Vietnam when the politicians finally pulled the handle on the big green toilet. He had to fight his way through Laos, and then to Thailand, to find friendlies and get back to the States.

We were both in Phoenix, Arizona at the time, and attending a weekly meeting for Combat Vets. After the "gathering" was over and everyone had slipped back into the shadows, this other Jar Head and I were laughing about something, when he asked me, "How many jobs you had since gettin' out of the Crotch?" (The Crotch is what only Marines may reverently call the Marine Corps).

Since you can say anything to another combat Vet, I wasn't the least embarrassed to admit that my count at that time was about 38. He looked at me and started to laugh again. Then he said, "I've had 47 jobs in 46 days!" We stayed there for about another hour laughing and talking about all the dick heads we'd worked for, then we too slipped into the night, pretending to be normal like all the other civvies.

Take a lesson from this. Do you want a track record like I have, or do you want to be smarter, and get your act together now? No sweat, if you've got 40 or 50 years to kill. But I would have been a hell of a lot happier for a hell of a lot longer if I'd have started a long time ago. So don't be discouraged, and don't give up; no quitters allowed on my duty watch. I'm here to tell ya, that after all the bullshit in my life, I know who I am, what I am, and I'm truly happy since I don't pretend for other people. And if I can do it, "So Can YOU!" And you will.

What I'm saying is this. No matter how bad you feel right now, you CAN feel better later. No matter what guilt you're dumpin' on yourself, with a little time and work, you can sort out the shit, and get onto what makes you feel good about yourself. And I don't give a rat's ass if you're depressed! There is nothing wrong with your reactions, or you. Although the legal drug cartel would like you to think so, you are not gonna be on the zombie meds your whole life either. Hell, maybe not at all.

Oh, and by the way, the counselor at the Veterans Outreach Center isn't gonna be hiding a syringe of mood stabilizers to stab in your neck as you walk through the door. If you don't want the drugs, "Just Say No". That simple.

All you really need to do to start feeling better is to start feeling better about you, admit you could use a little help, learn how to deal with the problems, and start planning your new life. I guarantee that once you've decided what you truly want to do, where you want to go, and how you want your life to unfold, it'll be like a kid looking forward to a trip to Disneyland.

But don't start settin' the "live-trap" for Mickey Mouse just yet, you'll need to keep reading, to figure out which path your gonna take to the Magic Kingdom. There's the long, hard way, and there's the shorter hard way. Both paths lead uphill, but it's worth the climb. So then, in the words of my own wise and knowing Sarge,

“Keep your chin up, your head down, and one round in the chamber, in case you stick the bayonet!”

From: “*The Warriors Guide to Insanity*” By Sgt. PTSD Brandi, U.S.M.C. Never Retired?
www.sgtbrandi.com