

Veteran Helps Others Find a Path to Healing

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Kerry D. Steuart enlisted in the U.S. Air Force with plans for a long military career. But things didn't go as planned. He was medically discharged only eight years into what he thought would be decades of service. Soon after, the Gulf War veteran began battling post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in addition to his physical challenges.

"Although I might appear happy and healthy on the outside, on the inside I was truly struggling," said Steuart, who is a member of VFW Post 4171 in Golden, Colorado.

"I was struggling to find a purpose, an opportunity to serve. I was angry and bitter because I spent the next 20 years trying to find out the cause of my health symptoms and the VA was not very helpful. All this frustration and anger was taken out on my family, friends and colleagues."

Yoga, Tai Chi and biofeedback were suggested to Steuart during testing at the War Related Illness and Injury Study Center in New Jersey. His oldest daughter had encouraged him to pursue yoga as well, so he decided to give it a chance, and it changed his life.

"I started my yoga journey with a practice of mindfulness and meditation, and what I discovered was that for the first time in a long time I felt calm and relaxed," Steuart said.

Over time, Steuart found yoga to be a key part of working through his struggles and he wanted to share his experience with others. He became a registered yoga teacher and has spent the past five years helping others go on their own journey of recovery. He's particularly proud of his work with fellow veterans and Warriors' Ascent, a nonprofit dedicated to helping service members and first responders find healing and support.

"I have been blessed to work with Warriors' Ascent which provides a week long opportunity to transform the participants' life at no cost," said Steuart.

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In addition, Steuart founded Midtown Yoga KC, a nonprofit based in Kansas City, Missouri, to provide yoga, mindfulness, mediation, teacher training and wellness classes. Donations allow individuals to attend programs for free or at a reduced rate. He also created a YouTube channel to connect virtually with people in any location.

While Steuart works with anyone and does corporate events, his focus is on veterans or others who've experienced trauma.

"Working with veterans and essential personnel has allowed me an opportunity to have a purpose and serve a greater good, just like serving our country in the military," Steuart said.

"I have been told after each Academy of Healing that I saved someone's life and their family, and before this program they had lost all hope."

Steuart knows there may be misconceptions about what yoga is or who can benefit. He hopes his story will inspire others to try it and find peace, acceptance and love.

"Yoga does two things for us each and every day. First, it allows us to realize the things in our life that we are doing well and secondly, those things in our life that need work," said Steuart.

"Yoga is truly for everyone and it transforms our life from the inside out."