

“D” USMC/USA

Erik Younger had approached me in July of 2017 to find out if I would be interested in taking part in the Vetitation program as he had got my name from a close friend of mine. I think like everyone else, I was a bit apprehensive at first because I had never heard of the program before and asked several times what the “catch” was. Erik assured me there was no catch, just a program designed to help veterans. Just in case you are still skeptical, there is no catch. None.

From that moment on, Erik stayed in contact with me and provided up to date information as the time to depart for San Diego drew near. Logistically, not only was everything taken care of, but it was seamless as well.

A little about me and my background. I started my military career as a US Marine holding an 0311 (infantry) MOS. I deployed to Afghanistan during 2005-2006. I came home in one piece, and thought that everything was going to be ok. Six years later, after suppressing all the bad stuff that had built up, my life went off the rails. It got to the point that I was making plans on killing myself—if the booze and the pills didn’t get me first. I am one of the lucky ones in that I got help and had a good experience with the VA system, but it still included the standard cocktail of prescribed pills. Like everyone I’m sure, I felt better with the pills, but still felt like a zombie and mostly wanted to just sleep. So I was hopeful that Vetitation would provide some alternates to finding the happiness out of life again

In terms of the actual programming, it was truly amazing. If I’m being honest, the first day I was a little overwhelmed because the meditation and yoga were both things I had no experience in, but I told myself I would keep an open mind. As veterans, I think our initial thought is preprogrammed at “this isn’t the cool thing to be sitting around saying ‘om’ and doing yoga. Fast forward all of five minutes later and I was hooked!

From that moment, I felt alive again. Through the meditation, yoga, improved diet techniques, I truly felt the life reignite within me. It was the first time in three years that I could sleep without the use of pills. As we learned how to meditate and look within during the weekend, I could truly feel that spark of life coming back to me.

The staff at the Chopra Center were amazing, but we also had our own support staff that was able to address our unique issues whether that was PTSD/anxiety/depression. Dr. Kole gave us a class on how we should look at our own individual trauma that had us all thinking ‘wow’ it all makes sense now. She provided us that ‘ah-ha’ moment on how and what we need to do get better.

Perhaps the most therapeutic aspect of the trip, was the being side by side with brothers and sisters that know what each other has been through. My group had never met before but within the first 30 minutes of arrival, anyone observing us would have thought we had been best friends and teammates for years. It was amazing.

My advice is that if you have been contacted about this program, or stumbled across it, take that challenge. This has been the catalyst in my life—in getting my life back and feeling alive again.

Thank you, Erik, and all the volunteers and donors at Vetitation for providing this opportunity. This program will save lives.

Namaste,
“D”

Testimonial