

Chief,
82nd Airborne Division

Testimonial

I was recently presented with a chance to go to Vetitation by a friend who had just returned and was extremely happy with the results. As he had told me. “No one can slap a smile off my face”. He was right, upon returning I feel the same way. At first, I was open to the idea of going; however, I was skeptical that it would produce desired results, as my friend had told me the same thing. Though I felt this way, I invited a co-worker to go with me and upon returning home he gave me a sincere thank you for inviting him on the trip because from the moment we arrived, we were treated with the upmost respect, every aspect of the program and venue at which we stayed was laid back, and very relaxing. Starting the program on day one made me much more at ease knowing that fellow brothers and sisters in the program were there for the same reason. We all shared a common bond of brother and sisterhood, with the challenge in our life we were facing and just as in training or battle, we were sharing the same experience and I knew they had my back, if anything happened while I was there. In addition, it did not feel anywhere close to group therapy as with the VA, because we were not there to share our stories and so on, we were there to completely focus on ourselves, and that is exactly what we all did because of the way the program is set up. Upon beginning the program, we were all brought in touch with our surroundings, enabling us to see how the world around us can make us feel and how we can choose to look at things, because in the end, we have a choice. Having dealt with psychologist in the past from inside and outside the VA, I never came across one who was truly passionate about their job and I never felt as if they could relate, so I was never really comfortable with them. However, that all changed in meeting the psychologist who is on the Vetitation Team, because as she openly admits, she had suffered from PTSD as well, finally I could talk “With” someone and not “At” someone. With her being able to relate, it made me feel much more at ease and able to concentrate during our entire program. Therefore, because of the way we were introduced into the program from the onset I felt very comfortable, so once we began the actual class’s I felt very much at ease. As the program progressed, it was clearly evident that the bond between my service member, brothers and sisters grew closer as we were kept together from the start and I know it made each and every one of us feel even more at ease, vs. having to sit among strangers. In just a few days, the Vetitation Program achieved what the VA could not in the 12 years since I had retired from the military. In addition, I slept like a rock every night. Which for me is hard to do as I rarely sleep well at all. On the third morning, I was headed back into class and was stopped by someone in my class, they commented to how relaxed I looked compared to day one. Then, half way

through the day I was approached by two more people who told me the same thing. Two days upon returning to work, my boss called me in the office just to tell me that they had not seen me this relaxed and happy looking in years. In addition, everyone immediately noticed a positive difference in me. Every time I turned the corner, someone made a comment how happy and refreshed I looked and that is just the way I felt. They were all right, I felt great!!! What stuck with me most by the end is a story they told, weather you believe in God or otherwise. As the flood waters began to rise, a man ran to the second floor and a fire truck showed up with a ladder, but the man refused saying that he would be saved by God. As the flood waters raised to the third floor a boat showed up offering help and again, he replied God will save me. Then as the flood waters raised to the top floor, he ran to the roof where a helicopter was waiting and again he replied with the same, God will save me. Eventually the man lost his life and as he entered heaven, he was angry with God and asked, why did you let me die. God replied, I sent you help numerous times but you refused to accept it. What I took away from that is that I was hurting and I was presented with the Vegetation Program, which I did not refuse to be a part of and it works!