



I am an Army Veteran. Like most veterans, we proudly serve our time and move on with life when the time comes. We don't always separate what's "normal" and what's "not normal" experiences while serving but I can say we all carry our service time closely. We are taught to follow orders and expect the outcome as "normal".

We are taught to use words to describe feelings, smells, taste or even objects. Most people can find the words to describe such items to another person and relay the information accurately. There are very few times in life that we get to experience a life-changing event where we cannot find the words to truly express our gratitude. That's how I feel when people ask me about my service dog "SPW Goose".

For me, I was out of service for 27 years before I started to realize I was struggling in civilian life. This was brought to the surface because of health issues. I accepted these health challenges as the normal aging process. I was told I would not likely survive Covid after being sent to ICU, but I did. A year later I was told I had a rare aggressive cancer and survived that. Within a year I was diagnosed with a rare congenital heart defect that less than 75 people worldwide have. This led me to a life-flight trip to the hospital where I would undergo a 12-hour open heart surgery and so far, I have survived that. I was living with the unknown of how these health issues will affect me and it just became too much to handle. Depression, Anxiety and PTSD were at an all-time high. These feelings lead me to a loss of hope and purpose. I disconnected socially, close friends and even with family. I was no longer "me".

Eventually I was introduced to Service Peace Warriors. Although I did not inquire about the program at first, I did keep the literature. I had no idea that what I needed to get my life back was inside that literature. I eventually applied and was accepted to the program where I met SPW Goose. We've been together for about four weeks now and I couldn't imagine a day without him now. In such a short time, SPW and Goose have given me back hope and for the first time in several years, I feel now I have a purpose again. I am more active physically and even socially.

This is where words alone cannot convey the true gratitude I have for Service Peace Warriors, their entire staff and all their supporters that make it possible for veterans like me to have a lifesaving dog like Goose. Truly, everyone involved that makes this possible are life savers, heroes and exude the best side of humanity which we rarely see in this world. I can not thank SPW enough for this life changing opportunity. I can't honestly say I would be where I am today, if it wasn't for this program. As often as the words "Thank You" are said, I am truly thankful for this program.

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