

The US Army Asked Twitter How Service Has Impacted People. The Answers Were Gut-Wrenching.

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After posting a video of a young recruit talking to the camera about how service allows him to better himself “as a man and a warrior”, the US Army [tweeted](#), “How has serving impacted you?”

As of this writing, the post has over 5,300 responses. Most of them are heartbreaking.

“My daughter was raped while in the army,” said one responder. “They took her to the hospital where an all male staff tried to convince her to give the guy a break because it would ruin his life. She persisted. Wouldn’t back down. Did a tour in Iraq. Now suffers from PTSD.”

“I’ve had the same nightmare almost every night for the past 15 years,” said another.

Tweet after tweet after tweet, people used the opportunity that the Army had inadvertently given them to describe how they or their loved one had been chewed up and spit out by a war machine that never cared about them. This article exists solely to document a few of the things that have been posted in that space, partly to help spread public awareness and partly in case the thread gets deleted in the interests of “national security”. Here’s a sampling in no particular order:

How has serving impacted you?

— U.S. Army (@USArmy) [May 23, 2019](#)

“Someone I loved joined right out of high school even though I begged him not to. Few months after his deployment ended, we reconnected. One night, he told me he loved me and then shot himself in the head. If you’re gonna prey on kids for imperialism, at least treat their PTSD.”

~

“After I came back from overseas I couldn’t go into large crowds without a few beers in me. I have nerve damage in my right ear that since I didn’t want to look weak after I came back I lied to the VA rep. My dad was exposed to agent orange which destroyed his lungs, heart,

liver and pancreas and eventually killing him five years ago. He was 49, exposed at a post not Vietnam, and will never meet my daughter my nephew. I still drink to much and I crowds are ok most days but I have to grocery shop at night and can't work days because there is to many ppl."

~

"The dad of my best friend when I was in high school had served in the army. He struggled with untreated PTSD & severe depression for 30 years, never told his family. Christmas eve of 2010, he went to their shed to grab the presents & shot himself in the head. That was the first funeral I attended where I was actually told the cause of death & the reasons surrounding it. I went home from the service, did some asking around, & found that most of the funerals I've attended before have been caused by untreated health issues from serving."

~

"My dad was drafted into war and was exposed to agent orange. I was born w multiple physical/neurological disabilities that are linked back to that chemical. And my dad became an alcoholic with ptsd and a side of bipolar disorder."

~

"i met this guy named christian who served in iraq. he was cool, had his own place with a pole in the living room. always had lit parties. my best friend at the time started dating him so we spent a weekend at his crib. after a party, 6am, he took out his laptop. he started showing us some pics of his time in the army. pics with a bunch of dudes. smiling, laughing. it was cool. i was drunk and didn't care. he started showing us pics of some little kids. after a while, his eyes went completely fucking dark. i was like man, dude's high af. he very calmly explained to us that all of those kids were dead 'but that's what war was. dead kids and nothing to show for it but a military discount'. christian killed himself 2 months later."

~

"I didn't serve but my dad did. In Vietnam. It eventually killed him, slowly, over a couple of decades. When the doctors were trying to put in a pacemaker to maybe extend his life a couple of years, his organs were so fucked from the Agent Orange, they disintegrated to the touch. He died when I was ten. He never saw me graduate high school. He never saw me get my first job or buy my first car. He wasn't there. But hey! Y'all finally paid out 30k after another vet took the VA to the Supreme Court, so. You know. It was cool for him."

~

"Chronic pain with a 0% disability rating (despite medical discharge) so no benefits, and anger issues that I cope with by picking fistfights with strangers."

~

"My parents both served in the US Army and what they got was PTSD for both of them along with anxiety issues. Whenever we go out in public and sit down somewhere my dad has to have his back up against the wall just to feel a measure of comfort that no one is going to sneak up on him and kill him and and walking up behind either of them without announcing

that you're there is most likely going to either get you punch in the face or choked out."

~

"Many of my friends served. All are on heavy antidepressant/anxiety meds, can't make it through 4th of July or NYE, and have all dealt with heavy substance abuse problems before and after discharge. And that's on top of one crippled left hand, crushed vertebra, and GSWs."

~

"Left my talented and young brother a broken and disabled man who barely leaves the house. Left my mother hypervigilant & terrified due to the amount of sexual assault & rape covered up and looked over by COs. Friend joined right out of HS, bullet left him paralyzed neck down."

~

"My cousin went to war twice and came back with a drug addiction that killed him. My other cousin could never get paid on time and when he left they tried to withhold his pay."

~

"It's given me a fractured spine, TBI, combat PTSD, burn pit exposure, and a broken body with no hope of getting better. Not even medically retired for a fractured spine. WTF."

~

"Y'all killed my father by failing to provide proper treatments after multiple tours."

~

"Everyone I know got free PTSD and chemical exposure and a long engagement in their efforts to have the US pay up for college tuition. Several lives ruined. No one came out better. Thank god my recruiter got a DUI on his way to get me or I would be dead or worse right now."

~

"I have PTSD and still wake up crying at night. Also have a messed up leg that I probably will have to deal with the rest of my life. Depression. Anger issues."

~

"My grandfather came back from Vietnam with severe PTSD, tried to drown it in alcohol, beat my father so badly and so often he still flinches when touched 50 years later. And I grew up with an emotionally scarred father with PTSD issues of his own because of it. Good times."

~

"Hmmm. Let's see. I lost friends, have 38 inches of scars, PTSD and a janky arm and hand

that don't work."

~

"my grandpa served in vietnam from when he was 18-25. he's 70 now and every night he still has nightmares where he stands up tugging at the curtains or banging on the walls screaming at the top of his lungs for someone to help him. he refuses to talk about his time and when you mention anything about the war to him his face goes white and he has a panic attack. he cries almost every day and night and had to spend 10 years in a psychiatric facility for suicidal ideations from what he saw there."

~

"My best friend joined the Army straight out of high school because his family was poor & he wanted a college education. He served his time & then some. Just as he was ready to retire he was sent to Iraq. You guys sent him back in a box. It destroyed his children."

~

"Well, my father got deployed to Iraq and came back a completely different person. Couldn't even work the same job he had been working 20 years before that because of his anxiety and PTSD. He had nightmares, got easily violent and has terrible depression. But the army just handed him pills, now he is 100% disabled and is on a shit ton of medication. He has nightmares every night, paces the house barely sleeping, checking every room just to make sure everyone's safe. He's had multiple friends commit suicide."

~

"Father's a disabled Vietnam veteran who came home with severe PTSD and raging alcoholism. VA has continuously ignored him throughout the years and his medical needs and he receives very little compensation for all he's gone through. Thanks so much!!"

~

"I was #USNavy, my husband was #USArmy, he served in Bosnia and Iraq and that nice, shy, funny guy was gone, replaced with a withdrawn, angry man...he committed suicide a few years later...when I'm thanked for my service, I just nod."

~

"I'm permanently disabled because I trained through severe pain after being rejected from the clinic for 'malingering.' Turns out my pelvis was cracked and I ended up having to have hip surgery when I was 20 years old."

~

"My brother went into the Army a fairly normal person, became a Ranger (Ft. Ord) & came out a sociopath. He spent the 1st 3 wks home in his room in the dark, only coming out at night when he thought we were asleep. He started doing crazy stuff. Haven't seen him since 1993."

~

"Recently attended the funeral for a west point grad with a 4yr old and a 7yr old daughter because he blew his face off to escape his ptsd but thats nothing new."

~

"I don't know anyone in my family who doesn't suffer from ptsd due to serving. One is signed off sick due to it & thinks violence is ok. Another (navy) turned into a psycho & thought domestic violence was the answer to his wife disobeying his orders."

~

"My dad served during vietnam, but after losing close friends and witnessing the killing of innocents by the U.S., he refused to redeploy. He has suffered from PTSD ever since. The bravest thing he did in the army was refuse to fight any longer, and I'm so proud of him for that."

~

"My best friend from high school was denied his mental health treatment and forced to return to a third tour in Iraq, despite having such deep trauma that he could barely function. He took a handful of sleeping pills and shot himself in the head two weeks before deploying."

~

"Bad back, hips, and knees. Lack of trust, especially when coming forward about sexual harassment. Detachment, out of fear of losing friends. Missed birthdays, weddings, graduations, and funerals. I get a special license plate tho."

~

"My son died 10 months ago. He did 3 overseas tours. He came back with severe mental illness."

~

"I'm still in and I'm in constant pain and they recommended a spinal fusion when I was 19. Y'all also won't update my ERB so I can't use the education benefits I messed myself up for."

~

"My dad served two tours in middle east and his personality changes have affected my family forever. VA 'counseling' has a session limit and doesn't send you to actual psychologists. Military service creates a mental health epidemic it is then woefully unequipped to deal with."

~

"My best childhood friend lost his mind after his time in the marines and now he lives in a closet in his mons house and can barely hold a conversation with anyone. He only smokes weed and drinks cough syrup that he steals since he can't hold a job."

~

"After coming back from Afghanistan.....Matter fact I don't even want to talk about it. Just knw that my PTSD, bad back, headaches, chronic pain, knee pain, and other things wishes I would have NEVER signed that contract. It was NOT worth the pain I'll endure for the rest of life."

~

"My cousin served and came back only to be diagnosed with schizophrenia and ptsd. There were nights that he would lock himself in the bathroom and stay in the corner because he saw bodies in the bathtub. While driving down the highway, he had another episode and drove himself into a cement barrier, engulfing his Jeep in flames and burning alive. My father served as well and would never once speak of what he witnessed and had to do. He said it's not something that any one person should ever be proud of."

~

"I was sexually assaulted by a service member at 17 when I visited my sister on her base, then again at 18. My friend got hooked on k2 and died after the va turned him away for mental health help. Another friend serving was exploited sexually by her co and she was blamed for it."

~

"I spent ten years in the military. I worked 15 hour days to make sure my troops were taken care of. In return for my hard work I was rewarded with three military members raping me. I was never promoted to a rank that made a difference. And I have an attempt at suicide. Fuck you!"

~

"I actually didn't get around to serving because I was sexually assaulted by three of my classmates during a military academy prep program. They went to the academies and are still active duty officers. I flamed out of the program and have PTSD."

~

"My father's successful military career taught him that he's allowed to use violence to make people do what he wants because America gave him that power."

~

"While I was busy framing 'soliders and families first' (lol) propaganda posters, my best friend went to 'Iraqistan' but he didn't come back. He returned alive, to be sure, but he was no longer the fun, carefree, upbeat person he'd previously been."

~

"My husband is a paraplegic and can't control 3/4 of his body now. Me, I've got PTSD, an anxiety disorder, two messed up knees, depression, a bad back, tinnitus, and chronic insomnia. I wish both had never served."

~

"This is one of the most heartbreaking threads I've ever read."

~

"I am so sorry. The way we fail our service members hurts my heart. My grandfather served in the Korean War and had nightmares until his death at 91 years old. We must do better."

~

"My Army story is that when I was in high school, recruiters were there ALL the time- at lunch, clubs, etc.- targeting the poor kids at school. I didn't understand it until now. You chew people who have nothing at home up and spit them out."

~

"I was thinking about enlisting until I saw this thread. Hard pass."

~

"I hope to god that the Army has enough guts to read these and realize how badly our servicepeople are being treated. Thank you and god bless you to all of you in this thread, and your loved ones who are suffering too."

~

There are [many, many more](#).



This is a poem I wrote a while back called “Naughty Little Boys”:

That little boy’s mum is going to be so upset.
He hasn’t combed his hair,
and his clothes are filthy.
And what’s he gone and done with his legs?
Where are your legs, little boy?
Better go and find them before your mum sees you.
Those legs are very important to her.

They sent the little boys up into the sky
and over the ocean to go play soldiers.
They gave them toy guns
full of toy bullets,
and they screamed toy screams,

and bled toy blood,
and cried toy tears,
and had toy nightmares,
and called out for their mums
in the desert.

The man on the TV keeps calling them heroes.
Don't call them that, TV man,
you'll only encourage them.
These are little boys,
and they're being very naughty.
They are worrying their mums sick
and it's time for them to go home.

Find your legs, little boy,
and go be with your mum.
Find your hands and your face too;
she'll miss those as well.
Find your mind and bring it back
from that dark, scary place.
You're not there anymore.
You are home.
Stop screaming toy screams
and crying toy tears
and go tell your mum that you've had
a bad dream.

*

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