

Dan

Dan lives for his grandchildren. Wants to stay healthy to see his youngest graduate from college.

- * Sgt. in Viet Nam
- * Divorced, with girlfriend
- * Had good job as construction foreman
- * Depression, anxiety, and PTSD
- * Diabetes from Agent Orange

Scenario

Dan recently contracted COVID-19 and shortly thereafter lost his construction foreman job. As a result, his existing depression has been exacerbated.

Expectations

Get out of this "funk", come up with some coping mechanisms for being cooped up inside, and strategies to get back to work.

Turning Point

During a routine telehealth (phone) PCP visit, the doctor senses that Dan is more depressed than before. He's been in counseling (non-VA) for his PTSD and depression in the past, and the PCP thinks he could benefit from psychotherapy at VA. PCP enters a Mental Health consult which is accepted by the specialist that day.

Maybe it is time to go the counseling route again. It helped before and maybe they can help me again.

Hopeful

Insight: efficient and effective consult process.

Intake/ Initial consult

Telehealth appointment with MH social worker via VA Vidyo Connect. Technical difficulties result in frustration, decision to do a phone session. Once it starts, they have a good conversation - though it takes time to get into the groove because of Dan's frustration with the technology. Social worker also sets Dan up with the Veteran Readiness and Employment program.

I wish I could just get out of this house and go talk to the therapist in person.

Frustrated

Pain Point: Technology/VA Vidyo Connect.
Insight: Improve telehealth usability/documentation; allow more time to get on.

First Therapy Session

Get to know each other; identify the issues to work on. Morbidity indicates psychotherapy only, every 3 weeks, though Dan would prefer to have medication in addition. He is also concerned about being able to relate to the therapist, who is a Vet but from the post-911 era.

Medication helped me quit smoking; I think it would help my mood too. And doing it on the computer is still frustrating. I just keep thinking about all my problems: health, employment... This therapist is a poor fit. He doesn't have a clue what it's like for us Vietnam guys.

Untrusting,
Frustrated,
Disappointed

Pain Point: Finding right provider, similar service history to Vet or at least experience with/ understanding of Vets like me.

Ongoing Sessions

Sessions continue every three weeks and are fairly unstructured - discuss moods, sleeping habits, steps taken to improve daily life. No homework per se, but they do exercises during sessions to talk through the issues from which Dan's survivor guilt stems, including imagining what he'd tell someone else in the same situation.

I feel like I'm taking charge of life, and getting myself back on my feet. It helps to talk about things that happened and to know I have to be aware of my moods in order to report to the doctor next time. I look forward to my appointments. But I still want to get out of this house!

Empowered,
Satisfied

Insight: meet patient wants/needs for level of structure.

Step Down

At the 10th of 12 planned sessions, discussion begins about transitioning out, but Dan wasn't fully aware that there was a "limit" on the number of sessions. He expresses anger with the therapist, who for his part insists that the tx duration was clear up front.

Making progress ... but they seem to think I'm "all better". I disagree. Feel dropped like a hot potato.

Rejected

Pain Point: Misunderstanding of treatment plan.
Insight: Manage expectations.

Resume

For a while, providers contact Dan to ask if he'd like some short follow-up visits, and he says "No, I'm good". After a few calls he has a session with same provider; they decide to start a new course of treatment, different style of therapy to work on underlying depression instead of recent and past traumatic events.

This is good, and this time they were very clear about how long the treatment is going to last. Looking forward to this.

Hopeful

Insight: success from clearly-defined, manageable goals for a single course of tx.