

PTSD treatment benefits a marriage and family

Michael: Michael, I served in the Army. I was an Infantry Soldier. My last duty station was the 101st. Our mission was to make it to Missoula. That was our final destination. At the beginning, it was, it was chaotic. Once we moved into Missoula, things changed a little bit. The tactics changed. We lost our sergeant major during that, you know, during that engagement so, it was just one of those things that kind of hits you at home.

When you get out, you realize that once you start in the civilian world, it's a totally different environment. The structures that you're used to is not really there. You know, the comradery that you have with your fellow Soldiers isn't there. It doesn't matter where you work, it's not the same. Then the things you get to do and the places you get to see. And in my case, I'd just gotten home from Iraq and then it was time to get out. There was no climatization as far as "OK, you're going from military, you're going from combat operations and you're going into the civilian world." It was very difficult. My wife and I got married just before we went to 101st so she had never been with me on a deployment, she didn't know what the reactions were or anything like that. When we got back from Iraq, I went straight to work, and it was a high-stress job. From there, she started to notice little things. I just was the normal soldier. "Hey, I'm not going to go see anybody because that's a sign of weakness" and that's how I was raised in the military, and finally rubber met the road and she was heading out the door and at that point, we started going to marriage counseling. I started getting irritated with the counselors because they weren't trained in the PTSD so I felt it ended up being "Well, it's all your fault" and so, when I started feeling like I was getting attacked, I just stopped going.

Things started to get worse after that. Ended up getting really agitated with life and getting agitated with my family and always on guard and always biting their heads off and then the second opportunity came where my wife was like "You know, I've had enough, this is pretty much it." And then she got distant, I got distant. We sat down and talked about it and it was just a combination of everything. So, at that point, that's when we decided to move back here to Charleston. It just so happens I got lucky and found a facility here at the VA that's actually doing some research with PTSD and I volunteered.

They want you to put yourself in situations that you normally wouldn't put yourself in. I have a problem with boxes on the side of the road. I always drive in the center, don't like crowds, don't like going anywhere near crowds, don't like being cooped up. They actually make you go out there and do that stuff. It's part of the program. It just makes you talk about the stuff that you normally can't talk about to anybody else, and you're trying to get it out but you just don't want to bother anybody with it, and I think that's the best part of the program.

Right now, we're going through parent counseling. We do marriage counseling, and then with her individual counseling that she has, that helps out a lot. And then with me being able to work through the issues that I have with PTSD on a day to day basis, even though it's hard, it's built a stronger marriage.

I'm able to manage my symptoms a lot better going through therapy. I go out with the kids where we normally wouldn't have went to the beach, just chaotic and we go to the movies, which you couldn't have caught me in a movie. But now, life is just really enjoyable. Talking about what you had to deal with is not a bad thing, and at the end of the day, it helps you in your life and get your life back.



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