

You've got to do it for yourself

Don: I'm Don. I've served in the United States Military for a total of 36 years. I am fortunate enough to be married to this lovely lady sitting next to me. I am her husband.

Sharon: I'm Sharon and I'm married to this wonderful man to my right, Don. He's a retired Brigadier General from the Army, and we've been married for 30 years. I do like to bake, and so when I met Don he was like, "Perfect, strawberry rhubarb pie," you know. The flaky crust, the little sugar granules on the top, you know, great fresh fruit. You know, they go away, they deploy, they have... you know, exposed to some trauma and they come home and they're conflicted and having some issues and you don't really put your finger on it right away. You know something's different, but you're not quite sure what it is and it's like in the pie if like maybe you use margarine instead of real sweet cream butter or something. It's still the same crust and the same pie, you know, and it tastes a little off, but you wouldn't say, "Oh it's cause it's not butter." It's the same with your spouse. It's like, well he's still Don, he's still, you know, my husband, he's still the guy I married, but there's something a little off, you know?

These back-to-back deployments, you have to adjust to living with this person all over again every single time because you just think it's because they've been gone, you know. Or he's irritated about work or, you know, he's adjusting to being a dad because he forgets how loud the kids are.

Don: Of course I wasn't sleeping more than three hours a night and, you know, I did have serious pain management issues which I wasn't doing anything about. All that collectively really hurt my relationship inside my family and with others professionally.

Sharon: It was one moment that really was the tipping point, and I had the screen right up on my computer and I said, "You need to come in here." You know, he had... I don't know, gone off about something so minor and I was just like, "All right, this is the perfect teaching tool," you know, because I'm gonna catch him right where he's vulnerable and I had this screen up on the computer and it was all these symptoms of PTS, and I said, "Read this," you know. And he read it over and I said, "Does this sound familiar?" And I said, "Now do you think, you know, you can go agree to get help?" And I thought I would get a fight and honestly he turned around, he started walking back to the living room and he said, "Yep, I will." But, you know, he knew and he admits that. He knew for a long time something wasn't right. He just didn't want to say it out loud.

And go to the VA...

Don: Yeah.

Sharon: And Don has his mental health appointment and that's what we do together and then he has other appointments as well. I mean, he goes there for everything so, but every six weeks we go together to his mental health appointment.

Don: We have such a responsibility given to us as leaders to take care of the sons and daughters of people that serve in the military. I would say that you have to go for help. That regardless of how your chain of command looks at it, or how your senior leadership looks at it, you have to go for help.



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It's important for you, it's important for your family, and it's important for everybody around you. We don't want you to be suicidal. We don't want your family to fall apart. We don't want you to be isolated. We want you to be an effective part of your community and you gotta do it for yourself if no one else is going to reach out and help you with it, it's important.



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