

Adjusting to civilian life together

Theresa: My name is Theresa and I was in the Navy. I got to Camp Pendleton right after the first Iraq push started. I was married for three years before I first enlisted in the Navy and then I ended up having a kid on shore duty but I had a very abusive relationship with my husband, and he was not enlisted. He was a civi. I finally was able to get help from my command to get rid of my ex. In the end, it was a relief that he was gone. I was separated for about 8 months and I met Dusty through a friend of ours and we used to meet once a week. We were friends for about a good 6 or 7 months and I want to say about 6 months before we got out because ironically, we got out within 2 months of each other. He asked me straight into, will you marry me, and I said, "Okay well, we haven't dated." And he's like, "What do you think we've been doing?" And I said, "Okay, well I'll wait." So, 2 years after we got out, we played house for 2 years and then we got married.

I can honestly say that the difference between a civilian life and military life, it's two different cultures. It's almost to the extent of living in another country. Your mannerisms are different, the respect level's different, how you view your job and how hard you work is different, how you treat each other is way different. There's a closeness between your neighbors and your shop that you don't get when you get out and I was a military brat. I was born in a Navy hospital. My dad served until his, I think he served 25 years before he got out and then I went in shortly after so that's all I ever knew.

So, when I got out it was a shock. It was like living someplace complete new. We felt very alone, very alienated I guess is a good word. We got very frustrated with people in general because of the differences in everything. It's not that they didn't respect us. I think we kind of didn't hold a whole lot of respect for the outside either so we didn't have patience with people that we should have had and neither one of us when we first got out got help to talk to somebody, you know because you need somebody to explain to you the differences.

I've noticed with me and my issues that when I start to get frustrated and life just seems to pile on too much, I can tell now it starts, I want to say right here, like a pressure and I get frustrated. Like the littlest thing can happen where I can drop something and I just get, I can feel it that is just gets more pressure or my husband can say something to me and more pressure and just builds to the point where I just snap and get so angry, but when I feel that coming on I know then that it's time to, I use my therapist sparingly shall we say, so when I can tell something's coming on I'll call her and I'll be like I really need an appointment right now.

And so, me getting help, it's kind of like when everything gets to much it's like I have this huge weight on my shoulders and then I get to go talk to her and I want to say, by the time I walk out of there it's kind of like you've had this burden and this heavy pressure that's just been lifted right off your shoulders and you feel a lot better.



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