

## A husband and wife find support for healthy lives

**Teresa:** My name's Teresa, and I was in the Navy. I was stationed the entire time on Camp Pendleton. It was my last, I want to say, 2 years that I was in and Dusty had already been to Iraq. And he already had his demons when I met him, shall we say.

So, we got out, and he got a job. And he was working really long hours. And he would put in, I want to say...holy crap, 15 to 18 hours, come home, have enough time to eat dinner, go to bed, get up before I even woke up and he was gone. I mean, we never saw each other. And then when we would see each other on the weekends, of course, our natural thing is, you know let's go out and have a beer.

And I noticed he would bring home, it started with just those big cans of beer. And then he would bring home two beers. And then he'd bring home a 6-pack. And I want to say about a year after he got out it had progressed to a 12-pack. And I knew everything he had done. I mean he told me everything before we even got married when we were still just friends. So, I understood where he was coming from. But it got to a point where it was all the time. It was every day. He would get frustrated really easy. And I couldn't decipher whether it was because of his issues or because of work. So, I didn't push the issue as hard as I should have about him getting help. But I would say something and, of course, you know the man statement of I'm fine. I'm good. I don't have a problem. There's nothing wrong with me. I'm just tired. I'm frustrated with work. And of course, that escalated.

He went down to the VA outpatient clinic in Fort Myers and he said, "Hey, I need help. I need to talk to somebody right now." He really liked his therapist at the VA. He got to talk to a guy and the guy happened to be a combat Veteran. They started talking to him, signed him up for more counseling sessions, and then said, "Okay, well, you need to go to AA." So, that was the beginning step for him to change what he was going through.

I said, "Listen." I said, "You know, you're doing really well. You're not freaking out. You're not drinking. You're able to now think about what you do before you do it." I said, "But you're not really dealing with what's going on inside." And he looked at me one day and he goes, "You know, I'm really lonely. I don't know what else to do. I'm really sad." You know he started talking more and dealing with his problems more. Because I'm a firm believer that talking is the key, and the first step is realizing that you feel bad. And, the more you talk to somebody the more you learn I guess to forgive yourself.

And I started the barbeques to help him because he was lonely and because of the help he was getting from the VA, which got him to the point where he was at, but he needed more, and I saw that. So, I said, "Okay. Well we're going to start these barbeques once a month." And he's like, okay. So, we started doing them. And they're really small. Some guys share. He realized he wasn't alone anymore. And there was people who live right down the street who were just like him, that dealt with the same problems that he had. It ended up where it became something bigger. Where now not only does he feel better for himself, but now he's making a difference in someone else's life that needed it just as much as he did.



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So, I mean, that was just one way to start another step in the process. He's improved to the point, I mean, it's a big difference. Huge difference. Where he's turning more into the person that I met. A lot of guys turn around and say, well, it's my spouse. I don't want to tell her cause she'll look at me different or she can't handle it. Well, the thing is that she can. That's why she married you. And give her a lot more credit for helping support you because you don't have to be the big burley man. You know we're here to support you too.

If you really love your spouse, you need to push back. You need to stand up for yourself. You need to stand up for your spouse. And you need to say, hey, it's time. You know. It's time for you to go talk to somebody. Not only will you as a spouse feel better that you did something for your spouse, but some of your problems won't necessarily go away, but they'll get better.



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