

## Couples therapy strengthened their marriage

**AnnMarie:** My name is AnnMarie. My husband is Josh and he is a former Marine, and he was trained as an Arab Linguist, and he served two tours in Iraq. I met him well before he joined the military, we met in high school. We corresponded a little bit when he was in boot camp and then when I was starting my freshman year of school, and we saw each other one more time after that but then we just kind of mutually lost track of each other, and then three years later he emailed me and so, we just started talking casually then over email and phone. And then, that was November 2002ish until January 2003 and then that's when he got sent over initially to go to Kuwait and then Iraq. And then, as I got more sense from the news that was going on that he was in a bad situation I definitely become very concerned and just the communication was not that good. He couldn't talk or get on the email or phone that much, so it was just like not knowing was pretty frightening.

The best way that I was dealing with it was writing him letters. There's just something about that, that I felt like I was connecting with him even if it took weeks for him to get it, and then my mom, my dad was in the Airforce, so my mom was a good source for that to.

He would tell me stories, but they would be pretty lighthearted, about you know things he was doing with his friends. He would, nothing in the letters was revealing, any like pain or things that he was going through, it was pretty friendly and just giving me the idea that he was doing okay.

When he came back after his first deployment we got together at the Marine Corps Ball and actually started dating, so we were officially dating for his second deployment. everything was heightened because we just had a much stronger connection and just felt like a lot more was at stake. The communication was better. He could call and email was better. He proposed to me in October and we as a couple wanted to go to therapy before we got married so we started going in January of 2008, so like five months before we got married, and in that therapy that we went to he started processing with the therapist a little bit more of things that I didn't realize that he was thinking.

When we went to our honeymoon we went to Costa Rica. When he first came into the country and he just had this sense of it being foreign and that he kind of just went into a little bit of a shutdown mode. He just kind of kept to himself more, did a lot of reading, I think that was a coping skill, and that he just felt like self-described that he was in a funk.

I remember feeling very disconnected, like just nothing even remotely that I could relate to or try to share in that experience with, and just really being at a loss for words because, yeah I'm not sure how to process that or what he wanted to talk about, and kind of taking the stance that you know, if he wanted to talk that I would just be there to listen. I had never seen him cry before and there was one couples therapy that he did open up and cry and that was I think a pretty big moment for him.

I think he was a little skeptical at first, but I do think that going to the VA helped to kind of just make that transition happen. He loves school and I know he really is interested in being in academics for life and being a professor. So, it will be nice to finally see that all come to fruition.



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I think that these men and women have made huge sacrifices, that they should take advantage of every resource that's given to them and have no regrets or no shame about it. I think that anybody, any civilian military can benefit from just talking with someone, processing, and especially if you've been in a combat situation. I just can't imagine there's not some benefit to processing that with a professional.



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