

## There was a time when there was just no laughing

**Brian:** My name is Brian Escobedo. I was born and raised here in Houston, Texas. I spent five years in the Marine Corps, and I got out as a Sergeant with three tours in Iraq. Rebecca and I met online and I was on my first deployment.

**Rebecca:** We wrote every single day and he was stuck on a ship. He would have to wait in line for like an hour just to write to me for five minutes.

**Brian:** She really is my best friend in the world, and she knew me when I went through my hardest time and she stood by my side.

Thank you, Lord, for this delicious breakfast we're about to have and let us have a wonderful day, Amen.

I wanted to be in the military since I was a kid. Since the first episode of GI Joe, I wanted to do that. That's what I wanted.

**Myra:** Brian is my baby. He's my son. He was happy and free-spirited.

**Rebecca:** When I first met him, he was a different Brian to the one I know now.

**Brian:** Everybody knew me as just the happiest dude. Even in the Marine Corps I was always the funny dude making everybody laugh. But there was a time where there was just no laughing.

**Rebecca:** In the war zone he had a different mind frame and he just kind of forced himself to become desensitized to a lot of things so that he could cope and do his job.

**Brian:** On my second deployment I got hit three times. Four bombs hit my vehicle. This is what I was wearing when I got blown up and that's my blood from the IED, from my face. Yeah, that was nuts. In order for me to survive in that environment, under those extreme emotional conditions where I was just living in fear, living with anxiety I had to go emotionally numb.

**Rebecca:** Unfortunately, when he returned it all kind of came out and was on top of him.

**Brian:** I didn't realize how messed up I was until I got back to America. I started having pretty horrible nightmares and I couldn't focus on anything. I was having constant flashbacks. The whole time I was awake I was miserable. I was angry.

**Rebecca:** I found that we were fighting more, and I was thinking, "We don't get to see each other often, why are we fighting?"

**Brian:** I couldn't feel any excitement about life, nothing. I stopped listening to music. I stopped talking so much to my friends. I isolated myself. I would just stay in the room all day and just drink and drink and drink and drink and I didn't know why.

**Rebecca:** He tried hard not to shut off from me, but he was shut off.



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**Brian:** I knew I had PTSD, but I didn't know that I would be scared to drive on a simple American road. You become suspicious of everything like, mountains of trash, dead animals. You are expecting everything to be booby trapped and when you start thinking like that everything seems like a threat in your environment. It kind of makes you go nuts.

As military people you find it very difficult to admit your own weaknesses cause that's completely contrary to the military philosophy. So, when you have PTSD, or you have anything like that or any sort of emotional stress you just suck it up.

**Rebecca:** I didn't know about PTSD so it never even occurred to me that there was something affecting him that was out of his control.

**Brian:** Rebecca encouraged me to get help. My brother encouraged me to get help. He had been to war already so he could recognize all the stuff that he went through.

I actually moved in with my brother when I got back from the Marine Corps and he understood me really well and he was very patient with me. I was isolating myself and all the typical things that people with PTSD do and he helped me out.

**Eric:** I didn't want my mom to see how different her sons had become throughout the years. She worries enough and she has an image of what we were and I didn't want her to see one of us freak out, just have a PTSD moment because it happens.

**Interviewee:** There's a sadness there. There's something that was lost but what I have is a hope that somehow it will get better.

**Brian:** I've been to one-on-one psychologists at the VA. I've been to multiple different forms of therapy. You have to surround yourself with good people that want to see you do better and you have to take advantage of programs they have at the VA or the nonprofit organizations that are there to help Veterans out.

**Rebecca:** There is so much more help and understanding then you'd even realize but you have to get off your butt and you have to go seek it.

**Brian:** I forgot that there was good in the world and every time I saw Rebecca it brought it back. It was like, "Oh, this is the reason I'm going to live. This is the reason that I shouldn't do anything crazy to myself." It just starts with saying, "You know what, I want to fix this." It takes a lot of courage to go against that military training that you have to admit that there's something that's broken inside you, you need to fix it. That's the very first step.

**Rebecca:** Even if it's just a friend or a family member or just a hotline, do something.

**Brian:** It all starts with going to the VA and there's a whole community of Veterans that just want to help you out. People that have been in your same shoes that know what you're going through, that have already overcome this. Just reach your hand out and connect to somebody else that knows what you're going through and knows how to help you. That's all it takes.



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