

## Staying strong for your spouse

**Mollie:** I'm Mollie, I'm married to Eddie. He was in the Marine Corp for nine years. He was in the Marine Corp when we met. He was home on leave after his first deployment. We first started out as friends kind of talking through the second deployment. So I got used to just kind of hearing about this stuff more from a friend point of view so it wasn't very censored, it was very just — he told me how things were going, so I got very used to it.

I think the third deployment when we were actually really dating it was harder because I had more invested in it, so I tried. I got close with a lot of the wives for the guys that he was deployed with. Those became some of my closest friends because you could get online and talk to them, or text them, or call them. So they knew what you were going through at anytime.

I still remember the phone call. He had called me the day before and said, "I am going out, I won't be able to call you for a few days, it will be fine, I will call you when I am back."

So usually when he would say that it would be a couple of weeks and then I would hear from him. I got a phone call the next night around 12 or 1 that night, or in the morning. The first thing he was like "don't be mad." Okay, that is a weird way to start a conversation, but he said "I got hurt, but I am okay." So that really kind of took me off guard and I kept thinking, oh he is not hurt that bad, he was able to call me. Well then of course those same friends that I had met from the other wives, I started talking to them and they were like no he's hurt pretty bad, he is going to be okay, but it's not just kind of a bump on the head.

He seemed fine still after we got married and then I guess some things started happening for him at work. He got some new people in charge of him and I guess they were actually the ones that noticed it at first for him saying I think that you need to go to talk to someone. So he kind of came home and told me. I went and talked to someone on base today; I am just having some difficulties kind of expressing myself.

I think that when he was in South Carolina that was the first time that he was able to actually process what had gone on, because he deployed three times in four years so I don't think he had any down time just to kind of figure out what he had gone through, what he was feeling. I think it all kind of came flooding in having time to deal with it.

He was diagnosed with PTSD and the therapist also started talking to him about kind of his long-term plans and realizing that the military wasn't part of those long-term plans anymore and talking to him about having him medically retired because they didn't feel that he could stay in because of some of the physical injuries and also because of PTSD.

It was a huge adjustment. He is very, very good of kind of having a very structured lifestyle, the physical activity, having someone be able to tell him what to do and when he got out he wanted to have the freedom of him being able to do what he wanted to do, but it wasn't working for him. Because he would just kind of sit at home. You could see that he would get more and more depressed and then when he needed to do things he would get overwhelmed by things. He had a lot of forgetfulness. So it was a lot of just



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kind of trying to find a way of bringing things up to him nicely. It taught me a lot of patience of kind of trying to remind him of it without just saying "Just do this." It was a big adjustment for me too.

He started out with a therapist at the VA, we ended up switching because he is retired to a Tri-Care therapist. That therapist seems to be working pretty well for him of kind of just letting him talk. Now he is fine going along with places. He actually tries to build more relationships with friends and people he meets at school. So now he is kind of starting to put more of an effort to make things work.

The therapist that he is seeing through Tri-Care also does couples counseling and has a spouse that does also just counseling one-on-one for me so we found that was kind of a very good fit that we could each see someone separately and then each see someone together.

I think he has improved a lot. I don't think it is everything that goes away, so I think it is always kind of something to work for so I know it has got to be frustrating for him that just like anything that you are always having to work for there is going to be some really great times and then I am sure there is going to be some not as good times that just kind of learning to recognize it.

I think the biggest thing is to openly communicate with their spouse, letting them know I have noticed a change. I think the most important thing is to know that there are plenty of different options out there and for them to just keep trying, talking to different people for them to see what works.



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