

## Therapy helped this Veteran with PTSD challenges

**April:** My name is April, Army. My husband is also an Army Veteran and we were both stationed in Fort Hood when I deployed. It was a little bit surreal for me. I thought, okay, maybe I'll be going to Kuwait where it's not really hostile and that's exactly where we went. We went there for about maybe two weeks and then we got the call that the war has started, and we will be pushing up to Bagdad, Iraq. That's when it got real, just the smell of death, just a site of death played a toll on, not only me, but my entire unit.

Coming back from Iraq, I kind of felt extremely proud. I felt wonderful about what I did, where I just came from. I felt like I can conquer the world, but I started noticing that my happiness almost turned into a little bit of anger. My happiness turned into a little bit of fear, wondering if I hit the curb something might blowup. Anything in the street I would be afraid to runover it. I did not like crowds, didn't want to sit with my back towards the exit. I really didn't pay too much attention to it only because I felt like, I'm a combat Veteran. I can face the world. I'm strong, but in reality I wasn't strong. I was pretending to be strong because that's how the military built us.

We were built to go, go, go, go, go. We were built to have this tough outer shell but inside there were a lot of things that were going on that I had no clue was affecting me, and I sat and I let it fester for a long time until someone told me, "April needs to get help."

In the beginning, I started going to the VA every week. I was under a special program specifically for female combat Veterans and I went every week and it was an outlet for me. It felt good talking about my experience in Iraq. It felt good talking about my fears and my concerns and my worries. It felt good having someone to listen to me and not judge me, but just to get all of that emotion and anger that I had built up out. It really worked for me. It really felt good.

Exposure therapy was awesome. It helped me to realize some of the things that I was doing, for instance, I would lock my door every five minutes, just having a fear that someone will come in my house and I won't be able to protect my family, and my therapist would tell me, "April, put a little sticky tab on the door saying that, I've locked this door already, I've checked this lock already," and that's what I would do and it really started to work. In the beginning, I was against exposure therapy but as my therapist worked with me I would recommend it anyone who was fighting PTSD, who was struggling with PTSD. That exposure therapy works.

Being that both, me and my husband have PTSD, we're both combat Veterans, his PTSD is a little different from my PTSD so when it came down to our relationship I couldn't understand his PTSD and what he was dealing with, he couldn't understand mine. So, there was a lot of conflict, a lot of friction between the two, and we decided that we needed marriage counseling, and it really worked out for the best. Our children, it helps us with parenting with our children. We don't get so frustrated and so angry so fast with the children. We actually sit down as a family and we discuss things. It really helps. It really helps the whole entire family.

Life is so much better now because I know that I have someone that I can call. I know that I have someone that I can speak to. If it wasn't for the VA, I don't know where my



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mental state would be but the VA is there for me and they're there for any Veteran and their families as well.



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