

Finding the tools to communicate with your spouse

Rosemarie: My name is Rosemarie, and I met my husband who was in the United States Marine Corp. I met him in 1980, and we have been together ever since. He did a lot of things in the military. He's a Vietnam veteran, and served a couple tours over there. He talked a little bit about it. He seemed very well adjusted, soft spoken. He was a different man completely, and we married. We had one child, and then we had another child and that child was burned when he was 14 months old. He stopped breathing and Mike picked him up and pulled up his shirt to revive him and all his skin came off, and it immediately put him back in Vietnam in a situation that he experienced, and our lives changed forever from that day.

He had been able to cope prior to that didn't know he was coping. It was just suppression, suppression of thought. People didn't want to hear it and he just got into a mode of not talking about it, and once that happened with our son nightmares started, just horrible, horrible repercussion from that happening. He immediately tied it to Vietnam. I could just see Mike spiraling. He was just not the same person. He comes out of his nightmares and he's sweating, and he's screaming. I had insurance at the time where I worked and I told him, "Maybe you need to see a counselor."

I just started kind of networking and talking to people, and is there help, I don't know what to do to help him. At the Vet Center, I think they may have had a couple one-on-ones, but they put us into weekly counseling, one week the vets were together, and the women were together, and then the next week they combined us. So, it alternated that way. It was so informative. It was, we were there for 4 years. It taught us, just the grieving process, that fact that, so many of the vets just never had an opportunity to grieve over anything. Our group got very, very close and, there was a lot of friendships made. It gave everybody tools, tools to work with on communication skills, being able to express, and sometimes the most difficult part is the realization that it's time to reach out and you do need help. You're trying to maintain a family and a life, and you're trying to work on the things that you need to work on to make yourself better. Sometimes, the longer it takes us to reach out, the longer it may take to get through it.

The spouses out there that are faced with the challenges, it is absolutely worth the risk. We are very instrumental in being able to help, and sometimes we need help in order to do that. It will bring your man back to you. It can help, you have a relationship that you might not otherwise have, and through it all the lessons that we learn as supporting individuals are priceless.



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