

## Helping Veterans with patience and understanding

**Divita:** My name's Divita. I am, I guess, Leif's girlfriend. When I first met Leif, you know, when you first meet somebody, there's a little bit of showing-off period. So, you know, he was fun, fun to hang out with, very charming. You know, we would laugh and have a good time and then, it was probably just a few weeks later when, you know, we started to really get to know each other that I noticed he didn't want to go out as much. I guess you could say, he would isolate or hibernate or things like that and I would call him, and he just always seemed down. But knowing that he was an Iraqi Vet, my father is a Vietnam Vet, so I kind of understood.

As the relationship grew, I saw more and more of the symptoms and how it affected him, you know, relations with just his friends, his family, even with myself when he'd go through his different moods of depression or, you know, his highs and his lows and things like that. The most important part is that, you know, I just stay with him and just keep it calm because I've noticed that if something gets, like if my energy gets high or if I get angry, he gets angry and then, you know, our communication is just gone and he's in a different mindset that, you know, I recognize. And when he's in that mindset, he almost looks like he's back there, you know, in Iraq. He still gets that. I've known him for over two and a half years now and, you know, and his episodes do still come. They're actually farther in between now which is nice and I think the more he talks about it, the more he embraces it, the more he accepts it.

When I first met him, you know, he talked about the VA and going to the VA and of course, me being a Vietnam Vet daughter, you know, we didn't hear great stories about the VA or hospitals in general. So, you know, he would talk about it and I'm like, "Oh, okay." But then he would tell me, oh he didn't go to this appointment. He forgot about that appointment and things like that. So, as our relationship grew and, you know, I started becoming more a part of his life, he would say, "Can you help me remember my appointments?" And so, no problem.

And then he started asking me to come to the appointments with him because he couldn't remember things that happened to him during that week and the doctors really have, you know, they sit there. They listen and they really understand PTSD and how it affects, you know, people and how to get them out of it. They don't talk down to them. They don't say, "You should do this. You should do that." You know, they've allowed Leif to talk about it and just, they kind of direct him, like you know, "If you ever feel that way, you know, what are things that can help you stay calm? What are things like hobbies or things that you can do?" Then, there's the medication and they're very patient about finding the right medication for him. It's not like, "Okay, take this and you know, you'll be fine." It's like, you know, "If it's not working, then we'll try something else." So, they really work with him in the program in helping him get through these emotions and feelings that he has.

It takes a lot of patience and, you know, first of all it's understanding, patience and then love. If you really love that person then, you know, just be patient and try to really understand. If you see the symptoms of them, you know, not motivated, not wanting to go out, not doing the fun things that they used to do, you know, don't be afraid. Go online, look up PTSD. You know, look up, you know, if there's a VA near you or, you know, other military programs because there's so many out there that can help.



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

**MAKE THE  
CONNECTION**



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

**MAKE THE**  
**CONNECTION**