

## A Veteran doesn't always ask for help

**Tiffany:** My name is Tiffany, and **Reagan's** my fiancé. We've been dating for about three years, and in that three years he's pretty much adopted my two children as well as his own. It wasn't until a few months into the relationship that I started seeing some tendencies, and I knew that he had an extensive military history and served our country in the most honorable way and had gone through pretty much literally hell and back, but I had no inclination of what that really looked like until he really started opening up, and come to find out he really didn't talk about it to anyone, and when he did start opening up it was quite scary, it was startling, because it was very graphic and something that my brain could not comprehend. It was very hard to visualize but it was very real, and just he allowed himself to be vulnerable at very small moments, but then what would happen was a lot of just that—those overwhelming emotions that he dealt with on his own would storm out of him in the very most unreasonable ways, and that was when I knew that I was kind of in for more than what I realized in the beginning.

We've recently started in on some counseling, for him, for me and for us, because it's a trickle-down effect. It's not just about him anymore and it's not—I mean, we have two children involved, you know, it's very much a process that affects, you know, all of him. At first he thought it was just about him and he could deal with it and "This isn't anything about you, Tiff, or the boys, this is all about me," but it took a while for him to see that there were kind of devastating effects on myself and on our kids now and he didn't want that, no, he doesn't want that. He wants just like any man wants the very best for his family, and it took a lot because he thought he was strong enough to handle it, but he realizes that actually the wise, manly thing to do is to go get some help, because we all need help sometimes and it doesn't make us any less of a Marine, in his case, or any less of a man, or any less of a human. That's what a—you know, humanness is supporting one another and working through those really traumatic situations so that you can power through and move forward with a much more pleasant, healthy, you know, whatever norm is for you and your family kind of life.

I would say to fellow spouses or loved ones of a Veteran that it takes gentle prodding, it takes a gentle, constant push because a Veteran doesn't always ask, because they're used to being the one that's turned to in the time of need. That's their call of duty, but I think our call of duty is, as the support system, is to not allow it to go unseen and continue to help them fight the battle that isn't always seen. It's about really understanding that person that's going through, you know, some of those symptoms, some of the areas that we can't all understand and just helping boost them and giving them the tools that they need in order to manage it themselves.



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