

Counseling strengthened her family

Amanda: I am Amanda and my husband is Jason. He is currently serving in the Air Force and he's been in for 16 years at this point, Security Forces. We've been through five deployments together and most of it's been, actually all of our married life has been overseas. You find the silver lining so to speak because you're forced into those very stressful situations and the time apart and you're forced to examine yourself and your relationship, and how you deal with stress and how you deal with the separation.

I sometimes find that the point prior to him leaving is as rough as the rest of it because you know they're going, you're not making forward progress yet because you're not doing a countdown. The only countdown you're doing is the countdown to the day that they're going and that's not a fun one. Once he left though, I think it was the, it was a good 24 hours if I heard from him. I had two children, so you push onwards. You take them to school, you take them to their activities, but it doesn't leave you, it's there still and even though I thought I was actually coping well, I thought I'm like rocking this deployment out, I'm doing that sort of thing and then started having panic and anxiety and I think the difficult thing was that, there's my husband that's in a combat situation and I'm the one back home in the cozy cottage in England that can't cope with it.

There's also almost a feeling of guilt. I kept it quiet. I remember I called one of the spouses and I said, "I know, I know where he's going, I know what his job's going to be and I can't, I tend to plan for worse case scenario and I can't plan for this, I can't cope with the worst case scenarios." Speaking with her, she recommended other areas that I could seek counsel I suppose.

I went in and I knew that just that I'd had the stresses that I had on the previous deployments that weren't in combat locations. I said, "I'm concerned that I'm going to have some difficulty, I just would like to learn some coping mechanisms." And I was looking for non-pharmacological ways at that point just to try to head it off if at all possible, and then she referred me to a Counselor off base, and I utilized some other, the military family wife consultant as well. We just went through different coping mechanisms, but relaxation, meditation, exercise. She helped me to focus on step-by-step and not thinking, how am I going to make it next week, how am I going to make it. It was more, what's right here. Literally one foot in front of the other.

I think with the children, they're very in here and now. They were okay with the buildup to the deployment, it was just once daddy was gone, then all hell broke loose at that point. But it was phenomenal for them to go to the military family life consultant because, it was just such a lowkey, it wasn't like going to the Doctor. There wasn't a negative, I wanted to make sure that they understood that there isn't, there's nothing wrong with going in and talking to somebody and you're just going to talk to this nice lady for a little bit and she's going to direct you on ways to deal with some of the feelings that you have and some of the anger that you have and that you're missing daddy. And even while they were in the sessions I was learning as well because I was learning ways to cope with them and the reason that they were acting out in some ways or that they were having difficulty at school or not sleeping. I would definitely recommend doing the same thing because an assignment is not a lifetime, and the things, marriages can end, children can, it's just things can go horribly, horribly wrong when you're not dealing with it and you don't have an outlet for it.



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I know now that when I start feeling those, someone sitting on my chest and the whole, I'm able to help the process. It's not perfect now, I think, because it changes you, it changes your family, it changes him permanently, but it's not a negative thing. You can learn positive things about yourself and about the way that you cope. It continues on, but it does get better. It does get easier in asking for help. We're not alone. There's a whole network of people that are experiencing the same things, and there's so many resources that are available, ask for help because it's out there and its' made me a better parent, it's made me a better spouse, it carries over into all other areas of your life because everybody experiences stress in one form or another. I can't say enough that once the conversation is started that you are absolutely not alone.



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