

We can open up and be a much happier family

Kelly: I came home from Afghanistan and I'll never forget it. It was about 5:30 in the morning, I had my daughter in the backseat, and I had told her to put her seatbelt on and she couldn't get it buckled. And I had gotten so angry that I put the car, I slammed it in park, and I got out and I snapped her seatbelt in.

And it wasn't until I got to the stop sign and I had looked in the rearview mirror and she had her head down and she was crying, and I just, I looked at her and I said, "What's wrong with you?" And she said, "I'm sorry that I made you so angry. I just couldn't see." And that's when I knew I really needed to do something to not be so angry, because I didn't want to hurt her.

David: I kind of developed a very healthy alcohol addiction at that point. All I could think about was my kids. I was like, you know, I wouldn't want my daughter to see me like this the rest of her life.

Ponce: I was not able, at the time, to process a lot of the frustrations that was going on. I would disconnect, right? So, I'm coming home and they're, hey, Dad! How's it going? I'm going, I'm doing well. Just give me a minute. And so I go disconnect. They want to, like all children want to, right? You know, Dad, what's going on? How's it going? I would disconnect.

Jennifer: I snapped one day and I almost hit my daughter, just because she was saying, Mom, she just, Mom, Mom, Mom, like kids do. And I snapped, that...it was nothing, what did I snap over? So I called my husband, crying, like, hey, can you come home? I need to go to mental health. And then that's when I started going to mental health.

Ponce: It came to a head, and resulted in me having to seek, actively seek, assistance with specifically the Department of Veterans Affairs. They have what's called the Vet Centers, and the Vet Centers are just, is one more tool in mental health, and which, in my case, you would go to six to eight weeks of whether it be group counselling or individual counselling, individual assessment. It's free.

Marcus: It gave my kids the opportunity for them to speak. For them to give their knowledge and their experience at their age the best way that they understood it. And to my surprise, they understood quite a bit. They understood when I was stressed out. They understood what I was doing when I was drinking. They understood what I was doing when I was happy, the things that we liked to do as a family.

Jennifer: Now I have those tools that not only help me, I have tools that I can help my kid with, which is really cool, too. And me and my husband get along a lot better now. And so it was like my therapy actually helped everybody in the house, because now I get to share my experiences and my tools. And we just kind of share our experiences. So now we can open up and be a much happier and more honest family.

Ponce: It's allowed me to be more human with them, and patient and tolerant with them.

David: Everything I do is for them. Everything. And I am a better man.



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Jennifer: A better mom.

Ponce: A better dad, a more compassionate dad.

Kelly: And I have the tools that I've learned through therapy to be able to help guide her into being a better person, as well.



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