

## **Better Together**

**Peter:** My roommate walked in, and he added some of his friends, the new troops that came, and one of them happened to be my future wife.

**Kelley:** I looked at him, he looked at me, and it was instant. And as soon as I saw him, I knew I was going to marry him.

**Peter:** Next month it will be 23 years later. You know, I was suffering. I was in pain, and she was suffering in pain.

**Kelley:** They told me I had fibroids, they're hard, fibrous mass, and they were in my uterus. And that's what was giving me all the pain and making me so miserable. There was only room for one sick person in my house, and that was Peter.

**Peter:** I was injured just doing my normal function of security forces. You know, I had some autoimmune issues. I developed problems where I was just falling all the time. Like I'd be walking, and next thing you know, I'd fall to the ground. It was a horrible time to not have a purpose.

**Kelley:** In my mind, he was a lot worse than me. And then, I could just help myself once I got him in a better situation.

**Peter:** You got two depressed veterans in a household, and we became just roommates.

**Kelley:** I was emotionally unavailable. He was going through a bunch of chronic pain. So was I, but I was masking it with going to work every day, and drinking, and my pills. I thought I had everything figured out. Really when I got sober, it sent Peter into a place of healing as well.

**Peter:** She went down to the psych unit. Because my wife was stigma-free about it, going to address her mental health challenges, she gave me the encouragement that I went in there right after her and I started getting some solutions in that actual psych unit.

**Kelley:** It allowed me to get a little bit of clarity that I wasn't a bad person. I was putting things in my body that didn't allow me to do the things that I normally would do. So, then I was able to help take care of him, and everything completely changed.

**Peter:** The VA made my wife, my caretaker. They gave her the training to how to be able to be of service to me so I can deal with these incapacitating disabilities that I have.

**Kelley:** The caregiver program allowed me to have flexibility so that I could be there for Peter without having to worry about taking a hit on our income. The VA played a very important part in that, especially when we went to the War Related Illness Clinic.



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**Peter:** They recommended a recumbent trike. It's a three wheel bicycle. Recumbent trikes have electric assist on them so even if you can't physically pedal, you can pedal by itself. It allows me to get outdoors.

**Kelley:** And he would just be so happy on that bike. And his legs were getting stronger. He went from a three-prong cane to a one prong cane. It was exciting. So, we just said, you know, every veteran should have access to it.

**Peter:** Through our nonprofit, now we can feel like we're serving together again. The VA was able to help us both stop suffering so much, and that gave us a spark in our relationship.

**Kelley:** I didn't even get my husband back, I got something better, because he's a completely different person than I ever even thought I married.

**Peter:** It's overwhelming just to know that I'm going to be married 23 years next month.

**Kelley:** It's like being in love all over again.



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