

## True Partnership

**Daniel:** My name is Daniel. I served 10 years and five tours in the United States Marine Corps, from 2004-2014. Iraq, Afghanistan, Africa, Mediterranean all over the place.

**Sara:** My name is Sara. I am currently in the United States Navy, onboard the USS John F. Kennedy, stationed Naval Base San Diego. Going on 19 years this September actually retiring next year.

**Daniel:** So, her brother is one of my best friends.

**Sara:** I hadn't seen my brother for 7 years and he was at Sobe, Japan on deployment.

**Daniel:** And she came out there and we kind of started a relationship at the end of the week and she came back out here to Pendleton, but I was still stationed in Lejeune at the time. So, the entire year and a half, first year and a half of our relationship was long-distance.

I had recently gotten sober. I had been sober about a year by the time we met. It was just one of those things. If we had met each other a year before or a year after it wouldn't have worked out the way it did.

**Interviewer:** How did your addiction problems start?

**Daniel:** I was an addict in high school, drinking partying doing all that crap. It bled over into the Marine Corps years. Then throw in being a Marine, PTSD, Combat Tours, being in a motorcycle club, all these things just compounded that. I was just a really bad dude.

When you really come to that point to where your life is going to take one path down a very dark road, or you go the opposite way. Unfortunately, a lot of people just go down that dark road and that's what led me to decide to get sober. Then that's when we had met, like I said about a year into it.

**Sara:** When we first met, what was pretty awesome is that he was really in a point in his life to where it was just about honesty, 100%. There were struggles in the beginning with some alcohol stuff but then you just communicate, and you talk through it and it's gotten so much better and we've gotten so much better as a couple just straight from the honesty and communication. Just going through some of those tough times.

**Daniel:** She got introduced to all the PTSD stuff all at the same time. I was transitioning out of the Marine Corps, we had a brand-new baby, I was becoming a civilian and I was a spouse, so we were going through all this crazy transitioning.

I lost an identity. I lost who I was. My entire life was being on active duty and a United States Marine, a leader in the Marine Corps and now I'm not. You have this bond that is closer than anything else you have ever experienced your entire life and then when you get out, you don't know how to connect with people. You don't know how to connect with yourself, all this stuff is gone. That abandonment can just be devastating.

**Sara:** At the very beginning it was hard for me because there is just certain things that were triggers or him telling me, "We cannot talk about this right now, I'm not ready to talk



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about this right now.” And you have to just sit back and listen. Everybody needs some space, and he needs time. He has good days and he has bad days where sometimes the PTSD kind of gets him a little bit. Almost as you step through the door you notice but that’s where, “Ok he is struggling today” so I’m gonna step in and he needs his time to figure out what he needs to figure out.

**Interviewer:** How do your children help motivate you?

**Daniel:** The first thing that I remember thinking when Abigale was born is I have never loved anything in my entire life, just in comparison to this little human being. That’s what really kind of completely altered my path in life because I think about her future, what she is going to be like as a child, as a teenager, as an adult. That has definitely led to bettering myself, trying to better my family, my friends, their family, trying to better the world that my daughter, my children grow up in.

**Sara:** You need to be honest with yourself. You need to realize that as a person and just be like “If I need to go get help somewhere from the VA, from the therapist at the Military hospitals then that is what you need to do.” There is nothing wrong with checking yourself.

**Daniel:** I very much suggest people go to credible counseling, and when I say credible, people who can really truly connect to you. Because if you go to counseling and it’s a complete negative experience, it’s going to turn you off, and that can happen. So, you got to find something that is going to actually work, and you are going to feel comfortable with.

**Sara:** Daniel has reconnected with his other buddies from the Marine Corps. That’s good therapy.

**Daniel:** My Brothers’ back in my daily life has drastically improved my daily quality of life. So, I tell dudes all the time “Man connect them, reconnect, bring your guys back into you, surround yourself with the people you care about, and those that care about you.”



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