

I thought, “I don’t have PTSD. That’s not me”

Marylyn: Twenty years ago I was in the field in a situation we didn’t know how it was gonna turn out. We didn’t know it was going to be a short war as far as wars go. But psychologically you still go through the same process as when you’re going to war and when you’re initially there that everybody else does that’s in a longer war. Some of the things that you experience while in that environment you still deal with them 20 years later. Post traumatic stress disorder is one of those things. I think having had that experience it’s made me a lot more sensitive to other people that I see symptoms of PTSD in. Even if they’ve served in conflicts prior to mine like Vietnam or even World War II, Korea up to the present day I can pick out the symptoms in others because I’ve experienced myself.

I had no idea that I had post traumatic stress disorder. Actually I returned in ‘91 and it was 10 years later before I had a personal traumatic even and all of the memories from my military service in Saudi Arabia during Desert Storm rushed back and I found myself at the VA Hospital talking with a counselor who suggested I speak with a lady at a place called The Vet Center. After a couple of sessions with this therapist who incidentally did save my life she told me, she said you have post traumatic stress disorder from your military experience. My initial response was “I don’t have that, that’s not me.”

Well hindsight, which is always 20-20, I was having symptoms since I returned from the Desert. I just was able to minimize the symptoms and go on with daily life, but at the 10 year point one of the things I was doing is that I did not talk to anyone that I served with. I had no connection with anyone. I would not...I lived here in Houston and I would not go down the street that my reserve unit was on for 10 years. I never went down that street and I worked in the medical center close to the unit, I would never go down the street the VA Hospital was on, I had nothing to do with anything military and I never ever mentioned anything about me being in the military or anything about my military service.

And that is a classic symptom of PTSD, the avoidance, the numbness.



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