

Finding PTSD relief through effective treatment

Keyla: My name is Keyla. I was a major nurse officer in the US Army. I was in charge of the enemy's prisoners of war, POW unit, in Baghdad. I was born in the Dominican Republic. And when I was a little girl, there was civil war going on. So, one day, my father came in and he says, "We need to leave." And while we're waiting at the airport, I see this green giant plane landing out the window, and I'm like, "Daddy! Daddy! Who's that green plane? Are they good? Are they bad?" And he says, "That's the United States of America, and they're good. They're going to take us out of here. We're going to be in a safe place."

So, I told my dad when I grow up, I'm going to serve that country that took care of us. So, that's what brought me to going to the Army.

I was assigned to be the nurse manager, the manager for the enemy's prisoners of war in a medical unit and the detainees. It was really tough, really tough, and you as a leader have to compose yourself. You've got to take it in.

I used to cry every Friday in Iraq. I used to go in my room and just cry out. That was my way to relieve the stress. I couldn't cry in front of my soldiers. I suffered like they did. And that's, I don't, I think another reason why I, you know, it got too hard on me was because I didn't have anyone to talk to but myself and cry myself out.

One day, I got, I think it was the stress. I had this horrible pain and I couldn't move. So, I went, you know, they rushed me to the, to the doc in the yard and he says, "Oh, you have some issues." So, they operated on me and then they sent me to Germany, and it was like boom, boom. Then, I had these, all these images in my head. I was like, I felt bad, you know, I got to leave, abandon my unit. What's going to happen to my kids?

I was, like, the rock, the mother. I was everything. Even for my patients, they, they only wanted to talk to the Major. That's, they just wanted to talk to me. They didn't trust anybody else.

I left the military in 2005 and I took a year off. It was, it was, like, I was a different person. I had these nightmares, you know, that something was going to explode and I was going to blown in pieces. You know, hearing all these bombs and explosions every day, it was, you know, it stuck to you. It was like, I couldn't, I couldn't sleep. Couldn't go anywhere. I was, I was scared. I was, I was detached.

I kept to myself like that until 2007. I started working and I heard, my second week, towards the end of the orientation period, I, they played the national anthem and they have pictures of soldiers and stuff. I got goosebumps. My, all, I just, like, I just, it was like I panicked. I'm, like, I started crying and crying and crying. I told the lady, I, "You have to excuse me. I got to get out of here."

So, I was walking into the mental health walk-in clinic. I started talking and crying and crying, and she, she told me, "Have you ever been treated for PTSD?" And that's when I decided I don't care what. It's my life. I've got to take care of myself. I can deal with—somebody got to help me.



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

**MAKE THE
CONNECTION**

So, she hooked me up. You know, I started talking to a therapist. I started getting relief. I started feeling a little bit more content. I was more safer. Up to now, I still see my therapist. It's getting much easier, yes.

There's a lot of people out there that were like me that are suffering, that are struggling, with whatever it is, PTSD, sexual trauma. I feel so good for the care that I got at, that it's like, I want to tell the whole world out there, go seek help. There's help out there.



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

MAKE THE
CONNECTION