

Dealing with the aftermath of deployment

Rebecca: The worst time he ever went through, I think, well one of them actually was, you know, of course right after his third deployment and that was the worse deployment. I mean, he had a difficult second time, but the third time he was hit by several IEDs. You know, which he got a Purple Heart from and he had a whole bunch of friends die. He saw a lot of hard things and had to do some hard things and it all really was, you know, messed him up. At the time, you know, so as he tells me when he was there, you know, he was in the war zone. He had a different mind frame and he was, you know, he just kind of forced himself to become numb and desensitized to a lot of things so that he could cope and do his job and he did his job well.

But unfortunately, when he returned, he was in a safe place to deal with things and so naturally, it all kind of came out and was on top of him. He was no longer numb. He was still very numb, but it is very hard to explain and I don't understand myself because I have never been through it. But, you know, when he came back, it kind of came back in the form of, you know, flashbacks, nightmares, alcoholism, stress, anger, you know. He tried hard not to shut off from me, but he was shut off from me emotionally and also when he came back, I didn't get to see him straight away. We were still long distance and he kept most things from me, but I already knew that he was an alcoholic at the time when he first came back because, you know, he'd call me and I could tell he's drunk and he'd try really hard not to sound it. And then when I saw him again, you know, I found that we were fighting more and I was thinking, you know, we don't get to see each other often, why are we fighting? You know, why are we so stressed and everything? And I couldn't really put my finger on it and I was like, maybe we're just not, you know, why are we not meeting eye to eye? Maybe we're not right. But I shouldn't have been thinking that way. I didn't know about PTSD. I'd never heard of it before. I heard of like war shock or battle shock or, you know, that sort of thing, but not an actual diagnosable condition. So, it never even occurred to me, you know, that there was something, you know, affecting him that was out of his control.

And he just approached me, you know, he talked to me on the phone one day and he said, you know, I've been doing a bit of Goog-laying and I've been putting things together and I've been realizing that I have certain symptoms. I think I have PTSD. So, I am going to the doctor. I'm gonna put it to them and see what they think. And sure enough, he was spot on. I mean, I didn't realize how common it was. I didn't really know how to support him, I just wanted to be there for him. I wanted to be someone he could talk to whenever he wanted to, but you know, he didn't feel comfortable telling me everything he'd seen and done. You know, and of course as time went on, he gradually felt comfortable that I could handle it. But I had to really try hard to make sure that I didn't act shocked. You know, I wasn't gonna come out and be like, I can't believe you did that or I can't believe you saw that, you know in a kind of judgmental way. I had to be understanding because I know that he's a good man and, you know, he's had to do some hard things, but you know, it doesn't make him a bad person. It makes him a hero, but he didn't feel like one.



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