

## Reclaiming Happiness

**Daniel:** I'm in a good place where I feel happy and I would have given anything for this happiness several years ago. My name is Dan. I served in the U.S. Navy. I was a mass communication specialist and I served from March 1993 to March 2020.

**Gemini:** Daniel and I met overseas and we both joined the same theater group. We were cast in a play together. So I was actually cast as his wife. We were married in 2000, so it's 20 years this year.

**Daniel:** As part of combat camera, what they do is they go out, they document anything from natural disasters to certainly combat. We flew all over Iraq. I never felt that I was in any danger and people weren't shooting at me constantly. I mean, mortars were falling but that happens wherever you're at. I was stationed in Japan, I was able to work in a Naval air facility at Misawa. There was a 9.0 magnitude earthquake that triggered a tsunami and then ultimately a nuclear meltdown. Six weeks following that is when a lot of the areas were unapproachable. We were able to get out and supply a lot of the first imagery that was picked up by the news organizations around the world.

**Gemini:** I think that that might've had an effect on his mental health. I think the larger effect on his mental health was probably his tours in Iraq.

**Daniel:** After I returned from Iraq, I would wake up very concerned and I couldn't really figure out what made me so anxious and nervous and it's a terrible feeling. I would go to work sometimes with two or three hours of sleep. Trying to come home, eat, fall asleep on the couch, and then it's midnight and I'm up and I'm very alert. So that meant me getting out of bed, going into the living room or wherever I felt like I had the most control.

**Gemini:** He would have to constantly do perimeter checks, check the house. There was a long period of time where he couldn't sleep in bed.

**Daniel:** But I've gotten so used to it. Eventually I started sleeping on the couch sometimes five, six days out of the week. I was really reluctant to talk to people about this because it feels like cowardice almost, that I should be able to suck it up. This is something I should have looked at much sooner, but it took 8 almost 10 years before I actually went to talk to somebody. It's easy to put your own self at the last of your priorities.

**Gemini:** What sparked him to go seek treatment? I remember telling him, "You're a hero to your country. You're a hero to your family. You really need to be a hero to yourself. You need to get the support you need and the help that you've earned."

**Daniel:** I did have a counselor that I talked to for a while. It was actually a telepain clinic that I went to, which I find the most effective thing. It was me doing a teleconference on a screen to a doctor. We would talk approximately two to three times a month, while it is for alternate means to handle pain, a lot of the times, and most of the times as it turns out we would talk about my mental state. He was a great listener and was able to get me out to talk to other doctors whose



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specialty was what I was having trouble with. It was the best thing that I did while I was pursuing my health. We didn't want to diagnose it as PTSD right away. Until it was PTSD it was PTSD like symptoms. We did a combat acupuncture in my ears, there was an overwhelming amount that they could do. I think my wife has noticed a difference in me, I'm able to sleep at night.

**Gemini:** He was more comfortable. He was more relaxed. It was like we had the old Daniel back.

**Daniel:** Just reach out to your local VA or even just a civilian hospital. I encourage you to do this. I guarantee you won't regret it.



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