

A Family's Role

Tony: So, my wife Kacie is the best thing that ever happened to me. She helped get me sober, she supported me through me getting my bachelor's degree in nursing, and she's supporting me now while I'm going to nurse practitioner school.

My name is Tony. I was U.S. Army from 2003 to 2011. So transitioning out, that was a nightmare. Actually, when I was getting out, I kind of was in recognition that there was a problem but I didn't really own the alcoholism thing. I drank during the service and I really started to drink heavily after the first tour.

Kacie: I'm Kacie, I've been Tony's wife. We've been married for just about four years, I think. We've been together for maybe five and a half, I don't know, we're not good at keeping track of it.

Tony: When I overdid it on St. Patty's Day, I got a DUI. At that point, that was the last straw. I was ready to change. And then Kacie saying, "No more. If anything like this ever happens again, I'm out." That's fair, let's do that. Let's stop.

Jeffrey: I've just always wanted kids. So we have Jamie, nine, Naomi's six, and then we have Anika who's four. They're great, they just love to be out and active. My name's Jeffrey. I'm in the Army National Guard. I served overseas in 2010, 2011. Oh man, yeah, I've been shot at, I've been blown up, we've been mortared, rocketed.

Cora: My name is Cora. I've been married to Jeffrey for almost seven years now. Around the time that I met Jeff, he wasn't sleeping, he had limited self-care, he was also just really guarded. Not like in an in touch with his emotions way, but like avoiding emotions, sensitive way.

Jeffrey: I had a really terrible past and then I had a really tough time overseas too. If it wasn't for my wife, I wouldn't be here. I almost committed suicide over this 'cause it was such a mess. I don't know what it was that my wife saw but she noticed something and she took all my weapons and I noticed that there was no weapons around. She was like, "No, you need to call your therapist. You need to actually do something. Don't run from this. This is, um, this is a permanent solution to a temporary problem."

Ruth: Having my family out here has meant so much to me. They are such a fantastic support. I'm Ruth, I was in the Navy in 1986 and 1987. After my service school, I was stationed overseas in the Azores, Portugal and as many people know, I was sexually assaulted over there. And in the '80s, that was a time when they didn't want to acknowledge that sexual assault was happening so they created a fictitious diagnosis called personality disorder. So I lived with 23 years of compounded injuries from untreated sexual assault.



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Butch: I met Ruth working for a blueberry company. She was tallying up boxes while I was raking blueberries.

Ruth: It just clicked and in 1997, we got together and I was really rough around the edges, very PTSD direct.

Butch: Some of the things is she started shying away from busy places. She didn't want to be around that many people.

Ruth: Aside from the self-doubt, a lot of anger, a lot of sleeplessness, a lot of flashbacks. I've always had a problem with my weight. After I was assaulted, I became anorexic.

Butch: And it came along to the point where I said, "You know, you're a Veteran. They should be able to do something. Go get help. That's what it's there for."

Tony: I went for help at the Vet Center, which is great. They helped me as well. They do my counseling for the program that I'm in and everything.

Kacie: Oh my God, it was a huge change. I mean, he just, I can't say he's not the same person he was, but all the best parts of him have come out, even better.

Jeffrey: I found out later that I had PTSD, TBI, GAD, which is general anxiety disorder. It's hard to find someone that you're gonna trust to open up with. I feel finding someone who you're comfortable with is definitely key to healing and progression.

Ruth: I met an incredible psychiatrist and he said, "You're dealing with untreated PTSD." The biggest takeaway was to trust myself, trust my instincts. Stopping to realize that not everybody is my enemy. Nobody's perfect.

Tony: They diagnosed me with moderate to severe PTSD and then I went through CBT, which is cognitive behavioral therapy.

Kacie: And then at some point there, bulbs just started to light up for him and he became so relaxed, so go-with-the-flow and easygoing.

Jeffrey: I wanted to better myself so that my daughter didn't have to live with the person that was so explosive and that was the main reason. Like, once it was pointed out, it was like, "Oh, I don't want my daughter to grow up around that." So I did a little bit of research and the Vet Center seemed like the best bet.

Ruth: I'm a healer, I'm a mother, I'm a wife, and I believe in the good of humanity.



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Kacie: I've told him many times how proud I am of him for doing the treatment, for going through with the treatment when it was so hard and he didn't want to do it anymore and he wanted to leave. Like I said, he's a different person in a lot of ways than he used to be.

Jeffrey: If you can find programs that get you out there like recreational therapies out there, I think because they incorporate your entire family in that process, do it. You know, it's just gonna build strength later on.

Ruth: Having my daughter and having my husband gives me a reason so when I can't see the good, I focus on them and I remember that they are my reason now. They're my mission so that's how I keep going.



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