

Understanding a Veteran's challenges

Felicia: Hi my name is Felicia, I'm Nick's wife. We met and then about a week later he left for his one-month training, which was his pre-deployment training and he was going to Louisiana. And then he left for deployment three months later.

At first it was fine because him and I were getting to know each other and so when he left it was kind of exciting for me and kind of exciting to know that we are kind of embarking on a new adventure together.

We married on his mid-tour leave. So, he had been in Iraq for three months at the point that we actually married and things kind of changed once we got married and he was there for the nine months after that point.

Initially it was kind of nice to get to know each other away from each other but then it was pretty hard once he came back, trying to not only learn to live with each other but to also learn to deal with his PTSD and his deployment issues.

When he got home, I had moved in with my mother at the time to help with our son. And so, we were newlyweds essentially all over again living with my mom and my stepdad and that was hard because he was not only trying to come down from his Iraq experience, but he was also trying to live with his newlywed wife in her parents' home.

Nick had a lot of dark days. He would just stare into the TV and not pay attention to anything around him. And a lot of really quick anger, a lot of quick emotions so we would have a normal conversation and all of a sudden a normal conversation is turned into screaming and yelling and I want a divorce.

I had a counselor at the time who was the wife of a Soldier as well, also the mother of a Soldier so that was nice to be able to come to her and say, "I don't understand what's going on, why is he so mad at me because I moved the cereal box two spaces over, I don't understand what I did wrong?" She'd calm me down and say, "It's not you." And so that was the biggest thing is understanding that his anger, his rage, his depression, his lack of talkativeness and his moodiness had nothing to do with me.

I was very open and honest and wanted the help because I wanted our marriage to work. And that was it and I had told Nick prior to his second deployment when I had first met him and I said, "I'm not going to do this by myself and I'm not going to do this without a counselor if we need it," and he was on board with that.

We both have a... it's another couple, an older couple who's both parties have been in the Service. We can both call on those people and say, "I need help, just walk me through this, let me just vent to you, let me just talk to you." I have also read quite a few books and I feel like that has helped me a ton because I'm able to understand why he would do something that I would not do. It just gives me a better understanding.

Positives have been being able to communicate, being able for him to tell me, "This is what I need, this is what I want, and this is why I'm hurting." That was a big thing, that was a big challenge for him. We just have to work. It's just the communication thing. We're always improving but we can always get better.



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Our son and Nick they get along so much better. I mean the joy that they bring each other is beautiful. You couldn't even imagine it. The way that my son looks up to him knowing that he is not only a Soldier but also a great dad, you can't even touch it.

My strength comes from wanting a happy family and wanting to be a happy person. And it takes a lot of strength. It takes a lot of strength to look somebody in the eye that you love and say, "You do this, or I'm gone." I think even for our Soldiers we have to be stronger than them sometimes.



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