

## A New Mission

**Linda:** My name is Linda. I served in both the Army and the Air Force for 20 years. I served all overseas, but I did deploy to Iraq in 2006 as a combat nurse.

**Steve:** I'm Steve. I was a Navy corpsman but went on to become a teacher for the Department of Defense school systems.

**Linda:** We met, Steve had just gotten out of the Navy and was being a ski bum up at Lassen and I was going to college, and skiing on the weekends, and he hooted at me.

**Steve:** Good-looking blonde. What could I say?

**Linda:** And we ended up getting married after that and started a family. When I look at the injuries that I saw in Iraq, people losing both of their legs, their arms, their life, you know, I felt I was always a strong person. I didn't think that someone who wasn't physically injured could have problems. But the sleeping problems turned into nightmares, and a little bit of isolation.

I think the people who haven't taken a weapon in their arm and shot someone, that sometimes we feel what we did there wouldn't relate to PTSD.

**Steve:** Her mother noticed it right off the bat when she returned. She mentioned to me that she's different, she's changed. It's not the same...I don't know, the smile's different, you know.

**Linda:** It was just, it was hard, you know? He knew I didn't want to do a lot of things like I used to do, but as I got better, we shared a big part of my therapy, which was making a video, wanting to show my therapist what PTSD felt like in my head. And him helping me really helped share my story with him. And I think that was the beginning of him seeing how I felt with the PTSD.

**Steve:** What I tried to do was always to be there. But there's still times where I just would feel angry that things were going on, and I came, I came from the background where you don't really talk about things and so, as a result, I don't deal with things as well as she does. So even this long after it happened, it's still affects me, more than I would think.

**Linda:** Willow really helped me. Willow brought joy in the moment every single day. A dog is not judgmental, they don't care what you look like, they don't care what kind of day you have. They're just always happy. And if you can kind of focus on that and see that every day, it really helps.

But, you know, it's a continual process of getting better, of adjusting and finding other ways to experience life.



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**Steve:** You know, at a certain time, she said, “I feel like I’m feeling life more.” And it seemed, it seemed that she started living in the moment, being there. And I believe that there was a growth in that.

**Linda:** You know, I’m a psychiatric nurse practitioner now and I work for the VA. What you find is people have maybe gone through therapy, but they’re still kind of stuck. And I always, when I sit down with them and they’re being admitted, I usually say there’s like about three things we really got to focus on. One is therapy. You have to process that trauma. Two, there might be medications involved. They help with the symptoms. And three, an area that I don’t think we focus on enough is finding a purpose in your life again. For me, it was going back, getting my psychiatric nurse practitioner, becoming someone that can help.

**Steve:** I think as long as the mission continues, then she continues to improve and heal.

**Linda:** I want to see people live their life to the fullest that have given so much of their life to this country, that I want them to have a good life. I want them to be happy.



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