

A spouse takes steps to help her Veteran succeed

Brittney: My name is Brittney. I was in the army for five years from 2007 to 2012. I'm also married to Joe. I was in Psychological Operations, which has recently renamed to Military Information Support Operations. We had the same job title, the same MOS, but we sort of did different aspects of the jobs. He was transferred to the company that I was in right before we deployed to Iraq, so I sort of knew who he was but didn't have too much interaction with him; we were in different places. But I really got to know him sort of the last few weeks we were there as the new unit was coming in and we were training them up. He went to the Philippines twice before I was even in the army and then Afghanistan before I knew him, and he had the anxiety problems as sort of an effect from Afghanistan, you know, where he saw a lot of action. Like you go to Iraq and then you come home, that transition, you know, it just makes you a little more sort of irritable and paranoid and all sorts of things, you know, because you're just not used to things like crowds or screaming children and like all those little things and so it just kind of puts you on edge until you sort of ease back into it. So, I think you do have that empathy, and I just know probably a lot more people on average that have these problems than the average sort of person in the populace because I've worked with a lot of guys, you know, who had similar problems.

When we first started dating and sort of got engaged, I was deployed to Afghanistan sort of a few months after that. And when I got home, he came down to visit and, you know, just coming back to Fort Bragg in itself was a big trigger, because he had sort of been so far removed as a civilian from a lot of those memories and then he came back to visit me and it just created a really big problem and he actually had an anxiety attack when he was driving home. And so it's definitely trickled down now into sort of changes of scenery, being in new places, it just gives him that automatic sort of response of, you know, every time I went to a new place in Afghanistan something really bad happened.

So, he moved back sort of near where his family, moved back in sort of with his parents. I was still actively deploying and things so it was just better for him to have sort of that support network. Trouble sleeping was definitely one of the sort of initial symptoms of things that were going wrong. You know, you can sort of see when people are anxious they shake or they sort of don't want to talk as much or they sort of talk nervously in a way. So, there is some of that going on and for him specifically, he gets very sort of quiet; he doesn't want to talk about things or he just kind of withdraws into himself. I think that withdrawal from family and friends and things is definitely one of the really big symptoms that become obvious to people who see them every day.

It was definitely really hard. There's a lot of worry that goes with it of, you know, like, "Oh, I know this is going on," so, you know, I worry about how it's going to affect him, especially when you're far away, there's nothing really you can do. You can talk to him on the phone, but I think the counselor he had, just he had a very good rapport with her and she was a really great resource for him. The counseling definitely helped because it sort of gives him that introspective sort of thing, and a lot of the things that you need to do, the counselors a very good guide to them but a lot of them sort of need to be done on your own so they can guide you through. We definitely made sure that everywhere we went, we went there first sort of before he needed to be there for like a real like class or a meeting or for a house or apartment, sort of getting sort of the feel for it and getting used to it so he was pretty comfortable with it beforehand and really trying to make that effort of building good associations with the new places and make sure that I sort of



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check in. He is very open about it, so it's also nice for me that he is willing to talk about it.

I think it's very important to realize they're definitely not the only one feeling like that and that they just need to sort of take that one proactive step to get themselves help. So, the only thing that you really need to sort of overcome that speed hump of like, "Where do I need to get," is just make that first phone call. And when you make that first phone call or you walk into a VA office or whatever it is you choose to do to sort of reach out to somebody, I think that's the most important thing is just, you know, that one-minute phone call is going to be the thing that sort of, you know, can really help you grab that lifeline and get out of whatever sort of problem that you're having and really start to take the steps that you need to take to make yourself better.



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