

"Operation Enduring Wife"

I have been married to a Vietnam vet for almost 37 years. The first few years of our marriage were okay, a few flare up's that I did not understand at the time, but bearable. My life changed dramatically in 1996, he became very distant, angry over nothing and began to have panic attacks. We both were employed by the same company and he started to miss a lot of days of work. One day I had gone to work and told him of a happening there, later that day he called the Foreman and told him " HE WAS GOING TO RIP HIS FACE OFF AND FEED IT TO HIM". The next day my husband went to work with me and the Foreman took him aside to have a word with him about the statement, all was denied of happening. Later on that day the foreman took me aside and said " his Mother had suffered from PTSD and had committed suicide, perhaps my husband should go on medical leave".

We set up all the paperwork for medical leave so that part was settled. I continued to work graveyard shift and dealing with his problems. He eventually began to see a therapist and a psychiatrist twice a month. We went through 3 suicide attempts during a 6 month period. I along with his therapist and psychiatrist were continually stressing the option of going to the VA, he would always say 'NO"! He finally went in June of 2000 and began to see a therapist and psychiatrist there. He was diagnosed with PTSD, we finally have a name for all this "HELL" I have been going through. He spent 2 weeks in the VA hospital with other PTSD patients and came out a new person, so I thought. He was awarded 100% disability a short time later.

We relocated to Texas in late 2004, our son was stationed at FortHood and we wanted to be near him and his family. They bought a home a mile away from us and it was wonderful. We spent most of time golfing on a daily basis and just enjoying life. In 2007, to avoid going back to Iraq for the 3rd time he re-enlisted to go to Fort Leonard Wood, Ill. He thought he would be there for 4 years, in March of 2009 he got orders to go to Fort Bliss in El Paso Tx. and he would be deployed to Iraq in November of 2009.

In early 2009 my husband began to have some medical problems, he had a bout with pneumonia in June and they found out he had gallstones at that time. He had surgery for that in September and then cataract surgery in December. It was a rough year dealing with his health and our son leaving in late November for his 3rd tour of Iraq.

My husband began having panic attacks in November and they steadily got worse. He would wake up one day and be okay for awhile and then it would begin. His heart pounding and total despair for 3 days. He made an appointment with the VA to see a psychiatrist and she changed his depression medication, thinking the old one had quit working for him. We tried that for 2 weeks and no results, we contacted her again and she finally sent another medication to help with the panic attacks. he has been taking them for a week and a half and everything was pretty good. This morning he had a full blown attack again.

I don't know if any of you have experienced panic attacks, it is no fun!! My immediate feelings when all this began is that we are back at the beginning of everything, I am scared all the time again. I have told him that he should begin to see a therapist again and if that does not help go to an in-patient program. He is agreeing at this time to do that , but don't know if he actually will go through with it or not.

In short what I'm trying to say is PTSD is real and will never go away. We are very fortunate that my husband was diagnosed when he was and we don't have to go through that hurdle. I feel deeply for any of you that are living with PTSD. I know the comments that are made, "OH, IT'S ALL IN THEIR HEAD", the relatives thinking "YEAH RIGHT'!, NO ONE UNDERSTANDS!

I wish the best for all of you and your husbands, it is a life long struggle. "THEY SAY LOVE CONQUERS ALL"! I WILL NEVER GIVE UP!

" OPERATION ENDURING WIFE"