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Spouse Calls: Red flags, PTSD and porn

By Terri Barnes, Special to Stars and Stripes
Stars and Stripes Scene, Sunday, May 17, 2009

When military spouses connect on common ground, they can assist each other with information and encouragement. This happens often on the Spouse Calls blog, particularly on the subject of post-traumatic stress disorder and the red flags that may signal its presence. Here's what some bloggers have been saying:

I found horribly violent pornography on my soon-to-be-husband's computer. We both served in Iraq together. He is a very sweet man, never ever violent, never raised his voice to me or been anything but sweet. I was shocked and sickened by it. He swears that he just downloaded the stuff late one night and never watched it. I am not sure I can understand this.

I know we both have PTSD. I am working on myself, going to counseling, etc. He does not have time.

I don't know what to do, but I can't put what I found out of my mind.

— L.O.

Your (fiancé) needs to have his PTSD addressed. You are getting yourself taken care of and that's great! That should give him the incentive to get himself straightened out. PTSD, as I'm sure you know, can be a monster and can sneak up on you when you least expect it. My husband has been on two tours to Iraq — a total of 27 months — and he never sought out help for his. He became addicted to drugs from self-medicating ... He is now in a substance abuse rehab program (followed by) a 28-day rehab program focusing on PTSD.

Are you guys still in the military? There are many resources through Army Community Service and the Veteran's Administration to help you both. The violent pornography on his computer may or may not be his way of coping with PTSD. If it is, it could potentially be problematic.

Talk to your husband and have him attend a counseling session with you. Many therapists will work with husband and wife together. He absolutely must make time to get help. Eventually this will catch up with him and he could possibly lose more than just time.

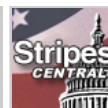
— R.

My husband started out the same way. A few months after he returned home he started looking at porn on the Internet. It was even being charged to our bank account, not just once but several times. That was six years ago; I didn't see that it may have been a sign. Now our marriage is struggling and possibly over, and he can't seem to stop looking on single dating sites (and who knows what else). I don't look anymore; I know enough.

Just sit him down when he is in a calm mood and up for talking and don't attack him about it. Just calmly explain to him that you think you need counseling to deal with all the changes and ask him if he will go with you. Do what you can to get the counseling. I make no promises that it will bring you too back to eye-to-eye, but it helps you one way or the other.

— M.

Terri's note to "L.O.": This is good advice from women who have been there. Do not ignore the



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warning signs that all is not well with your fiancé. Be aware of behaviors that seem at odds with his personality. These are warning signs.

If his true character is sweet and loving, and if he wants the best for your relationship, he will make time for counseling. If he does not consider this a priority, perhaps you should reconsider your future with him. As one blogger said, he has more to lose than time.

Terri Barnes is a military wife and mother of three. She and her family are stationed in Germany. Spouse Calls appears weekly in Stars and Stripes. Write to her at spousecalls@stripes.com and see the [Spouse Calls blog here](#).

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