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Spouse Calls: Stay involved, PTSD spouses

By Terri Barnes, Special to Stars and Stripes

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Spouse Calls bloggers have been discussing the necessity of keeping families involved in counseling for veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder. Here are excerpted comments from two wives:

I went to an appointment at the VA with my husband. His counselor was surprised to see me since my husband told her I wasn't interested in going with him. (I've been asking him to let me go for two years).

My husband went on a rant and got the whole office in a stir. The shocker was that he has never told his counselor or psychiatrist that (we) were having major issues. He told them nothing about how he wanted a divorce, or how he told me he doesn't love me anymore ... or that I am in counseling, or about his drug use, or lack of interest in the family. This whole time I thought that he was in there discussing how to re-connect with his family, but instead he is in there putting me down and making me look like this horrible wife. He never told his counselor what was really going on at home. For two years he has been fooling her.

He started treating me like one of his private soldiers right in front of all of them. He was degrading and loud and ... I was so overwhelmed I had to walk out.

I am learning that I have to work on me. I have to regain my courage and self esteem. I am

continuing with my own personal counseling. ... I'm afraid of living in this yo-yo life forever.

I just want all of you in my position to know that you can feel better, but it will get worse before it gets better. It's hard, but please, for the sake of you, your children, and your family, you need to seek counseling for yourself. I have a long road to travel, but I will slowly find my way. If I can do it, you can do it.

— *M.*

My own husband is in his third detox facility in the past six months. He does what he's supposed to on paper, but not based on his behavior.

The charge nurse called me today and we had a conference call with my husband. She suspects he has sneaked in drugs.

At the end of the call, she asked him if he was serious about getting sober and staying that way. He had no answer. I want him to do well and want to get better. I want him to be the guy I met and fell in love with, but he's not.

I stay in touch with the staff at the facility ... The therapist wanted me there to ensure accuracy of the history that my husband gave her. ... They are definitely keeping me involved, although I'm not sure that this will mean a better outcome for our marriage ...

Before things started to get out of hand, my husband and I began to see a marriage counselor ... After everything was in the open, our counselor had a clearer picture of what was going on and began to see that my husband needed to have his PTSD addressed.

It is a must for spouses to be involved in the soldier/vet's counseling. It is also very important (for spouses) to get therapy ... We are human beings too and should not be left to cope with this

in silence. Lives cannot be paused. Even though we have to use most of our energy being strong for our soldier and our children, we have to go on living.

— *R.*

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

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