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Spouse Calls: Forgiveness key to surviving PTSD

By Terri Barnes, Special to Stars and Stripes

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Much heartbreak is expressed on the Spouse Calls blog by spouses of veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder. One woman, Shannon, has been posting since the inception of the blog associated with this column. She has not experienced a "happily ever after," but maintains a positive attitude and had good news to share this summer.

She writes:

Just wanted to check in ... and see how everyone is doing. I am doing better. I am finally getting past all of the hurt of PTSD. Praise the Lord. It hasn't been easy. John and I are still friends and are actually still legally married. I think both of us don't want the marriage to end, but the way he shut me out of his life during that time was so hurtful. I know I have been there for him or he wouldn't call when he needs someone to talk to. He lives about two hours away with his girlfriend and their baby. I'm okay with that, but it has definitely taken some time.

My new business is going great ... Please keep me in your prayers I have to have surgery soon to remove a pituitary tumor. The doctor said the stress I was under didn't help it at all, so therefore it has grown and is pressing into my brain.

John came to visit me a couple of weeks ago he was so kind. He hates what he has put me through I told him to not worry about it because it is the past, I am looking forward to the future. I hope everyone is doing well. If your husband, fiance or

boyfriend suffers from PTSD, please get help for yourself. I got my strength and help from the Lord.

It is a great feeling to overcome that experience; I really feel for the ones that can't just step aside. That is what the soldiers need. It is hard. My faith is what made it possible. I live life to the fullest now everyone says it's so nice to have "Shannon" back.

I am a very bubbly person. I never realized the impact it was having on me. That is why I stress to wives, girlfriends and fiancées to step away. We don't have a clue what is going on in their minds, but we have to take care of ourselves. I truly believe John didn't mean to hurt me the way he did, and it was up to me not to let it continue.

I am seeing someone who treats me like a queen, I'm definitely not used to that. He was in the Air Force for 10 years; we are taking things very slowly. I never imagined this man would come into my life. You just never know what God has in store for you. It is great to hear from you. I get emails from wives who are going through the same thing I did. I am here to help.

God Bless you all.

It's wonderful to hear from you, Shannon, especially to hear that in spite of your difficult experience with your husband's PTSD that you are overcoming. A large part of this, I think, is because of your willingness to forgive — not to continue to let a person walk over you, but to move forward and let go of bitterness — a decision you must surely renew each day.

To send a message to Shannon and to read comments from other spouses living with post-traumatic stress disorder, please visit the Spouse Calls blog.

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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