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At war with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

When we think about Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, many of us picture a military soldier who has been to war. Another common misconception is PTSD affects someone immediately after a traumatic experience. Many people seem to think time heals all wounds. People also believe that after a traumatic event, one is no longer at risk for PTSD. According to PTSD Alliance, “While symptoms for PTSD often arise within the first 3 months after a traumatic event, many times it takes months or even years for symptoms to appear. To make it even more confusing, some people experience symptoms rather continuously for years; but in others, symptoms may come and go through the years.”

I was diagnosed with PTSD in 2017, at age 20. To my friends, my life may have seemed like I had it altogether, but I was mentally, emotionally and physically scarred. On March 17th, 2000, at the age of three, I was taken from the only person a young child had to depend on... my mother. I eyed the woman in the driver's seat as she started to drive away from the place, I called home. My eyes filled with tears, I burned with hatred. My heart ached with loneliness and my mind filled with confusion. I knew my life would change. “You're useless. You will be just like your mom. You will drop out of school and become a drug addict.” These sentences were repeated to me, foster home to foster home throughout my life. I was physically, emotionally, and sexually abused while in the foster care system.

I tried to forget my abuse from the past. I tried telling myself that time heals all wounds. I felt depressed and guilty for everything I went through. “Maybe it was my fault.” Eventually I just felt numb to emotions. I think about the time when I was 10 years old. One of my “foster

brothers” called me to his room to see a movie. He held me down to the floor to where I could not move. I was terrified. My foster mother was no where near while I cried. I could not sleep throughout the nights that followed. Every time he walked near me, my heart would race. That is when my panic attacks started. I was too scared to tell anyone what occurred that night. I put the blame all on myself. I felt like I should not have gone in that room to watch that movie.

Every foster home after that was a traumatic move for me. I did not know what to expect. Would I get beat with a cord for spilling juice all over my shirt again? Would I be locked in my room without water or a way to use the restroom again? It was extremely hard for me to adjust. All throughout high school, I focused on my grades. I was determined to make it out and accomplish all my goals. My anger and inability to concentrate followed me. There was a time when I thought suicide was the only way out.

In college, I began to see a therapist. She helped me realized what I was going through. She told me I suffered from PTSD and I thought it was strange because I was not in the military. I then did my research and realized that I am not the only one. I technically was in a war all throughout my life. A war without a mother to guide me through. A war to forget my abusers. A war with myself to push and bottle up my traumatic experiences. I was afraid to let men get near me. I am still working with my therapist. Though the road to recovery and healing is a long journey I will finish it. I have a 15-month-old daughter who needs me to be strong for her. I thank God for blessing me with her because she is the reason, I strive to be a great mom. Why I am working on my past to make a better future. I am glad I took the step to seek help. Dealing with PTSD is a challenge. My symptoms come and go throughout the years. I don't think I'll ever be completely healed, but I am in a better space to complete college and to succeed in life. I hope to inspire someone going through what I went through to seek help for PTSD.