

Interview With Dominique

Tell me a little bit about, tell us all a little bit about who you are. Well, my name is Dominique Walker and I am a vet as of 2016 and I'm a mother of six. Whoa.

And I pretty much, I was in the Marine Corps and I actually love the Marine Corps. I didn't really like being in the Marine Corps because of the people, not so much of what it's good for. I loved everything about it, about how the, the way the uniforms were, about how you would have the camaraderie and it was like, kind of sort of a volatile type of thing.

But at the end of the day, because of the people, the new people, the newcomers, everything became difficult. I was one of those people that were very upset and angry and like I ended up thinking about suicide at one point in time myself because it just like, it seemed like there was not enough family there, even though there was people there. It wasn't always everything.

What got you past that? To be honest, I was pregnant and my child gave me a different lifestyle. It gave me something to live for. It gave me something that I felt like I deserved.

While being a Marine Corps, I was hazed. They would constantly pick on me and not trying to be funny, but being a black female in the Marine Corps, it was very difficult. It made things a lot harder.

We couldn't really band together. Every time we tried to band together, it seemed like there was always something to try to tear us apart. And it was always like, this is a men's Marine Corps.

It's not made for women. So it kind of became very difficult. Thinking back along the lines, I've heard that quite a bit.

I mean, I don't have... It's like, if you have tough skin, it's easier to deal with. But for me, I had to make sure... I had to make sure that I wasn't just letting everything get to me, plus actually also counseling. When going to counseling, it made everything more sufficient in my mind.

And it's like, they will never send you to counseling if you ask for it more. So that's how I felt. It's more so if they felt like you had an issue, hey, there's an issue with this Marine, go to counseling.

And a lot of people faked it till they made it. And it just dawned on them and it made it very difficult. And I've talked to a whole bunch of Marines that in all actuality had full force experience because it was one of the sergeants of my ex-husband.

And he actually took it very hard. He took it harder than I did. And me being in the service, like I was used to people killing themselves and because of where I grew up and everything like that.

So it made it more difficult for me to try to be there because I was kind of numb to it. Well, let me ask you, I would say with my personal experience with counseling, it's so important to get a good counselor that you connect with. That is definitely true.

So that must have been one of the keys for you too. Yes. And it's ironic because her name was Samantha Dunn.

She actually was always trying to make sure that she wasn't biased. Well, she was non-biased. Like she made sure that we had to be able to hear her side of how we need to work our steps.

It's something like this. We made sure that we listened to her. She gave us homework to work on ourselves, to be able to have everything understood so that we can hear everybody else's side.

And- But she resonated with you and- Oh yeah. And you knew you could trust her. Oh, absolutely.

Nothing really that I said would go to somebody else. It was one of those things that she made sure that we felt safe. And ironically at the time, my last name was Dunn and her last name was Dunn.

So that was one of the things that actually made me happy. But I talked about suicide with her because from when I was younger, as well as when I first joined the Marine Corps, because it became difficult for me to process on abuse and the traumas. And when, while in the military, PTSD was out of this world.

Every time I wake up, I'm having nightmares. Every time I would walk around, I'm having nightmares. And it sucks because some of the people that were in there, they would tell us the horror stories of what would happen.

I actually firsthand have an issue with PTSD when it comes down to my father being in the military as well, because he would jump out of his sleep fighting in his sleep. And I do it still to this day too, as well. So for me, I kind of like, it took a toll on me.

And it makes people think and want to end things because when you come back in as, not even as a civilian, but as a veteran, it's hard. Like at this point, what are we now? When we were in the military, they would take care of us. They have the capability to make sure that, oh, we had all the healthcare, all the dental, all of everything else.

But when we get out, it seems like, what? There's nothing. Like, then we get berated. We get told that we're lying, or we had to go jump through hoops to get what we deserve.

And I, for one, am one of those people that had to jump through hoops. And it doesn't make any sense to me to have to jump through hoops to take care of my family. And then one as well, when we're getting out, trying to look for jobs, oh, we're too qualified.

In every situation, we're overqualified. Well, what do you want us to do? Present jobs that fits in our job description that we have capability to do. But then it's USA Jobs.

And that's a big one for us and the government because it helps us. But then when we do that, now we're underqualified. And it's a whole hassle.

Hassle to get military benefits, hassle to get healthcare, hassle to get dental care, it's a hassle for us to get jobs. This is why so many people are out on the street. This is why so many people are losing their minds and killing themselves because they don't, when they want to go back in, they can't go back in because they're so broken and torn by everything else.

And then when you try to, even when you can't get back in and now you have to deal with the civilian life, what else is there? We just feel like numbers. But after you've gone through what you've gone through and recovered from that, do you feel like you've got a handle on your trauma and issues and baggage and you're able to handle the struggles now? I can honestly say, based on that question, I can honestly say I'm still working through my process. It's a constant working process.

And when you don't know what's out there to help, it makes it very difficult. I didn't know what was out there to help. I didn't even know I had an issue, to be honest, about everything.

I knew certain things would bother me, but I couldn't put a finger on it. So when going to different situations, going through different situations, like we have courtrooms now that's helping us with this program. And now the program is putting us through different sources and different things that we can do to help ourselves.

I didn't know these things were out here. To be honest, I'm here because of a program. And the program through the court system that I didn't even know about.

Why does it take me to get in trouble in order for me to know that there's things out there to help me? Because I have to dig and research or pay somebody to do the research for me in order for me to get the information that doesn't make any sense. If something is supposed to be helping me, why do I have to pay for it? And it's really hard because it puts me in a down, depressed mood trying to get everything situated. And it's hard.

It's very hard. So at that point, what is the next thing to do? Well, I hear once a Marine, always a Marine. Absolutely, absolutely.

So tell me, you're a vet now. Yes. But do you find support from other Marines? Do you give support to other Marines? How does that work? Well, I would meet Marines every now and again.

And we would say, oh, we're all Semper Fi or stuff like that. And but we'll keep walking past. Because a lot of us, we sit there and you're like, it's in that mindset, which we're stuck in, that, okay, I can still handle this and I can do it on my own.

Like, and then some of those that I was in a military with, we still communicate. But a lot of the times, you had to legit find those people inside in order for you to come out and be able to be supported by them. Because not every veteran is the same.

Because any Army experience is different. The Navy experience is different. The Air Force experience is different.

And so is the Marine Corps. And so is the National Guard and Coast Guard and all the above. Every experience is different.

With Air Force, it makes, like, I've heard the Air Force, and my mom also said it, because my mom's at Air Force Reservists, and she said they treat them differently. I had a friend, one of my best friends, actually, he said they treat them great. When I was in, I was like, where was that treatment when I needed it? They get tense we had to build ours.

They get the beauty of having that luxury. We didn't. They get more money.

We don't. So it's like, a lot of things were different. But right now, the support system that I have, it includes some of the Marines that I moved in.

And then you gotta be careful with those two as well. Not with the friends that you have, legit friends, because even though people that I thought were friends, weren't really friends. And they showed their true colors after they got out of the military.

So it's just- Well, there's gotta be a little bit of a stigma also, and maybe even more so for being a woman. There's gotta be a little stigma, Marine, and a difficulty in admitting that you need and want support. You want help.

Me, personally, I'm an open book, and I speak. And some people, while you're in, they try to say, no, you need to be fit for the mission. You need to make sure you're doing this.

And for me, when I was an NCO, I wanted them to be better. So whenever people come to me, go ahead and go, because I know the pains that I had. Now I'm dealing with the pains while I'm out, instead of dealing with them while I was in.

And now I made it very difficult, because now I'm struggling, and I'm dealing with this pain for the rest of my life. Versus when I, had I been in and wanted to say something, well, not even wanting to say something, but had I been in and said something, then I get pointed out as being a malingerer, or pointed out as somebody that doesn't, that says that pretty much, just the whole, you need to do this, and why are you doing this? And we get scrutinized for asking for help. So in our minds, why would we ask for help if we're getting scrutinized for it? But while I'm out, I don't have anybody pointing any fingers.

I'm hurting, I need help. Hello, I'm over here. So it's easier to do it while you're out.

However, but when you're in for a longer period of time, a lot of people, it takes them a lot longer to do so, because then at that point, they get in their minds, one, I don't need help, I've been dealing with this already, which is sometimes me as well, and I fall victim to that. Or they say, there's nothing wrong with me, because they get that thought process in their head, there's nothing wrong with me. Or maybe even being labeled, and people saying, oh, and it might impacting the career or the progression, yeah.

Absolutely, it's a mental thing. And the military, what they do, like they said, they break us down, then they build us up. So I understand that to a degree, but at the same time, what

are you breaking in a person? How far are you gonna go to get to that particular place, so where you want them to be? How do you know you're breaking something bad? How do you know you're breaking something good? What are you breaking? But there's no question there.

But I understand the whole thought process, because don't get me wrong, I understand the goods and the bads. Because on the good side is I'm breaking everything so that I can get what I need you to do. But on the bad side, maybe that one thing that that person was holding on to actually made them a better person.

So when you were thinking about suicide, the shining star that brought you out of that and gave you a desire to continue was being pregnant and your child. Was that your first child? Yes. And so would you say maybe that a big part of wanting help, wanting to get support and overcome your present issues, one of the motivations is you're six children now? Yes, absolutely, because I want to be there for my kids.

I actually was happy to get out of the military because I had two children while I was in. And they scrutinized me for that. They berated me about everything.

They told me that I couldn't breastfeed, that they didn't even have any place where I could pump. And that is a part of the rules and regulations. Like they sat there and every little thing that I did, they scrutinized me for it.

And if I was pumping or if I had to go see my kids or if I was running late because they had a fever or anything of that nature, it was always a problem. Every single thing with a child, it was an issue. Then they would make fun of those that are pregnant and then they would make fun of the baby or they'll say little smart remarks.

But it didn't really bother me until my child was really sick. And then they started questioning what I was doing, thinking that I was lying because other people were aware, which I understand the whole whole, you don't mess up one and you can mess it up for everybody. That part I believe, I understand.

However, it made it very difficult for me to deal with my kids and have to do my mission at the same time. Because my mindset wasn't on the mission anymore. My mindset was me making sure that I'm there for my child because they didn't support me.

So why should I want to support this situation? Why should I want to make this a career if you're not even assisting me with what I need to be assisted with? I can honestly say a major thing in my life, which made it really bad for me in the beginning, which made me not want to continue after my four years, was when I was pregnant, I think I was like six months pregnant maybe. And they put me on the third floor with no elevator. It was just straight steps and I had to move my stuff myself.

There was no camaraderie. There was nothing. They just hang me out the drive.

Like I get, I came to the fleet pregnant. However, at the end of the day, baby, we're human. We're not robots.

We don't just say, oh, and then they'll do nothing. Like I get it. But at the same time, like you just left me out there to hang the drive.

Why would you leave me out there to hang the drive and you're supposed to be my family? You took me away from my family to just leave me there. That doesn't make any sense. So it made it hard for me.

And I stopped wanting to deal with suicide and seeing it firsthand and the effects that it had to everybody else. I don't want to do that. I don't want to do that to anybody.

I want to live my life and be happy, even though no matter how hard it is, but some people, they don't have that mindset like I do. Some people, excuse me. Some people feel like they don't have anything to live for because there's nobody there to show them.

So I don't know. Okay, well, I appreciate it. Tell me what unit you were in in that.

Okay. And I was in Eighth Communications. Oh, snap.

Bravo Company. And I think that's it. AECOM.

Is that the name it's due, I think it was called? How soon they forget. Let me in. At least you remember Marine Corps.

Once a Marine, always a Marine. No, I was in Eighth Communications in Jacksonville, North Carolina. And Jacksonville is one of the worst places to get married.

It's one of the worst places to have a family because they try to split everything. And that's what my dad was like. I wish you were a San Diego Marine.

I was like, oh my goodness, dad. But I mean, and when you realize and see the difference between San Diego Marines and versus Ferris Island Marines, well, there's a great difference. Then it's, I guess it's where they were and how they raised everybody.

It's just different. It's just different. San Diego's really nice.

It is nice. I was born in California, so I'm aware. I'm actually, my dad was in the Marine Corps and my mom was in the Marine Corps.

And I was born in 29 Pumps, California. 29 Pumps. Hawaii's not bad either.

That's my next mission. It's on my bucket list, I promise. Okay, well, good luck.

Thanks so much for sharing with us. Thank you for letting me share. Okay.