

Adam

One brother (Derrick, 19) and two sisters, Ashley (14) and Lisa (9)

Dad is in the Air Force Reserves

Interests: Playing videogames, hanging out with friends, going to movies, playing soccer



AUGUST 20

Dad is Home...

My dad is one of the coolest, smartest, bravest men I've ever met, but sometimes I just can't stand being around him. He's a doctor—a surgeon—and is in the Air Force Reserves. He just returned from a second tour in Iraq, and he sure acts different. After his first tour, it took us some time to get caught up, but just when things got normal again, he got his orders to go back to Iraq. Now he's finally home (for good?), but he just isn't the same. He gets mad over the stupidest things and spends most of his time in his bedroom or in front of the computer. He's still in "military mode," and orders us around way too much. He doesn't joke around like before, and sometimes just hangs out in the garage by himself. We don't talk much. I almost liked it better when he was gone. It was a lot quieter and less stressful around the house. Ashley, Lisa, and I just stay out of his way. Derrick is lucky—he's leaving for college soon.

Soccer try outs are in two weeks. I need to start running to get in shape.

SEPTEMBER 4

I Can't Have the Car??

Derrick left for college—he was pretty excited to get out of here. I don't blame him. Sometimes I wish I could go, too. My dad and I got into a huge fight last night. I wanted the car to go out with some friends and he wouldn't let me have it. What's going on? I've had my license for 6 months and I drive everywhere. Dad just doesn't get it. Things happened while he was away, and he hasn't caught up with our lives yet. He treats me like a little kid. It's like all he cares about is himself. I hate the way he wants to control me! I don't know what I did to make him so mad, but he sure went off on me.

I've got a big algebra test tomorrow. I can't concentrate on anything. I made the soccer team. It's good to have something to look forward to and the coach is great.

SEPTEMBER 28

What Is Up with Dad?

I've got a big soccer tournament and Dad says he's not coming—some lame excuse about too many people, too much noise, and he can't handle the traffic. Mom will be there, though—that's good. I really cannot believe Dad is not coming. He's quiet and so nervous now—the littlest thing totally freaks him out. Just last week Ashley and Lisa were playing cards—Slap Jack—on the kitchen table, and Dad came unglued. The

sound of them slapping the table really set him off, and he yelled at my sisters. I kinda felt badly for them, so I took them out for ice cream later that night.



IED = Improvised
Explosive Device - also
called a roadside bomb

Anyway, I wish I could have some friends over to the house but I think it would be embarrassing. I never know how Dad is going to act. This stinks.

Dad doesn't sleep much and sometimes I can hear him walking around at night. I try not to ride in the car with him because he drives crazy (and they think I am a bad driver? Whatever!). Dad sometimes swerves all over if he sees any trash or garbage bags. I guess it's because he had to avoid stuff that could have been an IED in Iraq.

Oh yeah, I hate to say this, but I think he's been drinking a lot lately. I see lots of beer cans in the recycling—sometimes he's just a zombie—maybe it's because he's not sleeping at night.

I'm driving again—finally!

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OCTOBER 10

PTSD???

Things have changed a lot around here. Dad has started going to the VA hospital—it seems like he goes up there for appointments all the time. I've driven by that big hospital lots of times but never thought MY dad would go there! The doctors say Dad has PTSD. Guess that's from trying to save so many wounded troops. That's basically all he did in Iraq. He saw so much bad stuff over there that it got to him. I had no idea! He thinks about all the people he operated on and wonders how many lived or died. He says he can't get those images out of his head. He dreams about it and says he sees it all over again when he closes his eyes.

The docs at the VA are really helpful—they have special programs for vets with PTSD. His therapist says that emotional wounds are just as serious as physical wounds, and that we can all help Dad by being patient and supportive. Sometimes that's hard to do!

