

Iraq ◀ 

LESLIE FLEURY



I am Leslie Fleury. I am a Navy Corpsman, almost twenty years and still going.

“When I first deployed, I was at the main base of Al Asad, Camp Cupcake, and it was fairly safe. But then they sent out a group of Seabees to make a convoy staging area, fuel farm, and other construction activities at a Combat Outpost (COP). **I was the only one available to provide medical support, even though I was the only female.**

“I was there for two months living in a tent with a bunch of guys so I would not be alone as one female by herself in a tent. Too risky. More risk: we had rocket attacks repeatedly. Some landed too close.

“When they hit, I put my corpsman bag on and ran about a half mile in the dark to where the corpsmen staged. **I had wicked shin splints, each step causing shooting pain, and I was scared. All I had was my 9 mil.**

“Later, I was part of a convoy team, providing medical support if we got hit. I spent my time running gruesome scenarios in my head so I’d be “prepared”.

“When I came home, I was evil. I had a very short fuse. I dimly understood that I was in trouble. **It was like standing in a hole and everything around me was black.** But just beyond my reach was sunlight and people walking by. Oddly, I didn’t want to get out of the hole. I didn’t know I was in that bad a situation. I did not deserve any help. Then I deployed again, this time to Africa. That deployment did not help my state of mind.

“I heard about Warfighter Advance while I was out there. When I got back to the States, I went, intending to learn what I could to help all my sailors and Seabees. Someone there told me that I could also reach out for help for myself, too. I was stunned by the thought.

“I have a lot of trouble, still, feeling that I’m worthy of assistance because I am so much better off than a lot of people. My husband reminds me that I got shot at. **Warfighter Advance gave me permission to accept that, and to get better, not to be in pain. I do accept that now.** I also realized that while you’re making yourself better, you’re also helping other people.

“Now I’m a Warfighter Advance mentor. I can’t wait to get back to another evolution.”

Leslie Fleury, Navy, 2003 - present