CASAT Podcast Network

Welcome.

We're here with Brittany today and she's going to tell us what it's like to be a family member of a first responder today.

I'm on my own.

Unfortunately Daniel's not here, lucky for him he's on vacation.

Um But we're happy, I'm happy to be here with Brittany today.

So welcome Brittany.

Thank you so much.

So just to kind of introduce myself.

Um Again you said my name is Brittany.

Um I have been, Let's see with my husband for about 13 years.

He has been a police officer For going on.

It will actually be 17 years next year.

We have three Children.

I'm a las Vegas native born and raised nice native Nevadan.

I am also a native.

So red well welcome again, we're happy to have you.

So as we dive in, what is it like to be the wife and mother of a family member of a first responder?

Um I it definitely has its pluses and its minuses.

Um with my husband and his job you get calls at three a.m.

There's sometimes where he'll be up until midnight or he'll be at work really late and then come home and then a few hours later he'll have to go to work.

Um I remember when we had my son and he's one years old right now but when I when he was really tiny and I would just get him down and asleep in his crib and then my husband's phone would ring and I'd like to do the run to try to go and shut it off, you know.

Um So it definitely has its pluses and its minus um I'm very proud of my husband and what he does um He's an extremely hard worker.

Um He is definitely a people person.

Um he loves to help people.

Um But then again like I said there are some things especially now with the environment that I feel like the U.

S.

Is in that can be very anti police.

Um It does make it very difficult.

We've removed any pro police stickers from our cars.

Um We try to kind of keep it to a minimal that people, you know when people ask what he does, we usually just say, well he works for the city um it's just a little easier that way.

Um But I mean he definitely loves his job and loves what he does and so again it just has its plus and minus.

So.

Mhm.

Yeah you talked a little bit about, we've talked a lot on this podcast about sleep and disrupted sleep and so how do you guys manage disrupted sleep in your household?

Like for you personally your kids as well as your husband.

Um I mean unfortunately now we're used to it um we're used to not celebrating holidays on holidays.

Um you know we celebrate it whenever we can.

Um We're used to you know daddy working all different types of shifts um lately he has um with the recent job promotion he got he has been um working days, um which is definitely a plus, but then he's also on call, so he could work a full day and then come home for an hour and then go to work and have to be at work all night.

So um we're used to it at this point, but I mean like I said, when you have, like, especially like when you have a new baby and there's always the struggles, you're always sleep deprived and so that sometimes that just adds to it, but it comes with the territory.

Mhm.

That makes sense.

Um You know, we also have talked a lot about, I hear a lot of adaptability in what you're saying, and so I'm curious, would you say that your family is resilient?

And in what ways?

Um I mean, I feel that my family is very resilient, we tend to kind of, I mean roll with the punches I guess.

Um My husband was involved in Route 91.

Um so he um was working in the infield for when all of the stuff started happening.

Um And at that time we also had two Children under the age of three, and we were doing, we bought an old house and we were doing a full house cut in renovation, and we were living with in our friend's spare bedroom with two kids and two dogs.

Um So then it's one thing that you have the stresses of your job, but unfortunately sometimes that, I mean, and with anybody's job that can enter into your personal life and everything that you have going on, um but especially with him and I feel like with most first responders and with most police officers, um they don't ever catch like a break, they don't ever have a lot of downtime.

So unfortunately even like if we go to dinner or something like that, he feels like he always has to be on and so um that can eventually start to affect your family, um it puts a lot of stress on my husband and then even more so when you have Children, because then he feels like he not also is being having to protect, you know, me, if we go somewhere, but now he's got three kids to protect.

Um so I feel like we've always kind of just rolled with the punches and You know, had to bounce back and when he had around 91 that took, I would say a good year and a half for him to kind of come to terms and resolve some stuff, but that's the kind of stuff that makes you stronger.

So what was it like to be for for you to have your husband involved in that critical incident?

It was, I mean, like, I I'd be lying to say if it wasn't, you know, a really scary thing, um he worked, it was that was a, you know, a three night event, he worked two nights of those of those events.

And and it was really interesting because I remember him calling me about half an hour prior and he was like, you know what he's like, he's like it's really nice.

He's like um everybody here, he he means like the concert goers, he was like everybody here keeps coming up and saying oh thanks for your service, thanks for being here.

Like this was all prior to everything happening.

Um And he's like, he's like this just feels which, I mean it was a country concert, so that tends to kind of go hand in hand, but he's like, it just feels like it feels very pro police and there's a lot of events on a lot of things that he would work that that weren't that way.

Um So I remember him just calling and telling me that and um at the time when he called um and I said I don't know how much you want me to like go into this and stuff, but at the time that he called me, it was about like around 10 o'clock at night.

And um I was working on trying to get both of our kids in bed for the 20th million wake up of the night that they were having um when you have a two and a three year old.

Um So and I remember he called and he just said like I could just hear a lot of noise going on in the background and at first like I thought it was just the music.

Um but then he called and he said he goes, there's an active shooter here, I'm okay, and then the line just clicked and I was like, oh, like, you know, I was, I didn't even know what to say, and of course, like I tried to call him back um because then I'm like, okay, what is going on?

And of course no answer.

Um so so then like, alright, I checked on the kids and I'm like, I'll go turn on the news and see if there's something on the news that I can find out.

Um and I again tried to call him back and no answer.

Um so he finally called me back maybe about like three hours later, that was the first time that he was able to make contact.

Um and it's like come to find out he was working in the infield area that night.

Um so when the shots started, he looked at his partner and they both kind of like, we're like they're supposed to be fireworks going on in the show or I don't remember seeing that on the schedule.

Um you know, and then they both kind of were like, no, that's not what this is, and um so they, you know, both through their dirty weapons and went running and they went around the corner and that was the corner closest to Mandalay Bay and when they went around that corner they just bombarded by bullets and people going down.

Um and so um he gathered like pretty much him and his overtime partner gathered all the people that were in that area and they actually took over and hid behind Jason Aldean is bus and they were getting people onto the bus and behind it and wherever they could to be able to protect themselves um and they were they had to stay back behind there for a long time.

Um They had, I think within their area they had 12 people that were hurt.

Um and they were the furthest from the exit in the medical tents.

So one of the really great things was that he was like, you know, he was like anybody that was there, he said that you know had a belt on or could do anything that could be used for a tourniquet.

They helped and they helped carry people out and um but I mean I know it was a lot for him because he also said that by the time they were able to get everyone in their corner out because they were the furthest from the exit and by the time they got over to the medical tent area um they were literally just stacking bodies of people that had bled out by the time they got them to the exit and of course not enough ambulance, not enough people to get out.

Um And my husband is an extremely laid back person, I tend to be the more high strung uh make more choice type thing and I think he deals with that a lot at work.

So at home he doesn't tend to be that way.

But um it's kind of hard to almost say that like I I lost my husband for about a year and a half after that.

I was extremely thankful that he was not hurt.

We were very blessed but his mental and emotional situation was not the same understandably.

So and like I said, we also were going through a lot of changes at home.

Um but my extremely laid back go with the flow husband.

I could be talking about something like paint colors and he would just completely break down and I'm like this is not a big deal, this is paint colors were in the middle of a house renovation, you have to pick something and he would just snap and that was not his personality at all.

Um And I mean there there were many days that we're just going through the motions and dealing with our kids and trying to kind of make it to the next day.

Um and then it goes from very hard situations like that where everyone at the time in Las Vegas was super pro police because of route 91 what happened to now, what I feel like it's times that we're in right now that is extremely the opposite.

So you just, it's, it's always changing, it's always difficult and and I think that that's one thing people don't look at is there like you know, these are, these are people with families, these are, you know, my husband carried out multiple people that had been shot that night and in my opinion saved lives, but yet now it doesn't feel like I would ever tell someone my husband is a police officer because it's just not like it's not smart, it's not safe, it's not any of that.

Um and it's just interesting because right now with what he does um he now is working um at a different in a different department and it was just funny because when we started having kids and you know, he worked uh he had probably been eight years in Northeast at the time and was working graves and swings and I was like, you know we're having kids, you should start working somewhere else.

But then it's kind of like that was an overtime event that he was working and those things still happen, you never know.

So um it just always has, its pluses and minuses and it's stuff that you just have to deal with.

So I'm curious what helped you and your husband get through that year and a half.

That was such a challenging time After the aftermath of Route 91 Um to be 100% honest for him, it was therapy and communication between us.

Um, like I said, I tend to be the more high strung decision maker kind of day to day in our household and I mean we always discuss the bigger things, but um, I kind of got to a point that I was like, I'm walking on eggshells around you, I was like, I can't do this, I can't have you getting mad at our kids for the smallest things or if I come to you with a question about something we're working on with our house, I can't have you snapping, I can't have you, you know, and I had to come and to him and be like this, this is, you aren't the person that I'm married and that was a horribly hard conversation to have.

Um, you know, and I'm very much the, through thick and thin and I understand what he went through was, it wasn't that situations like that aren't things that they even sign up for.

You can have all the training in the world and that just means you're going to be more prepared, but you're never mentally or emotionally ready for something like that.

And we had to have a lot of conversations and it was really hard because you're like, okay, so I wasn't there, how much do I push him to talk about things.

How much do I, you know, and a lot of with military and police, it's very much that suck it up type of attitude, but that's the type of attitude that eventually will wear on you and cause stress and you know, cause you to not have a good life and um so he had actually gone to one therapist and he didn't feel that the person understood his job or where he was coming from, so then he tried like a few more um and he still continues to go um you know, not as often, but he still continues to go just to kind of work through things and different stuff and um our communication definitely our communication was open before, but it just definitely had to change in the way of me understanding where he's at, and then it's kind of also like he had to understand where I was at because I told him, I'm like, you know what, I'm like this is a marriage, we chose to have Children.

I can't be the only one raising our kids because you've checked out.

Um that's still day to day life and um our relationship is so much stronger because of what's happened, but it's still really difficult to deal with and like I said, I hate when people go, well you signed up for this, I understand that, but that doesn't make it any easier and I think when people look at first responders, our police officers, they don't look at it, like people that have families, people that have kids.

Um and I don't think people think about situations and what um can affect people.

Thank you for sharing all of this because in in today this is what you're dealing with and we really want to understand what it's like for you um at this time and I think kind of one of the other things and it's like I said it tends to be something in, you know, I think police and military um type positions is that they're they're taught like you know to like suck it up and to not show emotion and you know these need to be the people that are able to get things done and be stable in crazy environments, but again that doesn't mean that that doesn't mean that they're not affected and you know and it's crazy because it's like I remember when my daughter was really really tiny um and my husband had a situation in Northeast where he was the first one on a call that a little girl I think around like 1.5 had wandered out an unlocked door and she got hit by a car and my husband was the first one there and unfortunately the little girl didn't make it.

Um But when my when he went in to go talk to the mother, the mother was the one that had accidentally left the door unlocked or ajar and so he's talking to her and in that next moment she drew a knife out and she tried to end her own life as he's standing there talking to her.

So it's it's one thing where then then you want to think, so he already had to go and deal with someone that is his own daughter's age, that has been hit by a car and then deal with the parents and what they're going through and then you then they just go home.

So then he's just supposed to go home and have me be like, well how was your day?

And my little daughter come running excited to see daddy and I there's a book that when my husband and I first got together um that's about the emotional um survival of police and their families.

Um And whenever I meet someone that is like new too, being like a police wife or anything like that, I always like pull up on their phone, I'm like amazon, send this book to your house because it really helps for people to understand the roller coaster of emotions and there's sometimes where my husband comes home that I want to bombard him and be like how much your day?

How is this blah blah blah.

This happened with the kids and he's like I need 15 minutes, he's like I need to decompress, I need to relax and I've had to learn, especially with reading that book um that are type of communication to understand that he needs that time to just get back to normal before he can deal with everything at home or play with the kids or do whatever.

Um, and, but I think that so many times with police and military, they're just hot, suck it up, suck it up.

And that eventually wears on you and you can't do that for so long without it being something that eventually will make you crack.

And so, um what we are religious, we go to church, we try to always have family support.

And I, I also feel like the fact that he has been able to get help outside of it and have someone that can give unbiased, objective opinion on situations that have happened with him is a great help.

So it sounds like you're very, you've been in this right for, however, how long you guys have been together.

And so, um, you, you know how to roll with it and yet it comes with a lot of challenges that wears on you.

Yeah, and I at least that I think that it's, it's just trying to stay together as a family unit.

Um, it's harder for my kids because especially like my daughter, she's getting at the age where now she's reading and she's seeing things that she necessarily doesn't understand and um, we always try to have a support system, but you never know when you're going to be, you know, um, somewhere with someone that might say something to your kids about their daddy being a police officer and we've had situations like that.

Um and so me and my husband, we always kind of have a, if someone says that you need to go, then we get our stuff and we go um but oh, it's hard to, like I said, you want to say like it comes with the territory, but there's things that shouldn't and things that are still hard to deal with and it doesn't always make it any easier if that makes sense, It absolutely does.

So, as we are beginning to wrap up, I'm curious, what message do you have to the family members who are listening to this podcast, What do you want them to know?

I want them to know that there is always help if you need it, there is always someone that will um I feel like step in if you voice that you need that help.

Um I think like I said with my husband um I, we really had to have conversations that I was like, okay, this isn't working, we need to figure out something for you too.

Come back to where you were at previously.

Um fortunately enough um because a lot of wives and families are in the same situations within the police community, they are very helpful.

They are the ones to always step up to always, you know, hey, does your family need a meal?

Do they need this?

Um at least within our community they are um and they, I think your family support is a huge thing, you need to be able to have your family support.

You need to be able to talk to people that are not just you and your husband or people that are just involved in your situation.

I'm very thankful that he has that help.

Um and I feel like I always have someone that I can talk to that understands what we're going through.

Mhm.

Throughout this podcast, we've really heard so much about the importance of peer support um really the relationship between the spouses and the importance of communication and that to get through these difficult times, really, what we need is each other, whether that be the relationship or peer support and when we do go through challenging times, the importance of reaching out to get clinical support such as therapy um in order to support going through something like post traumatic stress.

No, and I think one of also the huge things is that I I wish someone probably a long time ago would have told me like, yes, you will deal with these things because you can always be naive about things that will happen and you're like, oh, you know, and I mean there are plenty of of first responders that have worked their entire careers and it's been pretty like smooth sailing and they've never had things, but I kind of wish a long time ago, someone would have told me, okay, guess what?

Like these are these are things that you are going to have to deal with and to just be prepared because I think there has become so much of our day in and day out that we are just going through the motions that you know, kids home work and not talking about things that really do need to be talked about because especially with my husband, otherwise it got two points where we're like, we're not communicating anymore because of the space that you're in.

And I think that I just wish that I knew that the help was there if I asked for it.

And I think that there are a lot of people that they're like, no, you know, my spouse is okay, but they're not always okay and you have to be able to talk to that and you have to be able to ask for help Yeah.

In listening to your story when you identify, you know, this is not the man that I married and we've got to do something about this.

And you talked about how difficult that conversation was, but yet how critical.

And it sounds like a turning point for you guys as well in growing and um healing from that traumatic event.

And it also comes with the fact of like, you're like, okay, well I wasn't there in that situation, I don't do what you do, I can't say that I understand or that I, you know, you just never know sometimes the right words to say with that and you're like okay.

Like I don't want to say to you, Oh I get what you're feeling because I don't, I only understand my end of it and there's that fine line between your like okay, how much do I push to get someone to talk about something for them to be okay.

And but I mean especially for him, I know that he has definitely, he has reached out to other people that he felt like he was like, hey, you know what like I was in this situation.

This is what helped me if you ever want to talk like and that's not the normal mindset I think of like first responders or military or anything like that.

It's not to like tell people you need help and want to talk about anything.

Mm hmm From what we've been hearing from other families.

It sounds like maybe there's a shift there and an opening and people are starting to talk more about these um difficult emotions that we experience after going through traumatic incidents.

And yet there is still um this badge of honor for staying.

There's still that stigma almost to it that like you can't um You know and my my husband was never someone that he, It was kind of like after Route 91 happened.

You know, people would be like, well maybe you should go and talk to them.

Well no, I don't need to do that and it so many then people saying, well maybe you should, you know, and it's finding the right fit, but it's just not that mentality, they're supposed to be the ones that when everything hits the fan that they're still stable, but you can't expect that from people to then go home and you know, sit and play tea with my daughter and not have any thoughts on our emotions on things that have happened.

So, I definitely think that there is starting to become a turning point with this profession, that it is okay to to be able to talk to someone and it should be offered because you can't have this mentality of suck it up, suck it up, suck it up and eventually someone's going to crack.

Well Brittany, I just want to thank you for sharing your story with us today and really um highlighting the impact that it has on your family.

To me, what just keeps coming to mind is the human experience, right?

So the, the hat that we wear that your husband wears at his job and then coming home and being dad and the impact of, you know, the horrific things that he sees and then to have to, you know, come home and be that person and the challenges associated with it.

So, I just really thank you for sharing your story and your husband's story with us, so that other family members can um here this.

Yeah, I just like people to always remember that.

It's like these people are human.

They have lives, they have Children and they have families and I think people tend to forget that.

Well, thank you again.

We really appreciate you sharing your story.

Thank you so much for having me CASAT Podcast Network.

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