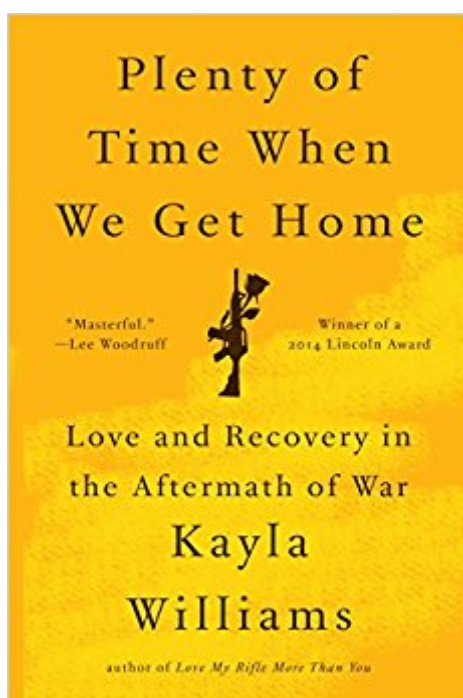


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# Plenty Of Time When We Get Home: Love And Recovery In The Aftermath Of War



## Synopsis

“Intimate and brave . . . a testament to how love soldiers on.” People Brian, on his way back to base after mid-tour leave, was wounded by a roadside bomb that sent shrapnel through his brain. Kayla waited anxiously for news and, on returning home, sought out Brian. The two began a tentative romance and later married, but neither anticipated the consequences of Brian’s injury on their lives. Lacking essential support for returning veterans from the military and the VA, Kayla and Brian suffered through posttraumatic stress amplified by his violent mood swings, her struggles to reintegrate into a country still oblivious to women veterans, and what seemed the callous, consumerist indifference of civilian society at large. Kayla persevered. So did Brian. They fought for their marriage, drawing on remarkable reservoirs of courage and commitment. They confronted their demons head-on, impatient with phoniness of any sort. Inspired by an unwavering ethos of service, they continued to stand on common ground. Finally, they found their own paths to healing and wholeness, both as individuals and as a family, in dedication to a larger community.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

**\*Starred Review\*** In October 2003, Brian McGough, “a soldier’s soldier,” was hit in the head by an IED (improvised explosive device) in Iraq. Shrapnel entered McGough’s helmet behind his ear, “tearing through the scalp and skull.” Sergeant Kayla Williams of the 101st Airborne Division, author of *Love My Rifle More Than You: Young and Female in the U.S. Army* (2005), met McGough while also serving in Iraq. After

McGough returned stateside, they married. Awarded a Purple Heart, McGough was released from Walter Reed and sent back to duty even though he still had a hole in the back of his skull and was clearly suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In this searing and brutally honest memoir, Williams chronicles all that McGough suffered at the hands of his own government and the subsequent long road to recovery. Indeed, Williams's anger is palpable and justified.

"The government that was responsible for sending Brian off to war wasn't going to take care of us—we had to take care of ourselves." This is an important book for returning veterans trying to cope with civilian life and those suffering from a traumatic brain injury as well as their loved ones. And it should be required reading for everyone in health care and government agencies. --June Sawyers --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"A must-read for military spouses, caregivers, and anyone hoping to gain an understanding of the challenges faced by soldiers coming home. Kayla and Brian's perseverance is a tribute to the power of the human spirit to not only survive but to thrive." - Marie Tillman, author of *The Letter: My Journey Through Love, Loss & Life* and founder of the Pat Tillman Foundation  
"Part heartache, hard truth, love story, and an insider's look at the back end of war, this book offers us a look behind the uniforms and the parades and into the damage of war's wounds. In the end, it is a story about how love can ultimately heal." - Lee Woodruff, author of *In an Instant and Those We Love Most*  
"Kayla Williams's raw, honest, and take-no-prisoners prose gives service members and families scarred by war the greatest gift of all—hope." - Tanya Biank, author of *Lifetime TV's Army Wives* and *Undaunted: The Real Story of America's Servicewomen in Today's Military*

Strong!! A follow-up to "Love My Rifle More Than You". Anyone doubting the effects of war on our warriors should read this book by one such female warrior. In growing love with a man who barely survived a critical shrapnel wound to the skull, with severe brain damage, *Plenty of Time...* describes their often rocky relationship and the problems the couple had with society and officialdom in the period after discharge. There were good times also, and these, along with Brian's gradual improvement over time and intermittent treatment, are why Kayla stayed with him. But it was tough, and many veterans don't make it; succumbing to the stress of PTSD, even without such serious wounds. Kayla seems a true warrior, and we should all be proud of our women of war - and

doubtful of those who send them to war.

It was a good read as far as being intellectually stimulating. However, the author seems to like to remind me over and over of her veteran status. She actually seemed to be somewhat condescending and belittling towards military spouses who are not in the military or a veteran. Also, it seemed to boast a lot about her and her husband's career accomplishments. I read the book as a suggestion to help understand PTSD from a spouse's point of view. This book didn't really seem to be very informative in regards to the disorder. I am sure if it is just read as a leisure book it would have been fine, but I was reading for more research and informational purposes.

*Plenty of Time When We Get Home* is a moving and insightful memoir describing Williams' romance with her future husband following their return from Iraq, where he suffered a traumatic brain injury due to an IED. Like her previous book (which I would also recommend), Williams strives to honestly portray not only a chronology of events but her mental state at the time without the benefit of hindsight. Surprisingly, a number of reviewers of her previous book have complained about this straight forward approach. I would guess simply because Williams' honesty makes them uncomfortable. However, I found her stark honesty absolutely necessary in understanding her experiences with PTSD and her husband's cognitive impairment, both uncomfortable issues that are all too easy to pretend don't exist. Her book provides a compelling story about the experiences of soldiers as they've quietly returned home from our recent wars. That being said, I found many of her encounters with the effects of traumatic brain injury eerily familiar on a personal level even though I'm not a veteran. The task of differentiating between the mind and the brain has escaped philosophy in the form of Alzheimers, mental illness and brain injury, and I think Williams' story will appeal on a personal level to many of us even if we never served in the military.

Brian and Kayla met as soldiers. Then Brian was evacuated after suffering a traumatic brain injury from an IED. When they finally got together, two things were clear: they were falling in love and the aftermath of war can be hell, too. Williams' book is a searingly honest account of two flawed vets dealing with wounds both physical and psychological and battling bureaucracy and sometimes each other. There are times when you wonder why Williams stuck it out. But by the end you know it was worth the fight.

Kayla Williams knows how to write, knows how to tell her story. She proved that in her first

memoir, *À Love My Rifle More than You: Young and Female in the U.S. Army*, about her experience in the all-volunteer army and her wartime deployment to Iraq as a SIGINT Arabic linguist. I read that book several years ago, when it was new. I have been wondering ever since what happened to Williams afterwards. She is tiny, but tough, and she made it through that army hitch, but not without her own traumas and difficulties. Well, now I know what happened to her, because here is the sequel, *PLENTY OF TIME WHEN WE GET HOME*, in which she tells about her post-military years and her often-troubled marriage to Brian McGough, also a veteran, who sustained a shrapnel wound to his brain, leaving him with multiple problems and disorders, including TBI and PTSD, violent mood swings, etc. There is a lot of anger in this narrative, as Williams describes how her husband was treated - or NOT treated - for his war-inflicted wounds by the VA, before he is summarily medically retired with ONLY a 30% disability, despite the fact that he is extremely dysfunctional in multiple ways. Williams is also angry at the way women veterans are often dismissed or not acknowledged for their service, because people often wrongly assume they only serve "behind the lines." She emphasizes that in today's wars there are no front lines, that everyone is in a combat zone. But it is not just her husband who is damaged from the war, so too is Kayla, suffering from fears and flashbacks. And she also shares that she is perhaps a bit anal, suffering from OCD, which worked pretty well for her in the army, but doesn't work so well in her marriage, causing conflicts which go beyond her husband's injuries. Her predisposition for extreme order and discipline clash with her husband's more casual attitudes toward things like housekeeping and cleanliness. Williams keeps excusing his laxness about these things by citing his TBI, but I kept wondering if part of it might have just been normal guy-slob stuff. That, however, was the least of their problems, as the first few years of their marriage were marked by violent arguments and even physical confrontations, but Williams hung in, sure that she could 'fix' her damaged man. The quarrels and bouts of drunken cruelty and fights sounded to me like an extremely abusive situation, and maybe even a bit of masochism on Williams's part. And the DRINKING! I could not quite believe how long it took for both of them to realize maybe alcohol was exacerbating their problems. But then alcohol consumption has always been an integral part of young men in the military - and, now, young women too, I guess. So ...But, in the end, I had to admire Williams for sticking it out, because after they have a couple kids, things seem to change for the better. She learns to let go of some of her OCD behavior and Brian begins to progress in his recovery - much of the turnaround seems to be due to the humanizing influences of parenthood. There are things here which seem to support the recent hoo-hah over the shortcomings of the VA medical system and how it is failing our "Wounded Warriors," but Williams is also quick to point out the things that still work in the VA

system. I also have great admiration for the way she continued to further her education (earning a Master's degree at American University) while working full-time and with all the marital problems she was having. Kayla Williams is, if nothing else, an extremely ambitious, focused and disciplined young woman, and for that I applaud her. And I wish her and her family nothing but the best. The only problem I had with this book is that I thought at times it was a bit repetitive, and wondered if it might have worked better as a feature magazine piece. At the very least, a more astute editor might have shaved fifty or more pages from the final product. But it is still a book that will give you plenty to think about, particularly if you have a daughter who might be considering a career or even a hitch in the military. Before she makes a final decision, give her both of Kayla Williams's books to read. And maybe Debra Dickerson's "An American Story" too, while you're at it. I've already said that Kayla Williams is a good writer. I will continue to recommend her books - BOTH of them.

Could not put this book down...Kayla Williams shares the most intimate details of what it's like adjusting to life post deployment and living with someone with TBI and PTSD. A true love story which I hope inspires so many others going through the same thing.

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