What happened?

Well, I was at work and um, there was a bunch of guys working, people were in and out and I um went to leave work and I saw- I usually make rounds before I leave work and I make sure all the doors are closed, lights out and stuff but I was in a hurry to leave because I was there late cause of all the stuff that was being done and I um saw a light on in the bathroom and it was right across from the elevator. and um i thought nah- Kelly can turn the lights out when she comes to clean and um so I came home, didn’t really think about it and Kelly- we went out to dinner, we went to Cheddars \*chuckles\* that’s how vivid this memory is. um we went to Cheddars and while we were there, Kelly called me and said, Steph the light in the bathroom is on and um the door is locked and I said, I started to tell her where the key was to unlock the bathroom and then I said eh you know what Kelly, I said nevermind, um I have to come in tomorrow anyways because it’s suppose to snow and I was gonna collect patients names and I said I will unlock it tomorrow and um so that was the end of that conversation. and um so I went in the next morning and I didn’t unlock the door right away, I sat down and was doing some work and um then mmm I guess I was there a couple hours and decided to go unlock the bathroom and um when I did, there was what looked like a pile of clothes um because I couldn’t see the guy’s head or arms or anything because he was all crumpled up but um and I said to myself, who left those clothes there? though I knew that it was more than that because there was this huge um puddle of blood. and so I realized that it was somebody that had died. and so um then I called my boss and he came in um and then we called the police. and as it turns out he - when they turned him over, he had a needle stuck in his arm and they found out- well they thought it was heroin but it turns out it was 100% fentanyl which is a narcotic that he injected himself with. He was 19, 19 years old, had watched his dad kill his mom when he was 10 and then his dad shot himself but I didn’t know all that till later. and that was that.

“Well, I was at work and there were a bunch of guys working. People were in and out and when I went to leave work, I saw-- I usually make rounds before I leave work and I make sure all the doors are closed, lights out and stuff. That night though, I was in a hurry to leave. I was there late because of all the stuff that was being done. On my way out, I saw a light on in the bathroom and it was right across from the elevator. I thought nah-- Kelly can turn the lights out when she comes to clean. So, I came home, didn’t really think about it. We went out for dinner at Cheddars (chuckles) While we were there, Kelly called me. She said, “Steph, the light in the bathroom is on and the door is locked.” So I said, -- I started to tell her where the key was to unlock the bathroom and then I said eh, you know what Kelly, nevermind. I told her,  I have to come in tomorrow anyways because it’s suppose to snow and I was gonna collect patients names. I will unlock it tomorrow. So that was the end of that conversation. I went in the next morning and I didn’t unlock the door right away. I sat down and was doing some work and after a  couple hours I decided to go unlock the bathroom. When I did, there was what looked like a pile of clothes. I couldn’t see the guy’s head or arms or anything because he was all crumpled up. But then I said to myself, who left those clothes there--though I knew that it was more than that because there was this huge puddle of blood.... I realized that somebody had died. I called my boss. He came in and we called the police. Turns out he--when they turned him over, he had a needle stuck in his arm. They found out--well they thought it was heroin but it turns out it was 100% fentanyl. A narcotic that he injected himself with. I found out later the he was 19 years old, had watched his dad kill his mom when he was 10 and then his dad shot himself. And that was that.”

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What was running through your head through all of that?

when it first happened and when i first opened the door, like i said, i was like i just kinda stood there but at the same time there was this rush. i felt my legs get really warm and it just worked its way up and my heart started racing and i like panicked. my first thought was who killed him, whos in here, are they still here, are they gonna kill me? and um and then when i just finally realized, i shouldnt say finally realized because i knew when i first opened the door that it was a dead person  but i guess when it hit me, i just panicked and just started screaming but there was  nobody else there, i was there by myself.

“When it first happened and when I first opened the door, I just kinda stood there. I was frozen but at the same time there was this rush. I felt my legs get really warm and it just worked its way up. My heart started racing and I began to panic. My first thought was who killed him? Who’s in here? Are they still here? Are they gonna kill me too? Then when I finally realized-- well more like when it actually hit me, I just panicked. I started screaming but there was nobody else there. I was there by myself.”

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How does it feel now, almost 2 years later? (So now that its been a year and a half since this happened, does it feel different when you walk into work now? Because you said the bathroom is right across from the elevator and that’s like the first thing you see, do you automatically think of that when you see the bathroom door?)

I infact, it’s funny that you asked that question because last night, mostly everybody has been aware of that and they try to help me out by making sure that light in particular is out when they leave but i was the last one to leave and um the light was on and the door was closed and i freaked out and standing in the elevator, had pretty much the same reaction that i had that day because i was just like is somebody in there? should i go back? but i can’t. like i physically I can’t and i haven’t been able to go in there. like if lightbulbs need to be changed- whatever, i can’t go in there.

“It’s funny that you asked that question because last night -- mostly everybody has been aware of that and they try to help me out by making sure that light in particular is out when they leave. Once again though, I was the last one to leave. The light was on and the door was closed. I freaked out. While standing in the elevator I had pretty much the same reaction that I had that day because I questioned, was somebody in there? Should I go back? --But I can’t. I physically can’t and I haven’t been able to go in there. If lightbulbs need to be changed or whatever, I just can’t go in there.”

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Overall, how has this affected you?

Um, well i think that--theres been a multitude of emotions that i go through that i think um theres a fear like with what we just talked about, with going down the elevator every morning and seeing that. and just the emotions affected with it and um I take- have taken on a lot of guilt because if you listen to the news you hear a lot of how this scenario is very common and has become so common that you can actually go into a pharmacy and pick up a drug that can bring somebody back. like you can go into RiteAid without a perscription. and its something that we actually have, obviously, at the surgical center and um i dont know, you know yes the police, the coroner and everybody said he was dead instantly but i dont know where he was at in the whole process when i left on friday. and so theres such a big part of me that just wishes I could have stopped it.

“Well I think that--there’s been a multitude of emotions that I go through. There’s a fear like with what we just talked about, with going down the elevator every morning and seeing that. Also just the emotions affected with it and I have taken on a lot of guilt. If you listen to the news, you hear a lot of how this scenario is very common. It has become so common that you can actually go into a pharmacy and pick up a drug that can bring somebody back. So if you wanted you could go into RiteAid without a prescription and get the drug. It’s something that we actually have, obviously, at the surgical center. Yes the police, the coroner and everybody said he was dead instantly but I don’t know where he was at in the whole process when I left on Friday. Now there’s such a big part of me that just wishes I could have stopped it.”

Did you like listen for anything in that moment just to see if you heard anything in that moment?

I didnt really listen because i was just focused on leaving because i was there later than i wanted to be. and so i was just in a hurry and i had assumed that one of the guys working there that day had turned the light on and just forgot to turn it off.

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Going along the lines of how it affected you, like what are some of the other emotions that you deal/ dealt with?

Um, the guilt. um, fear in multiple ways um i spook easy um yanno, at work, here at home, lights- like if lights on and doors shut, that triggers all of that. Like if you and Michaela are gone for the weekend and going upstairs or like say you just left and like you or dana or somebody forgot to turn the light off in the bathroom upstairs and knowing that Vinny’s down stairs, well who’s in the bathroom upstairs?

“Definitely the guilt, fear in multiple ways, I get spooked easily. If I’m at work or here at home, and if lights are on and doors are shut, that triggers all of that. Say if you and Michaela are gone for the weekend or if one of you just left. If somebody forgot to turn the light off in the bathroom upstairs, knowing that you all left and Vinny’s down stairs, well who’s in the bathroom?”

Has this affected your relationships with others and if so, how?

well i guess it has because of the depression and anxiety- kinda interferes with relationships. not intentionally

“Well I guess it has because of the depression and anxiety. That kinda interferes with relationships but not intentionally.”

What are you doing to overcome this disorder, if anything?

Well I go to a therapist every week and they’ve also put me on some kind of anti- anxiety, anti-depressant medication.

“Well I go to a therapist every week and they’ve also put me on some kind of anti- anxiety, anti-depressant medication.”

Who or what has been most helpful along the way?

Vince has put up with me. he understands me when i feel like nobody else does and he tries to help me but it’s not that he doesn’t want to help me, its hard to help someone in this situation. Sometimes i just have to go to my special spot by myself that noone knows where it is. I go there and think even though i dont always know what im thinking about.

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Extra Sharing:

this may just be me but sometimes i feel like other people are judging me because its been so hard for me. like the police, when they were there and I’m like frantic and he looked at me and was like you’re a nurse, youve seen dead people before. it wasn’t the dead person that freaked me out. in one sense it was but it was the situation. You dont understand why it happens. I used to work in the emergency room and I’ve been around the trauma before and ive seen dead people before but its just a crazy circumstance. You just dont have control over it-- it almost controls you. People dont understand, its not that i choose to be this way and its not that i  dont want to get better, it is what it is though and I’m trying to get help. so i guess what im trying to say is that-- whats kind of ironic is that right around the same time this happened with me, theres this um. one of the guys who comes in to do preventive maintianance for us, he had a situation with himself, he found a lump on his head and it turned out to be like not cancer and stuff but he ended up being off work for like 3-4 months and like he came back and it was just because he was so freaked out about the whole situation and um his boss and i talked and he said you know, people just can’t judge how a person reacts to a stressful situation. and with PTSD a lot of times it has to do with previous traumatic experiences. and you dont know how many it cant be until PTSD is triggered. In talking with my therapist, there was physical, emotional, and verbal abuse with my ex and my son cameron almost died a couple times. But my therapist said that with each traumatic experience, its that much harder to bounce back. It’s the whole idea of the unknown. you dont know when it can happen and what will trigger it.

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So I guess what I’m trying to say is that-- what’s kind of ironic is that right around the same time this happened with me, one of the guys who comes in to do preventive maintenance for us, had a situation with himself. He found a lump on his head and ended up being off work for like 3-4 months. He came back and he was so freaked out about the whole situation. His boss and I talked and he said you know, “People just can’t judge how a person reacts to a stressful situation.” A lot of times, PTSD has to do with previous traumatic experiences. You don’t know how many it can be until PTSD is triggered. In talking with my therapist, there was physical, emotional, and verbal abuse with my ex. And my son Cameron almost died a couple times. My therapist said that with each traumatic experience, it’s that much harder to bounce back. It’s the whole idea of the unknown. You don’t know when it can happen or what will trigger it.”

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