"I don't think anything you do can actually prepare you to see the emotions of a child, your child, going into surgery."

That was the world of Phoenix Suns center and 17-year veteran Jermaine O'Neal for the past week, as he was bedside with his daughter as she went through heart surgery to repair a "leaky valve." The emotions and stakes are a lot higher there, at her bedside, than they have ever been for O'Neal sitting court-side.

O'Neal took time away from the team to be with his 13-year old daughter Asjia as she spent four days in the hospital and two days in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), before being released and sent home.

She is walking now and rehabbing to get back on the court as doctors were very impressed with the rapid improvement she has gone through over the past two days before her release. Being away from the game she loved took more of a toll on her than the surgery itself, at least mentally, as she wanted to be on the court as her team went out and won a major tournament in her name.

SHE PROGRESSED IN A MANNER WHERE DOCTORS TOLD US TWO DAYS AGO RIGHT BEFORE I LEFT THAT HE HASN'T SEEN ANYONE, A CHILD LET ALONE AN ADULT, HEAL AS FAST AS SHE DID - Jermaine O'Neal

Thankfully, volleyball will be in her future. She will be able to step out on the court again and play the sport she loves thanks to the successful surgery, as well as some physical rehabilitation.

Now that is what the elder O'Neal is trying to do now.

He came back into Phoenix yesterday and had what he described as, "probably one of the top 5 worst workouts in NBA history, it was pretty bad." Getting back into physical shape after not lifting, running, or having any basketball activity will be the easy part. Being with his teammates is therapeutic, as he talked about getting back on the court with his teammates.

"Trying to emotionally get your mind right and physically get your body right, you expect that," said O'Neal about getting back into a basketball rhythm. "Coming off of a six hour flight from Boston back to Phoenix, to basically put your bags down and come here, you expect to be winded."

Having that veteran leadership and toughness, to go from a hospital bed back to basketball, that is the type of person that can help mold the younger big men.

Living that life and the grind of being in the hospital for 23 hours a day, only to run to the house for a shower and then run back, is something unfortunate to deal with. You do not watch basketball or follow the news wire. O'Neal was told two days ago of Marcin Gortat's injury and the play of
Hamed Haddadi
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"I didn't even know he went down until two days ago. When you are living that life, when you are in the hospital, you are not watching sports."

Those things are trivial under the circumstances. The support and outcry that O'Neal and his family received was emotionally overwhelming.

"I wasn't thinking of basketball to be honest. I had great support. I really have to compliment the
Boston Celtics
for their support, they showed a lot of support in so many different ways. Phone calls, care packages,
Kevin Garnett
and those guys sending flowers. The Phoenix Suns, Lon Babby, Lance Blanks, Robert Sarver and those guys showed a lot of support."

The NBA truly is an exclusive community that takes care of their own with the best FMLA package possible when these situations occur. O'Neal reaped those benefits while tending to what matters most in life, his family, while his other family tended to him from afar.