

COMBAT STRESS 100

LEARNING RESOURCE 2a PTSD & MENTAL HEALTH

How PTSD affects Families

**Two accounts voiced by students from
St Thomas More Language College**

SUE voiced by MELANIE

My name is Sue, and I've been married to John for almost 43 years, 43 years on Thursday. John is a veteran he served for almost 13 years in the Royal Military Police, leaving when he was 33 years old. During that time he spent quite a few years in Germany and went on two extended tours in Northern Ireland, spending two years over there each time there. I think for me that the writing has been on the wall for John for a lot of years. But he wouldn't have seen it, he didn't see it! He's always been there but not there. He just, over the years, totally disengaged. And I felt in a way I was going through a bit of a trauma myself. Then I was reading something about PTSD and from that did a bit of research myself. When I was reading it was just like a lightbulb moment!

SUE voiced by VICTORIA

I thought 'Oh my God' It was just tick, tick, tick, disengaged, not trusting, drinking, you name it. He had everything written on it. I actually rang up Combat Stress and that was the start of it for us.

Basically what had happened to him and how I understood it, he'd gone through all these traumas and it was just one after the other that he'd gone through, but not one of them had been dealt with. I feel like I've been one step behind him for many, many years, but now that he's got the tools, we've got the tools really, to deal with it. I've got my husband back! It's sort of like, 'Thank God for that', I wasn't going mad and it wasn't my fault either. I think basically, we've got the relationship back that we should've had many years ago.

SALLY ANNE voiced by CHRISTINA

My name is Sally Anne and this is my story of having a father with PTSD.

As a 10 year-old little girl I was desperate to have my Dad at the playground and for him to be a proud Dad at Sports Day or to attend the County Rounders matches that I played in. Instead, I had to phone him at home as he'd had a drink in the pub to help him sleep! And I would lie awake at night listening to the violent nightmares night after night. I couldn't understand why Dad was so dysfunctional, regimental and disengaged with everything and everyone. In 2008, I started to work in the Prison Service, which gave me the opportunity to complete a Trauma Informed training, which made me aware of how PTSD can be debilitating for the strongest of people. I already knew how it could rip a family apart through the lack of understanding and treatment. This is what my family had been through already!

SALLY ANNE voiced by SOPHYA

Since my childhood I've picked this brave man off the floor more times than I care to recall when a flashback has paralysed him, and on so many occasions I've had to take him to the hospital when his flashbacks had been so severe causing him to injure himself. I've consoled my Mum for many hours as she'd been at her wits end with how my Dad was behaving. She struggled to understand what the past 30 years of their marriage was and feels that she's not been able to understand his condition better and therefore she felt that she had failed him as his wife. In 2012 I went to a family awareness session at Audley Court to find out more about PTSD and what Combat Street could offer. I was surrounded and comforted by people and families who had experienced the things that I had. I could see how much damage PTSD could do to families. I learnt how the specialist staff at Combat Stress could change the mindset of veterans and to help them address their traumas. I don't think any of us can truly understand what it's like to be a soldier. PTSD can cause so much damage when it's unrecognised but it is crippling not only to the person who is suffering from it but their families too. I am now proud to say that I am the daughter of a man who fought for his Queen and country and if it wasn't for people like my Dad and so many others, our lives would be different to how we are today and for that I am truly thankful.

However, what I am most proud of and what I am most thankful for is that I am the daughter of Mark, a family man that I can turn to any day or night calling him my friend, Dad, my hero! We still have a lot of work to do but I'm incredibly proud of how he's changed and how far he has come to where we are today. To see him today – a man who has had to re-build his life, to learn how to be a husband, a father and a human being again takes courage that none of us can understand and that only being with the help of Combat Stress and the understanding of his family and friends that help him in our day to day lives as someone that suffers from PTSD.