

# **COMBAT STRESS 100**

## **LEARNING RESOURCE 4 PTSD & MENTAL HEALTH**

**Thoughts about the project  
by students from  
St Thomas More Language College**

**CHRISTINA**

I've learnt about the silent but loud affects PTSD can have on individuals mentally, through flashbacks, images and nightmares. Learning about this has allowed me to become more aware and knowledgeable of those facing the condition.

**DANIEL**

In my opinion, I think Combat Stress, is very helpful in the long term, as hopefully, no one in our generation will need to go to war. But it's important to learn about PTSD and its effects, in order to help educate our generation; in order to help, perhaps, prevent future wars. But mainly, in order to understand what those who have been in wars...how they feel...how they act – and more importantly, how we should see them – as human beings and not just machines of destruction and death.

In my opinion, Combat Stress helps do that, through stories of PTSD soldiers who have experienced combat in fire-fights, or naval battles, or aircraft battles and so on. And this helps get a better understanding of what they do, what the soldiers do, to help protect us. It comes at a price and I believe that we must learn about this price in order to fully understand what soldiers have to go through in order to keep us safe and alive.

**MELANIE**

After researching PTSD and mental health, one thing I have learnt, is that we should always be grateful for what we have in life and understand that some go through mental pain in their head every day...not just physical.

## **SEBASTIANO**

When analysing wars and history and battles, we often look at the famous people, or the statistics, or the numbers, or the dates or other factors but we never really analyse the individual soldier; the man who placed themselves in us and many times, freedom. In WW1, they suffered through the terrible trenches; in WW2, they suffered through knowing what the other side was capable of...suffering that the other side could give them.

In Vietnam, the Americans – the young Americans usually – had to know that they were going to leave their family, to go into a jungle area and towards the end of the war, into basically what became, a 'blood-machine' for the Americans.

Even as recently as Afghanistan, or Iraq, young veterans were shipped out and taken to a land they didn't know, to an environment that they had never seen before or ever even imagined. But they did this for what they believed was good. They did this to defend us. They did this to defend others and help others.

And many suffered. Many got what was referred to as 'Shell Shock' – now PTSD. Many would never recover. Many spent years and years, after battle, remembering seeing their best friends die. Remembering the shots and the bangs and many could not even move or think about it unless they remained paralysed by the sheer fear.

These are the people who saved us. These are the people who saved others. They are the reason that we are here.

## **SONNY**

This was an amazing opportunity given to us from Combat Stress, getting access to these first hand accounts of real veterans who have experienced these conflicts first hand. This helps us gain a greater understanding of the wars they fought in and the real human impacts that they made. We can use these experiences to link back to our GCSE Exams, especially for the interpretation and long written tasks.

Thanks again to Combat Stress for allowing us to join this experience.

## **SOPHYA**

This has helped me learn a lot more about PTSD, and about the struggles people face, but especially how it can affect others too, like their families. You never really think about how their families have had to live with someone who has PTSD, and how it's hard on them too. Also, it has made me realise, more so, that holding feelings in and not sharing your emotions can have a negative impact on your mental health, and that it's always ok to ask for help.

## **VENT**

For me, working on this project has been amazing. As not only did I learn more about the experiences of soldiers during WW1 and 2 but also the experiences and memories of soldiers who fought in the wars in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Working on the project showed me how PTSD – Post Traumatic Stress Disorder – is a vital thing for veterans in many types of soldiers from various types of wars.

The stories which I worked on and heard my teammates read, made me see that the veterans were reading their experiences like they were all that they knew. And that the stories were about their family. They showed how hard it was for them to say these things out loud as they were experiencing them through their voice and eyes.

The stories of the veterans should be recognised by the modern world and especially those who cause the wars should trust people with strong opinion and the people who are and were in charge of the countries and government.

Those stories which I heard and read are a few of thousands, which all show power and control, all having a sense of family. Those stories intimidate the reader, which is what we need, especially now with Covid-19 still going strong and pressing and pausing on people's busy lives. Thoughts of war and people's stories are usually seen as a waste of information. But now, people have more time to think about these stories. I feel a sense of responsibility to help them tell their stories.

It's not just soldiers who experience PTSD; it's the people who are in the middle of it...the civilians. An example is the Middle East. There are a lot of wars going on at this current moment. An example of this is the Afghanistan War which has lasted more than 13 years and is ongoing. The cities that used to be there are all destroyed and left in ruins and the people and the children left without homes, shelter, schools or any place to obtain food. These people are left feeling unsafe in their own homes. It also affects people who are retired and living their lives, as well as the soldiers. As Winston Churchill said in 1948: "Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it."

And I agree, as in 1962, another world war would have taken place between the USA and Russia but did not happen as the countries made an agreement. We all need to change a bit to make a difference and not destroy ourselves. And this agreement shows that.

The project which the team and I worked on shows how, if we tried, we could change and not repeat our mistakes – not only in causing another war – but also in our day-to-day lives. We, the young generation, should appreciate the past and remember the stories of those who fought for us to have a future and learn from it, as we could extinguish our lives before it even has a chance to begin.

## **VICTORIA**

It was nice and educational learning about how veterans are affected by lockdown. Learning about how veterans felt isolated and trapped in lockdown because they aren't able to visit their family or friends taught me how this time is more than not having to go school. For many like the veterans, it's a time where people feel isolated, at their lowest, stressed, worried, depressed and many more negative emotions. At first it didn't make sense to me why people felt depressed or sad that we have to stay at home because you're in a comfortable environment. But now working with you guys I understand and know why people or society are feeling these emotions.

*\* There is no audio recording to accompany this paragraph*

Living with a family member with PTSD is "like living with a stranger"

You might feel uncomfortable living with the person because you don't know how they will react to your actions or words.

You feel isolated or neglected by the person because they don't feel like talking to anyone so you never truly know how they feel.

It may feel frustrating for the person living with PTSD because no one in their family truly understands the pain and trauma that they feel.