

The Mountain Way Charity – assisting UK Military Veterans: Case Study 01 - Stu

Stu was a 34 year-old private soldier in the 1st Battalion, The Rifles, with a wife and two sons, when a devastating attack in Afghanistan changed his life forever. An Improvised Explosive Device (IED) targeted his patrol with horrifying consequences: his platoon commander – only feet away – was killed instantly and a majority of his team were seriously injured.



High-risk patrolling on operations in Afghanistan. To this day, Stu still has a fear of cornfields

Stu's ongoing and complex PTSD originate from feelings of overriding guilt and thoughts that he could have done more and might have been able to prevent the disastrous outcome. The effects of this incident persisted for years and resulted in a rapid decline in his mental health. This had significant - although typical - destructive effects upon his family, work and his relationships. He became isolated from his wife and children, suffered chronic sleep deprivation and became dependent on the use of alcohol.

Uncontrollable anger and aggression threatened to destroy his family, livelihood and prospects. After essentially being written off by his family, his employment was left hanging by a thread and contemplations of suicide emerged. NHS-delivered Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) was having no effect and ultimately, a successful suicide attempt was narrowly averted when a friend found Stu hanging by a rope.

Stu's parents attended a lecture delivered by the Charity's founder, but it took three years before Stu summoned the courage to approach the Mountain Way Charity to ask for help. Our founder and Chief Mentor – himself a veteran and PTSD survivor – initiated the process of preparing Stu for attendance at one of our programmes.



Stu nearing the end of his programme with his final resolution

A tailored programme specifically designed for Stu, allowed him to confront a complex mix of guilt, shame, failure, rage, hopelessness and isolation. Despite typical initial reluctance, as the programme continued, a combination of guided reflection, mindfulness and meditation began to address the issues.

Assessments using the Core34 psychological scoring process showed steady progress and what we term the 'fulcrum day' arrived. Stu was able to finish the two-week programme with the Resolution phase and a highly emotional point of release. This marked the beginning of his Post-Traumatic Growth Journey and it continues today with continued support from the Charity.



Having relegated the smell of burnt human flesh to the past, Stu at his first BBQ since returning from Afghanistan

The Mountain Way Charity helped Stu when he ran out of options. It is undoubtedly our approach to one-on-one mentoring and counselling in concentrated programmes that deliver powerful changes in military veterans like Stu.

His recovery journey continues today but Stu's life is vastly different now: he is once again a family man and proud husband and father. Not only is his job secure, but he has been promoted and continues to thrive. We continue to provide support, guidance and assessment and Stu has become an ambassador for activities including promotion and individual fund-raising activities



Stu's post-traumatic growth path has seen him repair broken family relationships

Link to an interview with Stu: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3lXdwqDQIQc>
www.mountainway.org