

## Veteran's wife, ex-client notes for PTSD Conference, 2017

Moving from Military accommodation to civilian is very daunting. You have to rapidly adjust to your surroundings. Searching the area for schools, and visiting the schools, not knowing how good the school is in practice, and just going by reading previous Ofsted reports.

For the children it is terrifying, yet another school, another uniform, and no friends there to help, not knowing if you will fit in. Plus after they have been at the school some time, because of the amount of Military children there, some friends suddenly leave as their father has been posted to another camp, so close friendships have been lost. I have had 4 children go through this process. A, the youngest is 12 years of age and has had 7 schools in her life. She has struggled to fit into the last 3 schools as none of the children there have had a military background.

I have noticed that civilian children (that is, of no military background ever) and children of a Military background have totally different personalities, act differently, speak differently. This for A has proved very difficult for her as she states the children 'just don't get her'. Children from a Military background are, as I call it, Regimental, authoritative in the way they speak and play, and civilian children see that as being bossy and abrupt and nasty, so they refuse to be friends with her. This causes her great distress as this is all she knows. I have had to speak and explain to the children her background, and explain being in Civilian life is new for her, and she needs help to learn and adjust.

For the soldier and the wife, making new friends is hard too. We too have to speak to neighbours first to break the ice, and try form a friendship. We have been in our home 5 years and our only friends where we live are our neighbours. Our true friends are from Military life we have a deeper bond.

For the adult there is the responsibility of the bills, which is a huge shock factor. In Military accommodation, Water was free, Electricity was supplied via the MOD and gas was the only bill really you were responsible for. Your rent was deducted from your husband's wage and was very cheap, and Council Tax (CILOCT) was also deducted from husband's pay. So every month, your husband's wage was spare money after food, and telephone bills.

Entering civilian life, you have EVERYTHING to pay. It is a minefield, and then the stress of how are we going to cope, or afford things, what do I do and pay first. The stress and lack of help is overpowering, making you feel a failure as if you can't cope, and then depression sets in and it is a vicious spiral'

I was married to a soldier before I met my current husband B (also a soldier). My previous husband is A's biological father. We met online although we came from same town. The first time we actually lived together was after we married and we moved into Military quarters in Larkhill.

All was good for a few months, but then he changed. Always on the computer, sometimes not seeing him for hours at a time. His routine, was get up, check computer, go to work. Home for lunch, check computer, go to work, and in the evening he would be on his computer until bedtime.

This was getting too much, and when I asked him about it, and stated we were a family and we needed him too, he would become abusive. Shouting, throwing things, belittling me, and then he

became physically abusive. Slapping me, pushing me. A lot of this was witnessed by the children, A remembers events even though she was only 3 at the time. One incident, he went to work and took all the mobile phones, house phone, all the keys ( windows and door) and locked us in the house. Neighbours were not home, as they worked so could not bang for help.

A few weeks earlier he had brought an old office telephone to use as our home telephone he had broken in a rage. I remembered A had been playing with this so searched her toybox. I prayed it worked, and plugged it in. It did. I was able to call the AWS and tell them what he had done, and that I was trapped in the house with the children. The AWS stated they didn't believe he would do that, and I had to beg for them to come and see for themselves.

Upon their arrival an hour or so later, he also arrived at the house for his lunch. His excuse to them was that he picked them up by mistake and to them that was the end of it. I kept contacting AWS for help, but they were never able to help me.

My ex-husband left his computer on one day, so I decided to take a look at what was taking up all his time. I was horrified. The history showed porn site after porn site, plus dating sites, and sites for couples to meet for sexual experiences, plus sites which I knew were illegal. I also discovered he had many different email addresses some with explicit names in them. I went through each site, cancelling his memberships, unsubscribing to them. I was disgusted.

Now I knew why he treated me like he did in our marital bedroom. He needed to carry out these fantasies, against my will on numerous occasions. Since then police reports had been compiled, and if I had received help I was crying out for, he would have been charged with numerous counts of rape.

In 2008 I met my current husband B. We met through a friend of my daughter C. We were just friends, as I was still married to my ex. B always said if I needed to help, or anyone to talk to, for advice then I could speak to him. He was aware of my situation, as C had told her friend's mum whom I became friends with, and was able to confide in her.

One day, when C was out, I was at home with 2 of my children. My ex came home from work in a foul mood and was aggressive and verbally abusive. We were terrified. He then turned the electricity off to the house, and refused to put it on, knowing my son was upstairs, and he has Aspergers Syndrome, and A was with me. My son stayed in his room, and I left the house crying and shaking and messaged B to state I needed help. I went to see him at the guard room, and told him what was going on. He put me and A to safety and made relevant telephone calls to get the help I needed.

My ex husband was then taken out of the married quarter, and put into the block in camp.

Finally this was the break, and help I needed to get out of the marital abuse, and to keep my children safe.

I never looked back.

The marriage had had such a dramatic effect on me, I was suffering with depression, and on medications, and needing sleeping tablets. I was suffering panic attacks on a daily basis which went on for years.

My friendship with B became closer, and after my divorce, we met up again, and now we are married.

Valentines day 2011, my world fell apart, I was broken. My eldest son took his own life. Leaving a younger brother, and 2 younger sisters. C was in process of doing her final exams, and A being only 6 years old. How was I ( we) ever to come back from this???

C was unable to do her exams as was too traumatised.

Very recently A had been struggling, needing help, but needed more than what I could give her. A told me she was seeing her brother's funeral, and was having nightmares, and unable to sleep. Mary offered a REWIND for A, and we accepted. Although A was nervous as she didn't know what to expect, Mary, did it in a gentle understanding way, and A since the rewind has stopped having the nightmares, and stopped seeing her brother's funeral.

For me the anxiety and panic attacks and depression worsened but I was doing what I could to deal with them.

In 2016 my husband B was suffering with severe depression after gaining an injury which prevented him from working or doing any daily activities. His depression spiralled, and all doctors wanted to do was give him medication after medication. He couldn't take any more and after a major breakdown and our daughter hearing him cry in early hours, he announced to me he had started to make plans to end his own life. This was totally devastating to hear, and I begged and begged him to stay with us, I put into action removing anything I felt he could end his life with, cleaning fluids, medication, cutlery, belts, car keys everything. But all he could say was if he wanted to he could do it no matter what, and this made me feel helpless, as I had lost a son, and I was not going to lose my husband too. I had many sleepless nights making sure I still had my husband. Not letting him out of my sight, but at the same time, trying to give him the space he needed.

A could see, and knew there was something serious going on, but I tried my best to protect her from this, as this would be catastrophic for her, just telling her dad didn't feel well, and trying to keep her out of the way, as didn't want her to see her dad falling apart, and losing the will to live.

B had done questionnaires on various sites, which came back as possible PTSD. He knew he had this, and deep down I did, as I had queried it a few years ago with him. But in order to access the relevant in depth help he had to have that PTSD diagnosis. Without that, there was nothing for him.

He was referred to Mental Health Crisis Team who came to assess B and stated he was in dire need of help. He had daily visits with chance to talk and they attempted to get him out of the house. B did not get on with one of the doctors who came, and the doctor just made B rage as B said he was not listening.

This made B worse, and more determined to end his life. I had to call the Mental Health Team and cry and beg for a second opinion. This was granted and he was given an appointment the next day.

At the appointment after them listening to B for over 3 hours, they diagnosed B with PTSD with many traumas. We both cried, and I thanked them, for as far as I was concerned, they had helped save his life, given him and us a lifeline.

B as soon as we got home, started calling and emailing to get the help he needed, now that he had a diagnosis. This was my husband coming back, on a mission to get things done.

B was suffering from many nightmares, and lashed out a lot in his sleep, even striking me on several occasions. He was always hot and sweaty, and very irritable, we were walking on eggshells everyday, not wanting to make any unnecessary or sudden noises. When B did sleep it would only be little naps at a time, sometimes he would be awake for days, as there was too much going on inside his head.

B called PTSD Resolution who called him back and he had his consultation. He was then offered an appointment with Mary very very quickly.

B started his treatment, although he was dubious about it as he had doubts if it would work, and stated Mary couldn't understand, as she had had no Military training. Needless to say, it did work, and Mary did understand, and my husband is getting stronger every day.

As stated Mary has rewound both me and my husband B, and our daughters A and C. Last year, neither me nor B would be able to cope with any event. I was suffering panic attacks daily, B was wanting to end his life. Thanks to Mary and PTSD Resolution, as far as I am concerned they have saved his life and we are looking forward to the future, and also we are raising our first grandchild D, who I must say has been a great help to us both, keeping us on our toes and smiling.

The future is bright.

Thank You