

JOIN THE ARMY

BE DEPRESSED

The armed forces has always been a high stress occupation, leaving a high percentage of ex-servicemen and women with clinical depression, obsessive compulsive disorder, bi-polar disorder, and a greater likelihood to engage in substance abuse¹. Since 2001, and the invasion of Afghanistan, life has become ever more dangerous for those joining the military.

In Afghanistan there have been **52 deaths** since 2001² (23 of which happened in 2006 alone). The situation is even worse in Iraq, where **140³ British troops have been killed**, whilst the number of **injured UK personnel is over 2,700⁴**.

The number of British casualties though is tiny when compared to the number of Iraqis who have died. According to the best available estimate⁵, there have been at least **655,000 war-related deaths in Iraq since the 2003 invasion**. 26 percent of Iraqis have experienced the death of a relative in the last 3 years⁶.

Even those that are lucky enough to come back from a combat zone alive still have a difficult life ahead of them. **25% of rough sleepers in the UK**

1. combatstress.org.uk 2. Ministry of Defence 3. ibid 4. Hansard (tinyurl.com/l7zva) 5. The Lancet mortality survey (thelancet.com) 6. Public attitudes in Iraq - 4 Years On poll, 3/2007 (tinyurl.com/2g3gd2) 7. Crisis homeless charity 8. combatstress.org.uk 9. "Ex-soldier kills family", BBC (tinyurl.com/mu9ga) 10. endabuse.org & womensaid.org.uk 11. "50% of women murdered suffered domestic abuse", House of Commons debate, (tinyurl.com/nhbf1)

were once part of the Armed Forces⁷. Combat Stress, the main mental health organisation for ex-armed services personnel, has long been helping those who have seen military service deal with mental health problems including: Clinical depression, phobic disorders, PTSD (aka Shell-shock or battle fatigue), psychotic conditions, substance abuse (drugs and alcohol), bi-polar disorders, obsessive compulsive disorder, and raised anxiety states⁸.

There is also a large body of evidence suggesting that **those who return from active service are a greater danger to themselves** (either through self-harm or attempting suicide) **and a greater risk to their family⁹**, with a greater propensity to commit domestic abuse¹⁰ or murder¹¹ than the civilian population.

For more information on these topics we would encourage you to use the resources to the right. There are thousands of opportunities outside of the military where you don't have to suffer these traumatic, stressful events. Perhaps you can explore those.

RESOURCES

Combat Stress

www.combatstress.org.uk
Support for ex-armed services personnel.

Samaritans

www.samaritans.org.uk
0845 790 90 90
Offers a listening ear for those struggling with personal issues, anxiety, depression and any other problems people need to talk through.

Military Families Against the War

www.mfaw.org.uk
A group of people who have either lost relatives, or whose relatives are serving in Afghanistan and Iraq. They campaign for the troops to come home.

Crisis

www.crisis.org.uk
0870 011 3335
Help and advice for those who find themselves homeless, or sleeping rough.

Refuge

www.refuge.org.uk
0808 2000 247
A support service for people trapped in a violent relationship, or suffering domestic abuse.

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