

A soldier in full combat gear, including a helmet, goggles, and a vest with a name tag that reads "A NEG", is sitting in the interior of a vehicle. A dog is sitting next to him, looking towards the camera. The background is dark and shows the interior of the vehicle.

MYNDS 
FOR A HEALTHY MIND

THE PTSD SOLUTION

A Military Approach

Written by
SARAH YUEN GILLIAT

RCH, GQHP, GHR Reg, CNHC Reg

The PTSD Solution

Introduction

The number of serving and veteran military personnel suffering from symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is continuing to rise exponentially, and so is the tally of soldiers, marines, sailors and airforce personnel taking their own lives. The Ministry of Defence, Downing Street and the NHS in the UK appear powerless to stem the tide of ruined lives in the military community, however hard they try.

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT), medication, and traumatic revisiting of stressful events using EMDR (the three NICE-approved NHS therapies), have not helped many serving and veteran military personnel, who continue to suffer, not so much in silence, but in isolation.

In the Parliamentary Defence Committee Report on Military Mental Health (published in February 2019), many veterans complained of being told they were 'too damaged to treat', or sentenced to medication for life.

But the method to eliminate all symptoms of PTSD, quickly and permanently, has always been available, and was used extensively, as long ago as World War One. It is clinical hypnotherapy. British doctors, Sir Grafton Elliot-Smith and Tom Hatherley Pear used hypnotherapy to effectively eliminate symptoms of shell shock among thousands of survivors of the trenches.

Clinical hypnotherapy is a process which can get to the root of physical and psychological symptoms, quickly and efficiently, and help a person overcome them.

Clients typically experience a complete remission of PTSD-type symptoms in just a few weeks.

Dr William Brown, the medical officer in charge of Craiglockhart Hospital for Neurasthenic Officers in Scotland in WW1, said all his shell-shocked patients were suffering from dissociation, or 'a splitting of the mind, which in the worst cases can cause symptoms including loss of memory, loss of sight or speech, loss of hearing and even paralysis. By hypnotising such a patient, and allowing him to subconsciously recall the circumstances of his injury, so evacuating the repressed fear, it is possible to re-associate his lost powers. Even if he has been paralysed, movement will occur in his limbs. A complete cure is often made.'

The Romans and Egyptians used hypnotherapy as a way to eliminate pain, anaesthetise the body and heal from mental health disorders. In the American civil war, it was used to block pain during amputations.

During World War Two, renowned American military psychiatrist, John G. Watkins, losing hope with traditional treatments for the worst cases of battle fatigue returning from the European front, turned to clinical hypnotherapy as a last resort, and found it to be 'The Original Brief Therapy.' He and his fellow military psychiatrists healed hundreds of veterans, and identified predispositions to PTSD among many sufferers, which led to more than a million men being ruled out of the draft in the USA!

The tragedy is, these methods have remained on the fringes of medical research for decades. Herbert and David Spiegel, father and son clinical hypnotherapists, worked with Korean and Vietnam war veterans for pain and combat stress, and in a series of well-documented medical studies proved that clinical hypnotherapy was an effective counter for both.

The Veterans Health Administration in the United States recommends clinical hypnotherapy to former service personnel suffering from PTSD. Some VHA hospitals have clinical hypnotherapists on staff. Many former military officers have trained in hypnotherapy.

In the UK, in 1955, a British Medical Association (BMA) sub-committee issued a report in the British Medical Journal, endorsing a 1892 BMA report, stating that hypnosis is effective in treating psychosomatic disorders, and that it can “reveal unrecognised motives and conflicts, and remove symptoms”.

The report also recommended that medical students be trained in hypnosis as part of standard psychiatric training, and that specialists in psychology should receive instruction in hypnotism.

In 1978, the Royal Society of Medicine (RSM) formed a section for “Hypnosis and Psychosomatic Medicine”.

In 1986 the BMA emphasised that hypnotherapy is “part of orthodox medical treatment.”

In 2000, the BMA stated to the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology that: “Hypnotherapy and counselling may be considered as orthodox treatments.”

In 2001, the British Psychological Society commissioned a group of psychologists to publish a report on ‘The Nature of Hypnosis’, which reported that ‘hypnosis is a proven therapeutic medium’.

Yet to date, the NHS will only prescribe clinical hypnotherapy for Irritable Bowel Syndrome, where it has an 80 per cent success rate, but not for PTSD, even though both are stress-related illnesses which have similar impacts on the body, and which often occur together, being co-morbid.

Here are a few of the comments from the serving and veteran military personnel who agreed to experience clinical hypnotherapy for the purposes of this collection of case histories, which was compiled for the Ministry of Defence. Eight veterans were selected for this clinical hypnotherapy trial and all their stories are included here.

“I had been through everything DCMH had to offer, and the NHS Mental Health Services. In just four sessions of hypnotherapy I was sorted. It beggars belief.” - Matt, serving soldier

“These sessions have made me realise the way I want my life to go forward. Hypnotherapy has given me the path.” - Luke, veteran soldier

“You know, it has gone. While I was looking at me in that cupboard I thought, I am over it now. I can’t change the past but I can let it go. I don’t feel that anger anymore.” - Charlie, veteran Marine.

“I was doubtful I could be hypnotised, but it felt amazing, and I have left the past completely behind. I understand now what happened and why, and I have “closed the book”. Something wanted to come out and it did. I have halved my depression and pain medication and will be free of both in weeks.” - Adam, veteran soldier

“Something remarkable happened and I was set free. I completely surrendered - no fight left in me. When I woke up I felt amazingly well. Now I feel great.” - Josh, veteran soldier

“I would recommend this therapy to all veterans with PTSD. It is very evident that it is easier with a therapist who has ‘been there’..... all clinical ‘experts’ previously encountered, both NHS and charity, did not listen and couldn’t understand... verging on not believing me.” - Rob, veteran soldier

The exact methodology of the clinical hypnotherapy administered to these British, serving and veteran, military personnel participants, is explained in detail in this book. You can follow their treatment, session by session, and learn how each man came to understand why his body was reacting as it was.

Names and circumstances have been changed to protect their privacy in the public domain, but the participants of this trial are very happy to talk to anyone about what they experienced. Please request their contact details from beatretreathypnotherapy@gmail.com if you would like to talk to them.

In short, the treatment entailed helping each participant achieve a deep sense of relaxation, and then using visualisation exercises to isolate the specific incident or emotion which was causing their physical reaction(s), and dissipate the impact of that negative event or feeling.

These stories acutely illustrate how easily cases of PTSD can escalate to psychoses and suicidal ideation, and give a terrifying insight into the struggles of contemporary PTSD sufferers.

PTSD is believed to be a subconscious injury, when the memories of disturbing or upsetting incidents and emotions - often beginning in childhood - are repressed, or can be remembered erroneously, by the conscious mind. However the subconscious enjoys a full recollection of events, and creates physical reactions to certain stimuli, for which the person may have no rational context.

However, when insight is gained, the context for the reaction becomes clear and a person is able to rationalise their reactions, and their symptoms and emotions simply disappear.

The possibility of a predisposition to PTSD was one of the major findings of the American military psychiatrist, John Watkins. He discovered that most military personnel who develop PTSD symptoms have endured difficult childhoods or traumatic incidents when young. They have effectively had to be too strong for too long! He documented this in his casebook 'Hypnotherapy of War Neuroses'.

After the Second World War, Watkins became Chief Psychologist at Oregon's Veterans' Administration Hospital and the Chicago Veterans' Hospital.

All the sessions detailed in this book were carried out online, proving clinical hypnotherapy can be delivered effectively over the internet. Sessions lasted between 90 minutes and three hours. It was felt it was important not to put a time limit on the sufferers need to talk. Each session of hypnosis lasted one hour. Participants were given recordings to listen to between sessions.

There are no side effects to clinical hypnotherapy, and there are no contra-indications to any medication the sufferer might be taking. Those suffering PTSD-symptoms are not advised to stop any prescribed medication, or even stop any substance abuse. That will happen naturally over the course of the sessions, in their own time.

Clinical hypnotherapy does not require any exclusion clauses. Sufferers experiencing extreme anger, suicidal ideation or abusing alcohol or narcotics are simply exhibiting the normal symptoms and practices of PTSD sufferers. Clinical hypnotherapy will help them, as it did the men in this book.

Fully-funded clinical hypnotherapy treatment for any serving or veteran UK military personnel, or first responders is available courtesy of Mynds UK. Contact beatretreathypnotherapy@gmail.com for a consultation.

Chapter One

Matt

Matt has been living with severe PTSD symptoms for nearly four years, struggling to maintain his role as a WO2 in the British Army and juggle three small children, with a fourth on the way. He has experienced suicidal moments, and bouts of extreme anger, but has so far managed to hide the seriousness of it from his Commanding Officer, and his wife. With his military career coming to an end, knowing he is going to have to strike out on his own in a totally different direction, Matt is becoming desperate to find some treatment that will put him back on an even keel.

Matt completed six tours of Northern Ireland, one of Iraq and one of Afghanistan. His best friend died on tour.

Matt believes his PTSD symptoms began ten years ago, but they came to a head in 2015 when he was stationed in Afghanistan, and he found himself alone in a sangar on guard duty at Christmas.

"I just felt this overwhelming compulsion to kill myself," said Matt. "I was away from my family. Everything in my life felt like it was out of control and I didn't want to go on. There was no particular reason for the way I felt. I just knew, at that moment, that I would be better off dead."

Fortunately for Matt, the soldier who was taking over from him on guard duty in that Kabul sangar turned in for duty early.

"If he hadn't, I wouldn't be here now. I was sitting there with the gun aimed at myself and he walked in the door. I was flown home immediately and downgraded from active duty, and then began four years of trying to understand what was wrong, trying every treatment possible.

"I had five sessions of CBT, which is basically talking about your feelings, and I felt no better. EMDR just made me remember everything that had upset me and fueled my anger. Nothing worked."

Doctors think Matt's depression could be caused by repetitive head injuries. His time in Afghanistan was very kinetic and he suffered concussion after an IED explosion blew him across a compound, head first into a wall. He was also involved in a pub brawl, and in 2004, while working in Cyprus, he was knocked unconscious during an NCO Cadre. One of the students was not happy with his report and hit him over the head with a bar stool.

He first saw a military psychiatrist in 2010 for aggressive tendencies and was put on anti-depressants.

"The medication did not agree with me," said Matt. "It stopped me from feeling too depressed but it didn't touch the anxiety or feelings of severe stress. I took it on and off but nothing was improving. If I stopped taking it altogether though I immediately got worse."

A few months before starting clinical hypnotherapy, Matt sought help again from a military psychiatrist, because he felt his anger levels were getting out of control. They further diagnosed him with Acute Stress Disorder (ASD) and gave him more medication which he does not want to take.

"I get severe headaches, which are not new, but they are debilitating. I don't sleep well, as I wake up screaming from nightmares but have no memory of them. I am scaring my family to death. My wife says I shout and scream and make a wailing sound. I hear the wailing sound in my dream and feel confused. I am constantly exhausted, anxious and irritable. The smallest things set off my anger, and I can get very aggressive. My palms sweat and I get all sorts of aches and pains."

Matt has tried mindfulness and meditation to calm his anger and he said that had helped to a point, but did not remove it.

What drove Matt back to seek medical help was an incident of road rage where his level of anger frightened him.

"I was driving in Aldershot and the driver in front didn't use his indicator before making a turn. I was absolutely furious. I spent the entire drive to Gloucester visualising giving this other driver a real beating. I was halfway down the M4 before I realised I had no idea how I had got there. I was

so pumped up, imagining the violence I would mete out on this person. I had three kids and a baby on the way. I was afraid of what I might do. I was afraid of what I was becoming.”

But Matt said he had been angry for as long as he could remember. He described a childhood where his father had left when he was two years old, and he had become ‘the ginger step-child’, saddled with dyslexia. He said he didn’t remember much of his younger years, but he had felt side-lined and unloved by his mother in favor of his step-father and their children together.

“When I was about five years old, they were getting ready to go out for the day, and I remember asking them: “Am I coming too?” Even at five years old I was obviously feeling very excluded.”

Matt said when he was little he would sometimes wake up and feel like everything about his body was huge - his hands and his torso - blown up like The Incredible Hulk. He said his step-father used to call him ‘The Incredible Sulk’ which upset him greatly.

“I have spent 35 years trying to get a connection with this guy and failed.”

It was obvious Matt’s dyslexia was a major problem in his life. He called it “the gremlin on my back.” He had never disclosed it to the Army and just found a way around his disability as he advanced through the ranks. But as a child it contributed to his educational exclusion and he was very unhappy.

“I found reading very difficult, and because I couldn’t do it like the others, I would get angry and act up.”

His constant bad behavior culminated in Matt being sent to a young offenders’ institution in his teens, before joining the Army at his stepfather’s behest.

Matt said he was willing to try clinical hypnotherapy because he has no avenues left. He has been waiting for months to see a Brize Norton psychiatrist but he has very little faith that they can help him.

First Session

Matt went very easily into trance on his first session, showing many of the classic signs of hypnosis, such as REM movement of his eyes and involuntary muscle movement in his body, within just a few minutes. Compulsive swallowing is an indicator of being in a hypnotic trance and Matt was also doing that.

At first, he was simply asked to concentrate on his breathing, noting the feeling of his lungs inflating and deflating as he inhaled and exhaled. He was told to take long, slow deep breaths and let his body become more comfortable and more heavy. This same method of progressive relaxation was used for all the trial participants.

Once his breathing had become rhythmic and even, Matt was asked to imagine a blackboard with a big circle drawn on it, and imagine breathing around that circle; breathing in all the way up to the number twelve position, and then sliding all the way down to the number six as he breathed out, and then going slower and slower around the circle. The best way to get someone to relax their mind is to relax their body first, so Matt was then asked to concentrate on relaxing the muscles in his toes, until they felt comfortably numb, and then to allow that relaxation to flow, muscle by muscle, all the way up his body to his shoulders, arms, and hands. This process takes about ten minutes, guided by the clinical hypnotherapist, and allows the person to concentrate on all the different sensations in their body, The relaxation is then transferred to the head and the face. The aim is to show the person what sensations the subconscious mind can create in their body, because as well as creating sensations, the subconscious can eliminate sensations too.

Once thoroughly relaxed, Matt was asked to imagine detaching his mind and walking away from his physical body, towards a wide open staircase which would take him down to a safe, comfortable, happy environment. The process of counting the ten steps down that staircase is designed to slow the oscillations of the conscious mind to the same speed as the subconscious mind and allow the person to feel like they are actually going downwards.

Normally, by this time, the sufferer’s imagination is beginning to take over their thought processes, giving them images and sounds and symbols which seem to rise unbidden behind their closed eyes.

Matt was led through a series of visualisation exercises to imagine eliminating all negative things, emotions and people from his life. This process was done slowly, allowing plenty of time for the brain to form the images. Matt was not required to communicate for the entire process. Anything he saw or felt or heard could be kept to himself, or shared at the end of the session, as he saw fit. There was no pressure on him to talk at all, at any point in the sessions.

After one hour of hypnosis, Matt said he could not remember ever feeling so relaxed, and that it was an 'incredibly lovely feeling'. He didn't share any other information with me, but he seemed calm and even happy.

He was given a recording to listen to once a day, designed to use visualisation to increase his levels of serotonin and melatonin, to improve his mood and sleep patterns. We agreed to conduct another session a week later.

Second Session

When Matt returned a week later, he said that his very relaxed feeling had continued into the next day, and that it had been a marked shift in how he had been feeling before he started clinical hypnotherapy.

For the following two nights he had listened to the recording and felt great during the day as well. Then, on the third day, he had developed a huge headache in his temple.

"I know I get headaches often, but this one was almost too much to handle. It truly felt like my head was going to explode. But I saw it as a positive rather than a negative pain, because it felt like something was processing. It eventually passed, and the next morning when I woke I was bursting with energy. I felt like I had had a really, really good sleep. And now I feel so much less stressed. I feel so much less stressed at work. I also feel more assertive, but without anger or irritation. I feel like I have more structure to my work and I am more in control of it."

Matt said he had had to talk to an officer, about the officer not taking enough leave, and the man was always very difficult to talk to, so he was apprehensive. He tried, but the officer barked at him.

"Normally I would have got angry at his reaction and there would have been a row. But I seem to have a new sense of calm now. I just walked out and went back to my desk and I was fine. I just let it go. Later, I asked him if he had calmed down and he was incredulous that I should think he was angry. He apologised. But throughout it all I was unnaturally calm. I feel so much more in control of my emotions. I have also been able to relax, and I never relax."

During a word association exercise, Matt had strong reactions to some of the words posed to him. The first was guilt.

"Yes, I feel very guilty about all the children, all the suffering, and some of it caused by us. I feel like I could have done more. I should have done more."

"Anger?"

"That word makes me super angry. I don't like it."

"Fear?"

"Yes, I fear things. I am always nervous. I fear the worst. It has got worse as I have got older. I fear possibilities. If we go anywhere I am always checking for an exit route. Explosions of any kind scare me."

The second session began the same way as the first. Matt was led through a series of visualisations to relax his mind, and then this body, as he lay with his eyes closed, again not expected to speak or communicate. But this time he was encouraged to go even deeper into his subconscious by taking an elevator down many more levels to an all white room, where he could meet the part of him which was responsible for his symptoms.

Sometimes the body will bring forward the 'part' spontaneously, even this early in the treatment, showing the person images or feelings of themselves at an earlier age, either experiencing an event or an emotion which is related to their symptoms. But often the mind is not yet ready to disclose that information, or does not feel the body is capable of handling the disclosure. Sometimes the body will actively block any attempt to seek out that memory.

One must remember that some of our most distressing memories have been sealed away for a reason, so that we are not forced to constantly relive them, which would create added distress. Unfortunately though, while we cannot remember them, the body can, and the body will react to things which remind it of that event. This means we might feel inexplicably anxious at the sight of the colour green, or have a strong phobia of water, but not have any idea why. It is a double-edged sword.

Matt returned to consciousness with very red eyes, which is a sign of hypnosis called lacrimation. He said the experience did not feel the same as the first time. Before, he had actually felt his body sinking when told to imagine it getting heavier and heavier, but this time he said he had stayed more alert.

“I didn’t feel hypnotised. I was trying to concentrate, but my eyes kept flickering behind my eyelids. I could feel them flickering. I didn’t get any vivid images, but I did get a couple of images which were blurred. In one, I was a child and I was standing in a doorway, and I think it was my parents’ house. In another, I was inside the house and I was looking up at the top of a window frame, at the right angle of the top of a window frame, and I was pointing at it. Everything was very white. Bright white.”

He said the white light had started off like a pinhead, but then got bigger and bigger until it enveloped him. He said he felt as though his mind was telling him this was his new life.

“Then suddenly I was flying. Really flying. It was as if I was a bird and I was flying over a corn field, then I could see hillsides and the coast and the empty sea. It was a lovely flying sensation. It wasn’t anywhere I recognised. While I was up there I did wonder if it was Cyprus; like the flight approach route coming into Paphos. But it was too green, with the hillside flowing down into the sea. I felt freed.”

Matt said he was enjoying the process of hypnotherapy because it did not demand endless information from him, and he was free to explore his own thoughts at his own pace. He said he was looking forward to the following session, and he had never looked forward to therapy sessions before.

Third Session

When Matt returned for his third session he said he had been having a very stressful time. His mother-in-law was in hospital with a fractured skull after falling down stairs, and he was taking care of the children while his pregnant wife was at the hospital with her mother.

The two nights previous to the session, he had not slept well. He said he was feeling anxious about something but didn’t know what. He said he felt as if he had lots of unspecified thoughts racing around his head. He said he had been using the serotonin and melatonin-boosting clinical hypnotherapy recording, but he kept waking up when the recording mentioned serotonin racing around his body.

“It felt like I was pinned to the bed by a heavy weight, and there was a huge rushing through my veins. It was so intense; this mass rush. I felt like I had run a marathon. My legs were shaking like I had. It was genuinely strange, like an uncomfortable orgasm, when your whole body goes stiff. When the recording was finished I had to stretch off as if I had been for a run.”

Matt also said he had had a huge pain in his right shoulder a few days before. If he moved his arm, the pain was excruciating.

“I thought I had really hurt myself, maybe done something to the rotator cuff while lifting too heavy weights. But then, as quickly as it came on, it vanished. It had to be psychosomatic. It went from 100 per cent to nothing, just like that.”

Despite the apparent setbacks, Matt said he knew he was getting better overall.

“For the last three years, I have been hoping to be picked up for the promotion board for WO1. I have given everything to the army, but because I wanted some adventure, and to do different things, I have been out of my unit for the past few years so I don’t have an advocate, a supporter, to push me for promotion. I was told today that I haven’t been picked-up for promotion. Normally I would be furious about it. Last year, I was uncontrollably enraged. This time I really wasn’t that fussed. I started listing logical reasons as to why it wasn’t a good idea - I would have to move; I was happy with my present job etc. I was never able to be logical before, nor rationalise my failure.”

Matt said all sorts of thoughts were popping into his mind now too. He had thought often that week about an incident in 2003 in Iraq during Operation Telic 2.

“I went into Basra prison as part of a police support unit. I used to go to collect food from Basra palace. One day, we were setting off and there was a dead body on the side of the road. An old guy had been shot in the head. I haven’t thought about that until now. I keep picturing this bloke left in a drainage ditch. Eventually the locals collected him. I kept wondering why he was there. Why had he been dumped outside our gate? Was he killed specifically to be able to do that? It didn’t upset me at the time, but this week it did. Telic 2 wasn’t that kinetic. I didn’t get to do any fighting. But that was my first exposure to someone being shot. I must have been about 25 at the time. It was good it wasn’t kinetic as we had soft vehicles, and normal body armour. We were afraid because of that.”

When Matt went into hypnosis his body seemed to relax very easily and he gave every indication of being asleep, except for his hands which were moving sporadically throughout the hour-long hypnosis session.

After being taken through the usual progressive relaxation techniques, and then led down, in his imagination, to the big white room where he could gain self-enlightenment, Matt was asked to imagine someone coming into that room whom he was angry with, and someone he felt he needed to communicate with to find peace.

“Just as you said it, my step-father walked in,” said Matt. “It was very emotional. At one point you were telling me that if I couldn’t forgive him for the hurt he had caused, I could cut the emotional cord between us, but it was really difficult. I didn’t want to. It was difficult between us when I was little because he was a threat to me. He was not my father. But I knew I was not supposed to be cutting him off. I knew that, deep down inside, he was telling me: ‘This was not meant to happen this way.’ It was a huge relief to me, and there was a lot of ‘man love’ going on. We were hugging, a lot, and it was really nice. We do have a better relationship now than we did, but we did not at all when I was a kid. I felt so excluded. But while I was in hypnosis I realised that I had actually excluded myself. I was asking myself: ‘Did I put the wall up? Was I difficult because he was not my Dad?’ I did ask my mum that time: ‘Am I coming too?’ when they were going on a family outing. I imagined their family with me on the outside, like a bump on the circle. All I kept hearing was: ‘It wasn’t meant to be like that!’ Conversations were spinning around in my head. I could hear myself saying: ‘I should have been inside the circle’.”

Matt said, as he went through adult life, he often felt like an outsider too.

“I was accepted into the Army as a naughty boy. My stepdad pushed me towards it. But once I joined the Army I got promoted quickly and easily and hit all my targets. I was always getting pats on the back. Then suddenly, in 2009, that stopped and I came unstuck psychologically. I had gone off the rails as a kid and ended up in a prison for young offenders for nine months. My mum and stepdad came to visit me and that was very emotional. I had messed up. So when I seemed to mess up in the army, by not getting promoted, I was right back there again. I saw that psychiatrist in 2010, when I should have promoted, and when I was getting divorced. I have only just realised that it all happened at the same time!

“I remember always being very angry as a kid; truly furious. I would say: “I will show you.....” But in this session my step-father was saying I wasn’t meant to get to that stage. I tried to follow the session, follow what you were suggesting, and tell my step-father why I was angry, but I couldn’t say it. I didn’t know what I wanted to say. I know there has been resentment throughout our relationship. We came close to fighting. I didn’t like him at all. He was the enemy. Only once did he ever say he was proud of me, but my half-brother got praise all the time. There is an element of jealousy about how he treats me as opposed to his girl and boy, even now. I am always calling myself the “ginger step child” and I need to stop it. It sets me off inside; angers me. I can feel my anger building up and my self-esteem plummeting. It makes me doubt myself and my abilities. I have always been scared of public speaking and anxious and nervous when doing presentations. If people tell me it was good, I doubt them.”

This session appeared to have opened the flood gates of insight for Matt.

“In 2012, I went to be an instructor at Brecon, but despite the huge accolade I went off the rails there. I tried to hide it and was promoted in 2014 and deployed to Kabul, but things were seriously wrong.

“I had gone to help run a training academy for Afghans, and I was doing lots of physical exercise like flipping tyres and things. Then all of a sudden I didn’t want to leave my ISO container. It was like I just closed down. Looking back now, I realize I was once again putting myself outside the circle. It was Christmas and I was away from my kids and feeling so low. That is when the suicidal thoughts crowded in.”

Fourth Session

Matt arrived in a buoyant mood for his fourth session, with a beaming smile, even though he said he had had another knock back that week, but he felt he had handled it well. As he hadn’t promoted to the WO1 board, he was told he could go for the RQMS position as a bridging gap. But he had also been unsuccessful at that board.

“People a lot junior to me are getting senior positions. Normally, that would send me nuclear. I would be saying: ‘I hate the Army’ and ‘I am getting out’, and I would be completely irrational. But I have reacted in a much more logical fashion. I thought it was a bit crap to start with, but then I sat down and thought about it. I realised I can sign off next year, and people are already offering me other jobs, in things I am interested in, so perhaps this is the push I need to change my life. If I made WO1 I might have stayed longer and missed other opportunities. So realism kicked in, and a logical, rational response. That wouldn’t have been the case before hypnotherapy.”

Matt said he felt so much more positive and more in control.

"I feel like I can focus more. I am not making shotgun decisions. I am making logical decisions."

I asked Matt if he had had a chat with his stepfather after the previous week's session. He said he didn't need to. He said they had bridged the gap some time ago, and it was just up to him to settle the resentment in his own mind. "It was me, not him. But now the anger has been released on that score."

He said he had been "sleeping like a baby." He had been suffering some pain in his shoulder again, but he thought it was because he was sleeping so heavily on one side.

"I haven't slept so heavily in years. My body is not used to it anymore."

Matt had been to see a psychiatrist at Brize Norton that week. He said it had taken him an hour to drive there and an hour to drive back, and the psychiatrist had seen him for 15 minutes, asked if he was okay and told him to keep taking the tablets. There had been no discussion of his condition. He had now been given another appointment in two months time.

"So, they have made me wait five months before I can see anyone to actually talk about my problems. But I was almost homicidal."

Matt said he had been thinking again that week about the guy dumped outside Basra prison. He said he had also been thinking about one of the mothers of the soldiers he took to Iraq, who told him quite menacingly as they left: "Make sure you bring my boy back safely." He was angry that that responsibility had hung over him for the whole tour.

He said he had also had a dream about three brothers, all tearaways, who were his friends in his teens. He recalled kicking the younger one and starting a fight, but he said the dream wasn't really about that, but about fear. He said his fear response was still there and now seemed to be getting worse. He has an immense fear of being put in difficult situations.

"I am afraid of the angry part of me. But the angry part also fears me. It is weird. I don't know how far I might go. I am afraid of losing the plot and really hurting someone, and I am also afraid of being hurt in that situation. It is double-edged."

Matt said that strangely he was not afraid when he was deployed.

"That was not real fear, because I was always very well trained for the deployments, and I knew I could take care of any situation. There would be no consequences to violence either, as long as it was within the regulations. But when things kicked off in a pub, that would cause fear because it was out of control."

The fourth session of hypnotherapy was aimed at finding exactly what moment in his life had started his feelings of anger and depression. It was obvious from what Matt was saying that anger was a major issue in his life, but anger in a man is often covering a more vulnerable emotion. Matt himself was using the word fear. So, he was taken into hypnosis and asked to go back to the very first time he had ever felt extreme anger or fear. He was asked to identify that emotion within himself and let it escalate, just for a moment. Then, with it prevalent in his mind, he was asked to go back to the very first time he had ever felt that way.

Matt's whole body went ramrod stiff, and his face turned very red. He began to groan, and it was obvious he was very uncomfortable, but he did not ask for the session to stop. He was told to see everything clearly, but detached from all emotion. This appeared to relax his body immediately, but his eyes were still moving rapidly behind his eyelids.

Matt came back to the conscious state claiming he had felt pinned down.

"There was something so heavy on me. It just felt so heavy."

He said, when he was asked to go back to the very first time he ever felt his most troubling emotion, he had gone right back to the age of seven. He was at school and he was struggling with dyslexia symptoms.

"I was lost in a blind rage. I felt it tear through me. I could feel my hands digging into the duvet. Heat rose up through my body. It was so, so hot. Then I was back at my school with my teacher, Mr Robinson, and it was kicking off. I was throwing things around because I couldn't do what he was asking me to do. I just couldn't do it. He was telling me I would never be able to do anything and I just flipped. Because I was suffering from dyslexia symptoms, I was in the lower sets at school, and I was as disruptive as I could be to get friends. That is why I was friends with the three boys in my dream. They were bad lads so I was one too. That is how I ended up in a young offenders' institution. Then after I joined the Army and I went home at weekends I couldn't get on with anyone then either. I just didn't fit in anymore. I had built a different set of associates and left behind that kid who was angry. But I realise now I hadn't. He was just suppressed inside me. When you asked me to go back I saw it from his perspective; the younger me. I felt myself welling up. I saw Ralph's face; my boy as I was then. His little freckles, this boy so like me."

Matt grew more upset as he recounted the story.

"I felt all his pain. He was so frustrated. All he wanted to do was learn but he couldn't, and he didn't know what was stopping him. If people asked him what was wrong he just said everything was fine, but it wasn't."

Matt said he then remembered flying up into the air and seeing the earth from very high up. He said he took his younger self by the hand and heard me asking him to go up as high as the stars, but he didn't go that high.

"I stopped when I saw a path ahead of me in space, made of gob stoppers cut in half and placed like a path. I walked along that path with my younger self and felt very emotional. It put things into perspective for me. I knew that was the path I needed to be on. I could see how life would change if I was on that path. Me and my younger self seemed to be like two people made of Lego, and then all of a sudden we were swapping parts of our bodies around. I felt his emotions so clearly. He had had such a struggle and he had masked it. Or rather I had masked it for him.

"Cut and paste literally saved my life. I didn't tell anyone about my dyslexia, but sometimes I had to cheat to get by. When I was at Brecon I had to get someone to write the orders for me and then I would copy it. I always just pushed through and carried on. I think if I could read and write properly I would have been a different person. I still can't read most words. That alone sparks anxiety in me because I am so afraid of looking silly."

Matt said his dyslexia had never actually been diagnosed. He had just been labelled a disruptive kid. He said his reading level had improved but was probably only at about the age of a 9 year old.

Fifth Session

Matt was ebullient by his fifth session, feeling better and better.

"When anything comes up I react differently. It is like I am sticking a finger up now, telling people to take me as I am. I don't worry about what everyone thinks of me anymore."

Matt said he was experiencing no pain at all anymore; not in his shoulder, or back and he had no headaches. He seemed quite surprised as he said it, and he did a quick audit of where he had had pain before, and realised he had none now. He said his habits had totally changed.

"I go to bed late now. I actually sit up and enjoy the 'me' time. That means I can't get up so easily in the morning, but not in a bad way. I am just so relaxed. Before, I was always aware of the time and I would be worrying that I needed to go to bed because I would have to get up soon, and then I would go to bed and not sleep, but as soon as the alarm went off I would dash out of bed and hit the day, feeling absolutely exhausted. But now, when the alarm goes off I hit the snooze button, and not once but two or even three times. I am thinking: "Hey, why not take just a little longer for you." I am never late for work but I take my time, and because I have slept so well I am not exhausted. I didn't want to face the day before, but now I am fine. I am so comfortable. The other day I even signed off work an hour early so I could join my boy for a swimming lesson and my wife was knocked out. She just said "Wow" and my boy was so pleased. I can't believe it has taken me four to five years to get to this point. I have been through everything DCMH had to offer, and the NHS Mental Health services. But I am here, in just four sessions of hypnotherapy. It beggars belief. I have dropped my medication. I cut the dosage in half - dropped to 50mg of antidepressants from 100mg. I don't feel any different at all. Well, that is not true. I do. I have more energy for everything. When I am tired I am just tired. Not floored."

Matt said that after the previous session he had experienced no drop in spirits and no uncertainty.

"It's true that I had never pinpointed all my problems to that, but once I had absorbed it I felt more in control of it. It was truly a lightbulb moment. I have spent the whole of this past week congratulating myself for doing what I did with my life, for achieving what I have achieved up to now. I am proud of me. Truly proud of me. I am patting myself on the back. I am who I am."

Matt said he had decided to leave the army after completing 22 years.

"I will get my pension. I am not sure what I will do but I have options. Maybe I will work in mental health, you never know."

Matt asked for one final session to cement his calm and his ambitions. After the usual progressive relaxation visualisation, Matt was asked to imagine a steel ball at the top of a hill, rolling down, but being pulled into a magnetic field, knocking it off course. The magnet signified all the people and events which had combined to create obstacles in his life. He was then asked to take

the steel ball back to the top of the hill, make it twice as heavy and twice as large, and watch it roll down again, unhindered, just as his life would be from now on. Matt emerged from hypnosis saying he felt energised and determined.

Six months later Matt is still feeling the positive effects of his clinical hypnotherapy. He has gone ahead and signed off from the Army and already has at least one job offer relating to military mental health. He is sleeping well, with no pain and feeling very positive and motivated.

Chapter Two

Luke

It has been nine years since Luke returned from theatre in Afghanistan; nine years of battling extreme anger, depression, hypertension, a racing mind, flashbacks and intrusive memories.

“My flashbacks are sparked by environmental things, like if the light is reminiscent of Iraq. I was walking my dog one day and I looked down a street, and suddenly it was a street in Iraq with high walls and metal gates - each house was a house, but not a British house.”

Luke said his flashbacks happened fairly often, and each time his heart would catch and he would hear noises.

“It can stick with me for a long time and I find it hard to switch it off. I have to keep my mind occupied or I start dwelling on things. I tell myself: “Don’t think, put that back in its box and crack on.”

Luke served two tours of Iraq, in 2003 and 2005, plus an extremely kinetic tour in Sangin in Afghanistan in 2009/2010. He was medically discharged in 2010 in circumstances which made him feel as though the Army was ‘washing its hands of him’.

“Before I was deployed to Afghanistan I was confirmed as having hearing loss from Iraq, and I was downgraded to non-deployable. But when they needed to make up the numbers for Afghanistan they asked me to go, and told me I would get promoted if I did. After I returned, I was recommended for promotion, and sent to a promotion course. But I had a medical on the Friday to start the course on the Monday, and the doctor told me I couldn’t be promoted because of the hearing loss. He said I needed to be medically discharged immediately. I was just short of my 12 years service. As a result I wasn’t eligible for my half pension rights. They also said although my loss of hearing was bad enough to end my career, it was not bad enough for me to qualify for any compensation. I was eventually awarded a small war pension of 140 GBP a month which I had to fight for tooth and nail.”

Luke started drinking heavily and became extremely aggressive and destructive. He destroyed his own shed, and his kitchen, and his temper would explode at the slightest provocation, like if the children were loud or banged doors. He developed a stammer but that has now dissipated. He said no one liked him.

Luke’s symptoms cost him his family. He parted from his wife when the youngest of his four children was only one.

He was diagnosed by his doctor with PTSD in 2014 and was prescribed CBT talk therapy, but he felt those sessions made him worse, Luke then tried EMDR but said that was even more stressful.

“I was very anxious in the lead up to each appointment, and my symptoms grew worse. I asked my therapist if we could do it every two weeks, instead of every week, so that I had at least one good week. But in the end they told me I wasn’t getting anywhere and referred me to a veterans’ charity instead. I didn’t go.”

Luke got a contracting job and went back to Iraq, but felt very unnerved by the lack of security in the country.

“The Iraqi police were wearing ski masks and we needed to bribe them to get around. It was not safe. I thought if I shoot someone here I am going to jail. So I just went to the airport and flew home.”

He started a close protection course and was applying to work for the British embassies, but then he was involved in a road rage incident.

“This guy was tailgating me and acting very aggressively. I stopped the car and got out and he was swearing and making rude gestures, generally being very aggressive. I ended up punching the man’s wing mirror to make him stop, and it flew off the car. The police prosecuted me even though I paid for a new wing mirror. The drug addict before me in court got a slap on the wrist even though he was a habitual thief. But the judge told me I should contain my aggression and gave me a 500 GBP fine, but more importantly a conviction for vandalism, which meant I was immediately barred from working at any embassy. I told the judge I had lost my Army job; I had lost my children as my wife had left me, and he was now destroying me too, but he didn’t care. I gave the Army everything - Iraq, Afghanistan, all those Christmases, my soul, my blood, all that fighting and now my mental health. It was alright to drop a bomb on a village, and kill everyone, but not alright to knock off someone’s wing mirror.”

After that, Luke said his symptoms grew worse, until now he feels like his mind is not functioning properly.

"I can't read anymore. I can see the words and I recognise each individual word, but when I put them together I don't understand the meaning of the sentence. I can't follow cooking instructions on a packet. I can't work for anyone. I am so depressed and so frustrated. I have got to get out of this rut of shit. I know I am not right. I am running on 30%. Everything is grey and hazy."

Luke's father served in the military in Northern Ireland and the first Gulf War and Luke suspects he also suffers from PTSD. Luke's mother died suddenly when he was 11, leaving three young sons.

"I had a very sheltered life for the first ten years, as an 'army brat'. But then Dad left the army and we moved to Scotland, where I was suddenly thrust into a world of drugs and gangs, and I was threatened with knives and mugged. Someone stole my bike. It was such a shock. Then Mum developed cancer and she died two weeks after Christmas. She complained of stomach pains, went to the doctor, was sent to the hospital, and then two weeks later she was dead. She did return home for Christmas but she couldn't move at all."

By this time, Luke's father was a violent alcoholic. Luke was the middle boy. He had a toddler brother and an older brother who had been sucked into the drugs gangs. He used to steal Luke's possessions to buy drugs.

First Session

Luke was nervous about hypnotherapy because he had had a bad experience once before. His wife had given him a hypnotherapy recording to listen to, to lose weight, but within a few minutes of listening to it he had started to see many disturbing images from Afghanistan.

"It was like it was showing me a video reel and I was screaming 'Fuck off, no, no, no.' I ripped the head phones out and threw them to one side and thought I never want to listen to anything like that again."

He was concerned it would happen again. I assured him that we would take it slowly, and instruct the subconscious to only bring forth constructive information, and not anything which was scary or destabilising.

Throughout his first hypnotherapy session, Luke was extremely restless, so much so it was impossible to tell if he was in a hypnotic trance or wide awake. His arms and legs were moving constantly and he shifted position every few minutes throughout the progressive relaxation, and even during the visualisation exercises to clear negative events, people and thoughts from his mind. But after Luke was urged to return to the conscious state, he said he had felt thoroughly relaxed throughout and did not remember moving his body.

He said he was not at all upset; had not seen anything worrying, and felt very calm. However he said he was aware of liquid coming out of his ears at one point. He said it was a very real feeling and he thought it might be water, but he couldn't imagine how he had water in his ears.

Luke said he was keen to see clinical hypnotherapy through to the end because he realised he had to tackle PTSD properly now, as it was not going away and was actually growing steadily worse.

Second Session

When Luke arrived for his second session, he said he still felt stressed and run down, mainly because of family arguments, and he had not been listening to the recordings he had been given because he was too busy.

"I feel like I am dragging myself through treacle. Everything is getting on top of me. My life is like something from the Jeremy Kyle show. I have three little girls and a baby boy. My wife has started seeing someone else, and I have a new girlfriend. I tried so hard to save the marriage and gave it a lot of thought. We were together 12 years, but in the end I realised I was just there for the children, and I could be a better father if we lived apart."

He said after the first hypnotherapy session he didn't feel different in terms of his emotions, but he did feel as if the 'lid had come off'. He said he felt as if everything was now open and exposed.

He had had one significant flashback that week and, like all of his flashbacks, it was to that same street in Iraq. He said nothing was happening but he was feeling very alone and vulnerable and unsafe.

“All my senses were heightened and I felt on edge. I looked at the ground and walked forward. I felt like my walking was being channeled. It was how I used to feel when I was looking for IEDs. You were always looking for command wires. You searched everything twice. We were taught the principles of where they were planted and we were always processing that information. I remember looking in doorways, not wanting to go through certain doorways. I do that all the time now, and then I have to remind myself where I am.”

Luke feels there are two sides to his PTSD. He feels one element has been created by a specific intense trauma, but he is not sure which one, and another element has been created by the long, drawn out, hour after hour fear.

“I was always on edge. Could someone get me? Is this gate safe or is there an IED behind it? Could someone throw a grenade over this wall? I was always stressed.”

Luke said when he went to Iraq for the first time he was in Baghdad and they were told that a Chechen sniper was operating in the area.

“I was looking everywhere. I always thought he was looking for me. It could be me, I kept thinking. When you feel like that long term, it is like the feeling is being engraved on you. I feel like I need a reset to leave that feeling behind.”

Luke acknowledged that it wasn't just in Iraq that he had that feeling. He had felt like that as a child. Uneasy. Vulnerable. He felt like that when he first moved to Scotland, when his father left the Army, and the whole family relocated.

“I was immediately in someone else's terrain, not mine. I had no idea who was safe and who wasn't. I didn't know who was in which building. The people were hostile to me. I had to look after myself, even as a ten year-old boy, and it was a horrible feeling. The same feeling. There was always a danger of something happening. It could come out of nowhere. I was 10 years old and people drew knives on me. It felt so dangerous. As I got bigger I could take care of myself, but I was always on edge. It was the same thing in Iraq, but different.”

Luke said he didn't lose anyone close to him in combat in Iraq.

“We did lose some TA guys. There were also some casualties and accidents. One 18 year-old was killed in a training accident just four days into the tour. He was familiarising himself with a wagon when it went into the canal and he drowned. Afghanistan was a different beast. It was brutal. Iraq was just surreal. It was the first time I had ever been anywhere like that. None of us knew what we were doing. Were we at war or were we not? Were we supposed to be killing people or not? What was going on? There was no clear brief. We were going out and wandering around and just reacting to whatever was thrown at us, and no one seemed to have any strategy. We just got there and people started killing each other. The rules of engagement changed all the time. I was 18 years old. I had no idea what we were doing.

“We went into one compound and some of our guys got blown up. The next day we were doing exactly the same mission and it was so raw that we rounded up the Iraqis and demanded to know if there were IEDs in the garden, and if so why. I told one guy I was going to stab him; going to kill him. I was so angry. I pulled my knife out and said I would kill him. I didn't of course but I was that angry. I was even more angry in Afghanistan. You are just waiting; waiting for something to happen. And you know that someone has laid an IED and you grab hold of him and demand to know if he has, but you also know that if he tells you the Taliban will come and kill him. We were constantly taking ground and then they took it back. What was the point? We were just destabilising a whole country for money, and soldiers were losing their lives, their limbs, their sanity, for what? Why were we put in that position? We were just abused. That really adds to my bitterness.”

Luke said he has the comfort of knowing that he at least performed his role to the best of his ability, for his platoon and company.

“We did what we were meant to do. We did the right thing by the military. We didn't step out of line.”

Luke recounted an incident on his first tour when he was involved in an engagement as Iraqis attacked their position.

“They were bashing our platoon so we attacked them. We bashed them. We did the job right. It was a job well done. But then we had to go out and bring the bodies back. They were just young lads. There was a woman there and we had killed both her sons and they were only 15 and 17. They had come looking for trouble but they hadn't been expecting what we had ready for them.

“There was another lad who came up out of an irrigation ditch and ran off towards the horizon. I looked at my corporal. We could have killed him but we didn't. We couldn't bring ourselves to shoot someone running away. There was a woman running up and down the street grabbing kids. They were all so scared because of what we had unleashed. We overwhelmed them. It was a job well done. By the book. Loads of Iraqis came and surrounded the base to collect the bodies. The

mother of the two boys was hysterical and trying to hurt us. We didn't understand then, but when we came home and got our own kids we understood. I feel so guilty for that. We pinned them down. Then we advanced and executed them. And the guys were all arguing about who got the kill. Who shot them? The two brothers were shot with one round. They had come up our left flank. Both got shot straight in the head. The commander got a medal for it, but did we need to kill them, or should we just have shot at them until they fucked off? Does anybody have the right to kill anyone?"

Luke eventually settled down for his second hypnotherapy session and went deeply into hypnosis. He was breathing calmly for some time, as he was led through progressive relaxation and down the stairs to his safe haven. But when he was asked to take the elevator down to the room of enlightenment, to find the part of him which was causing his symptoms, his breathing became agitated and his body began moving erratically, then he started sobbing, deeply. He sobbed all the way to the end of the session, and was still crying as he came back to the conscious state.

Luke remained upset for some time after hypnosis. He said he had seen his mother when he was asked to identify the part causing his symptoms.

This is not unusual, as psychiatrists believe there are three main types of 'parts' resident in our body - our younger self, our adult self, and our parents.

He said that when he was asked to go into the room of enlightenment he saw chairs and a table, and he thought that he was going to ask the part to come forward and it would say no.

"I so wanted to know what was causing my symptoms, but I thought it wouldn't tell me. Then my Mum walked in and sat down, but that didn't make sense to me. I didn't understand how she related to my symptoms. But then I thought that after she died I was so lonely. So alone. The house was empty. It was really difficult. There was not much money. I knew she was dead and I had no one to go to for advice. But now she was here, sitting opposite me in the chair, with her arms folded, and I felt she was angry. And I was angry, and abandoned. Anger is a cover emotion for me. When I am sad or afraid I am angry. I was angry at home and I scared the kids. Guilt makes me angry and flips my triggers, and so does being alone. I am always so alone in my flashbacks, but there is more to it too. It is tucked right away in there, hiding deep inside me. I don't want none of it. I just want it to go away. It feels like it is telling me: 'No, no, no. You stay away from here or else'. It is screaming inside me. It is a presence; a force. It is not an emotion; it is a feeling which makes it scream inside.

"After my Mum died I used to tell myself she wasn't dead but had run away. I would expect to see her out in the town. The loss of her was too sudden, and afterwards I had no chance to grieve."

Luke began crying again at this point.

"I lost all my security, and stability. I hadn't had much anyway, having moved to Scotland, but I had her and I knew she loved us very much. She had a very hard time when my Dad got out of the Army. They didn't have much money and my brother was very difficult. She sheltered us a lot, but she was depressed and she didn't have happy memories. After she died it was just hardship. For years after that I never got any attention. I just had to put my head down and crack on. I felt so abandoned."

Luke said he had experienced a flashback during hypnosis to a Forward Operating Base in Afghanistan.

"It was just a snippet on a loop, and it was bright yellow. A guy got hit by an IED in our platoon. We were on patrol in Afghan and some of the guys were searching a compound which had been searched before. It had been occupied before. I was not sure how the IED had been initiated. Was it a remote detonation or a pressure pad? If it was a pressure pad, other guys had walked over it. It was at the foot of a ladder and that area should have been cleared. This guy went to go up the ladder and he was carrying the ECM so he was heavier than the others. He got his legs blown off and his fingers. The medic was a girl, so I asked if she needed help to go to him, and she nodded and we went over to him together. We had to go over a wall into the compound. We were a couple of rungs from the ground looking at him ten feet away. As keen as I was to go and help, I was scared, and I feel guilty about that to this day. My mate was the barma guy with the metal detector and I asked him if he had cleared it. He said yes. The guy who had been blown up was lying in a pool of blood and we needed to get to him, but I kept asking my mate if the route to him had been cleared. Over and over again. He kept saying yes, but I was essentially saying I didn't believe him and he hadn't done his job. By asking those questions I was blaming him and I feel so guilty for that. Eventually I climbed down to him, but I was so scared. This chap was so desperately injured. We applied tourniquets. I was working on him but I was very conscious in my mind there could be another IED. I was so scared of ending up like him. I was convinced in my

mind there was something else there, as we were dealing with two broken mop sticks and all this torn meat. I remember that I needed to get another tourniquet out, and I had more in my pockets, but they were under my belly, as we were lying on our stomachs, and I thought if I moved and one blew it would split me in half. It felt like an eternity reaching for that tourniquet. I was waiting to get blown up. I think that is the cause of my hypertension now. Maybe I was experiencing a sixth sense. I was so totally convinced something was there.”

Luke explained that the guy had lived but that had not lessened his guilt.

“We had a six hour patrol back - all the time the Taliban were on the intercom saying they were coming to get us. I learned a lot that day about effectiveness and enemy morale. It was such a hard day.”

Luke said after that troop morale was rock bottom.

“No one wanted to fight. We were only a month to six weeks in. Even though the guy survived he had died in front of us before being resuscitated. We had had to crack his ribs open.”

Luke said he was aware he was doing things that his whole body was screaming not to, but he had to ignore it.

“To do the things we needed to do, we needed to be abnormal. Then when we left the military we needed to put the wires back the right way. But we couldn’t. So we became aggressive and it changed us. The army and the government deliberately made us aggressive and then chastised us for being aggressive. We don’t fit in to the civilian world now. We don’t fit in with people. We don’t even fit in with other mental health patients. We don’t belong.”

Third Session

Luke said he had reflected on his Mum all week and he realised that he had never grieved for her.

“Whenever I cried to my Dad about my Mum he was always really short. He used to say: “You need to suck it up, that’s all.” There was never any emotional comfort from my Dad. I understood that what I was saying to him was upsetting him.”

Luke said he had had some flashbacks since the last session, but they were quick flashes and not clear and lengthy like before. Overall, he seemed very contemplative and thoughtful, but keen to go back into hypnosis. This time the focus of the session was on forgiveness of others, and identifying the person or persons who had hurt or angered him, and letting go of that emotion, if he could. He was calm as he went through the progressive relaxation stage of the session, but as soon as he was asked to take the elevator to the room of enlightenment he became physically agitated and started crying. He cried all the way through the session until he was encouraged to return to the conscious state.

When he felt able to talk again, Luke said the whole session had felt very weird. He was aware that one of his ears was wet again, and as he came out of hypnosis he checked to find that his headphones were indeed wet. He was not sure if the liquid was coming from his ears, or if it was his tears rolling down his face. He said he was aware he was crying but he wasn’t sure what had made him cry.

“I was very conscious of a tense feeling at the beginning. I was anxious. My mind kept wanting to wander and felt busy. I feel like that in my life in general. It is like my mind doesn’t want me to face anything. My brain is like a random number generator, never giving me time to reflect. But I remember being in an elevator, and it was very nice, but when you said it was going down, something inside me started saying “No, no”. I couldn’t see any specific faces, but I was very aware of expressions of agony coming at me. It suddenly clicked that I had seen those faces in my flashbacks, especially one particular one.”

Luke said he knew something inside of him did not want him to see the cause of his symptoms.

“It was screaming at me. It was trying to frighten me off. That was the feeling I was getting all the way through this session. The elevator grew very dark and it became a cage, like one of those old wrought iron elevators. It was like a horror scene, with these faces. When the doors opened it was like one of those sliding gates on an old lift, and everything was dark. So dark. I didn’t like it at all and I wanted to go back up. I felt like something was going to get me in the dark. I went over and sat down at a table and I could just make out the two chairs and a door. All the time I was thinking “just spare me the show”. When you said the door would open and something/someone would come out I saw the door move, but couldn’t really see, but there was a foot there. I could make it out. A foot came around the door but then pulled back. It was wearing a desert boot. Then it shut the door and I could hear it laughing. I was angry then. I got up and went to look in

the door but I couldn't see anything in the dark. I shouted: "Okay, if you don't come out this time, I want you to know that next time I am coming in."

Luke said he remembered saying: "I want to know. I want to know."

Luke said he was absolutely sure it was a soldier behind the door, wearing desert camouflage uniform. He said it was a soldier's foot.

"But it was obvious it wasn't willing to come out."

Luke remembered being asked to picture someone he was angry with, and he expected that person to materialise.

"I kept asking myself: 'Who am I angry with? Who can it be?' But the door remained shut. I realised I am not angry with anyone. I kept thinking: 'It's just you here, Luke. You are angry at yourself. You are let down by yourself. So what is it? What is the problem? What's going wrong with me?' I felt like I was comforting a broken me. I was telling myself I need to slow down. I need to think about number one. I need to get my focus back. I feel like everything is moving too fast. My mind is deliberately distracting me. It is keeping me too busy to think. I do try to tackle it. I was saying that I feel guilty, but it isn't because I haven't worked hard enough. It is time to start feeling better. I kept asking myself what was back there? Whatever it was had shoved my Mum out first. I felt like it showed me my Mum to let me know that she shaped me. You think you know yourself but you don't."

Luke's tears were coursing down his face as he spoke.

"This thing with the face..... during the first tour of Iraq..... guessing nowbut it makes sense now..... people say that was definitely a turning point. Afghan made me chronic but Iraq was the turning point. There was this face in Iraq. Two things happened to me. One in the day and one at night. These guys started a firefight and this woman was running around collecting children and taking them to safety. We did a section attack. It was my job. I was a grenadier and I had to clear positions, go in first, and it was the first time for me. I was just 18. We used all our conventional tactics. Me and the commander went forward, and then he stayed back while I went forward. I wanted a grenade and I remember he wouldn't give me one. I demanded why he wouldn't give it to me. I was really angry. He got a medal for what I did and he didn't even give me the grenade. He got a citation. So I went forward without it. There was a guy in a white dish dash who had been shot in the head. My mind plays tricks with my memory. I remember him being face down but he wasn't. He was face up, and he had an AK across his body. It was slung across him. He was still but I couldn't see any blood. He was sitting bolt upright in a trench position and I kept thinking he wasn't dead, as there was no blood. I thought he was pretending he was dead and I was so scared he was suddenly going to pop up. I ran right at him and gave him the hardest kick I could, right in the head. I knew then that he was dead. As I kicked him in the head I was shouting at him. His was one of the faces. But all the other faces also had his expression - loads of them with that expression. Agony. His eyes rolled back in his head. Even though he was a baddie he was still human. It was weird; surreal and eerie. It was all a grey blur but also so vivid. I remember his hair and his forehead and his beard. I remember it like an SAS picture. I see his expression and his grey blurry face. But in hypnosis it showed me his face again, clearly - like that painting "The Scream". It's in my head. I can't clear it. You don't mean to but you let it slip into your psyche.

"The operation meant I had to run across a bridge. It was 40 or 50 metres. The commander said he would stay back and cover me and I had to go on my own. I was alone. I wouldn't have put cash on it, but I knew I was going to get blown up. I was so scared. In any attack you need to work around and clear ground. The safest place was the end of the bridge where he took cover. He got the second highest award for gallantry which you can get, and I was out there alone.

"I was a good shot. We never brought a body back but I had a brand new weapons system. I know I hit the guy and killed him. He was engaging the others and he had a belt-fed weapon. The guy was shooting. I knew I did a good job but it was very calculated what I did. It was cold and sneaky. I had to be the best to get him. I was out to get him. I planned a murder. That is what I was doing there. I knew he was going to get murdered and I was going to do it. You think you are doing the right thing - you want it to be the right thing - but it was madness. There was no point to it. I attacked. I fired. He never fired again. I know I got him. I feel so bad about it now but at the time I thought: 'Let's get this bastard'. When we got to his position there was blood and casings. It was the first time that I shot anybody. I didn't see the body but it has haunted me all this time.

"I had to go back and search the guy who I kicked in the head. I searched his body to see how he died because I hadn't seen any blood. There was a tiny hole in him. He was laid back then and his hands were not on the gun. I had kicked him in the head before running across the bridge. I remember shouting at him as I booted him in the head, and I remember his head wobbling, so I

knew he wasn't about to jump up and shoot me. I tried not to look at his face. I tried to focus on his hands. But I remember that face.

"So you see, there have been several things over the years but I don't remember which.....there were so many times I was scared. You just have to take a deep breath and think 'showtime'. You have to pull your trousers up and just go through with it, and when you come back you are not the same soldier anymore. I told myself I wasn't scared but in reality I was very scared. It was the most heightened sense of awareness. Things happened to me. I nearly got shot in the face - it missed me by inches. There was also a near miss explosion. It is a different kettle of fish when you see that blast wave. It does something to you. It physically goes through you. You absorb so much when you are a soldier. You physically run yourself into the ground; you get some bits of broken sleep, and then you keep going. You are programmed. In Afghanistan, at the end, it was a physical grind and it was relentless. That did things with my head.

"I was 18 then, and I didn't comprehend death and agony, but I also shot those Iraqi boys and they were soft as fuck. I am not sorry for what we did but it wasn't right. I am not sorry but personally, I am sorry."

The pain and anguish Luke put into the word 'sorry' was palpable.

"Somebody loved that child. I am paying for it. I don't feel guilty but I don't want to think about doing it."

Luke broke down and cried for a while before he was able to continue.

"I have got to slow down. I need to process these thoughts. I am fighting on so many fronts. It is trying to scare me away from knowing everything. But it is me. Not something else. It is saying no, no, no. It is so dark. It is a part of me but it is also evil and separate. I was scared of him but now I am not scared. Being scared is what makes you aggressive. I think perhaps I need to talk to my Dad. Maybe I will write something and let him read it. I think my Dad might feel the same way as me."

Session Four

Luke came to the session saying he was feeling a bit better.

"I have been doing more. I have been more productive. I am getting through stuff. It is a conscious effort, but I feel more optimism."

He wanted to go straight into the session this time and he seemed to relax more easily. But as the session progressed he seemed to be struggling with his emotions again. When he was asked to identify his most troubling emotion, and take himself back to the very first time he had ever felt that way, he began to cry. His tears continued to roll down his cheeks all the way to the end of the session. When he came back to consciousness he appeared upset and disorientated and needed some time to compose himself.

"I was upset but not, if that makes sense. I didn't feel upset but it was horrible. A horrible feeling of uncertainty and helplessness. I can feel it there now." He touched his chest. "In me. It is still in me. I can feel it. I keep needing to look around and get my bearings. I feel so worried."

Luke said he had gone back to two scenes, one in his military career and one when he was a child.

"It makes sense, I guess. Looking back on it. Remembering it. It did feel the same."

Luke began to explain.

"Initially, I went back to when my friend lost his legs. I could see everything. It wasn't nice. I didn't want to tend to him. It was horrific. But then it wasn't."

At one point in the session, when Luke appeared to be very upset, he was instructed to distance himself from the scene emotionally, so he could still see what was happening but not feel upset. This may have accounted for the sudden distance he felt.

"I just kept seeing it. I was close to him. When I was tending to him, I was in the blast crater. It was about a metre in diameter and I could just get in it. Half of me was in it up to my waist. I was thinking: 'They are going to blow a hole in the compound wall to extract him', but I was convinced there was a secondary device. I was so conscious of the risk.

"As I put my knee down I was thinking: 'What if it is here? I don't want to move by any measure, because I know THAT will happen to me.' I could taste the blood in my mouth. His blood. When you are in that situation you are so conscious of where you are. I was being methodical, but all I could think was: 'Please don't let that happen to me.'"

"In the background I was knuckling down and doing what I had to do, but in the forefront of my mind was terror. I was on my belt buckle when they blew the wall. It was just 20 metres away. I

was so close; too close. When I lay down someone was counting down, and I thought: 'When he blows that it is going to set off another IED'

"In my mind I knew I was going to get blown up. I was lying there, thinking I didn't have any more field dressings, or tourniquets. I had used them all on my friend. It was just horrendous. I can't even explain that feeling. I was physically screaming inside, waiting to get blown up. Imagine there is a grenade and it is thrown into your base, and you dive on it to save everyone else, and you know that is it, and in a moment it is going to blow and you are going to die, and you are just waiting to die. You just have two seconds to wait until you die. And for those split seconds it is just too much fear. I was just saying: 'Please take me out.' I wanted to be rescued, like a child. I wanted someone to rescue me. Isn't that pathetic?"

"Then combat mode kicked back in. I had to stabilise my friend. I had to put all feeling aside. But right at that moment I felt like a fuse blew, and my system didn't work anymore. It was just this split second. In order to operate under those conditions something has to go. In that moment I was stuck.

"I always wanted to be a soldier. I am a good soldier. I was always at the front. First in. But in that moment I was bricking it. I wanted to be extracted. If the option had been there, I would have run. People think all soldiers are big and hard but we really aren't inside. I realise I am not. When that feeling is so strong, and you have to fight it so much, then you think: 'I have really fucked up.' No one can go through that and be normal. Normal people think: 'Fuck this, I am out of here.' But as a soldier you have to do the abnormal. Running away was not an option."

Luke said he still felt disorientated, and felt like he needed to keep looking around.

"If I shut my eyes right now I could go back. But I have this feeling that things will become apparent and will make themselves known and will be sorted in days. It's just a feeling. It is like being tethered. Like a tether which keeps pulling you back. You can't get to where you need to go. You need to unclip the tether."

Luke said he had also gone back to a scene from childhood.

"It was vague at first. More a feeling than a scene. The words: 'The fuckers left me!!!"

Luke went on to explain: "I was in Scotland, in Primary 6 or 7. I went to a quarry with my friends to play. I had my toddler brother, Ed, with me. We were all primary school kids. We knew we shouldn't go there, across the imaginary border with another housing scheme. Back in those days one didn't go into another scheme. There were consequences if we got caught. We just can't get caught, we told ourselves. So we were playing and a gang of boys came. Everyone saw them coming and ran but I couldn't run because of Ed. I couldn't get away. They caught us. Those fucking pricks left me with my toddler brother to face them alone. These boys hurt me.

"They surrounded me and they were all staring and everyone was asking: 'Where are you from?' I hadn't been living there long. It was just after my Mum died. I was about 12. 'What are you doing here', they asked. I said I was playing. They said: 'But this is our place.' They said they wouldn't let me go. 'Now we need to batter you,' they said. I begged them not to, but they wouldn't listen. Suddenly one of the boys hit me on the back of the head with a piece of wood. I asked them to let my brother go and they said he could, and I told him to run to where the others were. They were standing watching! Then this guy pulled out a Swiss Army knife, opened it and then said: 'This is for you.' I just punched him and then ran through the circle of kids. They started chasing me. I had to run through a river. They were trying to get down my flanks and encircle me. It was a classic Rommel pincer movement, but I was flying. I was so young and was just going mental, convinced he was going to stab me or slash me. I could hear them shouting: 'Fucking kill him'. Suddenly I came across this guy, and I was screaming: 'Help! Help!' He grabbed me and took me to my Dad. I was so lucky....

"Another time I was going to a shopping centre to get bread and milk, and to get there I had to walk on the side of the road belonging to the other scheme. This guy pulled up his T-shirt and pulled out a kitchen knife, the same size as his femur. He must have stolen it from somewhere. He asked where I was from. He was a vicious wee bastard. Rough as fuck. Sniffing gas. This session took me there too. I was shitting it. It was horrible. Just horrible."

Fifth session

Luke said he felt a lot calmer and had spent time with his children that weekend.

“I was fine. Overall it has been pretty good. I am not nearly as stressed.”

He said he was very conscious of what he had recalled in the last session, as if it was just “sitting there on the fringes of my mind.” He said: “I know now, it is the cause of it. That makes things easier.”

Luke agreed to a fifth session, and he relaxed into the progressive induction. The aim of this session was to forgive himself for any emotion, or any action, which was playing on his mind. Luke showed no emotion during this session, and seemed very calm. When he emerged from the session he said he had not seen anything upsetting and had just felt an overwhelming sense of peace.

“I saw some random images and I saw myself, but it was like it was just making sure what I already knew. To let it go. Slow down. Look forward and not back. And you know I think I can now. I want to write. I have wanted to write for so long but never found the time. I want to write about my experiences, but also short stories and some fiction. Maybe even take a course. This session made me realise the way I want to go. Forward. It has given me the path.”

Six months after the session, Luke reported that he was still feeling centered and motivated. He had joined a veterans' 4 x 4 expedition across the Oman desert. He had thoroughly enjoyed the whole experience, especially when his mechanic skills had been called upon to avert expedition disaster. He had taken his girlfriend to Turkey on holiday. He was now about to join that same 4x4 charity on another expedition in Spain. The trips had allowed him to make new friends with people who had been through similar experiences to him, and prompted him to start laughing again. His flashbacks were gone.

He was still drawing up plans for what he would write, but he felt like he had time now to sort it all out in his own head. All his PTSD symptoms had vanished and he was looking forward to the future.

Chapter Three

Charlie

Charlie is a former sniper who completed three tours of Iraq and two of Afghanistan.

He is also a single father of a seven year-old boy, who he calls his “lifeline”, who he sees every other weekend and for holidays. He also has two rescue dogs which he says ‘keep me sane. Almost!’

His wife left him while he was on tour in Afghanistan.

He is unemployed but has been accepted to work with abused and orphaned children and is waiting for a start date. He is worried about his symptoms getting in the way of his new job so he wants to overcome them as quickly as possible.

Charlie was diagnosed with PTSD in 2015, by DCMH, but DCMH believes he has had symptoms since 2005.

Charlie started noticing PTSD symptoms himself in 2012 when his Colour Sergeant Major pointed out that he was drinking too much. He remembers being very irritable and not sleeping.

“I was drinking cans of beer from the moment I woke up and getting into fights. I couldn’t sleep more than three hours at night. I harboured a lot of guilt about the women and children I had killed. I was particularly bothered by a seven year-old child I killed on my last tour of Afghanistan, who was the same age as my son is now. I didn’t care about the guys, because if they were holding a gun and aiming it at me it was fair enough. But I do care about the women and kids.”

Charlie is suffering flashbacks and memory intrusions when he is awake.

“It is so disorientating. I truly believe I am back in theatre and everything around me is as it was then. My heart races like crazy, just as it did when I was lining up for a kill.”

He said that after his diagnosis DCMH kept giving him different types of anti-depressants, one after the other, until he had seven or eight different types.

“They kept trying different brands to see what might work, but nothing did. Then they tried CBT but it was pointless, and the psychiatrist was scared of me and refused to work with me. I also had several sessions of EMDR but it made me worse, and would massively trigger my anger and flashbacks. They used to give me the EMDR, make me recall everything, and then just send me out into the street, but nothing was resolved and by then I was dangerously angry.”

Charlie explained that he had been beaten and used a “rent boy” by his father when he was small; hired out to his father’s friends for sexual services. He was taken into care when he was 11. He believes his story is “not much different to anyone in the infantry.” He said almost all of his friends had also been abused.

First Session

Charlie went easily into hypnosis, showing tell-tale muscle jerks and spasms to attest to the depth of his hypnotic trance. He made a few groaning sounds a couple of times as he was being led through the progressive relaxation and the visualisation of discarding anything negative in his life, but otherwise he was still and silent.

When he emerged from hypnosis Charlie was stunned.

“That was amazing. I know it’s the first one but my god I feel amazing. Tired, but amazing. I can’t wait until next week. I keep a journal everyday to write down emotions and stuff so I will record how I feel.” He said nothing more.

Second Session

Before the next session, disaster struck for Charlie. He said he was being evicted from his home for unpaid rent to the council of 284 GBP. He said he couldn't pay it and he was planning to move into a tent in the woods with his dogs, so he would have to give up sessions as he would have no internet.

He was very depressed and said there was no hope. He said it was "all he deserved" and he would be fine.

We studied his finances together to see if we could find any leeway in the figures, and we realised he had been paying too much for water, so we secured a rebate of monies overpaid which would clear the unpaid rent. He got to keep his house. When he came to hypnosis, Charlie said he felt drained but so relieved.

He said the effects of hypnosis the week before, in terms of energy and deep relaxation, had lasted one day, when he had slept so well overnight, but the worry about being homeless had ramped up his stress levels and he had found it impossible to quell them. But he said it was such a relief to have had that one good night's sleep and now he knew it was possible.

Charlie was very keen to get back into hypnosis again. He said his family had noticed a difference in him already, and so had all his friends. They said he was much more laid back and calm. He said without the initial hypnosis session, he didn't think he would have been able to face his financial problems and sort them out.

"I have just had my head in the sand where finances are concerned. I was always crap at finances and the PTSD has made me even worse."

During the session, Charlie was asked to bring forward the part inside of him causing his physical and psychological symptoms. His body jerked considerably throughout the progressive relaxation and the therapy part of the session. When asked if he had found the part responsible for his symptoms, he nodded. When asked if he could forgive this part for all the symptoms he was suffering, he nodded. When addressing the part directly, and asking if it could stop the symptoms, he nodded. Charlie was encouraged to embrace the troublesome part inside of him and indicate when he had done so. He did so by nodding.

Charlie emerged from hypnosis saying that he knew exactly what was causing all his symptoms. He said he had seen himself at the age of six in a dark cupboard under the stairs, so scared.

"I felt this overwhelming, immense, fear."

He said his father used to beat him up in front of his own friends, to show how well he disciplined the boy. He would also sell the use of him for sex to his friends.

"When I came out of that cupboard his friends were always ready for me. My father would pick me up from my mother's house on a Friday, then put me straight in the cupboard and lock me in, and give me only bread and water. I had to soil myself in the cupboard. I was only brought out for beatings or sexual abuse. Then on Sunday afternoon he would bring me out and hose me down in the garden before taking me back to my mother. This went on from the age of six to 11."

Charlie said his mother was a heroin addict who died when he was 11. The abuse ended when he was put into care and he no longer saw his father. He said he now understood the pain of the kid inside of him. He said he had joined the army to learn how to shoot, and had become a sniper so he could track his Dad down and kill him. But he had not found him.

He said he now felt weird. He couldn't exactly explain it, but he felt compelled to do something! He just wasn't sure what. But he said: "You know it has gone. While I was looking at me in that cupboard I thought I am over it now. I can't change the past but I can let it go. It is time to let it go. I don't feel that anger anymore. It really is weird."

Third Session

Before the third session, Charlie contacted me to tell me he didn't need any more clinical hypnotherapy, as he now understood why he had had all his symptoms and they had completely vanished.

"I now sleep like a baby every night. I am not having any nightmares or flashbacks. You have seriously changed my life in so many ways that I didn't think were possible. I have started the job working with kids and I am on top of my rent and my bills. I have also met a woman who is the most amazing and kind person. I don't think any of this would have been possible before doing

sessions with you and I will be forever grateful to you. If I need any “top up” sessions I will contact you but I genuinely think I am done.”

I contacted Charlie a week later to see how he felt and he said everything was fine; he was still sleeping with no flashbacks or nightmares, and he felt relaxed and calm. He said he was enjoying his son; he was extremely happy and he had no adverse effects at all.

“I feel as if I am starting a totally new life.”

Six months later, Charlie has changed his job and is now working as an ambulance driver and thoroughly enjoying his new role. The symptoms have never returned. His relationship with his girlfriend didn't last, but he has met someone else who he is very happy with.

His facebook feed is full of pictures of him with his son and girlfriend, happy and smiling.

Chapter Four

Adam

Adam retired from the army 23 years ago. He is now 66. He was a tank commander and he served three tours of Northern Ireland. He now lives in the south of England with his wife of 46 years. He has a son and a daughter, and grandchildren and he is a shotgun coach.

Adam was diagnosed with PTSD by a Combat Stress psychiatrist in 2014, but the doctor told him he couldn't deal with his many issues and he needed life-long medication. He has been taking enormous amounts of medication for four years, including two Paracetamol, two Ibuprofen and three Codeine every four hours, plus statins and anti-depressants, vitamins and castor oil. Despite all these pain killers, Adam is still in pain, in his back and his knees, and he self-medicates with alcohol. He has been told he is pre-diabetic.

He was invited on a six-week Combat Stress residential course but was so demoralised by the psychiatrist telling him he was beyond help he didn't go.

Before choosing to try clinical hypnotherapy, Adam had been suffering dizzy spells and black-outs, and also battling extreme anger. He said although he and his wife were still together, their family life had been very difficult due to his anger. His grown-up daughter now suffers from anxiety and depression.

"Four or five years ago my daughter told me that all she remembered of me was anger and aggression, and I am very aware of the damage I have done. I realise I never had the foundation to make a happy family life because of my own upbringing. I asked my daughter recently if it was too late to make things better. She just cried."

Adam said the transition to civilian life had been very hard for him.

"It was very difficult when I left the Army because there was no call for tank commanders in civilian life, of course. I chose teaching, as it is engrained in military personnel to serve and help others, and see other people succeed."

Adam grew up in foster care for much of his first six years, and then in children's homes, along with his younger brother. His father was ex-military and he had fought in World War Two for six years. He was an alcoholic and his mother left his father when her sons were toddlers because of his drinking. There was a third brother but he died as a baby.

Adam and his brother were put in care when their mother left, but they constantly ran away and made their way back to their father. Adam said their father would just drive them back to the foster parents. Once, Adam remembered being in the car with his brother when his father said they had to go back, so he let the handbrake off and the car careered down a hill and crashed into a wall at the bottom.

When their father was put in prison for stealing money out of a gas meter, the boys were placed in a children's home.

"It was like a prison. They used to take us to the swimming pool, supposedly to learn how to dive, but the teacher would make us boys jump off the diving board and hang onto rails in the ceiling until she told us to drop. It was torture. My brother and I refused to do it. I saw her brief one of the other boys to come up behind my brother and push him in the pool. I beat up all three of them involved. I was my brother's protector."

Adam lost his brother when he was murdered 25 years ago, and says that was when he really went downhill.

The two boys were in the children's home from 1956 to 1963 until their father remarried and could take them back. Their stepmother was unkind to them but demanded to be called Mum.

They lived in a deprived area and after Adam finished school the only option was to get a manual job or go into the army. Adam became an apprentice stonemason.

"I earned 4 GBP a week and my father took 3 GBP a week for my keep. I met my girlfriend, now wife, and gave up the apprenticeship to get a job in a motor factory for 38 GBP a week. Then I was made redundant and I decided I had to join the army. The cavalry seemed the most exciting option. I was sent straight to Northern Ireland."

Adam was in Northern Ireland when his daughter was born and didn't see her for the first three months of her life. He was away ten months of the year, he estimates. Even when his baby was sick with pneumonia the army didn't let him go home, or even tell him for days.

"I was so angry. We were all angry, but nobody could see there was something wrong. All of us soldiers drank to numb. We didn't go anywhere without beer. We had beer in all the tanks. The military hierarchy tried to stop us drinking in the tanks, but they eventually gave up and told us to get tin cups so no one would know we were drinking alcohol!"

Adam feels like he has been "bolting on armour" for years, and the more things that happen to him, the more he bolts on. He feels like he alienated his wife by being too authoritative.

"I thought we were happy but we were not. She found someone else in our circle and I didn't know. She told me years afterwards that she had chosen not to leave because we had the children by then. I blame myself, but I was still furious with her. I also realise I blame her for a lot of the things that went wrong in the army. I have stuffed all my issues away in boxes and tied them with a bow, but sometimes the bows come undone and the boxes slip open."

Adam says his anger is exponential when it goes. He gets some warning that it is coming on and tells his wife. He doesn't know what the exact triggers are but he will just erupt over the smallest thing.

"I have no control. I am not violent, just furious. My flash to bang is very short but I also calm down very quickly."

Adam's dizzy spells began at dinner one evening, when he suddenly realised he couldn't swallow, and he knew if he didn't get off his chair he was going to fall off it. He sat on the sofa and passed out. He refused to go to the hospital.

"It just felt like my body shut down. I had passed out before. I always pass out if there is no passing air for some bizarre reason."

Adam has belonged to a Combat Stress support group for five years, but he hasn't told anyone about his time in the forces.

"I never told them about the firefights and all that. There were circumstances and complications but none of the therapists have ever been 'there'. The impact to them is nothing, but to me it was very severe."

First Session

Adam was doubtful he would relax well enough to go into hypnotherapy. He said he had never done anything like it before but his wife had convinced him to try. He insisted on laying on the floor rather than on a bed or a sofa, and listened quietly to the progressive visualisation suggestions and images of negativity clearing. Before long he was breathing rhythmically, and apart from some involuntary movements and facial expressions, he showed no reaction to what was being said.

When he was urged to return to the conscious state, Adam was stunned to find he had been in hypnosis for nearly an hour and a half.

"To me it seemed like just a few minutes. I cannot remember being that relaxed."

Adam said he had had visions of a red watering can with white dots on it, but he didn't know the significance of this and was puzzled. He said he felt a huge need to sleep, and on being given permission to do so, he promptly went back to sleep.

Second Session

Adam said that after the first hypnotherapy session he awoke feeling quite drained and exhausted, as if he needed to sleep endlessly, but he also said he had been feeling much better ever since.

He said there had been an incident a couple of days before, when his wife had reached into a kitchen drawer and accidentally flipped the switch on the electric can opener, cutting her hand.

"It was silly, but I couldn't do anything about it, so I had an outburst. I was angry at her for hurting herself. She was calling for help and I couldn't get there quick enough to prevent injury. It was a battery-operated can opener so she wasn't that hurt, but I was steaming. The thing was I couldn't prevent it happening. I was in a rage. My wife kind of understands it - I think - 99.99 per cent of it - but not really."

When asked if Adam had not been able to get to someone else in time to prevent injury he said: "Oh yes. A number of times."

Adam said he had taken immense care of his younger brother as a child, but then they had drifted apart and he was murdered while Adam was not with him, and before Adam could reestablish their relationship.

"I was in England when he died, but I was in Bournemouth and he was in Brighton, and it was a horrific loss. I can't remember exactly how I felt at the time, but I changed dramatically. I drank a lot more. I frightened my wife and her parents. That was when I went from normal drinking to drinking to numb. I never go out for just one drink. I will find any excuse to turn it into a session. But I can also leave it. Some days I don't have a drink at all. But when I have a drink the physical pain goes away and so does the mental turmoil. It is like it is all diluted."

Adam had a strong reaction to certain words when they were presented to him.

"Betrayal?"

"Yes, that is a very nasty word."

"Injustice?"

"Also a very nasty word but not quite as bad as betrayal."

"Anger?"

"Yes, that resonates very strongly with me."

Adam chose to lay on his bed for the second session, so he could be more comfortable. It took him a few minutes for his body to settle, but then he became still and he was breathing calmly and evenly. He showed no reaction to being asked to identify the part within him which was causing his symptoms, and forgive it or cut the emotional cord with it. After the session he had asked to be left to sleep, so it was some hours before he reported what had happened.

Adam said everything was blurry during hypnosis, but he could make out two to four people. However, when he went back to sleep after the session everything was suddenly clear and he could see his mother.

"I was looking at her, but it was as if she couldn't see me. She didn't speak to me. I could just see her, and my Dad and my brother and I."

Adam said he doesn't know what his mother looked like, but he knew it was her in the vision. He still has a picture of her, but only of her feet.

"Dad destroyed all the photos of her when she left and I just have one, where her body has been torn off but I can see her feet. I always knew it was my mother and not my father that caused the problems in me. I always knew the loss of my mother was the issue. But I didn't realise how much. The other people in the vision were my Dad and me and my brother when we were quite small. She left when we were small. After I met my wife I found a note in my Dad's drawer, which was years old, saying: 'I am going and don't blame the children!' As I was growing up, I always wondered where she was."

Adam said that years later his aunt told him his mother had lived two minutes away from them when they were children. His aunt Frances was always where he ran away to from the foster parents. He now knows this aunt, and his mother, were in contact.

"But I had had no contact with her at all since I was a toddler. I am not angry with her though. I am angry with my stepmum, who said to me: 'I knew you wanted to talk to your mother. But you can't now. She died two weeks ago.'"

Adam said: "I don't remember being happy, ever, after she left."

Third Session

When Adam came for his third session, he said he had been calmer all week and felt so different. He had been thinking a lot about his family. He recalled his father being sent to prison for breaking into the meter, and he and his brother being removed from foster care and put into the children's home, which he said was run like a penitentiary.

"He had to come and visit us in the children's home as we couldn't go out. All visits had to be conducted in the facility. They didn't tell us that he had gone to prison, so for 18 months he just didn't come to see us. We didn't know why. Visiting on a Sunday was preceded by a church service, so I remember sitting in that service, looking around at the other parents, and thinking: 'He didn't come again!'"

Adam said he didn't actually find out that his father had been in prison until he was 30 years old.

"It wasn't until my brother was arrested for drug smuggling that my Dad told me he had also been in prison. I got a letter from my brother saying he was in prison in France. I was on exercise. I went home and Dad said he would be fine while we got him out because he had been fine when he was in prison!"

Adam talked at length then about his brother, saying he worked on a drug farm in Morocco and was also a stone mason.

“He never got over the trauma of our childhood or our time in the children’s home. He was a phenomenal guy but he couldn’t find his way. He blamed our stepmother with a vengeance for our neglect. I think about him every day. I think of him fondly, but with unhappiness. I am sure I did right by him but I am not sure what he thought.”

When the boys moved back with their father there were endless rows with their new stepmother.

“There was a row just after I became an apprentice and she threw an ornament at me, which hit me in the head. I automatically threw it back and it hit her on the face. She told my dad that he had to throw me out or she would leave.” He did.

Adam slept in a cemetery to begin with, and then in rooms above a cafe.

“In the end my Dad stood up for me and insisted I come home.”

Adam had also been thinking about his brother’s death all week.

“He was in the wrong place at the wrong time. He had borrowed 10 quid from the wrong type of person, who was a boxer. They met unexpectedly one day and the guy set about him; beat him up for not paying the money back, and kicked him in the throat. He split his carotid artery and he died. The tragedy is, when we went to his house to clear it out, we found 10 quid on his mantelpiece, so he had obviously had the money to pay him back.

“I was planning to go and visit him, like I planned to visit my real mother at some point. But I never did either. I hadn’t seen my brother for 10 years before he died. He went to Brighton after my stepmother threw him out. I was always away with the army, or looking after my own family in the little time I had at home.”

Adam said he had always felt huge guilt that he wasn’t there to protect him.

“When I left the Army I drove lorries for a while and worked nights. It suited me as there was no need for me to meet people. Several times he came in the cab with me and he lived with us for a while.”

Adam’s body was moving and fidgeting all the time he was talking.

“He struggled with life.”

Adam also rued the difficult relationship with his daughter.

“All I can do is apologise to her for how I was. I went to Combat Stress because of her; because she said I was always angry. But the psychiatrist there said he couldn’t deal with my issues. I decided I had to try to sort myself out alone. I tried to hold my daughter and tell her I loved her and she burst into tears and said she wasn’t ready for it. Not ready for me. I asked if it was too late and she said it wasn’t too late.”

Adam said he was on a six-hour patrol in Armagh when his daughter was born and he only found out about her birth when he got back into base.

“But my Dad and my daughter had a very special relationship. They stayed close. I am very close to my daughter’s children too.”

Adam said he was aware of the stress on his wife, from the lifestyle they had led.

“When I was in uniform I wouldn’t even hold her hand. I was keeping up an image I guess. I was a self-conscious youth. I saw one of my Sergeant Major’s holding his wife’s hand once and I didn’t like it.”

This time, as Adam went into hypnosis, his hands were constantly moving, his thumbs rolling like windmills around each other, but they stilled once he was deep in trance. He was asked to identify a person or people he was angry with, and either find a way to forgive or cut the emotional tie. He displayed some spontaneous body movements and moaned occasionally during this time. At the end of the session he did not want to wake up and he was left sleeping again. Later he reported that when asked to bring forth someone he was angry with, a number of people who had looked after him in his childhood came into view. He said they were not full-time carers in the children’s home but they just came in and out. He didn’t remember all their names but could see them all in hypnosis. He remembered one woman who took his favourite toy away. Adam had been visiting with his father, and when he came back there was a boy playing with a toy he always played with. When the boy put it down he picked it up, but a helper said it was the other lad’s toy and made Adam give it back to him. He hated her for it.

That same woman also took him to the cinema once, and in front of the other teachers she was nice to him, but as soon as they started to leave the children’s home she shoved Adam aside and told him he couldn’t join the trip.

Adam said he hated the food in the children’s home and simply wouldn’t eat it. He said they used to lock him in a room with the food in front of him, in a bid to make him eat it. He said he used to take tiny bits of it and flick it up on top of cupboards to get rid of it.

The swimming teacher, who had organised other children to push his brother in the pool, hated both Adam and his brother,

“She used to get two cakes, put us and the cakes in a room during swimming classes and tell us not to eat them. We just had to sit there and fight temptation.”

Adam said he had also remembered being picked up in the dining hall by another teacher. He was not eating his food so this teacher marched forward and picked Adam up under his arm and carried him back to his table, and told everyone he was a rebel. That same teacher also went to the next children’s home with Adam and his brother and told them they were the most rebellious and most disruptive kids in the whole home.

Adam said he also remembered telling one teacher he wasn’t interested in the Olympics on television, so he was paraded in front of the other children and they were told he wanted to stop them watching it, which he insisted was not true. Then, they sat him down and made him watch it continuously for the whole month.

Adam said none of these were conscious memories, and many of these people he hadn’t thought about for years.

Adam said he and his brother eventually went to live in another home, run by ordained sisters who were much nicer people.

“It was a total breath of fresh air to escape that place. We spent four years with the sisters. I was allowed to join the Scouts and actually leave the premises, unlike the children’s home. But even though they were nice, I found it very difficult to trust them.”

Adam said the original children’s home was shut down and a housing estate was built on the land.

“I feel numb whenever I drive past the place.”

Fourth Session

Adam said he had been fine all week, feeling totally calm. He said he was sleeping a lot better and he had the evidence of the change in him on his Apple Watch health setting. He was continuing to take his cocktail of medication - antidepressants, pain killers and statins - but he had cut back the amount since starting hypnosis. He said his knees could generally be very painful, but the pain had gone that week.

He said he thought he had pulled a muscle in his back that week, throwing a ball for the dog, and was in some pain from that. He described a pain in his mid-spine to the right hand side, in the area of his liver. He said he had been tested for liver function and it was fine. But he said his intention now was to try to drop all medication.

Adam said he was no longer drinking to excess, but ‘still liked a beer’ and the process of pouring it. He said he was ‘social drinking’ now and not to numb.

Adam had been for his fortnightly visit to the Combat Stress peer support group. He said the nurses had tried to start a group discussion on: “What is anger?” He said they never got off paragraph one.

“If I knew what anger was I wouldn’t be angry.”

But he said he went to the group feeling really calm and returned feeling really calm, which was a huge improvement. He said, at that moment, he felt as if he had no issues with anger or irritation at all. He and his wife had been religiously listening to the clinical hypnotherapy recordings each night and he felt they really helped him.

He had been thinking about his father that week, and he said his father had never told him that he loved him. He said there was only one photo of his father with a hand on his shoulder.

Adam reflected on how hard his own family life had been, and how much of it was his problem. He said he used to come back from tours and want to reorganise everything for the family, when they already had a well-oiled system working fine.

He said that when he was in the army, he absolutely couldn’t tolerate bullying. When he spoke about bullying, his legs and hands were moving repeatedly. He was constantly shaking his leg.

Adam’s body movements showed obvious agitation at the start of the fourth session, all the way throughout the progressive relaxation induction. But when he reached the safe place part of the session, being told to imagine somewhere he felt most comfortable, he stilled. There was no other obvious sign of distress during the session. He asked to be left sleeping afterwards. Later Adam reported that he had not seen anything in particular during this session, in which he was asked to identify his most troubling emotion and go back to the very first time he ever felt it.

Fifth Session

Adam came to the session without his huge, bushy, Santa Claus-type beard. He looked totally different. He said his wife had never liked the beard, and he himself had been using it to hide behind for years. He said he had decided all of a sudden to shave it off and totally surprised his wife.

"She was stunned. It was time for a change. Everything in my life has changed and now I am a new person, with a new look." He was very pleased with himself.

Even though Adam was still experiencing some back pain, he had taken the decision to stop all Ibuprofen, and he was planning to drop one of the Paracetamol soon too. He said although he was in pain, it was not that bad and manageable. He was intent on coming off all medication by Spring. The pain in his knees was gone. He said it did come back for a day during the week, when he went shooting, but he hadn't used his bandage so it had had no support.

"It wasn't so bad. The pain went away again the next day."

Adam said his relationship with his children was greatly improved. Since he had started hypnotherapy, he had begun writing to his son and daughter, giving them a weekly roundup, and telling them he loved them. He said he had never done that before.

"The other day, I was talking to my son on the phone, and as he said goodbye he said: 'Lots of love to you both!' He had never said that before. I was thrilled and so was my wife."

Adam was beaming with delight.

Adam said he had had a military dream the night before.

"It wasn't really a nightmare, because it wasn't anything I couldn't handle. It was a firefight on the Southern Irish border. We were dropped in by Chinook which was hedge-hopping, doing 27 drops, but people only got off at three of them. As we got off, we got caught in a massive firefight. We soon ran low on ammunition and we needed extracting, but the cloud had come in and the RAF wouldn't come back and pick us up because it wasn't safe. In the end, an Army Air Corps pilot came in a small helicopter, skidded in, grabbed four of us at a time, and then kept coming back until he got us all. I was the last of us to be extracted. As he was picking up my men I was screaming at them to leave me their magazines, in case the guy couldn't get back. I was reliving it like I was actually there. It was very vivid."

Adam said he did a lot of serial dreaming, where even if he woke up he would just go straight back into the dream, or have the same dream night after night. He said a lot of the dreams seemed to be posing the same question: "What do I need to do?"

He said some of the dreams came time after time and seemed to play on a loop. He said he didn't know what the trigger was for the dreams. He could go to bed calm and happy and still have horrible dreams.

When asked if he had been involved in many horrible incidents he said: "Oh yes, many, many, many."

Then he started describing some of them.

He explained how he had witnessed a young private being run over by a tank in the tank park. He said the tank had broken down and they were trying to connect the tank to another tank with a slave lead. The lad was removing the lead from the front of a tank and had tied it around himself, when the tank suddenly moved and he was dragged under the tracks. The tracks rolled right up his body and pushed all his internal organs upwards. He died a few days later. Adam saw it all and wasn't able to do anything to help.

"The RMP and the REME soldiers came in to deal with the situation. They went into a recovery mode."

Adam said he knew the lad quite well. He went to his funeral.

Adam said he was in the cook house in Northern Ireland when a fusilier pumped 20 rounds into it because he was angry with the army. Adam and everyone else had dived under the tables.

Adam remembered being locked in a police station with eight other soldiers, and thousands of people outside, during the internment marches. He said the Irish were trying to break down the gate and climb over the walls.

"The RUC officers had locked themselves in the cells and we were left to fight them off if they got in. There was a close observation post across the road and it got sacked. It was quite scary, but we couldn't allow ourselves to be scared. We were frozen to the spot. When I dream about that incident I feel the fear again in my body. While we were in Northern Ireland there were also lots of firebombs in shopping centres. They would get people to tell us there was a bomb in the bin. I would have to take control. If we called in the bomb squad we would be there for hours, manning the cordon, and our patrol would get extended, and we were always hungry at the end

of a patrol, so I would just go and fish it out of the bin myself. Fortunately they were always hoaxes, but I never knew if one would be live. I can remember the fear now of reaching into the bin.

“There was another incident on a Catholic estate in Belfast when I was a patrol commander. I heard there was an IRA war memorial on the estate and I wanted to see it. I knew I shouldn’t but I did, and by the time we got to the memorial we were surrounded by a group of people. There was a guy in front of me with an axe, obviously intent on splitting my head open. I smashed him with the barrel of my gun and then stuck the gun virtually up his nose and said “Your move.” He threw his axe away and I knew we had to get out of there fast. We started walking casually away and they were throwing bricks at us and rocks. I got the guy back later on when I nicked him in town on assault charges. But when I was arresting him, I was told he was an intelligence asset and I needed to let him go. But I already had him handcuffed. I asked my guys what I should do and they shrugged. I was already walking to bring him in. So I took the handcuffs off him and let him walk ahead, and then we walked slower and slower until he was quite a long way ahead of us, and then thankfully he just legged it. We, of course, did not give chase.”

Adam seemed surprised that he had opened up to relate all these stories. He said he had never told anyone before any of these things - not even his wife.

The fifth session was aimed at identifying any anger towards himself, or any guilt residual in his body, and forgiving himself for former actions or emotions. Adam relaxed easily and did not show any anguish throughout the hypnosis session. He was left to sleep afterwards, and did not report back until the following week.

Sixth Session

Adam said he had been “grumpy” for three days that week. He said he had “felt awful” following the Forgiveness of Self session - in which he did not remember seeing anything at all in the way of insight, but just feeling very unsettled, very rattled, afterwards and in some pain.

His sudden return to grumpiness had greatly upset his wife who felt hypnotherapy wasn’t working. But Adam said he now felt “totally different” inside. He said after the three days of grumpiness he awoke feeling amazing, and that feeling had continued into the next day, and now a third day. He also said he had reduced his pain medication by a third since the last session. He intends to halve the dose within three weeks.

“I have no brace on my knee today and yet it feels fine. That would never have been possible before. I feel like I have left all the trouble and anger of my life behind. I feel like that case is closed now. I am not thinking about it anymore. Not since the last session. I understand what happened, and why, and why I felt the way I did. But now I have closed the book. I have seen what I wanted to see. I told my peer support group how amazing the whole process is, and how you go down stairs and then go down corridors of doors to see your past. They didn’t understand, but I will try to explain it again to them. Hypnotherapy has turned my life around. My wife said she had been walking on eggshells for years, but all my peers were acting the same way to their wives and partners. My wife is so worried I am a Jekyll and Hyde, even now. But yesterday was a transition! I felt totally different. Something wanted to come out and it did. I had never spoken about all those things, but now all I can think is: “Wow, just wow.”

“When we started, I would never have dreamed that it would create this huge change in me. But I am a different man, and I know now my life can be very different.”

Adam asked not to do the sixth hypnotherapy session.

“I don’t want to reverse anything. Everything is just perfect now. I just want to enjoy it.”

A week later Adam said everything was fine and calm; he was happy and relaxed.

One month later he sent a thank you note.

“Since the end of the treatment I have continued to improve massively. I have much less to nil anger; less pain; I sleep much better and I have considerably less stress and tension. I haven’t felt this good in years. I feel so positive every morning and I look forward to getting up. I have also halved the depression medication. I hope to be free of all meds by the summer after having been on them for 30+ years. I am so grateful. Things are just brilliant.”

Six months later Adam is still enjoying that same calm.

“I can’t believe I’m still so positive. All is fine. Medication is minimum and only when I really need it. Which is not often. I have my life back.”

Chapter Five

David

David is 32 years old. He joined the military at 17 with the intention of being a driver, but not expecting to become a battlefield ambulance driver. He recalls watching many people die in front of him in Afghanistan in 2006 during an extremely kinetic tour.

He was diagnosed with Complex-PTSD in 2008, but he says no one ever told him the difference between PTSD and Complex-PTSD. He says his symptoms have been getting worse for ten years. He describes experiencing every symptom of PTSD, including flashbacks, hyper vigilance, anger, lack of emotion and intrusive memories. He says he has no emotions about anything anymore. He is totally numb.

"I only feel emotion during sex, and immediately after sex, but it doesn't last long."

David says he has tried every therapy available for PTSD, including CBT, EMDR and acupuncture, but none have worked. He even tried mindful meditation and says that did help when he was doing it, but he stopped. He doesn't know why. He said it "turned everything off" for a while.

He said he has been trying to do exposure therapy on his own at home - making himself think about everything for ten minutes every day, to try to break the power of the memories. He said he recalls all the smells, the textures, the sounds, the images but it hasn't helped at all.

David has two children with his current partner, aged four and one, and two more with his ex-wife. He says he has had 14 jobs in six years. He says the PTSD symptoms kill all his job opportunities, making it impossible to work when it flares up. He is now working for himself, trying to be a stock trader and buying and selling cars.

First session

David explained that he was the duty driver at the field hospital in Bastion in 2006. He was not a medic, or trained in how to be one, but he says he was exposed to death and mutilation for months.

"I was just a member of an ambulance crew. It was not my remit to be a medic. But I became one."

David said so many things happened in theatre that he did not agree with; things which he feels were just plain wrong. He said they were told what the situation would be like before deploying but when they got out there it was nothing like they had been told. He said he and his fellow soldiers felt very quickly that British soldiers shouldn't be there, and that Afghan civilians were dying because of British military action.

He said the bodies of special forces soldiers were being left in the desert for more than six weeks, in overwhelming heat, and then he and his team were sent to pick them up.

"We had to stick knives in them to deflate the bodies so we could manhandle them into bags. Sometimes we had to break bones, and even snap their backs, to get the bodies in a small helicopter, because the bird they sent was the wrong type and didn't have enough room."

David said there was one incident which made him very angry, and still makes him angry to this day.

"We were moving a soldier in a perilous state from a MERT helicopter to Bastion hospital, on a trolley, and we were going very slowly, to try to keep the guy alive, when a Sergeant Major ran over to us and told us to hurry up. He shoved the gurney so hard the guy fell off the back, onto his head and died. The guy was alive, and could have lived, and that RSM killed him."

David said no-one let him talk about it afterwards, however much he tried to find someone to listen.

"They told me to get over it and just carry on."

David says he chain smokes now to calm himself down. He has an inexplicable fear of water. It is a trigger for flashbacks for him, but he has no trauma related to it as far as he remembers.

He has conscious memories of a number of different traumas.

"Quite a few."

David remembers a raid on an alleged bomb factory, where the British troops threw grenades into the target building. But when they went in it was just a family home, and the whole family had been sitting down for tea. Every single member of the family was dead except for a baby who was

about a year old. She had severe shrapnel wounds. He took the baby back to the hospital and they healed her, but then they told him and his fellow soldiers to take the baby back and just give her to a village elder. He said he had to watch her being handed over and he knew it was wrong.

"They should have got her adopted in the UK, and given her a chance, but we just got rid of her. What happened to her? I couldn't stop them. She would be 13 now. I don't even know if she is okay. It was just completely wrong. I want to find her."

David said he had felt so powerless at the time. He said he can't stop thinking about it. He still sees her face; a picture of agony and pain when she had the shrapnel embedded in her. He said someone took a picture and he has it, and it is gruesome. When he took her back she was calm and happy and smiling, but then they handed her over and she had that same look of agony, but without the injuries.

"If I was her, I would be so angry with the British Army, and I just keep wondering if we made a terrorist. She could be coming to the UK to bomb the soldiers who killed her family."

David said he now has a serious problem with authority and people telling him to do things he doesn't agree with. He said he won't back down now, ever.

He said he was so appalled that no one else said anything to support him regarding the baby.

"There was no one to turn to. No one seemed to feel the same way I did. There was always another emergency, another dead or dying person coming in."

David said he knows the people who were there with him in Bastion in 2006 are having similar problems to himself, but no one will talk about it. He is scared to say anything to them in case he affects them and gives them PTSD!

He said at one point they were told to convert an ISO container to a mortuary, and they had to sort out Afghan body parts. He said a doctor came in with a clipboard and told them they needed to match up the body parts with the different numbers to essentially reassemble the bodies.

"It was like some kind of macabre game of snap, trying to find another piece with the same number, and all I could think was: 'Where did they all come from? Why did we have so many pieces of Afghans in the base? Who were these people?'"

He said he didn't choose to be in the Army. He was a young lad mixing with the wrong crowd and his father told him he had better join the Army or "he would never amount to anything."

"He said I was wayward. I wasn't bad, but my father was so despondent about me, and he told me he didn't think I was tough enough to do it, so I did, to prove him wrong."

David's father had to sign parental consent.

"He was so proud of me at the time. But if it had been explained to my Dad what I was going to be sent to do, I don't believe he would have sent me. What the hell was I doing being made to pick up body parts?"

David said he feels totally overwhelmed by life.

"Everything would be so much better if I could think of any benefit which came from the Afghan conflict, but there was no benefit at all. It was protection of a source of income and acquisition of people."

He said he likes working for himself as he doesn't have to leave home. But he said he makes many mistakes on the stock trading and he can't get it right.

David took himself off into his car for the session to get privacy from the family. He appeared to relax easily into hypnotherapy and his body was calm and still throughout the progressive relaxation and the visualisation exercises, to rid his life of unwanted negative emotions, things and people.

When David returned to the conscious state he said he felt extremely relaxed.

"It was really nice. I dozed off, which never happens. When I woke up everything looked so bright; very weird, like a golden glow all around everything." He said he felt more calm than he had felt for ages.

At the end of the hypnosis session he had been directed to imagine walking into a control room in his brain where he was able to regulate his own emotions. David remembered doing that and said he had seen his own hand fiddling with the knobs to dial down his emotions.

"I could actually feel the sensations altering in my body, as I was levelling things, I actually felt as if my emotions were being calmed. I could feel the sensation. I was dialling down my reactions, and my irritation and my anger. I was turning up patience and happiness. The whole time I was doing that my body seemed to be aware that I was doing something for it."

He was given a hypnotherapy recording to use each day, and he later sent a message saying it was very relaxing and he was already noticing slight changes. The next day he sent a message saying: "Right, here we go, let the deep relaxation begin - gonna kick PTSD's arse."

Second Session

David said he was still feeling better after the first session, and after listening to a hypnotherapy recording to boost serotonin and melatonin, he was now able to go into shops without feeling hyper-vigilant.

He said that before he started hypnotherapy he told himself that something “would just click” if it was working, and he felt this was the proof.

“Before hypnotherapy, if I went into a shop, I would be very aware of all the people around me, and would be constantly aware of what might happen. But today I actually suggested going into a shop and we walked around and it was nice. I didn’t contemplate how much uncertainty there was around me, or what might happen. Before, I would be anticipating everything, every encounter. But we just had a great time. Today was a nice day.”

David said he had also had a conversation with someone, which would normally have been a passive-aggressive conversation, but he hadn’t acted like that at all. “We just had a lovely exchange and it was fine.”

Before he started hypnotherapy, other people were annoying David hugely. Even the post-woman knocking too loudly at the door could set off his anger. He said he had taken the post woman to task, angrily, only to find out she was deaf!!!

His father often banged the door too hard as well.

David was having relationship issues with his partner. He described the relationship as “a ticking time bomb” but the couple have two small children together.

David said water as a trigger for his symptoms was still happening, but he elaborated on his statement of the week before, saying that when he steps into a shower he feels suicidal. He related this to an incident in Afghanistan, when he went into his Commanding Officer and slammed his weapon down on his desk and demanded to go home.

“I told him I couldn’t take any more. But he told me the tour was almost over and we were almost there and I should just go back to work. So I took my gun into the shower block and I was going to shoot myself there and then. But when I started thinking about all the people at home I couldn’t do it. So I thought I would shoot myself in the foot, so they had to send me back immediately, but then everyone would know I did it.”

He said the water triggering his symptoms only began about four years before. Water, and the thought of water, also gives him vertigo. He said that when he has a bath now, and dunks his head underwater, it makes him very anxious and he begins to shake. He doesn’t feel the same near a lake or the sea. Just in a bathroom.

David said that when he gets angry he starts to feel disorientated. As he talks about being made angry by his wife or his father, David starts to go into a noticeably hyper-vigilant state. He thinks there is an intruder downstairs, and he goes down and starts checking every window and every door. He looks agitated and anxious.

He says: “When I seem normal to other people, it is just a very good mask.”

In word association David had strong reactions to certain words.

“Fear?”

“It makes me think of death. I have feared more and more things since Afghanistan. I often think people are following me.”

“Guilt?”

“Yes, I am full of that. That resonates with me.”

“Injustice?” :

“Very much, but it has faded. It is not as powerful as it was.”

“Powerlessness?”

“Six months ago, I would have said that was strong, but not so much now.”

David said he was now looking at setting up a house clearance business. He said he enjoys going through everybody’s belongings, and seeing what they did in their lives, and what was important to them.

The second clinical hypnotherapy session brought a significant sense of calm to David. He said he didn’t see anything in particular, or feel anything, but he just felt as if he was floating and it was lovely. When he was asked to let the part of him come forward that was causing his symptoms he said he didn’t see anything, but it didn’t bother him as he was so comfortable.

Third Session

David said he was feeling pretty good this week. He had encountered a situation the day before which would normally create panic and anxiety in him, but he had managed it well and didn't overthink things, so he was really pleased, and focussed on that.

He said he had managed to go into a bingo hall to collect his grandmother, which was a huge challenge, as there was always a lot of noise, and lots of people. He said as he walked in he got the feeling he normally gets in hypnotherapy, where an immense sensation of calm enveloped his body.

"I just sat there, in this lovely calm bubble, with all this noise and uncertainty around me and I was fine. It was amazing."

David did say that he often felt better in the winter, and worse during the anniversary of his Afghan tour, which had run from April to November. But he said he was far calmer now than he ever was before. He said he had not been triggered very much since starting hypnosis, with no intrusive thoughts at all.

For this session David had brought his young son to lie beside him during the therapy. He seemed to slip into hypnosis easily, as before, and was calm throughout the session where he was asked to identify someone he was angry with, or angered by.

David returned to the conscious state saying that he had not seen anything in particular, but he had had the bizarre feeling that time was meaningless.

He said he was enjoying the feeling of just letting go for a while and leaving all his conscious problems behind.

A few days later though, David asked to take a pause in his sessions because he was finding it difficult to schedule them around childcare demands and his new business. But he also said that he was enjoying the calm feeling so much, he didn't want to jeopardise it by more stringent investigation of the causes of his PTSD at the moment, given he wasn't experiencing the symptoms any more. We agreed that he could return for more hypnosis if his symptoms returned. Otherwise he would continue to use the recordings to maintain his present state of calm.

One month on, David said he was still feeling the benefits of hypnosis and quite relaxed.

Chapter Six

Josh

Josh joined the Army in 1988 and served in Northern Ireland for 26 consecutive months, and then completed a tour of Bosnia. He had to leave the Army in 1997 because of roller-coaster emotions and anger. He did not get diagnosed with PTSD until 2015 but he says he had all the same symptoms in the late nineties.

His mental illness wrecked his marriage, and he is now divorced and working as an online academic tutor from his home in Spain. He has been trying to manage his symptoms alone, without any medication or counselling.

“No one offered me any counselling. One military doctor said I could be sectioned if I liked, but I had just got married and she was waiting in the car.”

Josh’s symptoms include insomnia and nightmares; overwhelming fear; flashbacks; hyper-vigilance; blurry vision; dissociation and body tremors and pain. He is drinking to numb and says he has an almost non-existent sex drive.

First Session

Josh came to his first clinical hypnotherapy session saying that he had tried for 20 years to manage his PTSD but something had happened.

“I have undergone the longest and most difficult time of PTSD. This time it hasn’t gone away and I am willing to admit that I am frightened. I am not afraid of death, but I feel like my body is shutting down and I feel like I am in hell.

“I haven’t eaten or slept well in months. I have self-medicated with alcohol and am chain smoking to the point that I can feel the consequences building inside me. I haven’t read a book. My sex drive has gone. My behaviour has changed. Somedays, it is all I can do to get out of bed. I have been stunned into immobility on many occasions recently as something has ripped me out of the present and rooted me to the spot. Even my dog isn’t happy. He knows. I didn’t know I could fall this far, or this fast. I know I should surrender and accept it, but it is so debilitating. It is like kicking to the surface to wake up from the nightmares. I seem to have a programmed fight response. I have had two experiences of walking through an airport and a shopping mall recently when I wasn’t really there. Everyone seemed to be making eye contact; I was hyper alert. Every bag, car, entry, exit, potential weapon, threat was illuminated like in some sort of video game. I was numb. Like an observer. I felt like if a car bomb exploded in the street I could dive right in there and do my stuff, but if I went back to my bathroom and discovered I was out of toothpaste I would be in a ball on the floor crying my eyes out.”

Josh said he had attended a British Legion remembrance ceremony and his whole body had gone into spasm when they played the Last Post. He said he felt like some other force had taken control of his body and was causing him immense pain from head to toe. He said guys were crying all around him but he felt absolutely no emotion at all, and no need to cry, but he was convinced his legs were about to give way and he was finding it hard not to gasp in pain.

“I felt like every fibre of my body had gone into shock. I have been trying to curb my PTSD reactions for 25 years but I have never felt anything like that true physical reaction. It was horrible. I felt like I was having a seizure or an epileptic fit. There were electrical charges coursing through my body. I had felt like that before though, during an ambush in Bosnia when I was scared; really scared.”

Josh said that in that ambush, Serbs had pulled him and other peacekeepers out of a UN vehicle and the Serbs had begun knocking the Ukrainian peacekeepers around, because they were Slavs.

“I coped with it okay at the time, but then this same seizure feeling kicked in 4-5 hours later. It was the same sensation. Like my body was not mine.

“I am lower now than I have ever been with my post-Bosnia feelings. I am at the end of my tether. I don’t give a shit about anything. I can’t write. I can’t read. I can feel both a flight and fight mode going on inside me at the same time. I have been researching what might be causing this in

me and I can feel it. I feel like I have totally disconnected. I am not here any more. This body - the one that is going through the motions - is not me. I am sitting behind this body, about a foot behind, watching it moving and performing. It is a bizarre, totally spaced out feeling. It feels like I am distancing myself from my own body. Sometimes there is nothing going on at all in my head. I just sit and stare into space. I am just a facade, not attached to emotion.”

Josh said he is also having problems with his sight.

“Everything goes fuzzy, in and out. It feels like something is trying to stop me seeing things. When I was in the shopping mall, it suddenly felt like I was in an arcade game and target insurgents were popping up; there were lights flashing everywhere like in a pinball machine.”

Josh understood that after spending so long in Northern Ireland and Bosnia, hyper vigilance was normal. He embraced it.

“It kept me safe.”

But now Josh said his hands were trembling almost all the time, or he was getting sporadic tremors. He said he felt a need to protect everyone.

“Anyone in trouble or upset, I feel like I have to wade in and put everything right. It is crazy isn't it? I am always helping other people and I can't even help myself. Even when my wife left I tried to make her feel better. I don't think I ever mourned my marriage, and I loved being married.

“I have started waking up confused and not sure where I am. Sometimes I wake up in abject terror. Before, I could be irrationally angry and explode. But since this past July there is no anger. I don't feel anything. I feel like I am losing me.”

Josh said that where he was living in the Spanish mountains was very evocative of Bosnia.

“I think the hot weather and the mountain air is triggering me. I know the smell of dust and the smell of diesel is a big trigger,”

Josh said he lost his stepfather a year before. He was a former US Marine and Vietnam veteran, and someone he really liked.

“He never spoke about PTSD and said military guys just have to get on with it. But just before he died of an aneurism he started talking about all the bodies he had seen, and I realised perhaps he wasn't as Teflon as he seemed.”

Josh appeared to go into hypnosis extremely quickly and became very agitated almost immediately. He started crying during the initial breathing exercise and his body was contorting. He was instructed to let his body become calm and to move away from anything which was upsetting. He stopped crying, but as the session moved on into progressive relaxation his body was constantly jerking. He was also breathing in a very scared fashion. He was reassured that anything he saw, or felt, or heard was just the subconscious attempting to communicate with him, and he should treat it as a memory and nothing which could hurt him. He was also told he could bring himself out of hypnosis at any time simply by counting to five. But he didn't and the session carried on, suggesting negativity clearing visualisation exercises. As he was being urged to return to the conscious state Josh opened his eyes suddenly and was gasping for air, as if he couldn't catch his breath. He said he was so scared. He had his hands over his eyes and they were trembling. He took some minutes to compose himself, and then he explained that he had felt as if he was being grabbed by a demonic entity.

“I was so frightened. It had hold of me and it was so angry. It wasn't playing the game. It was seriously pissed off. It was me, but it was a separate part of me - a part of me, and not a part of me if you know what I mean. There was a huge amount of resistance.”

As he sat up he started to retch, saying he needed to let something out of his throat. He retched several times but was not sick. Then he studied his hands and said there was blood all over his hands, and then he said “I must be mistaken.” He looked very puzzled. He said that at one point he had felt blood, or possibly water, dripping out of his ear and he said the sensation was very vivid.

That night, after the session, Josh rang to say he had woken at 2am in absolute terror. He got up and retched a number of times.

“I was retching like something out of the Exorcist. It was so forceful and prolonged. I was exhausted. After a while it went off and I felt calmer, like I had actually expelled something.”

The next night he listened to a hypnotherapy recording and said he slept for four hours without waking, which was unheard of for him, but when he woke he had to breathe his way out of an anxiety attack which went on for three hours. He said he was totally exhausted.

“I am really struggling now. I'm on the verge of crying all the time. The shakes are really bad and embarrassing. I am having palpitations even in bed. I can feel the fear building in me and I feel like my chest is being constricted.”

We advanced his next session to try to help him quicker, but the day before he came for the second session he said he had felt a tangible shift when he woke, had almost no tremors and felt mostly calm.

“Early days but encouraging,” he wrote.

Second Session

Josh arrived saying he felt so much more positive. The bags under his eyes were less pronounced. He said he was feeling the urge to escape the mountains.

“They really unsettle me and I now know it is because of the association with Bosnia and Sarajevo. I need to move to the beach.”

He said he had gone back to the shopping mall to test out his new calmness and there was nothing there.

“There were no insurgents in Vodafone this time.”

Josh said he had slept more hours each night for the second half of the week. Four hours one night, then five hours the second and six the third. This was a revelation for him.

He said he had seen a hypnotherapist before, not for PTSD but to help with public speaking because he would blush like crazy whenever he addressed a group of people. He said that everyone else said he wasn't blushing but he could see himself “bright blood red in a mirror.” The hypnotherapist tried to take him back to the cause of the blushing using regression, and he remembered seeing a red door and then crying uncontrollably.

“I don't know what is behind the red door and I never want to.”

Josh said the previous hypnotherapist had told him: “When you first came in here I thought you were a strong person, but I realise you are really quite hysterical.”

He never went back.

Josh said he felt morally wounded by Bosnia.

“We didn't do what we should have done. I am protecting people now because we didn't do it then. Our job in Bosnia was not about killing. The UN tied our hands and then made us watch them rape and kill children. Also we had a stray dog who had taken refuge with us, as everyone killed them and ate them. She was so cute and she was the best mortar alert. Even before the Serbs started firing the rounds she would run into the ops room, straight over to our body armour and hide under the sandbags. We always had our kit on before the shells fell. She was invaluable. Then a Danish commander came in after a Transfer Of Authority and said he would give a day off to any soldier who shot her, as he didn't want her on the camp. So someone shot her. Why would they bloody shoot the dog? She was lovely.....”

Josh said he had trained as a SSAFA caseworker to help others when he couldn't help himself. He said he never told anyone about his symptoms because he didn't want to look weak. He never secured any compensation.

He said he had remembered an incident during the week which really upset him and he hadn't thought about it before.

When he left the army he had to take his kit back to the stores. He said the storeman picked up his No2 dress jacket, with the medal colours on it, and just threw it over his shoulder into a wheelie bin, as if nothing on that jacket mattered. He said he had felt blind anger just thinking of it again, and remembered feeling the same at the time, but he had said nothing.

“Nine years of exemplary service just thrown in a wheelie bin.”

Josh said his confidence was shattered after he left the army because he felt a failure. He began to self-harm, cutting his arms, but he stopped when he realised it “bloody hurt”.

“I was cutting myself to release the pain and pressure from my body. But of course it didn't work.”

He said he once lost a job because he went ‘mental’ at a boss at a university who wouldn't help a student who was pregnant, had no money and couldn't pay the tuition fees. He said he couldn't handle someone not helping this woman and he just flew.

“Injustice is my trigger for sure.”

But he also felt immense guilt and anger at himself.

“I had no power. I screwed myself. I didn't step up as a leader.”

When he was asked what incident he was referring to with that comment, the university or something during his military career, he looked confused and said he didn't know.

He said he wasn't scared about going back into hypnosis despite the last time because "I know now that the only way out is through."

Josh again went straight into hypnosis, and within a couple of minutes he was breathing as if he was terrified. He was encouraged to calm his breathing, by telling the subconscious that it should present any insight to him only in a calm, rational and intellectual manner. This seemed to calm his breathing for a while as he was led, through visualisation exercises, into his safe place. But when he was asked to imagine going down a second set of stairs, into the depths of his own mind, to look for the part of him which was causing his symptoms, he got very agitated and appeared scared again. When he returned to consciousness at the end of the session he explained everything he had been seeing and feeling.

"When I was in the safe place I felt okay, but as soon as I was asked to go down the stairs again, I didn't want to go. It knew I was coming, and it was waiting for me. I wanted to go back to the safe place and tried to get back there, but then the whole safe place was suddenly black and charred with no colour, like it had been in a forest fire. It did that!

"The part of me at the bottom of the stairs - and I knew it was me - screamed at me that it would blind me if I kept looking for it. I didn't want to go any further, but I was being told to keep going so I trusted the suggestion. I remember being told to go into a white room with two chairs, with the part causing the symptoms, but it refused to come in the room. It was standing outside the room and now was so angry. I couldn't see it. It was fuzzy, like this awful dark shadow lurking in the fringes of your vision.

"I sat down in a chair and I asked it to come in. I said to it that I needed it to come back to me. It was younger than me now, but not that young. It was adult size. When I told it I needed it to come back to me it seemed to relax a bit, but I knew it was scared stiff. The centre of the shadow suddenly became light, and the light was human shape. But it was emanating fear like it was very afraid. When I was told to ask it what was wrong, and why it was causing my symptoms, it suddenly lunged at me across the room. I was so scared I thought my heart would stop. It was so angry. But when it got hold of me and was holding me down it started screaming: 'I need you. I need you.' There was so much fear.

"Then it pulled back into its chair, and then I was angry. So angry that I was being told to go after it when it was so scared. I was angry on its behalf. I was also in huge pain and I wanted it to stop, so I started screaming for it to be left alone. I kept saying: 'For fucks sake just leave it alone. Leave it alone.'"

At an advanced point in the hypnosis session Josh had started to shout this sentence out loud.

"When I was finally counted up, it was like coming out of a nightmare. With most nightmares I can bring myself back to the conscious state easily, but in this one I couldn't. I couldn't get back until I was counted up. I need to protect this angry, dark, demonic thing. It is angry because it is vulnerable. It is being tormented. The resistance on its part is enormous. It has control of me. Like I am a cyber man. An avatar. It operates me."

While what he was saying was alarming, Josh seemed more interested in what he had experienced rather than upset, once he was fully awake. But just before leaving he suddenly looked up, with tears running down his cheeks, and said: "It is ashamed. It is so ashamed."

Third Session

Arriving for the third session, Josh said it had been a difficult week. He had felt unable to do anything. He couldn't concentrate on work.

He said that one evening something weird had happened. He was sitting at his computer and then suddenly it was an hour later.

"I must have been catatonic. Very odd. But then I felt somehow lighter for a while."

He also said he went to a cafe in the week and his legs wouldn't work.

"They just wouldn't hold my weight. I just had to sit there as I couldn't get them to work for four hours. I remember my legs not working after the incident with the Serbs. I believe the root emotion is fear."

He said he could still feel this huge sense of injustice inside of him.

"This part of me is extremely angry. The tension just keeps building. I feel like whatever it is, it is just dancing around me, observing me. There are parts of myself which are self-sabotaging. I

am not surrendering. I am fighting. I tell it: 'Don't fuck around with me.' But some days I can't get out of my hole. I dread the emotion. It is better to feel numb."

In the midst of this emotional turmoil, Josh said that he had met a woman who he wanted, and who had wanted him for three years.

"It is wonderful. She is a lovely woman. But I have to get better. I can't look weak, or like a coward, as someone else called me and hit every trigger I have. I have to be strong for this woman."

He said he went to a bar with his new girlfriend in the week and suddenly experienced extreme vertigo.

"I thought I was going to fall off the bar stool. It happened two or three times that afternoon. I feel like my body is betraying me."

Josh said he had a pain in his neck which he could not ease.

He had been listening to hypnotherapy recordings and he said he didn't get any specific insight, but once he heard gunfire, and he sees lots of shifting shapes, all moving around him. But just shapes, and not specific people.

Josh was calmer as he went into hypnosis this time, but he exhibited constant repetitive eye movement. He was told to experience no fear, but to just have a rational conversation with his "part" if it appeared. The focus of the session though was on identifying someone or some people Josh was angry at, and finding a way to forgive or cut the emotional ties.

Josh did not cry or appear frightened as he was led through the visualisation exercises. But when he returned to the conscious state he said he had seen an enormous amount during the session, but he wanted time to formulate it; understand it, in his own head, before discussing it. He said there was a lot he didn't want to share. He seemed dissociated and disorientated as he left.

Fourth Session

In the week between sessions Josh sent a message saying: "The part likes you. But not me yet. There is no trust. Only shame."

But then, in subsequent messages, he questioned the efficacy of hypnosis because he was finding it so hard to control his emotions. He wrote messages in a very aggressive way which was not characteristic of Josh's personality. He was a very gentle man. At one point he wrote: "You are talking bollocks. Nothing can help me. You said you understood but you don't understand at all. This is not going away."

The messages continued as the week went on, getting angrier and angrier, and becoming abusive and vitriolic, until it seemed the ongoing communication was with the 'part' and not Josh himself. In the end, to stop the tirade, the 'part' was told to stop being rude and communicate cordially. Josh replied: "What are you talking about? I haven't been rude!"

Josh said his legs had been like jelly all week. He said he hadn't slept for the previous three nights. When he did doze off for a few minutes he would wake up with a constriction across his chest, gasping for air. He said he had been retching a lot. He was never sick, but the dry retching was so strong it made him gag. He said despite everything he was feeling positive inside because he believed everything that was happening would eventually dissolve his symptoms: he felt like everything was unravelling.

He had managed to head off a panic attack while out with his mother. "I felt like one was seconds away and I told her I needed to sit down and let it pass. I felt like an observer watching myself - sitting it out - giving it time to come out. I remember saying to myself: 'How much more can a body take?'"

Josh said his condition has been greatly affecting his work as his concentration was so poor.

"It is right on the surface for me. I have been using the recordings. Last night I woke up struggling to breathe. There was no light and I couldn't find the door so I panicked. It was hideous."

Josh was taken into hypnosis a fourth time and once again he was calm, without any obvious emotion. There was frequent REM movement, and he occasionally flinched and had involuntary muscle movements, but there was no obvious distress. He was asked to focus on the emotion which he found most difficult and upsetting, and to go back to the very first time he had ever felt that emotion, and to take note of where he was, and who he was with, and what was happening.

He returned to the conscious state saying his hands were on fire. He was clutching his fingers, saying they had grown hugely hot under the blanket and were immensely painful. He was looking at them intently.

“They were red hot, in intense pain, but they are now numb.”

He said that during the session he had not experienced one incident, but many. Some were from childhood and some were from his time in the military.

“I felt the evil in Sarajevo. There was evil in that city. There was a lot going on. It rocked my belief in humanity. The Serbs were so awful. In Northern Ireland, I felt like we were making a difference, saving lives. But when we put the blue hat on, they tied our hands.”

He said he could feel the emotion rising up inside of him again and his hands were getting really hot again. He took a moment to let it settle.

During the session he said he had seen the red door which had so frightened him in hypnosis previously, and he said he thinks he went behind the door and what was there was not so frightening, and he didn't feel that much emotion. He didn't elaborate on this. He said he didn't want to share it.

But he said he felt lighter, like he had been carrying a huge load and it had been lifted.

Fifth Session

In the week leading up to the fifth session, Josh and his mother were both in contact to say he was in a bad way. He had locked himself in the toilet at a bar and had banged his head on the wall. Josh himself reported that he was being assailed by an evil force inside of him.

Then, suddenly, out of the blue, Josh sent a message to his mother saying: “Something remarkable happened this morning. I feel like I have been set free. Incredible. I think I reached my limit last night and this morning I felt destroyed. I went and lay down and listened to one of the hypnotherapy recordings and completely surrendered. I had no fight left in me. When I woke up I felt amazingly well. Now I feel great. My body is still a bit wonky but maybe that is understandable.”

When Josh came to the fifth session he had a big smile on his face. He said he was now feeling extremely calm and it was a major difference. He said in the middle of the week his experience had been horrific, like he was being torn in two, but now he felt totally relaxed. He was still slightly jumpy if someone touched him from behind without him knowing they were there but that was all.

“If I don't expect it, then I jump inside.”

Josh said he felt happy, and calm. He was a little apathetic about work but he thought that was because he had had so many nights without sleep and just needed to rejuvenate. He said he had been sleeping for hours though, sleeping through his alarm even, and late into the morning. He said all his anxiety had dissipated.

He said he did not think he needed any more hypnosis because all his symptoms had just stopped. He had now had five days straight without any symptoms which had never happened before.

“I feel like everything surged to a head and then was spent. I think it has run its course. Before it was always spiking, but not now.”

Josh said he didn't want to “ruin it”. It was obvious he was afraid of agitating anything inside him again, but he also said he felt like the part “had moved out.”

Josh said he would continue to use the audio recordings and he asked for a recording to consolidate all his gains to date.

“I feel like my body has re-balanced. There is no anxiety. No screaming inside.”

Josh said he had had a number of dreams in the preceding days which were interesting but not scary. One was military-related, in which someone died and a fellow soldier was very upset about it, and Josh told him: ‘Look mate, that's just the way it is. You just have to accept it.’

In another a doctor figure said to him: “Once the process is finished, we can heal your body.”

Josh said the session of the previous week had had a major impact on him.

“For 45 minutes after the session I didn't speak to anyone. I was almost catatonic. I just sat and ran through everything I had seen in my head - all the places my mind had taken me in my childhood and during my military years. It was like a movie was playing in my head. Little clips, like vignettes, playing back and forth in my head. I didn't feel any emotion.”

As he was explaining his reaction to the session, a car revved its engine nearby. Josh smiled and said: “Last week that would have made me nuts. It doesn't even bother me now.”

One week later Josh was still feeling really good.

“I feel totally different, and I am sleeping. The only problem is my sex drive hasn’t totally returned yet. But I am sure I just need to get my strength back.”

Six months on, Josh said he finally had his body and mind totally back in his control. He was working hard, had no anxiety or pain of any kind, and his sex drive had returned. He was very much in love with his girlfriend and he was very happy with his life.

Chapter Seven

Max

Max was a medic in the 1st Gulf War, and in The Balkans in 1993. He left the Army in 1998 and joined the police. He eventually left the police, after a number of harrowing incidents, and is now establishing his own business. He is 53, married to his third wife, with an 11 year-old son whom he shares joint custody of with his ex-wife. He says if it wasn't for his boy he could easily "kill people." He also has three estranged children, and three step-children.

He was diagnosed with PTSD and Adjustment Disorder by his doctor in 2000 initially. He sought help from Combat Stress but said nothing they offered worked. He tried CBT and EMDR. He was placed on medication.

He has been taking anti-seizure and anti-psychotic drugs in high doses for ten years, but he is still suffering insomnia, nightmares and night sweats. He gets pins and needles in his extremities, pain in his shoulder and head and suffers from anger, hyper vigilance, racing thoughts and roller coaster emotions. He has memory loss and finds it hard to concentrate.

First Session

Max says he was "messed up" in theatre. He says he cleared up a friendly fire incident during the Gulf War and then worked with the US Marines with diggers to clear up the Basra road.

"We went down there and it was a bloodbath. The nightmares began shortly afterwards. I dreamt that my body wasn't working. I got drunk all the time. When we came back off tour they made us stay in camp and get pissed. It was crazy. When I got home I was a nutter. I was out in the garden digging graves in the middle of the night. We soon had a baby on the way but I was going to the bar all the time and drinking as much as possible.

"From the Gulf War we went straight to Bosnia, and that was carnage too. We were sent to a place south of Sarajevo, in a beautiful valley. There was a sanatorium with 900 mentally ill patients. The principal of the sanatorium and two Muslim nurses were trying to look after everyone. We were told there were only 700 people left alive inside and they were running out of places to put the bodies. The Muslims and the Serbs were shooting at each other across the valley. We were only fourteen guys. We cleared the building wing by wing; five floors, with 10 wards, plus side rooms and offices. The inmates were crazed, with no medication and terrified. We had to padlock some in their rooms.

"On the top floor we found a children's ward. We were not told it was there, but we came across 20 old cots full of kids. They were all wearing nappies. I didn't know a nappy could hold so much shit. Some of the children had been raped. Their eyes were blank. We just tried to make them as comfortable as we could.

"We had no drugs; just some dressing packs. We asked MSF to send us some supplies and they just sent heavy blankets, no medication. It was June. The kids were dying however hard we tried to keep them alive. Then after a few weeks we were told we had to bug out. The Croats were coming and we were unprotected. We tidied all the kids up as best we could. Some had pneumonia but we had to just walk away and leave them."

Max was silent for a while as he struggled to contain his emotions at the thought of abandoning the children.

After Bosnia, Max left the military and joined the police but he hated it. He said in the military, even if you fell out with someone, you knew the minute you were in combat they would have your back. But he did not feel that was the case in the police. When he was pressured to falsify evidence he refused and ended up being blackballed by other officers. What he calls 'a campaign of harassment' led to him going missing.

"They found me in a tent in the countryside. They picked me up and sent me to a police rehabilitation centre. They said I was as mad as a box of frogs. They diagnosed me with PTSD and gave me CBT which was useless.

"Even after my diagnosis the harassment continued and I was eventually forced to leave the police."

Max said he was suffering flashbacks and visual nightmares which play out in front of him like a movie. Many are related to the sanatorium and the children's ward. He said they are mostly of Bosnia.

"I had one a couple of months ago and I still don't know if it was real. It involved a body with a hole in the head. I hadn't seen it before."

Max had a real struggle getting compensation and a war pension because the police insisted he had PTSD because of the Army, while the Army insisted it was the police. The Army finally offered a 20 per cent war pension and it took Max nine years to get it up to 100 per cent.

"I can't get closure. I have so much resentment. I have watched friends commit suicide. We have all suffered bad health. I had all the injections, and the tablets including Anthrax and The Plague. I was near the oil fires in Iraq, and there is something wrong with all my children, except my eldest girl conceived before I went to Iraq. My fifth child died of deformities."

Max is pretty sure his own father had PTSD as he was in Singapore when it fell to the Japanese.

"He told stories of the horror he saw. He died 12 years ago. I was sorry I didn't get to know him better. He walked out when I was five, but he was violent before that. My mother used to make me sleep between her and him so my father would not beat her up. I always remember my father being very angry with my mother. I only saw him a few times after the age of five. But I remember he used to hit me and my older sister."

At school, Max was physically abused by a Jesuit priest.

"He didn't sexually abuse me but the guy was a paedophile for sure. It was the way he looked at us when he beat us. He scared me to death. I couldn't hit back."

Max has tried to find closure with spirituality. He is most interested in Buddhism. He is also trying to reconcile with the Catholic religion of his youth.

"I feel a huge sense of pressure. A failure. I feel like I am not good enough. A loser. The Army and the police made me feel that way, and the Catholic church, and my father was hardly my biggest fan. Rumination is a real problem for me. I disappear down a rabbit hole when I have to do anything."

Max was hopeful he might find the calm and closure he needs in hypnotherapy. Despite becoming agitated while he explained his history, once he was asked to lie down and close his eyes he seemed to visibly relax. He remained totally calm throughout his first session of progressive relaxation and visualisation exercises, to rid himself of anything or anyone negative.

When he came back to the conscious state he said he was the most relaxed he had been in a long time. He said he felt himself go very deep, but then come back up midway through. He said he had begun to see some scenes from his past but he just turned away from them. He didn't want to see them.

Second Session

Before his second session Max messaged to say that he was experiencing severe headaches after listening to the hypnotherapy tapes. Headaches can be a sign of a need to clear negative emotions. He was told to stop using the recordings until the next session, when those emotions could be addressed.

Max said his mind has been racing a lot since the last session. He had had a nightmare during the week. He didn't remember what it was about but he woke up shivery and sweaty. He said he feels more driven to succeed. He says he didn't like being written off by his own country, but now he feels he better understands what happened and he can overcome it. He said he had listened to the recordings twice and they made him feel more rested. He was keen to enter another session of clinical hypnotherapy.

He appeared to go into hypnosis easily. At a couple of points during the progressive relaxation he exhibited the tell-tale involuntary muscle movements of a hypnotic trance.

Once the session moved into the therapy section, with Max being asked to identify the part in him which was causing his symptoms, he appeared to be in almost constant REM.

Max emerged from hypnosis saying: "There is something there. Something spiked during the session and it made me judder."

However he was unable to recall what he had seen or felt. He was given a post-hypnotic suggestion that he would remember what he saw over the coming days, and it would bring him the insight he needed to understand and diminish his symptoms.

Third Session

Max arrived for his third session relaxed, but he said there had been a very difficult episode during that week.

He had been getting calls from the local mental health people, and from Combat Stress, asking him to attend a review. He said he knew Combat Stress wanted him to go on a six-week course, but he didn't want to go.

"It doesn't help, talking over and over about the memories. It makes me worse. There is no point raking up the past. This works. That doesn't. But they won't listen to that. I don't want to get worse. But I think they want to cut my financial support. They did that before. I turned up for an appointment on my own and they said: "Wonderful that you managed that!" Then the next week they cut my money. They didn't know that I had spent two hours walking around and around trying to make myself go in. I wish I hadn't. I think the new calls triggered my anxiety, and also because we had people coming to stay. They always corner my wife and say: "Is he okay?" Like I am not in the room. They don't ask me. Always her. And I always worry that I won't be able to keep the mask up. I am a 53 year-old man. Why don't they just ask me? So I have some issues with things I remember. I am not insane. Yet."

Max said he and his wife had had a row about the arrival of the guests, which he thinks triggered a flashback.

"I don't know what happened. I thought I went to bed. But I don't know if I did. All I remember is suddenly being back in Bosnia. Everything was happening around me, playing out like a film and there was a lot of screaming, including mine. I came to in the bathroom, shouting, as I was going through the sequence of events. I had not had such a flashback in a long time."

Max said he had been using the recordings between sessions and he felt very calm after listening to them. He said he was aware he had had some dreams during and after them but he couldn't remember them. He just knew something was in there but he didn't know what.

His third hypnosis session passed without incident. He was calm and relaxed throughout, as he was asked to allow someone he was angry at to come forward. But when he returned to the conscious state he said he had not seen, heard or felt anything in particular.

"I went into hypnosis very quickly this time. I remember coming out at one point because I heard something, but then I went straight back in. It wasn't anything upsetting though. I have no recollection of anything at all. Of anyone. To be honest I feel wonderful. Like I am bouncing on air."

It is often the fourth session which allows a person to gain proper insight into the reason for their symptoms, because it allows someone to use the emotion they feel to go back to the very first time they felt it. Max was keen to make arrangements for his fourth session, saying he had more rest during the sessions than from actual sleep.

However a few days later he said he wanted to try the hypnotherapy recordings alone for a few weeks, because he felt things were decompressing fast, and he didn't want any instability getting in the way of his new business.

"I don't want everything "spilling out at once". I can feel the doors opening."

One month later Max said he was feeling calm by using the recordings and much more rested. Six months on he was doing well with his business and still felt much calmer than before, but he knew at some point he would need to tackle the part within.

Chapter Eight

Rob

Rob enlisted twice in the Army, serving for a total of 26 years. In between his two enlistments, he was a police officer for six years. He finally came out of the Army in January 2018. He served in Iraq and Bosnia. He is now a contractor in Europe.

Rob was diagnosed as having PTSD by DCMH in 2015. He said his last contact with the military mental health services was two years before.

“I saw a therapist once a week but she loved giving me her opinion. She repeatedly told me that I harboured a desire to kill my mother. I stopped going to see her.”

Rob is still battling extreme anger, depression and anxiety. He has feelings of self-loathing and worthlessness. He sleeps badly and often feels apathetic.

Two years ago he developed an infection which led to a heart attack. He also suffers from high blood pressure. Both worry him greatly.

Rob tried to commit suicide in 1998 and spent several months in a psychiatric ward before rejoining the Army.

First Session

Rob came to his first clinical hypnotherapy session saying he constantly wants to run away from everything, and that he is actually already running in his mind.

He said that one of the most stressful times in his life was when he got divorced. He was a police officer at that time. He reenlisted in the Army after he got divorced.

He says he feels like he is just going through the motions in life. He said that when he left the police he felt like he had completely failed at life, professionally and personally, and it was then that he tried to commit suicide by running a hose into his car. But despite being exposed to the fumes for eight hours, he survived. He said the doctors think all the drugs he had taken slowed down his body to the extent that it protected him.

Rob says his Mum called him as he was sitting in the car, and he hadn't spoken to her for two and a half years.

“I was sat there, with all these tablets and this huge mobile phone, as they were back then, and I pretended I was at work. Then I hung up and tried to kill myself.”

He said he felt very guilty about that. She died before he could discuss it with her. But that night, when he was admitted, he noted that she came straight to the hospital.

“When I was lying in hospital, not only having failed at life, but also at ending it, a psychiatrist came and asked if I would like to go into the psych ward, and I said yes. Why not? I was there two to three months and there was no therapy, just drugs.”

After Rob was discharged from hospital he went to his mother's house in a crofters cottage in Scotland, where he knew no one, and he was isolated from everything, which he says did not help him at all.

He decided to go back in the Army. They accepted him, even knowing he had tried to commit suicide and had been in psychiatric care, and he was sent straight to Bosnia.

Rob says he was abused and humiliated as a child by his step-father, and he said his mother did not stop it. He said he thinks his mother only knew about the humiliation, and not the beatings. But he believes his mother was guilty of letting the constant humiliation go on.

“We were just starting to explore that when she died. My stepfather was not nice to anyone. I had a stepbrother and stepsister, and my own sister. My sister told me I was making it up when I talked about the humiliation from our stepdad. But when Mum died my siblings admitted they had seen his abuse of me. I was angry for years at their denial.

“I have tried to sort out my issues, but there are so many different ones. I know I was suffering when I went into the police because I remember thinking I was happy to die there. I was in

close protection. I wasn't reckless but I thought if someone goes for the person I am protecting I will happily step in front. My wife now does not understand this feeling of not caring if I die."

Rob said he enjoys music and art but hasn't listened to music or drawn anything for years. He said he might start drawing, but then he finds he has no motivation to carry on and is too easily distracted. He doesn't listen to music because almost all the songs he used to like link to a memory he doesn't want, so he has developed an aversion to pretty much all of his music collection. He says he can't turn that aversion off.

He was a little apprehensive of his first clinical hypnotherapy session but keen to see if it could help him.

He lay quietly as he was led through progressive relaxation, and then onto the negativity clearing visualisation exercises.

Immediately after the session, Rob said it was the most relaxed he had been in years. He said he had drifted away, but also followed the visualisation suggestions. He was quite amazed that he could allow himself to be that relaxed. The next morning he reported that he had actually slept.

"I got the first unbroken sleep in years; got a full five hours as opposed to five separate one hour naps".

Second Session

Rob said that the night after the first session he had slept so well, but the sleeplessness had gradually crept back. Because he had been very busy at work, he hadn't kept up with the hypnosis recordings and he felt like the effect of the first session had worn off and he was keen for another.

His blood pressure had not improved and he had hoped it would. He was always concerned about the effect of carbon monoxide poisoning on his body from his suicide attempt. He explained that he was found in his parked car and taken to hospital. He remembers being in the ambulance with a nurse sitting on his chest, giving him cardiac massage, and the heart monitor giving off two tones. That was in the morning. He was unconscious for most of that day. When he awoke his hospital gown was covered in charcoal. He was told that he had died twice. His chest was very painful. The doctors believed he had taken so many drugs it had stopped his body absorbing the carbon monoxide, otherwise no one could work out how he had lived. He kept asking himself: "Why did I survive?" His sister, who he had not seen in years, was at the hospital which surprised him.

He blamed himself for failing to commit suicide. He says he hates himself and he doesn't know why. He feels like such a failure at life. He said he didn't feel such a failure when he was younger but "it has got stronger and stronger since." He doesn't care about himself and he has accepted that as the norm. He said he wondered if that feeling came from the treatment by his step-father but he wasn't sure.

He explained that up to the age of nine he lived alone with his mother, and he didn't have much to do with his real father. He saw him, but his father was frequently absent. When he was eight years-old he found out his father had other children.

"He came and went and we were not really living in a family situation. He was hardly there. Then my mother had my sister, and my soon-to-be stepdad came on the scene, and suddenly my father was more interested in us. There were lots of dramas with my Dad and my stepdad."

Rob's parents went to court and his stepfather adopted Rob's sister, but not him. His stepfather was not allowed to adopt him. Rob became the weapon between his parents. He remembers being very protective of his Mum and always trying to please her. His stepfather had a son and a daughter. He always felt left out where they were concerned. He felt that his sister and his stepfather's son and daughter were wanted, but he wasn't.

Both of Rob's fathers died in the same year, when he was in his late teens. He said then, to his sister, that he had been ostracised, and she told him it wasn't true. His Mum didn't say anything, but he knows she knew. He said if anyone starts talking about him and making comments he gets very upset. He can't open presents on Christmas Day. He can't bring himself to show any emotion, ever.

Rob says he feels more emotion for animals than people.

"Some of the things I have seen were truly awful, but it didn't bother me that much. But if you show me a hurt animal I am in pieces."

His lack of emotion worries him.

He believes he remembers everything that happened in his life before the age of ten - with an almost photographic recall - but not after the age of ten, and he doesn't know why.

Two particular incidents from his childhood stick in his mind. One Sunday, his Dad took him to church and they were away from home for about an hour and a half. On the way back they stopped at a phone box and his Dad made a call and then got back in the car. They both just sat there for five or ten minutes. Then they drove home and an ambulance was there and his Mum had taken an overdose. He didn't know why. He still doesn't know why. He never asked her.

In another incident, when he was about seven, his Dad had a heart attack, and he and his Mum visited him in a clinic in London. They went for a walk in a park. It was a nice day and his Dad was in pyjamas. His baby sister was already born. They were playing in a play area and a tramp was watching them. His Dad got agitated about the tramp and the guy walked away, but as he walked past Rob he said: "That child is going to have problems soon." He thinks the tramp saw something in him. It has bothered him to this day.

Rob has huge guilt about an incident with his second wife which got him arrested and led to his suicide attempt. His second wife was out with friends and he was babysitting for her son when she brought a man home. They had a row and she hit him in the head, and put a cigarette out on the back of his neck. He slapped her around the face and he was arrested.

He was charged and convicted in court.

"I admitted that I hit her. I didn't mention that she had hit me first and put out a cigarette on me. She later withdrew the allegation and said she had lied to the police, but I still got done. I felt such dishonour in being arrested. I had slapped her. I had become my stepfather. So I felt that the honourable thing to do was commit suicide."

He said he went to a B&Q and bought garden hose and tape, and then he adapted his hatch-back car so the pipes could go from the exhaust and through the boot into the car, and not through the window, so no-one would know. Then he hid the car under some trees. He put some music on - Bon Jovi - and felt very calm. He wanted to die.

When he failed he was mortified that he had lived, and very disappointed in himself. His mother kept asking him why, but he didn't answer her. He was angry he had lived.

He said he constantly feels like he is running away from something, but he doesn't know what. He is scared of answering the phone and of opening letters.

When he was a policeman, he was assigned to the paedophile team and was forced to watch child snuff videos, which greatly upset him. He feels like a victim in life. He also hates the word 'hero'.

"When I came back from Iraq, everyone was coming up to me and saying I was a hero. But I felt a failure. On Remembrance Day, I won't wear my medals. I don't want to publicise what I have done."

In this second session, Rob slipped easily into hypnosis. He was confident now that he could relax enough to be hypnotised, and he was led slowly through progressive relaxation and down into the depths of his own mind. He was then asked to locate the part of him which was causing all his debilitating feelings. At this point, Rob appeared to come fully awake and stare straight into the camera in a hostile manner, but then, after just a few seconds, he went straight back into trance again. He had no recollection of this when he emerged from hypnosis. He said he didn't see any part of him; he just saw two alternating still images of a desert and a forest, one after the other, repeating. He said the desert in the photo was empty and the forest was just normal trees. He said the pictures were square snapshots. But he said as he looked at these stills he felt a huge anger rising up through his body.

The next day, following the session, Rob messaged to say he had "slept like a baby again." He also said he was concerned he had not apologised for staring into the camera with his "war face on."

"I always apologize straight away for everything. But I don't think I did. I do apologize, but this is a noticeable change for me. I always apologize for everything I have done, and even things I haven't done. This is strange."

Third Session

Rob said he had been using the recordings and he had been sleeping well. He had felt much less wound up. He had stopped feeling depressed, but in the past couple of days he had become more and more anxious.

"I am anxious about lots of things. I try to be logical but it feels like I am running around and don't know what to do. I feel like I am in a field with snipers all around and I am trying to dodge the bullets."

He said he had never been in a situation where he felt totally helpless, even on ops, because he always had faith in himself to get out of danger. But now, he feels that he has no faith in himself.

"I am not suicidal, but if death happened I wouldn't be too bothered."

He then began to reveal a bit more about the aftermath to his suicide attempt.

"When they put me in the psychotic unit after my suicide attempt they took me from the hospital to this other establishment in an ambulance, with big clear windows. They insisted I sit in a wheelchair in my hospital pyjamas, with my boots on my lap, and there was a lot of traffic. So I ended up sitting in traffic jams with all the people in the other cars looking at me. I sat in that chair repeating again and again to myself: "I am not insane. I am not insane." I still have this obsession with not losing the plot. Military men are like storm troopers. We have to go on regardless of the damage.

"I feel like I am not in control of me right now....the door is unlocking but I am not unlocking it. A lot of it is about the relationship with my mother. She was ill when I was small and I couldn't help her. When she was ill and dying I couldn't help her either."

Rob began crying at this point and wiping away his tears.

"At the end, my mother had gone down to see my sister in the south east of England and we were in Scotland. My sister rang at 10pm at night to say Mum was in pain and had gone to hospital. I went back to bed and I knew I wasn't going to see my mother again. I had a plane booked for the next day but it was too late. I never spoke to her again and there was so much we never discussed or resolved."

For his third hypnotherapy session Rob slipped easily into trance, but he appeared agitated when he was being asked to identify someone he was angry with. A couple of times he opened his eyes, turned his head, and stared hard at the camera again, with what appeared to be an angry expression, but then he went straight back into trance.

When Rob emerged from hypnosis he said he could taste blood in his mouth. He thought he might have bitten his lip, but on inspection he couldn't find any wound.

When asked if he had identified someone he was angry with he said there was a queue of people in the room. When asked if he had given at least one of these people 'both barrels' he said: "No, more like a cap gun."

He didn't make it clear if his mother was among those he was angry with, but he kept saying: "I thought she was aware."

He said he had always felt extremely protective of his mother. When asked what happened with all the people in the room, he said he just got annoyed with them all and walked away. He said when it was suggested that he imagine a cord between him and all the people he was angry with, and he was told to pick up a tool to deal with that, he thought he was going to be able to hit them all so he picked up a wrench. But when he was told that the purpose was to cut the cord between him and the person or people he was angry with, the wrench became a set of bolt cutters and he cut the chain link.

"It was like when I was on the psycho ward and a man went past my bed walking in a handstand. You go into protective mode, when you are sitting there thinking 'what is going on here?' I felt like I needed to help THEM but I was in no fit state to do so. But that is how military men think."

Fourth Session

Rob came to the session agitated. He said he didn't feel in control. He said he hadn't found the time to use the recordings that week, but then he corrected himself and said he did have the time but he just went into his bedroom and slept, even as early as 7pm each night.

He said he just felt an overwhelming urge to sleep. Sometimes he didn't even last 30 seconds into a TV programme before falling asleep.

He said the last year had been very stressful for him. He was working in conflict management but he couldn't control people in a normal military way, and that lack of control made him anxious. He said too many people were snowflakes: "Say one word and they melt."

Rob was eager to go into hypnosis. He said he felt his brain was in a constant state of processing and he wanted to hasten the process. He wanted to stop the churning.

Rob's body was moving throughout his descent into hypnosis. His fingers were 'windmilling' around each other from the start, all through the induction, but they stopped as soon as he was asked to concentrate on the most troubling emotion within him.

From that moment on he was fully responsive to all requests for ideomotor responses, nodding when asked certain questions. He became emotional during the session, and tears rolled down his cheeks.

When urged to return to the conscious state Rob sat up saying: "Wow, wow, wow....."

He appeared slightly disorientated. He said: "Everything just made sense. I was four years old and everything was going around in my head. It just made sense."

He asked for some hours to process the information and then later he sent an email explaining what he had experienced.

"The trigger point seems to be when my mum took an overdose back when I was four? During the session, loads of possible trigger points came up and disappeared.... Then.....this one came up clear as day and stuck. Going back one month, to be sure I had found the root cause of the emotion, took me to walking home from nursery school after some sort of party? I was looking up at the sky, at the stars, singing 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star' and 'Silent Night' with my Mum. I got the feeling the party was at Christmas time, but I am not 100 per cent sure. I know I hate Christmas time...for no apparent reason, I always have. And....my mum died 10 Dec, the same time as Christmas parties were happening at schools.

"I felt a massive sense of helplessness and failure while in hypnosis. Prior to the overdose incident, it was predominantly my Mum and me only, Dad only around odd Sundays.

"Another thing I remembered is that the first house I owned was in a street called Hainault Avenue. I hated the street for no apparent reason again.....now I remember the phone box where my Dad phoned the ambulance from for my Mum was at the bottom of Hainault Avenue....

"In my mind, this appears to explain my overriding protective instincts, constant sense of failure, complete contempt and lack of interest in me. Always striving to give 200%, all of the time... apart from to me. Looking at life after this incident, there are a large number of occasions where these feelings have been reinforced by other incidents, thus just compounding the problem. I need to write all this down now because the floodgates have opened and it is all unravelling and making sense....still working on it. The problem I have now is I don't believe me... and no relatives to talk about it. What do I do with it..... I don't know how to help little Rob let go of this.

"The whole ambulance scenario is the bit that baffles me.... But it is completely clear that he went into the phone box, then came out, and we sat there for a few minutes... I even know where we were parked.... The ambulance went past and we followed it to our door....I've also spent my whole life trying to prove myself to my mum..... even now...after she has gone."

Fifth Session

Rob said he had had a weird week.

"I didn't feel down exactly, but very unsettled. Uneasy. I had a nightmare where I was shouting a lot, but I don't know what about. My blood pressure has been high. I have heard the blood rushing in my ears."

He said he had been tired all week and in bed by 7pm.

"But then I wake up in the middle of the night."

He said he hadn't listened to the recordings all week, even though he had had the opportunity. He didn't know why. He was still ruminating on the revelations from the previous session, about the time his mother took an overdose.

"I know we just sat there and waited. Dad stopped at the phone box and made the call and then we waited. Then an ambulance went past and we followed it to the house a couple of minutes later. As we got there they were bringing Mum out on a stretcher. I didn't know what she had done. I only heard within the family later that she took an overdose."

He said the previous week's session had been very weird.

"As I went down, there were a number of significant events from my military and police days, and everyday life, and as they came forward every one of them appeared to be THE incident. It was like a film. I could see them coming forward, but then they floated past me, to the side of me. Then more just kept coming. It was lots of key things; some I had forgotten about. Then this one came up, and started to go past but then stopped and came back in front of me. The overdose moment. It was the very last bit of the puzzle. It was a lightbulb moment for me. I have been programmed not to believe in me."

As an aside, he said it was interesting that he can't stand children and never has been able to.

"I have no time for them. Even my own family - my nieces and nephews. If I had to rescue a baby or a dog, I would rescue the dog every time. I would protect a dog with my life but not a child. I even noticed my antipathy to children on ops. It is a definite aversion."

His fifth hypnotherapy session started much like all the others, with him resting calmly and getting more and more relaxed. The focus of the session was to identify the part of himself that he didn't like, and talk to it, to see if the two parts of the one person could come together and work together to eliminate the PTSD symptoms.

During the session, Rob occasionally appeared agitated and his hands were frequently moving. His eyes opened a couple of times but he immediately went back into hypnosis.

Again, as he came back to the conscious state, Rob sat up saying: "Wow."

"I saw the other part of me sitting in front of me, but it was not a person, rather a white blob."

Rob said he felt an overwhelming anger and indifference towards this "person".

"I just don't do the whole 'me' bit. I thought the whole conversation was pointless. I have never had any time for me."

He said he followed requests to start a conversation with the blob, but then he couldn't be bothered to continue it.

"I kept telling the other part of me 'you're not worth it'. Then when I was told that I could use any tool I liked to cut the emotional cord between us, I picked up a Samurai sword and chopped the white blob's head off. I felt nothing but anger and contempt."

During the session Rob had also been asked to go back to the moment he saw his mother being brought out of the house after the overdose, and run the memory several more times to get more information. He said after his mother was taken away, his Dad took him to a flat. He said he knows where it is, and it was very familiar to him. He said they stayed overnight in that flat. He remembers an old gas fire. He said he doesn't remember what happened in the flat but he felt immense confusion, bewilderment and just plain lost."

Sixth Session

It was decided to use the wildcard sixth session to force the part of Rob creating the symptoms inside of him to come forward.

Rob had had many insights, but was still experiencing symptoms, and did not have full information about what had happened in his life to create them.

It was decided to command Rob's subconscious that it was time to give him the information, and that he was fully equipped to handle it. Rob's subconscious was to be told that it could not evade explanation any more, and Rob himself could not dismiss it any more, or refuse to address the part of him responsible. He had to confront the root cause.

Rob arrived for the session saying he was not sleeping well. He said he was not as uneasy as the week before, but "it's still there, even though I have tried to put it to the back of my mind. I can't let it go. Every-time I try to ignore it my brain focusses on it."

He said he had noticed a real animosity towards himself; an indifference verging on hatred. But, conversely, he had also started laughing more.

"I just don't do happiness," Rob said. "I truly can't remember being happy. But this week I have caught myself laughing - talking about something and laughing. Up to now my life has been a flat line.

"When I had CBT, it is like your brain gets to a point where something says: 'You should be better by now.' It is like a conscious decision to force yourself to feel better, even if nothing has changed. But I don't feel like this with hypnotherapy. I feel like I want to keep going for as long as it takes to root out the reason."

Rob said it was nice to talk about it, and not always be trying to keep it under a shroud.

"There was one member of my troop who had PTSD and he confided in me. We kept it between us, but there was an incident and he was sent to the Med Centre and as soon as they knew what he was feeling - within a month - he was out of the Army. After that the other troops would never talk. We had a rehab unit. Whatever had happened to you, if they sent you to that unit, and in a week you were not showing signs of improvement, you were out."

As Rob was sliding into hypnosis he was told that this was the session where everything would become clear to him. He was breathing very fast at the beginning of the induction and sometimes during the therapy session. His thumbs were making circular motions for some minutes. He cried at various intervals, and occasionally he wiped away his tears as his subconscious was commanded to give Rob full insight into his symptoms.

He emerged from hypnosis saying his legs were very stiff, but he finally had the last piece of the puzzle.

He said he had seen not one but two parts of himself, at younger ages. One was small and defenceless, and the other was a teenager. He said the little one was four years old, and the bigger one was between 10 and 16 years old. He said he saw it as if he was watching it in a water droplet photo sphere. Inside the sphere were photos of what happened.

"The little one is in a minefield. Stuck. Trapped. Unable to move and scared stiff. The teenager, I finally understand. He is angry. Seriously angry about my stepfather and his treatment of me. But I have the overwhelming feeling the teenager is stuck too. I don't know why I am saying that, but I kept hearing the word 'stuck'.

"I think it is because I was denied my chance - he was denied his chance - to kill my stepdad. When my stepdad died, the week before he died, I wanted to stab the bastard. I was 18. I was almost big enough to take him on. I had been waiting until I was big enough. Then he died! And I was robbed of getting to the right size to stab him.

"I would never have believed my stepdad if he had apologised to me, but now I am talking about this, I can see the reasons for what I have been feeling all this time, and all the things I have done, and also why he acted the way he did. When my stepdad's first wife died and left him with two children, I think he was really messed up. The policeman in me completely understands that, and I can empathise with him. But there was a full on war between us. When he died, I think the real me stepped in and put a lid on the angry teenager, which was also me.

"I think it was a protection mode, so I didn't completely explode. I realise now I probably made everything worse, by squashing down and denying the feelings of the angry teenager, and just telling it to shut up basically. But it never shut up. It was livid. I can see in the army, and in the police, I had similar situations with people, where that anger was so violent.

"I remember thinking as a kid in primary school that children should be looked after. I had a strong sense of right and wrong. I never hit back. I saw my step-dad punch his own 15 year-old son with a full on punch in the face. I was petrified of him.

"There is an advert on the TV for casinos, and the guy in the advert is the spitting image of him. Whenever that advert comes on my anger goes nuclear....

"What I can't get my head around is that at some point I turned that anger that I harboured towards my stepdad into anger towards me; myself. I turned all of it on me. Maybe it was like a protection mode. He was dead and I needed something to be furious at, so the teenage part of me turned on me. For not standing up. For being worthless. I have spent the rest of my life, going at 200 per cent, trying to prove myself.

"That teenager hijacked my early years in the Army. I had no emotions. It was no different to being at home. If I screwed up I was beaten up and ridiculed. That is what happened at home. Then as I started going up the ranks I was the one who started to bully and frighten others as part of my job. I was stuck in this method of discipline - if you screwed up I jumped on you from a great height. I had turned into my stepdad.....

"When I took my overdose, I told the medical staff it was because I had become my step-dad. I remember that now. I had slapped my wife. It didn't matter what she had done to me. I had turned into him. I had also hit other young lads. Honour is everything.

"They asked me how I felt and when I told them, they tried to explain to me that wasn't the way I felt. But they were wrong and I argued with them, and then switched off. I never had any anger towards my Mum, except that she couldn't see my Dad was a philanderer and for the first ten years of my life she stood by him and hung onto him even though he was almost never there. It was blatantly obvious my Dad was seeing other women but she wouldn't have it.

"It is so obvious to me now, after this session, why I have such a good memory of my life up to age 10, and then nothing from 10-18 in the memory banks. Up to 10, I had my mum and my grandparents who spoiled me rotten. After ten, I lived with my abusive stepdad and my mum who wouldn't tackle him. My grandparents didn't come any more. I spent eight years virtually shut up in my room with my anger. Even Christmas was spent in my room. The teenager inside me blocked out those years."

It was a series of massive revelations for Rob. He said he immediately began to decompress. The anger was gone. The anxiety was also gone. He sent a message a couple of weeks later saying he had visited friends, and laughed endlessly and even managed to open presents in front of people which he hadn't done since he was ten.

He did ask for one more hypnotherapy session, as he wanted to make sure he had tied up all the ends. He felt his "parts" might have something more to say. So a seventh session was scheduled and conducted. In this session Rob said his adult self, teenage self and little Rob were walking together, underwater. He said they didn't say anything, but there was an immense sense of camaraderie between them, and a wonderful feeling of calm.

In the weeks which followed, Rob's blood pressure returned to normal. He was sleeping properly and he felt far more able to handle the uncertainties of life. But even more importantly, and sometimes uncomfortably, he got his emotions back. Six months on he said he was still learning how to handle suddenly feeling things he didn't ever remember feeling.

"I am negotiating that. It is definitely an eye-opener. But everything in my life is so much better.'

Epilogue

This trial for combat veterans suffering from PTSD has proven that clinical hypnotherapy is an effective method to help sufferers diminish and/or eliminate their symptoms, and understand the root causes of their afflictions. Clinical hypnotherapy allowed each person to investigate their own memories and emotions, and get a greater understanding of the impact of incidents upon them.

It is clear that those who maintained a regular schedule of clinical hypnotherapy sessions, and who used clinical hypnotherapy recordings between those sessions, gained the most benefit more quickly.

But even those who did not use the recordings between sessions achieved greater insight and relief from their symptoms than they had enjoyed from any other therapeutic method they had tried so far.

It is also clear that for the majority of these men, stress and trauma suffered in combat was related to stress and trauma suffered earlier in life.

Some clinical hypnotherapists claim only one session of hypnotherapy is needed to put a permanent end to PTSD symptoms. It is true that it is possible to gain the insight required in one session. But I have found people need a few sessions more to be sure of having found the root cause. Also, the body needs to be relaxed enough to give up its secrets and that requires a good rapport with the hypnotherapist to engender trust.

There are a few outcomes of this trial which are felt to be highly significant.

One is that it has proven that clinical hypnotherapy can be effectively delivered remotely, over the internet, by a trained and qualified clinical hypnotherapist, preferably with military and/or combat experience.

Also, it is possible to standardise the treatment protocol, by providing six sessions using the same scripts, even when each serviceman or veteran had different symptoms, experiences and requirements.

In Annex A you can read what was said to each man while he was in hypnosis.

If you are suffering from PTSD, and you would like to consider clinical hypnotherapy to tackle your symptoms, please don't hesitate to get in touch with beatreathhypnotherapy@gmail.com. Free treatment is available for serving and veteran military personnel and first responders courtesy of Mynds UK.

Annex A:

Each session started with a few minutes of gentle breathing, to calm the body, before using the following visualisation exercises.

Chalkboard Breathing

As you relax there so comfortably, imagine a blackboard, like the one you had at school - a big blackboard at the end of the classroom.

Imagine picking up a piece of chalk and drawing a huge circle on that blackboard, taking the chalk all the way around and back to the start point.

The next time you breathe in, imagine being at the number 6 position on that circle and breathing in slowly all the way up to the number 12. Then as you breathe out, imagine sliding all the way down the other side back to the number 6 position again.

Allow yourself to go around that circle several more times in your mind.

With every revolution of that circle, allow your breathing to become slower and slower Going around the circle more and more slowly. Imagine yourself actually making that circular motion.....with your body and in your mind. Such a soothing, relaxing, sensation.

The more times you go around the circle, the heavier your body feels - the heavier your legs feel, the heavier your arms feel, the heavier your head feels on the pillow/cushion. Feeling that weight in your body. Sinking lower and lower...deeper and deeper.....into the chair/sofa/bed.

And as your body sinks deeper, allow your mind to spiral downwards too..... spiralling down into the deepest depths of your subconscious, knowing the more times you breathe around the circle, the more your mind descends deeper and deeper.....knowing the deeper you go, the lower you go, the more insight your subconscious mind can bring you.....

Seven Plus or Minus Two Induction

Just allow yourself to be as lazy as you want to be... listening quietly to the sound of my voice... and while you're listening quietly to the sound of my voice concentrating for a few moments on your breathing... breathing slowly and steadily, just as though you were sound asleep, or pretending to be sound asleep... and imagining, perhaps, just how comfortable you might look while you're relaxing there in the chair... using the power of your mind to see yourself in your mind's eye... and then using the power of your mind to do whatever has to happen to make you look even more relaxed... and still thinking about your breathing, making quite sure that each breath in lasts the same length of time as the last breath in... and each breath outwards lasts the same length of time as the last breath out... even though each breath in will probably be slightly shorter than each breath out... and while you're thinking about your breathing, noticing, perhaps, the weight of your head against the back of the chair... and still listening quietly to the sound of my voice...

And while you're listening quietly to the sound of my voice, it maybe that you'll become aware that you've forgotten to think about your breathing... but that's all right, you can just simply start thinking about your breathing again while you're listening quietly to the sound of my voice and what I'm saying to you here... and in psychology, there's a rule called... seven plus or minus two... and that means that most people can think of seven things all at once... plus or minus two... so you should be able to think of at least five things all at the same time... the sound of my voice... the steadiness of your breathing... the weight of your head against the back of the chair... and how you might look from the outside... and that's four things... so you can think of those four

things while you're listening to the sound of the music I'm playing in the background... so that's five things, now... and I wonder if you can think about those five things and then at the same time notice the way your feet feel on the footrest of the chair... and perhaps how your arms feel... and that's seven things now... the sound of my voice... the weight of your head against the back of the chair... the music playing in the background... the way you look while you're relaxing... and your breathing... and your arms... and your feet on the footrest... and I wonder if you can now add an eighth thing into all of that... I wonder if your mind is powerful enough to think of seven plus one things... adding in, perhaps, an awareness of the temperature of the room... and then just testing to see whether you can add yet another input to your senses... so that you're thinking of NINE things all at once... that's seven plus two... thinking about all those eight inputs to your senses and then maybe adding an awareness of the way your eyes feel while you're thinking about all those other things... the weight of your head... your breathing... the music in the background... how you look from the outside... the temperature of the room... your feet on the footrest... your arms... the sound of my voice... and how your eyes feel...

The weight of your head... your breathing... the music in the background... how you look from the outside... the temperature of the room... your feet on the footrest... your arms... the sound of my voice... and how your eyes feel... and of course, when anybody thinks of all these things, what they are really doing is scanning round them one after the other... very quickly... so quickly, it feels as if you're thinking of them all at once... and in the world of computers, that would be called timesharing... sharing your available resources between the different tasks you are attempting to perform all at once... and that's why some people can think of only five things... because it's the limit of their memory... while others can actually think of nine things... and I wonder how well your memory is working as you struggle to remember those nine things... the weight of your head... your breathing... the music in the background... how you look from the outside... the temperature of the room... your feet on the footrest... your arms... the sound of my voice... and how your eyes feel...

And now you can think how good it will feel... when you simply allow yourself to think of only the most important thing of all... concentrating all your energies onto that one most important thing of all... which is going to be so easy to think of, now that you are going to allow yourself to think of only one thing instead of nine... and that one thing is how good it feels to think of only one thing... thinking how relaxed you can be now... that you're only thinking of how relaxed you might like to be... relaxing in your mind... and in your body... no need to think anything at all, really... no need to do anything... nobody wanting anything and nobody expecting anything... and absolutely nothing whatsoever for you to do except to... relax.

Body Scan

Turn all your attention to your toes now.....imagine your toes becoming completely relaxed.....hanging like a windsock on a windless day.....imagine a tingling comfortable numbness filling your toesspilling over into the balls of your feetturning off all the muscles of your feet as it travels to your ankles.....then up to your kneesknowing this is the power of your subconscious mind.....turning off all sensation just as it can create sensations.....you have the power to turn on nice sensations and turn off unpleasant sensations.....feel the numbness moving from your knees to your hips.....turning your thighs 2D from 3D.....sinking.....until the whole lower half of your body is completely numb.....then let that relaxation spread across your abdomen.....all the essential organs drinking in that relaxation....just stopping for a while. As it moves into your chest feel your heart beating at just the right rate.....and your lungs inflating and deflating at just the right pace As the relaxation moves into your shouldersthen rolls down your armsto your elbows.....to your wrists.....to your finger tips. Then up into your forehead, down across the forehead to your cheeks - to your jaw - releasing pulsating waves of relaxation from your amygdala which you can imagine as any colour you please.....

Stairway Deepener

I wonder if you can imagine a stairway leading downwards. That stairway can look like anything you wish. It may be a stairway that you are familiar with, or it may be one created from your imagination.

As you approach the top of that stairway, you look downwards, noticing that there are 10 steps to the bottom...to the deepest levels. Relaxing and feeling so curious. And as you continue to observe these stairs, you know, you can sense, that with each step downwards, you, too, will relax deeper and deeper. Each step going down...more relaxed...deeper in trance.

So, as you step onto that 10th step...downwards...going deeper...you may find it interesting how easy it is to allow yourself to go deeper into relaxation. Deeper...more comfortable...that's right.

Going to the next step, nine...going even deeper. Doubling your relaxation. That's right...just letting go.

And taking the eighth step, you may discover yourself going even deeper...and deeper. So relaxed...and feeling so good.

And on the seventh step...just letting go. That's right...deeper and deeper.

Sixth step. Doubling your relaxation once again. Finding it so curious just how deeply relaxed you can allow yourself to go.

Fifth step. That's right. Relaxing even deeper. Very good. Just allowing it to happen.

Fourth step. Going deeper and deeper. Knowing only you can allow yourself to relax so well.

Third step. Letting it happen. And I wonder if you will go deeper into trance than you have ever experienced. That's right...very good...

Second step. Almost there. Doubling your trance once again. Going all the way down now.

First step. So relaxed. All the way down. That's right. And as you find yourself at the final level, you begin to realise that when you take the final step, you will be on the bottom floor. All the way down. Arriving there now

Safe Place

I want you to imagine a place where you feel most safe - somewhere you feel most comforted. Perhaps a place in nature.....a beach or a forest or a lakeor somewhere within your own home....

I want you to imagine that place now and imagine yourself in that place. Maybe this is a place you know well Or maybe it is a fantasy conjured out of your own imagination,....it doesn't matter.....as long as it makes you feel safe and protected and content.

This place is private A safe place private within your own mind.....a place you can come and go from....whenever you are here you feel totally safe. Imagine every little detail of it.....what you can see.... What you can hear....how it makes you feel..... are you alone or within someone.....whatever you need to feel safe.....

No one can come here without you inviting them. This is a place of peace, serenity, harmony.....a place of balance. Feel that balance in your bones, your blood stream, your tissues, your nerves, in every cell of your body....
In your DNA

The longer you spend here the more relaxed you are.

Ego Strengthening and Negativity Clearing

I wonder if you can find yourself on a beach - big wide beach - so beautiful - lovely breeze - sea coming and going out - every time it goes out it is pulling all the stress from your body - as it comes in it brings calm and happiness - look around you - notice there are stones around your feet with something written on them - look closely - reach down - pick one up - see what it says - noticing it is something you no longer want in your life - something which makes your life difficult - something you want to eliminate with hypnosis..... feel that stone in your hand.feel how heavy it is..... how annoying..... how it holds you back.

.....because you are so deeply in hypnosis, your subconscious is watching what you are doing. it is watching you holding that stone. and the subconscious understands images and symbols far better than it understands words. so it is waiting to see what you do with that stone. are you going to hold on to that thing which causes you so much trouble or are you going to throw it away?

are you going to show your subconscious what you want in your life - clearly and permanently.because your subconscious is the part of your brain which makes things happen for you..... you don't even have to decide how it will happen. it can do that by itself..... you just have to tell your subconscious what you want..... clearly and definitely. so i wonder if you can take that stone over to the sea and looking at what it says again, tell yourself you do not want that in your life, and throw it out into the water.

watch it fly out across the water - hit the water - sink beneath the waves - watch the sea wash those words off that stone - taking them back into the universe - far away from you. that is gone from your life now.

go back to the beach, see if there is another stone with something written on it - if there is another stone pick it up. read it. tell yourself you don't want that in your life any more. and take it to the water and throw it in. you are telling your subconscious to eliminate it. to eliminate everything you don't want. be clear. be firm. make sure you don't forget anything. this is your chance to clear everything, every person, every feeling you don't want in your life right now.

when you have picked up every stone with something written on it and thrown it into the water raise this finger so I will know you are finished.

well done. i wonder if you can look back at that beach and now see a bucket and spade on the beach. go to the bucket and spade. pick up the spade and start filling the bucket with sand. fill it to the top. then keep adding more sand until you have a pyramid of sand on top of your bucket. then take the spade and start banging the top of the sand, pushing it down into the bucket. compacting all the sand into the bucket. keep hitting it until the sand is level with the top of the bucket. then pick up the bucket. note how heavy it is. every grain of sand in that bucket represents every time you have been hurt, or upset or angry, or annoyed.

all the negative energy you have had lodged in your body for so long. every negative event in your life is in that bucket. all that weight has been inside your body for so long. but now you can throw it away. eliminate it from your body. just by throwing the contents of that bucket out into the sea. so imagine yourself walking over to the water and lifting your bucket to shoulder height. on the count of 3 i am going to ask you to throw the contents of your bucket into the sea. Get ready. counting now. 1, 2, 3. throw that sand out into the sea. see it fall into the water like a curtain of sand. watch it dissolve into the waves and back into the universe, far away from you. the bucket is empty now and so are you. no more negative feelings. no more hurt. no more anger. no more consequences of all that negativity. you are light. you are free. free to fill your bucket with nothing but positivity. with health and happiness and joy.

now you have emptied all that negativity from your body, walk back onto the beach and take a moment to sit down. take a moment to watch the waves. enjoy the view. feel all that calm filling your body. this is your calm place. nothing to bother you here. you are protected here. no negativity can reach you here. i wonder if you can imagine a big circle around you as you sit on the sand.

a big wide circle. this is your barrier. Your barrier to negativity. You can imagine this barrier as a fence, or a wall, or even an electric force field. just imagine that barrier all around you now. you can erect this barrier whenever anything negative is happening around you, insulating yourself with positivity. when you are positive you are happy, you are confident, you are healthy, your whole body works perfectly, no illness, no aches, no pains. when you insulate your body with positivity everything is as you want it to be. everything you need in your life you just have to think about it and it happens. this is your space. your positive space. and when i bring you back to the conscious state in a moment you will return with this positivity, this calm, this insulation all around you, with full health, all bad habits eliminated and your body working perfectly. Just take a moment to think what a difference that will make in your life.

Ego Parts Therapy

And as you relax there in the chairlistening to the sound of my voice....feeling so comfortable and yet so alert.....your subconscious mind ready to absorb any information, any commands, any images that you give it.....and your subconscious mind ready to give you the insight you require to solve any of your problems....the insight you need.....allow your conscious mind to just wander awaylet your conscious mind wander..... as you instruct your subconscious mind to take over your thoughts now.....take over your imagination.....

allow your imagination to follow my voice.....imagining what is being said.....seeing it in your minds eye.....imagining.....if you can.....that you.....(name).....are not one person but many people.....many personalities.....created by the experiences that you have lived.....personalities created to help you in life.....the ambitious (name).....the diligent (name).....the determined (name) (alter as per pre-induction session).....and created by the roles you have assumed in your life.....(use as appropriate - the father; the mother; the daughter; the son; the employee; the friend.

Sometimes I am sure you can sense these different personalities inside you.....do you sometimes sense them? Nod your head for yes.

You can hear them telling you the best thing to door telling you something is not a good idea.....that you shouldn't act a certain way.....that you should do things differently. All these personalities are products of the situations and roles which formed them.....

The sub conscious mind creates these ego states naturally as we go through life, and these ego states all live on within our body once they are createdideally getting on well together..... bringing their experience of life to the otherspretty happily.....and when one of the ego states develops a problem, the others will bring their knowledge to help solve it.....

So we really are not one just person....but many many different personalities all within one package.....

But sometimes, when we have major incidents in our life, difficult incidents, our body creates new ego states as a result of the different emotions we experience... disappointment.....anger..... helplessness.....pain.....trauma.....

Maybe one or some of these resonate with you.

Sometimes we get scared..... we are abused..... we feel neglected.....maybe you can think now of situations like those in your life.....when you have felt such negative feelings such as guilt.....fear.....a feeling of being trapped.....not good enough.....

That feeling, which you projected, was picked up by your subconscious and that made it search for a solution to your feeling; a protective solution.

The subconscious understood your problem as you told it to it, experienced it, and downloaded – installed – a helper in you. A friend. Someone who cared very much about you. It might have surrounded you in a protective bubble at the time to protect youor stood in front of you and

stopped you doing something so you didn't get hurt again.....or comforted you and protected you by sharing the experience.....like an imaginary friend.....or got very angry to frighten off an attacker.....or made you not care that someone was not showing you any emotion because you had this ego state to take care of you now. These ego states may have been created because of negative circumstances, but the intention was not to hurt you.....the intention was to protect you.

And so you added them to the group of friends and protectors you had created, the other ego states within you like a new addition to the family....sometimes a rather unwanted member of the family because they could be a bit disruptive – angry, scared, guilty and worried all the timebut they lived in your body all the same.

Unlike you though, these ego states never grew uplike Peter Pan.....they always stayed the same age.....they still feel like a person of that age now.....and because the subconscious mind just lets them bedoesn't try to help them get over their upset..... would never expel them.....just lets them live there.....in their original state.....nothing ever changes for them, unlike you who sees change every day. They are stuck.

Maybe, in your mind's eye, you can start to see some of those separate parts of you. Imagine if you will the various different parts inside of you right now, which have caused you to be the person you are, and act in a particular way, and what your own collection of ego states might look like.

You can see them as a group.....or maybe only focus on one or two of them.....the one or two that resonate most clearly with you at this time.....see their ages, their faces, their expressions.....

Perhaps you might like to imagine them walking down a street.....the core ego, the group of easy going ego states in the middle – enjoying the day chatting, laughing really having a good time. all pretty easy going personalities. All they mainly want to do is get on, get ahead, have an easy life. But, also walking with them, because they are always with them, are the other ego states that make up your personality.....perhaps hanging back a bit, dragging their feet, perhaps kicking stones down the side of the road, perhaps one walking on ahead, not wanting to be part of the group, always out on their own. The loner. The one who wants to control all the rest as often as possible.

Maybe you have one of those and you can picture that one now if you have.

These are the negative ego states.....the angry ones.....the scared one always looking behind and clinging to someone else's arm, perhaps a few of them are children so they don't walk as fast as the others. Sometimes you feel like you are eternally dragging them.

In general the core ego in the middle just carry on ahead, feeling fine, not paying much attention to the stragglers, to the miserable ones. There's things to do. Places to go. Things to take care of. That's life.

But then, every now and again one of the others will erupt in fury at being ignored and bring everyone to a halt. Maybe the hurt child will suddenly, throw an enormous tantrum. Start screaming. Shouting at the others because no one is paying attention to their hurt. Crying. Throwing stones. Accusing the others of ignoring them. Screaming that it's not fair what happened to them. And the ego states in the happy core group have to stop, and go to the child and sympathise with the child, pick the child up, feel the child's pain, stop everything they are doing just to feel that hurt with the child.... Perhaps there has been a time when you have felt suddenly overwhelmed by a hurt you suffered in the past, and been almost unable to function or think of anything else while you tried to rationalise that hurt. That was one of your ego states crying out for attention.

Or maybe the teenager on the end of the line, kicking stones against the side of the curb, will suddenly see something that reminds him/her of the huge anger which created him/her, and suddenly feel an intense anger and start kicking stones at all the other ego states, hurting them, angering them, causing them as much pain in anyway possible – as much pain as the ego state feels right at that moment. Maybe you have had unexplained pains, illnesses, symptoms, which had no explanation, or always seemed to happen when something similar occurred in your life.

Maybe you can imagine one of your ego states acting in such a way for a particular reason – out of anger, guilt, fear.

Or maybe the ego state walking ahead of everyone else suddenly senses a danger which reminds him/her of how he/she was created and feels an immense fear as crippling as this ego state felt when it was first made. A fear so overwhelming that he/she has to stop everyone else to protect them from the threat. So he/she stands in front of the others, arms out, blocking them, refusing to let them go on, eyes terrified, shouting at them to go back, not take any risks, and when they won't he/she will do anything to stop them. Scare them, disable them, freak them out. Scream that it is too dangerous, that they don't have the tools to tackle the huge, great fear that he/she sees. The core ego will try to reassure him/her that everything is fine but he/she won't listen. And perhaps he/she scares some of the other ego states so much that they agree with him/her, and support him/her, and then it is even harder to push him/her aside and get past.

Maybe you can see that ego state within you now – the one that holds you back, disables you, scares you, makes your doubt yourself. Maybe you know his/her history. Perhaps you know why he/she is acting that way. Or perhaps you need that ego state to tell you. In a moment you are going to be able to talk to your ego states, listen to them, understand them, because they need to have the chance to speak.

Because these different ego states inside of you, these avatars if you like, which have been created inside of you for whatever reason, which have downloaded directly into your psyche, cannot be simply switched off or deleted, not even the annoying ones, the difficult ones, the ones who just plain act badly. Because they have become a permanent part of you. Once they have become a part of you they are your responsibility. The responsibility of the core ego in you. They depend on you for their survival.

So you really only have two choices where they are concerned.

Go along with them, agree with them, do what they say and live the same way they do – buffeted by their demands and their needs all the time even if it damages your life. You could make that choice. Do you think you want to do that? Nod your head for yes, or shake your head for no.

So the other choice is you can negotiate with them – encourage them to dial down their reaction to things that happen now in your life and allow you to take charge of them now, because you do not need them to take charge of you anymore.

You've grown up..... the core ego state has become far stronger.....doesn't need to be scared any more.....can physically deal with situations can't be hurt by bad situations or bad people anymore.....and doesn't need the mental protection which they were created to give you.

But you still want them to stay. Because they are a part of you. And you love them. Because they went through scary and difficult things with you. But now you can all be free. Because nothing in the past can hurt you any more. The past doesn't exist. It is just a memory. Only the present exists. And you control the present.

I am going to touch your hand now and when I touch your hand I want you to imagine something for me....

Touching your hand now.....and asking you to

Imagine..... if you will..... all your ego states now together in one place....anywhere you like.... and as you imagine them they become clearer to you.....you can see them all around you.....every single ego state which makes up you(name).

From now on, your subconscious mind can choose to speak to me, without it disturbing your comfortable state of hypnosis, or it can, if it prefers just answer my questions with a yes or no, or by raising the fingers on your right or left hand. Raising the fore finger – the first finger – for yes and the index finger – the second finger for no. Do you understand that? Answer me anyway you like.

Good, now take a good look around that group of ego states which you are imagining all around you.....and identify the ego state among them which gives you the most trouble. The ego state which causes the most problems in your life. Which has the strongest effect on your life. Imagine that ego state sitting in front of you now. Looking at you.

Can you see that ego state?

when you can see it clearly I want you to signal that to me by saying yes or no, or lifting a finger so I will know.

Does your subconscious know which event in your life caused that ego state? Answer yes or no, or raise either finger so I will know.

Would the ego state like to explain its purpose and how it was formed. Say yes, or no, or raise one of your fingers so I will know.

It can start speaking now. It is talking only to you let me know when it is done, by saying yes, or raising your forefinger.

Do you now understand why that ego state, created by that event in your life, is causing the problems you are experiencing now?

It is your chance now to speak directly to that ego state and tell it how it has been causing you difficulty in your life and to explain that you need it to stop what it has been doing because you don't need that sort of protection any more.

I would like now to speak directly to the ego state inside you. So, ego state, you have heard what (name) said to you about how your behavior and reaction is damaging his life. Can you agree to stop creating this conflict/physical reaction inside (name).

Can you forgive and accept what the ego state has explained to you here today and go forward with the ego state in a spirit of accommodation and collaboration, knowing that the ego state will no longer place these hurdles, and these destabilising reactions in your path, as a result of the way in which he was created. Do you agree to work together with the ego state from now on.

If not, cut the link between them and the ego state.

Forgiveness of Others

It is very normal and healthy to feel angry in situations where you are hurt, abused, taken for granted, or mistreated. However, anger becomes unhealthy if it is held or increased without resolving or letting go of it. If you cling to your anger instead of dealing with it in a healthy and loving manner, it will eat you up inside.

Maintaining angry feelings or unhealthy grudges, especially those from the past, only hurts you. Making yourself stay angry in order to keep from experiencing the underlying hurt/pain will only serve to hold you as a prisoner inside your own body (and mind), and you will probably experience the hurt even more so.

Even if you were wounded in a terrible way, holding on to the anger and/or rage only restricts you, not the other person. Releasing anger often entails forgiving another or oneself for any and all transgressions. Forgiving another does not mean the actions taken were right, acceptable, or appropriate. Nor is it necessary to "like," speak with, acknowledge, or even forgive someone in person. The purpose of forgiving those of a wrongdoing towards you is to release yourself from the negatively charged energy emotion that binds you to that particular situation or event.

We need to leave our abusive memories in the past, where they belong. It doesn't serve any positive purpose and it doesn't help us in any healthy way to keep our wounds open, fresh, and painful.

You may not be ready to take this step quite yet. I understand how difficult a task this can be. However, if you truly wish to be set free from the chains of the past, this is necessary. The only way we can truly be free from any oppression, self-inflicted or otherwise, is to stop acting like a victim, take the appropriate steps, and free ourselves from the anger, hurt, and sadness. This is not easy, but it will work and you will finally be able to put the past behind you and move on.

In taking this type of responsibility, self-leadership, and action, we are also more able and ready to forgive ourselves for whatever role we may have played in creating a particular situation or event. This doesn't imply that it was your fault you were hurt. The role for which you may be forgiving yourself for might simply be that of continuing to remain a victim by keeping the hurt or anger alive.

This is something you will no longer allow yourself to do once forgiveness sets in. It may also entail releasing yourself from any further negative thinking or hurtful self-statements.

Often, victims of abuse feel responsible, as if it were their fault they were abused. This is untrue. You cannot control or be responsible for the actions of another. You are only responsible for your own actions. If, however, you allowed the abuse to take place, now is the time to forgive yourself, learn from your past, and make wiser decisions in the future.

Take a nice, slow, deep breath and then let it out. (Pause five seconds.) Good. Take in another nice slow deep breath and then slowly let it out again. (Pause five seconds.) Very good. Now I want you to take a very deep breath and then let it out very quickly all at once through your mouth. (Pause five seconds.) Excellent.

Now imagine walking into a medium-sized room. This room is like a conference room. However, it's divided in half by a huge piece of thick glass. This glass is special because it's indestructible. You cannot break it even if you hit it with a sledgehammer. There is a chair on the other side of the glass and there is a chair next to you if you want to sit down. Imagine that an individual with whom you are very angry or upset walks into the room on the other side of the glass, and sits down in the chair. This person may have harmed you in the past or is harming you now. There may have been emotional or physical abuse, or it may have been a less serious incident that hurt you just the same.

This person may be a stranger, a relative, a spouse, or a parent. It's important to know that while this person is sitting in the chair on the other side of the special glass, he is unable to move, talk, or make any facial or bodily gestures while you are speaking. It is impossible for him to leave, interrupt, or even move while you are speaking. What I want you to do is tell him exactly how you feel inside. Tell him how you felt when he hurt you, how you feel now, and anything else that you want or need to say. This is a very safe and secure place to get it all off your chest, releasing it once and for all. Take your time and remember he can do nothing but listen to what you have to say. Take your time and do this now... (Pause for a couple minutes.) Well done. Now this is very important. What I want you to do now is have this person respond to what you said in the way that you would most want him or her to respond. It doesn't matter if he would do this in reality. Have him do this here and have him do it now.

(Pause a couple minutes.)

That's good. Now go ahead and respond to what he just said. Take your time. (Pause two minutes.)

Now have him respond again in the way you would most want him to. (Pause two minutes.)

If there is anything else that you would like to say to this person, please do so now.

If not, then what I want you to do is tell this person you forgive them. Remember, you are freeing yourself from the past and releasing the negative energy that still holds you back from true peace and happiness. I also want you to forgive yourself for whatever needs to be forgiven, even if it's just for hanging on to the anger for so long. Do this now. (Pause for few moments.)

Finally, I want you to say good-bye to this person. You can just say good-bye, shake his hand, give him a hug, or leave the room. As you do this, return back to a safe, happy place and recharge in the warmth and love this place provides for you. (Pause two minutes.)

Age Regression

There is a feeling inside of you which you don't like.....it has to do with the problem which brought you to hypnosis.....you don't like it. It is uncomfortable for you to experience. But we just need you to experience it for a few minutes.

As I am talking about it now your attention is turning to it. You may even be able to feel it somewhere in your body right now. Can you feel it somewhere in your body. Whereabouts in your body? On a scale of 1 – 10 how strong is this feeling? Take note yourself how strong it is.

As I count from 1 to 5 it is growing even stronger within you. One, your attention is going to it, consciously or unconsciously. Two, you are focusing on it even more. Three it is becoming as real to you as ever before. Four, You can actually feel it growing within you – bubbling up....making you feel uncomfortable and uneasy....making you feel all those things you don't want to feel. Five, Now the feeling is strong within you. You are aware of it. Your subconscious knows it well. I can tell you are re-experiencing it because.....

How strong is that feeling within you now on a scale if 1 – 10.

Now I am going to count backwards from five to one and you will go back to the first time you ever felt that way....just like playing a video tape backwards.....going backwards with that feeling prominent within you.....flooding through your system.....Five, Still focused on that feeling. Four, Going back to the first time that you felt that way. Three, Becoming younger and younger....feeling younger and younger.....going backwards in time.....Two, almost there.... One, be there now!

Quickly, look around you and take note of your first impression....anything you see.....or feel..... or hear.....Take your time.....Is it day or night? Okay, just stay focused on the feeling inside you and allow it to give you any impressions at all. Are you indoors or outside? Are you alone or with someone? How old are you? What is happening? How do you feel?

Now I would like you to re-experience that event again If this is frightening.....scary.....hurtful....painful.....you can move away from it now and see it as if it is just on a television screen which you can watch from within your own protective bubble.....move away from the emotion.....leave any emotion behind and just watch from a distance....just as if it is a movie....a movie which can't hurt you in any way.....it can only bring you insight./....information.....which is valuable to your subconscious mind and the feelings you have been experiencing.....Now wind that experience back...as if it is a movie.....right back to the beginning and experience it/watch it again.....noticing every aspect of what is happening.....do you see anything you didn't notice before.....do you feel anything different to what you felt before.....(Repeat 3 or 4 times)

Is this something you feel like you have experienced before....like it is familiar or is this a new feeling?

Just to be absolutely sure that this is a new feeling....and not one you have experienced before.....I want you to go back in time to one month earlier than this date you are experiencing. I am going to count from 5 to 1 and I want you to go back...back in time....(take them back)now you have arrived one month earlier where are you? How do you feel? Do you still have that same feeling?

Okay adult, now I am talking to you. Wouldn't it be nice if your conscious mind had known what your subconscious mind knows now.....your subconscious mind now knows everything you have recalled. If your conscious mind had known all these details you wouldn't have felt this overwhelming emotion.

Adult: with the wisdom of your experience and your years I want you to explain to child how to handle this overwhelming emotion and why it is happening. Tell her what resources she can use to deal with this event. Help her to understand it and overcome it. Help her to see it from a different perspective. Tell her now and raise a finger when you are done.

Child: you have heard what adult..... Has to say.

Do you understand what adult..... has said.

Has it helped you understand what happened and to see it with a different perspective?

Has that different perspective helped to diminish the strength of your emotions? If not, what could adult..... say that would help you understand it or deal with it. Tell adult..... now what she could say to help you and then raise your little finger when it is done.

Adult.....: Are you able to tell child..... what she wants to hear. Do you understand what she is asking you? Are you able to help her more? Go ahead and help her understand this situation with more clarity. Raise your finger when you are done.

Child Has that helped you understand the situation? Are you able to master the emotion which you have been feeling? Are you able to put it aside and reframe it to help you rather than hurt you.

Child.....: You are safe now.....you are secure.....you are whole.....you have explained everything and in doing so you have diminished the power it may have had over you.....your feelings no longer have that power over you.....those feelings are diminished.....reduced.....assuaged.....

Forgiveness of Self

I would like you to imagine a big round room.

There is nothing in this room except two chairs, facing each other.

One is the talking chair and one is the listening chair.

Imagine yourself sitting down in the chair, and then imagining, in the other chair the part of you which gives you problems.....which causes you troubles.....which you don't like very much.

See that part of you sitting in the other chair and concentrate on what it is about that part of you which makes life so difficult.

Study the other you hard.

Now I want you to tell the other part of you how it has held you back.

Now let the other part of you tell you why she or he was holding you back in this way.

You can reply anyway you want.

Tell the other part of you the existing situation needs to stop for you to go forward.

Negotiate with the other part as to how to find a different way to go forward.

We need to establish a new set of guidelines now for the protective part of you – so it will move back and stop trying to protect you in this way, and allow you to even experience painful times so that you will grow, personally.

These new guidelines will allow the other part of you, the protective part of you, to overcome all issues and work on change. Because change is good. Change is progressive.

Sometimes we protect ourselves to the point of blocking change which would otherwise bring great joy to our lives. Or protect ourselves so much we cannot learn new things.

Very good then perhaps you can imagine yourself standing up out of your chairs...both of you...and facing each other. You have both had a hard time, and have worked so hard to navigate the problems of life, and you both deserve a huge hug ...from each other. Do you feel able to embrace the once protective side of you as just another part of you?

Then step forward now and give him/her a lovely big hug and as you do so tell him/her “I forgive you and I accept you.”

I forgive you and I accept you..I forgive you and I accept you.

In a few moments I will return you to the conscious state but in the full knowledge that you have conquered this battle which has been constant in side of you.....that you have reached an understanding which can allow you to go forward in the way you want most. And which can allow you to be truly successful and happy in your life.