

## **I don't have PTSD!**

by Guest Contributors - Wednesday, September 18, 2013

<https://politicsrespun.org/2013/09/i-dont-have-ptsd/>



I don't have PTSD! by [Stewart, who is accepting donations here!](#)

Last week Robin touched on her personal experiences growing up in a military environment and how her endeavour to learn more about PTSD has shone a different light on those memories, reactions, and actions of those around her. It's changed her. It's changed how she views the world, politics, war, soldiers, veterans, and even how she views me.

We've been so busy running, working, writing, running, eating, running some more, and trying to stay awake in the afternoons, that I've not had time to ask her how differently she views me – I hope with more patience. You see, this endeavour has also changed me and in ways I'm finding hard to comprehend. It's made me reflect on memories, past events, and how I reacted and dealt with them. How my friends reacted to things that happened to them and the different paths we all took when we left the Army. Some started businesses, some became security contractors, some joined back up, while others, like me, left Britain for greener lands. I'm thankful for choosing Canada. It truly is a beautiful country. Yet, those memories and past events followed me here, as did the dark moods that came with them. They're not as bad as they used to be, although I often find myself apologizing for my army humour.

This isn't easy to write. I'm literally squirming in my chair. I can't help wondering why that is. Maybe it's the thought of letting someone peak under the hood. I don't have PTSD if you're wondering. I know I don't. I'm quite sure of it. I think. I consider myself quite lucky really. Normal I'd say. Nothing extraordinary happened to me. I mean compared to some people. I've got all my limbs. They're even in good working order – it might be different after the marathon though. But, why does this bother me so much...

I know I found life hard when I finally, and honourably I'd like to add, left the British Army. I was lost in civilian street with my RSMs last words, "you'll never make it sonny", freshly ringing in my ears. I wish

I could go back now and show him different, that I'd made it, but maybe he was projecting his own fears. I remember getting confused about having to pay for water and all the other bills. My new paycheque was hacked down by one bill after another. What was left was a pathetic amount of beer tokens. Everything was taken care of before, the roof over my head, the food in my belly, medical, dental, even water. The money at the end of the month was for me to do with whatever I liked. Things had changed though. Work was a challenge. People were continually squabbling and wasting their days away moaning about what seemed meaningless. All I could think of was what I'd seen, real pain, real suffering, death, the smell, the taste. I was engaged when I left. We struggled though, and soon separated, with her joining back up. I wanted to join back up. To be back with my mates. All of us in the same boat. I didn't. I guess, in the end, it was those words my RSM spoke and my stubborn streak that kept me soldiering on. I ended up moving away and getting a better job, a house, and a fancy car (or two). But those dark moods would follow, as would the loneliness, and my continual attempts to drown them out.

I have friends who've struggled with PTSD. Some still do. It's a horrible thing to see. It seems to fade with time for some - for the lucky ones. I remember one guy lost it on a firing range, stood up and started waiving his rifle around, until he got decked by the butt of, ahem, someone's rifle. I was put in charge of him until further notice. To be his shadow. To kick his ass into shape. I didn't know what I was doing and was far from qualified. But I tried. We'd just come back from Bosnia, which was a mess. The main fighting was over and we were there to rebuild that god awful place. We saw some sights. Most of us would drink things away, but not for him. Some days his eyes had a deadness to them. It was like some invisible darkness had entered him and was sucking the life out of him. I couldn't get him out of bed some mornings, even when the RSM was coming around to inspect. I tried everything. Gentle encouragement. My boot up his ass. When he screwed up it would be me running around the parade square carrying, pulling, and pushing all sorts of crap. I loved physical fitness though, so it didn't bother me too much, but I felt angry at those who put him in my care. It was clear they didn't understand him and just saw him as a nuisance, a pain in the ass, a weak man, and certainly not fit for fighting wars. It wasn't long before I was sent off to Bosnia again where I lost touch with him. I found out later he discharged himself, went off to London, and hit the bottle with a deadly passion. Until this day I don't know what happened to him. Maybe he managed to get help and pull things together or maybe he's on the street, like so many Vets, fighting for each day most of us take for granted. God I regret not being able to do more.

You see, I've realized that PTSD is not just about those suffering with it. It's also about those who've escaped it. It's about their attitudes, knowledge, understanding, patience, compassion, empathy, and heart strong desire to help those who clearly need it and deserve it with the right tools we have to available!!

I don't have PTSD, but I have friends that do, and it's for them, as well as for me, that I run and will keep on running. It's the stigma that bothers me, the sigh when it's brought up in conversation, the avoidance, and the cognitive dissonance. I'm continuing to meet some inspiring people on this journey who support me while I try to support others. Isn't that what life's about - a mutual championing of one another to climb that ladder, to better oneself. I want to say thank you to everyone championing me and my amazing partner Robin. You're amazing and we're very lucky to have you in our lives!