



Ministry
of Defence

Issue 30 December 2013

Veterans

WORLD

Raising awareness of the range of help and advice available to veterans



Restoring emotional wellbeing

Hope through horses

Life skills programme helps veterans 'dare to live'



Photo Credit: John Lawrence

Hugh with Ko-Li the horse

The equine-linked programme supporting veterans restore emotional well-being and re-integrate back into civilian life.

THE LIFE SKILLS learning programme, Dare to Live, aims to make a difference by giving veterans the tools to help them successfully return, by supporting the transition process in all aspects – from family to the wider community and workplace. The facilitator teams include ex-Service personnel who offer mentorship and post-programme support that clients find invaluable.

Uniquely, horses are an integral part of the programme as they naturally facilitate veterans to gain new insights and strategies for successful communication and relationship building.

Established in 2012, the groundbreaking programme* evolved from the work and research conducted by the International Foundation of Equine Assisted Learning (IFEAL), and the

founder's military experience. The course is sensitively conducted by experienced and qualified therapists and offers insights and techniques to support veterans suffering the effects of PTSD, depression, stress and addiction. All the facilitated interactions with the horses are safe and non-ridden.

"... the horses gave back the calm stillness that I had sought for years."

From this year, veterans are awarded an Interpersonal Skills Training certificate (Edexcel Assured Crossfields Institute Qualification) when completing the three-day course. The certificate helps veterans explore employment opportunities and give potential employers evidence of a change in interpersonal relationship management – ideal for those where this has been a previous barrier to employment.

A Royal Engineers' story

Hugh Forsyth was diagnosed with PTSD in 2006 by Combat Stress. In January 2012, his welfare officer signposted him to Dare to Live and he ventured down to the farm in Sussex with a small group of other veterans to participate in the programme.

"I served in the Royal Engineers for 12 years with the high risk bomb disposal teams in Northern Ireland and Bosnia. It was my job to find improvised explosive devices. As a result of what I experience I developed PTSD which left me scared, depressed and virtually housebound.

"Even on the first day of the programme, when working with one of the horses I had a breakthrough and felt like a young boy again. After all those years of being on high alert, in a very short time and with the guidance of the facilitator, the horses gave back the calm stillness that I had sought for years."

A year on, Hugh's recovery and pursuit to get back to work has culminated in him being trained to become the Operations Manager of Dare to Live – thanks to the Poppy Factory who are supporting him back into employment with the financial support of Walking with the Wounded.

Hugh's unique insight through his journey of recovery from war-related PTSD and to recovery and employment is invaluable to other participants and their families.

*The programme is a not-for-profit Social Enterprise, run by the International Foundation of Equine-Assisted Learning (IFEAL), veterans may receive referrals and funding from Armed Forces organisations and charities.

Phone 01342 850330

Web www.ifeal.me/dare-to-live/

email admin@ifeal.me