

367R- Post Traumatic Stress with Andy Shaw

Steven Bruce

Well, good evening, and welcome to what I think will be a particularly interesting show. I'm sure you've seen my emails about it. So you know that we're going to be talking about post traumatic stress disorder, and I have warned you that some parts of it might be distressing. Of course, I could be accused of just using marketing hype there, but I personally found part of my guests story very emotional, indeed. Maybe I'm just a big old softie. These days, I guess we'll find out. That guest is an old friend of mine. He's someone actually I haven't had any contact with though for the best part of 30 years. He's Andy Shaw, major Andy Shaw, a retired Royal Marines officer and a frontline veteran of the Falklands war in 1982. He's got personal experience of PTSD, which is going to be telling us about in a moment, but he's now gone on to found a charity called the mountain way in which he provides one on one help to fellow sufferers. And he's also going to tell us why he thought it was necessary to do that, and why what he offers is a useful alternative to whatever conventional care is available. From your from your perspective, I anticipate this broadcast will help you to identify features of PTSD, which might be affecting your own patients, it might well offer elements which you can add to your screening process, for example, it might be something which is indirectly affecting your patients, maybe if a family member is affected, for example. So it's a very sensitive subject I know. But I've had lengthy chats with Andy beforehand, and he assures me that there's absolutely nothing off limits this evening. So if you've got questions about his own experience, and the way it's affected him, then do feel free to ask our aim here is to make sure that you have as good an understanding of PTSD as possible, and are better able to help your patients as a result. And it does occur to me that you might actually be suffering from PTSD yourself. I don't know. If that is the case, and you're prepared to share them, please feel free to do so. But if it's too difficult, then you're welcome to contact me privately after the show, and I'll do my best to help out. So major Andy Shaw, welcome to the academy. It's great. Great to see you again. It really, really is. And the I've told everybody, you're an ex Royal Marine officer like myself, but you had you had a lot of character building experience before you joined the corps. Didn't you want to tell us a bit about the original nd show? Well,

Andy Shaw

the full story is too long for to this conversation. But after six different schools to which we're boarding schools are on our way to see in 1970 at the age of 16, right, first of all, in the merchant navy, as a navigation apprentice for a couple of years, didn't complete the apprenticeship, because I wasn't academically qualified and then transferred into the fishing fleet in a hole and spent about three years fishing out a hole, went back into the merchant navy for a short period and then joined the Royal Marines in 1976.

Steven Bruce

And you joined as a Marine, which the people who don't know that's a private soldier in the Royal Marines, as rose did the Marines, which is actually what we call the Royal Marines. But yes, right. So you had four years nearly experiences on what we would call the lower deck didn't serve as a private soldier before getting your commission. What was experienced during your time as a Marine?

Andy Shaw

Well, because I was a little bit older than the rest and I'd come out of training top I think all the kings badge would have been awarded to me. They put me straight in support company, which I didn't get technical for your audience, but these are the people that tend to be the oldest sweats rather than the young people in the rifle companies. So I had a bit of a leg up there and I ended unthinkable reconnaissance troop which was Probably one of the best organisations have been for bringing you on with your soldiering skills and so on. So that advance me quite a bit to be honest. And during my time we did I think a couple of Norway tours. Rather, you'd know what I'm talking about three months in the Arctic. We deployed to both Denmark, the Alps, and of course, Northern Ireland as well. Yes.

Steven Bruce

Denmark? And the answer sounds like a great holiday.

Andy Shaw

Yes, it was with a little bit of work thrown in the Alps particularly was quite an interesting time we were climbing Mont Blanc took a month to get up there. Whereas you can do it in a cable car probably in about three hours. But we were learning all the techniques as well at the same time.

Speaker 1

And you said Belfast, so? Yeah, so that was a pretty challenging time as well, wasn't it? Because that was just what the end of the 70s when the troubles were probably at their peak?

Andy Shaw

Yes. 1977 was the first of all. It's hard to sort of differentiate looking back now, but things were pretty poor, then very bad. We lost a marine on that tool. In 78, there was an emergency door, the unit was what was called spearhead which meant it was kit was packed, ready to go anywhere in the world. And I got deployed the day after I got married. I share it wasn't the best start. And that exacerbated the problems further downstream when we get on to the biggest subject. And then the toll you and I did, of course, is 81 by which I might become an officer. Yeah,

Steven Bruce

as I remember it, you make it a habit of coming top as well. And you didn't you get the sort of honour in your badge. Somebody gave me a sword. Yeah, I'm sure it was a mistake. Yeah, you're being very self effacing. And I'm very modest. You actually, I mean, I, I'm gonna blow your bloody trumpet for you. I mean, you, you you were somebody I admired. When I when you and I were colleagues back then. Everyone I've spoken to knows you to be the fantastic soldier that you were. You even went on to go through special forces training later, which is not relevant to what we're going to talk about this evening, I guess. So you've trained as an officer, I have to say, I am really crossed with you in your batch because your batch, the batch being the young officers in training, you took over from my batch, so we hand it over to you just as the Falklands were invaded, which meant that you lot took your soldiers to the Falklands, and we didn't go and for reasons which will probably puzzle our audience that was that's a that's a real chip on the shoulder of a lot of Royal Marines, I guess. Tell us about the build up to the Falklands and, and how that went with you. How well prepared you thought you were for that particular war.

Andy Shaw

Well, I do feel sorry for you know, many people who just tragic really, you never got the opportunity to do that sort of thing. We were in the jungle at the time in the Far East. And we just finished this training. And actually, we're in Hong Kong, we heard about it. So everything went into overdrive. In a matter of weeks, we'd bounce back through Scotland dropped kit picked up along the way. I mean, the story is well known, you know, we flew down to Ascension Island, which is on the equator where all the cross decking took place. Because things are throwing the ship so fast. It all had to come out and be restored again properly for the actual operations.

Steven Bruce

What job were you doing when you got to the fulcrum

Andy Shaw

I was only five troops. In other words, I was in charge of 32 Royal Marines and a rifle company.

Steven Bruce

As I recall from reading quite a bit about what you're doing, you weren't really you were being used as more than just an ordinary rifle troop. They weren't you when you were being used more by the company commander to do more adventurous things than the others?

Andy Shaw

Well by the CEO, actually, I think because of my experience, my age and all the rest of it, it seemed natural for him. So the first time I was singled out if you want to call it that there were nine contemporaries, nine rifle troops in the US was to lead the unit on what was called the Omp, which is a march from west to east across the Falklands. That was a great privilege, of course, and quite a challenge as well.

Steven Bruce

And maybe we should put this into context for our audience, many of whom will only or have ever seen Hollywood movies or whatever it might have been. Back in those days. We were still wearing short boots with what we call putties those things you wrap around your ankles to the holder of trousers in we have shitty weapons shitty webbing. There were so many things we didn't have at minimum chief amongst them. We didn't have very many nitrogen equipments, did we? We didn't have much in the way we certainly didn't have any Sat Nav or anything else to help me navigation. So finding your way across the Falklands in the dark, must have been challenging.

Andy Shaw

When I reflected on this, I realised I was wearing the same equipment my grandfather wore in the trenches in Flanders in 1914. Referring to the potter's Of course, the rest of the kit wasn't much more modern. No, in fact, the webbing shrunk when he got wet, which made life difficult.

Steven Bruce

Now than I imagined in the Falklands, it was quite often wet, if not always. Yes,

Andy Shaw

but of course being wrong means you don't notice it. Do I mean it's just all life? It's it's not raining.

Steven Bruce

It's not training. Exactly. That's right. Yes. Yeah. No, the reason I mentioned all of that is because it wasn't a simple thing to do. You know, even even the night vision kit that you had wasn't particularly brilliant. We didn't have what I'd like to do. If you don't mind, I'm going to show a clip from the film, the unbeaten path, that sort of documentary that was made about your experience down there, which kind of sets us off on the whole of short we're gonna talk about this evening. So let's run that video,

Andy Shaw

I was tasked with the mission of going forward onto the position to find the enemy's water positions and to destroy them. The actual plan was straightforward. But what actually happened was very different.

As we got to that region, the lead Scout spotted something and halted the whole troop. It was a one night in the entire week where although we had virtually full moon, there was no light whatsoever we had complete cloud cover, couldn't see my hand in front of my face. We only had one light viewing device, I think all in individual weapons site. And through these IDs, I could see a group of men perhaps 100 metres away in a huddle. All of the evidence and intelligence that came for the next few minutes pointed in the direction of this being the enemy force we'd been warned about. And this includes our own supporting water Secretary telling me they were in position ready to give me support. events unfolded rapidly, this group started moving, I'd seen a light knowing that they were looking at a map they were clearly lost or trying to confirm their position. And it wasn't very long before it was obvious that the lead man of this group was going to step on the rear mount of our trip. And therefore, we didn't have the possibility of ignoring them and letting somebody else deal with us. We have to deal with this ourselves. This became what is essentially called a hasty ambush. At the point where it was deemed that the bulk of the enemy force was in our killing area arcs. I initiated the ambush by putting.

YouTube sighs my afterwords record, we fired about six on media rounds in that first initial first. For about two minutes, there was a feeling of First of all, massive relief. pulling the trigger is probably the hardest thing I've ever done. Then a growing fear that nothing was coming back and therefore perhaps, would have been outflanked by a superior enemy. And then came the moment when I heard a British voice and realise this wasn't the enemy at all. This was in fact, our own water section who had gotten us that we'd ambushed.

Steven Bruce

novichok? Which I shouldn't be, but how do you cope with that? You I mean, it was your own man. What is it 30 years,

Andy Shaw

I think, to do give you a very simple answer as designing this very complex. 30 years before I felt I could actually start considering living normally, perhaps and there were distinct phases in that 30 years period.

Steven Bruce

How long were you? How long did you stay in the Corps after that incident?

Andy Shaw

14 years.

Steven Bruce

And at what point did somebody I don't know who were the first person to recognise this was at what point did somebody recognise that you were suffering PTSD? Well,

Andy Shaw

firstly, that phrase wasn't familiar to anybody. I don't think possibly the doctors maybe but nobody that I knew. Nobody actually pointed their finger in any sense whatsoever. And it was there was actually no reference to the event itself. There was a 15 minute debrief that very morning, and then we were straight into the main battle of the brigade attacks. And so it was just another event that slipped into history. I think it was more a question of myself realising things weren't right. But it took quite a few years. I went through that period of denial, and then a form of paranoia, then strange behaviour, and then very strange behaviour. And of course, my relationship, my wife was starting to get seriously affected by all this. And so that exacerbated all thing. But it got to a point where I felt I was wearing a mask, and I couldn't hold it in place any longer. And the real feelings that were beyond my comprehension were starting to surface and there were one or two experiences which were really quite frightening. Not nightmares as such something far worse than that, which I can't really describe easily. But there was sort of significant periods where I had to stop and think to myself what is going on here? I never actually heard the phrase PTSD or saw it rather until 2008. From 82 to 2008. And that was simply because I bought a computer when I was doing security tasking Malaya and having to do some Googling and saw it. So we were totally ignorant about this, this condition if you like. And I only left because I realised I was becoming a liability. My decision making processes were warped. My confidence was definitely affected. I was super aggressive, and just about controlling it. And I think, you know, there were lots of signs which even I was starting to recognise. So by the time you know, it was obvious to me, it was starting to become obvious to other people, but only in very small ways. In my last job, I was going to be given a job as a rifle company commander and the CEO change it to OC HQ, which means not a lesser job, but possibly less potential to do damage, you know, a bit more controlled.

Steven Bruce

Yeah. Do you feel I mean, when we think of PTSD now, certainly, I mean, I, I've said you already, but I watched that film for the first time thinking, Well, I know what PTSD is, as we go out, we see dreadful things dreadful things happen to us. But that punch line when you find it your own them in? That must be a, it must have a much more dramatic effect on the individual, or do you not think it matters as PTSD come from any, any particular source in a conflict?

Andy Shaw

Well, my experience very in mind, you know, 42 years ago, yeah, memory is fallible. But this is an abiding memory. I felt as if I'd gone from one extreme one end of the universe to the other, a complete journey zip from everything was unbelievable. The Universe had capsized nothing made sense. There was a sense of disbelief, which you can't really put into words. That was the initial impact that of course, predictably, things like horror and shock as well. And then anger and so on, they all crowded in very, very quickly. But as for the actual conditions, later that developed, there is a clear path, which you know, is well documented about the sort of subset, if you like, of conditions that people tend to suffer from, I think the military version of PTSD is possibly the most complex. That isn't to belittle any other form, of course, but it there, there are moral issues, as well as practical issues, like dealing with fighting war, of course, you know, which people involved in traumatic events might not have. So there's a lot of things involved in this. You

Steven Bruce

and I talked earlier on about the fact that when we joined, and we were young, red blooded individuals, and and maybe we've mellowed a lot since then. And I was thinking, as we were talking, you know, there's a vicious circle, this isn't there, because you put all these individuals together, and there's a sort of a self perpetuating also commit competitive nature to be more aggressive than anybody else. I like to think that the officers that we were in the Royal Marines, and we were there to keep a check on that when it wasn't required. And I guess, you know, that's not possible in the sort of situation you found yourself. Ian has asked whether you and your troop, although it was more than just a troop, I think was a result of troop plus, but when did you get a debrief of any sort when you when you finished? The so maybe you may need to put into context, that sort of timescale of events when you're in the middle of a full blown war like this?

Andy Shaw

Well, it took pretty much all that night to sort the problem out.

Steven Bruce

No problem being the casualties. Yes, the whole thing.

Andy Shaw

Well, we were under three enemies to enemy positions in our own position that it wasn't till much later. And we're talking months later, I found out one of our own observation posts, sitting on the 14th of a mountain that we were underneath, thought they were being attacked and was trying to bring down and fall on us as well, that was nearly a double blue on blue. Fortunately, cooler heads in the command post realise this doesn't sound right and prevented that from happening. I wasn't aware of that at the time. But we were dealing with the reality that we could come under artillery or even direct fire from to enemy positions, we will slap bang underneath. And then there was the business of the casualties, of course, and cause of hacking people back was impossible in the wages today. You know, we've looked at the recent wars and Chinooks flying into the battlefield, we had nothing like that at all. So that was a major issue. Security, of course, but also the commanding

officer was adamant about this, we need to find any kit that's been dropped, because although I was unaware, he knew that the brigade attack was happening in a matter of hours. And these very people we'd act attacked, were actually enrolling our capability to attack the enemy.

Steven Bruce

So it wasn't a security issue. It is what we needed in order to support the attack that he assumed

Andy Shaw

that could have been dropped. Now I've spoken to people who are actually there at the time, and they're completely convinced nothing was dropped. And perhaps they're right. And I honestly can't remember, but it was a bit bizarre. We had to sort of line out in the dark on the enemy's nose with our torches and advance you know, looking for is there a motor

Steven Bruce

issue rent, slotting boards, whatever,

Andy Shaw

you know, that sort of thing?

Steven Bruce

I suppose one, just to put this to bed. How on earth did these people find themselves in your kingdom?

Andy Shaw

Well, I need a map to describe all this is quite complex. So to sum it up, but what was the brief preamble? It's the classic with any of these situations which happen in every conflict. It's a series of tiny chain events, which suddenly coalesce into one big problem. And you got to go back some way to trace The roots of some of these things, but essentially, they were forwarded me, which is something I've only very recently become aware of. And so there's a first indication of a problem. So they're closer to the enemy than newer. They were. Yeah, that's right. And I was completely unaware of this. I was under the impression they were coming from the rear. They weren't actually coming from the front, they were in sent to close the range down between where they were actually located and where I was going to be operating. So they could actually support me, as you might remember, 81 millimetre mortar range of five 660 metres. That's right. Yeah. We also had the artillery as well, you know, the 105 gun at 17k. So awesome firepower. But that's essentially why they weren't moving. Now, the deconfliction element wasn't really there either. So there should have been some sort of time windows to prevent this happening. I picked on because I was unaware of where they were starting off from. Just before we left, a helicopter flew up to my position, we'd

done a night rehearsals, we were literally having a last fact before going. And Gizelle flew up in the dark. And the pilot gave me a bit of paper, it just went to the hover and it came straight from it said beware of 601 Commander operating in your areas and items. So I had in my mind, the enemy here. And they're similar to our 601 Being who Argentinian Belgian says Special Forces. Yeah, they were actually there, but not in the era. We were at the time. It doesn't know everything, of course. But you know, they were just warning us. So when my leads go saw this group in the dark, the natural assumption, really.

Steven Bruce

But getting back to Ian's question, having gone through all this process, so there was no question of sitting you down with a quiet cup of tea with anybody's talking about shell shocked post traumatic stress it was you got five minutes and now you're on to another task

Andy Shaw

because they'll get him up and pick me up as soon as it's first of all, he flew me back to the the main unit, I was four kilometres forward of everybody. So four or five commander minus five to 4k back. And I got out the helicopter, the CEO was waiting there along with the Operations Officer, all the usual people. And it was literally but you know, tell us what happened. Because they'd all been on the radio, they knew what had happened, but he just wanted to hear from me. And I spoke to various people who are also interested, like, obviously motors, for example, and obviously support company and people that nature, but I think it took no more than 15 minutes just to recount the story and explain what it actually happened from my point of view. And it was a case of right. Okay, champs, you get back to your trip, Shawn, you'll be getting orders coming through shortly. You know, it's the brigade attack tonight.

Steven Bruce

So yeah, and so this is what's known as a blue one blue, I suspect there won't be any conflict ever were there, there is no blue on blue, or at least three in the Falklands War. And they happen all the time. They are unavoidable because it's okay. It's a confusing environment. One thing I do want to point out, not that it necessarily had an impact on what happened to you afterwards is but I mean, you're completely exonerated, you went through every check you possibly could have done to make sure that your actions were correct. And nobody's nobody's pointed any blame at you for this. In fact, the guys who were in the military, they were they were lost, and they hadn't told people they were out of position. So sadly, I just want

Andy Shaw

to clarify a point here. That's exactly what I thought they weren't for most of the time since then. That's what I believe. But as I say, quite recently, a couple of years ago, there was a revelation. And I wanted to make clear, more truth was not lost. They were very professional blokes. Unfortunately, however, they didn't give the right information on the radio, when we were checking who is ready to support us. They said they were when in fact they weren't. And that was the mistake that led me to

believe this is the enemy rather than them. Yeah. And there were no fingers of blame pointed to anybody.

Steven Bruce

It's just one of those things. It's a horrible thing. But it was one of those things, isn't it? Yeah. I've had a question from Sarah, who said you talked about denial. Is that common? She says in PTSD? Yes, it is.

Andy Shaw

The best example of this is a 90 year old man who came from New Zealand to talk to me about his experiences with the Japanese. And he turned up with a middle aged lady who I suddenly discovered was his granddaughter. And after our very brief conversation, he left without even sitting down having a cup of tea was quite bizarre. And she turned around and said to me, I just realised why we came back to the old country. She's I thought he'd come back to see it one last time. He was British, but he'd been in New Zealand most of his life. She said no, he came back to see you. She said because we've never heard anything like this as first time he's ever spoken about it. Now was he in denial for most of his life, that I suppose is important to didn't define what denial means. In my case, I think the first real experience of this was in the six week period after the Falklands, we got back we had a six week period of leave, you'd naturally do the rounds and telling my wife what had happened was very, very hard. And then I went from Scotland down to Devon to tell my parents what to see them of course. And their reaction was exactly the same. There was a sort of stunned silence. They didn't know what to say. And then my mum said, Well, okay, let's go down the pub. So we walked down to the pub and it was something I didn't want. Because you know, the country went bad back then there was bunting everywhere. Everybody thought you were heroes. this sort of stuff. And I sat down at a table and a man came up to me with a pint and gave it to me shook my hand and all that he sat down, he just looked me straight in the face and said, So tell me what's it like to kill somebody. And if that was to happen today, something is incentive that I can't guarantee my reactions would be what they were, then they might be more violent, but back then I just got up walked out, that it was almost as if there was a shutter in my brain, there was no physical or mental reaction. It was just a natural sort of going away, and it lifted. And

Steven Bruce

it's hard to believe that people can ask such a stupid question of anyone regardless of their military experience, isn't it

Andy Shaw

when you see a lot of humanity in life, if you live long enough, and you live a proper life, you know, you meet all sorts, and it was just one of those things. But the denial thing to do you explain that? I think that lasted. In my case, well, probably almost 14 years, I was still serving until it became painfully obvious something isn't right. And I've got to do something about it. But I was also ashamed of it. I was I was frightened. You remember that Jack Nicholson film, One Flew Over the

Cuckoo's Nest, a great film, but I remember when it came out, being quite disturbed by long before I ever heard of the Royal Marines. And that was always at the back of my mind, you know, things are happening in my head, which I can't explain. And is this the beginning of being sectioned, for example, you know, all that kind of stuff, losing your control? I was frightened of all that stuff. So I never spoke about it to the doctors or any authorities. This is before you joined the wrong room? No, sorry. I'm just talking about film had an always in my memory. Right. And that was one of the things that prevented me from asking for help. Yeah, okay. The only hope I did have was when I was training the officers in 90. So we're talking nearly 10 years after the war. When I went to my Officer Commanding and said, Look, I think I'm having a bit of a problem. I'm starting to feel a bit rebellious. And his advice was just go see the doc. And I didn't, of course. So I mean, that was it. So I think there's an I lasted for quite a long time.

Steven Bruce

Someone anonymous for what will be obvious reasons says sent in a question saying, if it isn't too personal to ask, are there things that your wife could have done differently? And she's asking for personal reasons, or he or she, I'm guessing history, because they want to know if they could provide better support than they currently are?

Andy Shaw

Well, of course, every case is unique. And unfortunately, my wife had some problems from her childhood, she came from Singapore. And they were the usual problems that females tend to have when they're children, you know, we're talking of a sexual nature, I think she was never open about it. And being Chinese by nature. They're not secretive people, but they're very private people. Because I was never able to sort of get into that and discover what the real issues were. And of course, I was a lot younger than and nowhere near the knowledge about now. So it was one of those things was just okay, brushed over we just crack on. But of course, that must have been festering in the back of my mind all the way through. And when my behaviour started becoming hard to understand, it just added to the problems now, what could she have done? Okay, well, let's leave her aside. Let's talk about a lady that hasn't got any problems and is in love with her husband and a normal wife, perhaps. Think the first problem you've got is to actually get your partner if that's the right word, to accept, there is a problem, because I think that's part of the denial phases that people don't want to accept, there is actually a problem. If you go back to 1982, or even more recently, that our knowledge of PTSD was non-existent on a public level never even heard of it. It's quite recent, almost, it's coming to the surface, like this conversation now. So I think, you know, if you were to talk about it in the context of today, it's not unknown, and there's plenty of help out there. So the mystery is gone. What else can she do? It's hard to say because many reactions you get can be very, very strange. I mean, sleeping with your partner, for example, when he's biting his hand in his sleep, when he's screaming when he's waking up, and much worse than a nightmare kind of reaction. I've heard of that. met people that can't sleep together. For that reason, you know, we might belittle that element of a marriage, but I think is essentially important. And it's a major problem. behaviour with other people self harming, for example, they started drinking a lot of alcohol, or they might get into drugs, or other bizarre behaviours, which just are out of character. Those are all signs. But there are signs before that, if the subtler signs when it's starting to develop, perhaps, appetite loss, a lower libido and obsession with war films, perhaps, you know, I'm just talking at random here, because

Steven Bruce

I've seen all this in people that you have. Yes,

Andy Shaw

that's right. Yeah. These are the very early signs. Now what I'm trying not to do is get the whole world start panicking that their partner suddenly got PTSD because not necessarily true, but it becomes apparent that something isn't right. And when people are super sensitive to give an example, my eldest girl was Yeah, I think it's right to say this because I think she probably knows on the assumption As you might see this that the night of the blue on blue was the night after her first birthday. So that's always a strange time of year for me, you know, on the one hand to celebrate, on the other hand, obviously you can imagine. But when I got home, and the problem started pretty much straight away. Every time she cried, which all children do, I had to leave the house. And of course, my wife couldn't understand this. Why am I running away from my little daughter when she's crying? The reason was the noise she made was identical to the noise of the men who had been killed on the battlefield. And I couldn't say that to her. I couldn't tell her anything about this. So there's a chasm straightaway. So if there's something that's developed in your relationship, and it's just inexplicable, or there's a silence, or there's no explanation or something, or he's going off on his own for long periods, when he never used to do, yeah, I mean, just ask yourself, what was it like before something happened? And I think the helpful thing is, is discover what was that trigger? What What event has happened, and then you can do the sort of, and forgive me for being sort of apparently dismissive to the religious people here, but I call it BC and AD before crisis and after damage, and I can put my finger right on a time and location, when that happened to me, not there was a case some people, it's a collection of events. So it might just creep up on rather than be immediately apparent. But essentially, I think that's all you can do. And then you need to get professional help as quickly as possible.

Steven Bruce

Yeah. And I guess it is possibly difficult to know, when it's important to get that professional help. And I say that because I remember coming back from the Gulf War in 2003. And Claire told me, I was behaving differently. Now, I had nothing like your experience while I was out there, I think it was just being in a military environment for most of that year, it just changes the way you behave to a certain extent. But I don't, I'm hoping that I shouldn't have sought professional medical help just for that change in my behaviour. And I'm hoping that I'm no longer changed in my behaviour. Claire might write in and tell us differently. And so yeah, I mean, is there a Is there a point at which you can identify that people should seek help? Is it just when the behaviour becomes problematic?

Andy Shaw

Well, I think you've got to have their consent. Without that you're not going anywhere. And there's far too many young people today. And I think we generally believe we've only seen the tip of the iceberg in this particular case. Who, you know, are in that denial phase. And then by the time they

get to realising life is untenable for them. They've already made the decision. They've crossed the line, basically, they haven't ordered suicide,

Steven Bruce

and the suicide rate amongst about five days. So every five days, the annual

Andy Shaw

average since 2017, is 90 suicides a year in the UK veteran community last documented and not by the government, not by the government. No, they've only recently decided agreed to start recording suicides in the veteran community.

Steven Bruce

But how does that compare to the wider community as a as a percentage, you

Andy Shaw

don't know, Steve, but I mean, the figure that came out after the foreclosure 300. And about the time when I started looking into this, which is 2012 12 years ago. And the government's response to that was, well, this is probably a normal suicide rate. But my view, is this. Not saying that, you know, service personnel are immune to these kinds of mental health problems? Course not. But we all know that, you know, people who join the armed forces, no matter what they join, even the RAF regiment are quite strong, capable people, and not prone to this sort of problem. And I think if you were prone, is it conceivable you'd actually get through basic training? Not my opinion. So in other words, what you can assume is these are not natural suicides. These are as a result of something they've experienced in the military life, I guess

Steven Bruce

our audience will have to forgive us for a certain amount of

Andy Shaw

the wound next.

Steven Bruce

Not believing anybody else is quite as good as the Royal Marines. But yes, and part of that, too, perhaps is now I don't, this will sound insensitive, and I don't want to sound insensitive, partly because you're bigger than I am. But there is, I feel there's a perception amongst all those strong individuals in the military, that maybe it's a sign of weakness, if you expose the psychological

damage done by whatever that experience might be that caused the PTSD. And that, of course, causes people surely to bottle it up. Did you feel that you couldn't go and say somebody, I'm feeling a bit different resource.

Andy Shaw

There has been a big change in the last three or four decades, no doubt about that. There's a thing called trim trauma risk management, which is created by the Royal Marines, actually, and it's now accepted across the whole of the armed forces. But that is a method of identifying the potential for PTSD. It's not a solution. It's a huge step forward. We have nothing prior to this. What you're fighting, of course, is the classic sort of machismo society. I mean, of course, you don't go sick. I know when sick in my entire life. You know, unless there's a bone sticking out and blood pouring out of somewhere you don't really justify it. And of course, if somebody does go seeking claims about back, we all immediately suspicious, it's the same and do illustrate the changes. Of course, in our time, if there was a man at the bar that didn't drink, we all looked a bit strange in reverse now is the other way around. Probably a good thing, I suppose. But so the there have been fundamental changes, but but I don't suppose that this ability to look like a man act like a man, the classical image of a man has changed. And I think there's a stronger argument for it, because the nature of what we do is never going to change. And it's not gonna be nice to the Russians, or the Chinese or anybody else. You've only got on YouTube and look at how they train and what their people are capable of doing realise we've got to be the same. And society has moved a long way from that. And that's why we seem not I say dinosaurs, but we're at a step in this sense. But unfortunately, the military can only take what society gives it so it is changing as well. The acid test will come when the balloon goes up someday, and as another Falklands, or something, we'll find out what people are capable of doing. But I don't think you can go too far away from that sort of classical male image, you know, the man who, the stiff upper lip and all the rest of it. And as for crying, I never saw that in 20 years. Even at the actual site of the blue on blue, I saw a lot of anger, but there was no tears. So now the tears come very regularly.

Steven Bruce

Yeah. And maybe it's coming across to our audience that you and I are war mongers and we approve of all this sort of behaviour. I think that's the case at all, is it particularly now and I can remember you and I had this discussion some weeks ago, when we were in in Belfast, I can remember doing everything I could to tone down the violence to stop conflicts occurring, to try to engage those people who were hostile to the British forces. And to keep my own guys in check. And I think you did the same thing. I knew it was it again, it was an exercising control. That's the responsibility of the office.

Andy Shaw

Yes. And no. In the early days, yes. In the very first tour your story, I just tried to stay alive. But actually, that's the wrong impression. I wanted to be there. And I think to be perfectly brutally honest, bearing in mind, I was a Marine. We all wanted to be there. You know, this is our trade, we joined up to do this, you know, does it make us war mongers?

Steven Bruce

some extent I think there's a difference between wanting a war and if there's a conflict going, wanting to be there and to test yourself in that environment,

Andy Shaw

for testing yourself. It's a rite of passage, of course, it is, is the ultimate one really, to be honest. But I also think in that context, we were there as peacekeepers we were there essentially, to keep the peace. And there's a huge difference between that in Iraq and Afghanistan, where there's a bigger moral component, we had none of that question mark in our mind in 82, in Ireland, or new or the Falklands.

Steven Bruce

Let's turn back to some questions from the audience. Marina has asked whether you know anything about fnd functional neurological disorder, and it's not really your expertise, because you're not a medic. You're a bloke who's suffered PTSD, and has found a way to help others. And we're gonna come on to that in just a second. But she wanted to know whether severe fnd was resulting from untreated PTSD and wants to know where to go for the help needed. Well, if it is part of PTSD that's causing the problem, then maybe we've got some answers to that in a minute.

Andy Shaw

If I know and that question, say, a week ago, I might have had time to do a bit of research and find out what it actually means. And then answer the question, if that lady would like to follow this. I'm very happy to do that. I'm sure you'll put a link at the end or something. Yes, because she can talk directly to me, and I'll see if I can answer a question over that. Yeah.

Steven Bruce

I think she'd be delighted to hear that. Now, Sarah has said, so sorry to hear all this where the rest of the group affected with PTSD, as we all know, is a very interesting question, isn't it? Because it begs that question of why are some people affected and not others? And she asked, did anyone check once you'd worked out? You had it? Do they go back and check the others that were involved?

Andy Shaw

No, it's a simple answer there. And were they affected? Well, interesting enough. I was unable to go to the first I think the second reunion of that group, the class of 82, if you want, it was too emotional, just couldn't face it. But I did go back eventually, I think it was the third one that was available around about the 25th year, maybe the 30th. And only half of my troop turned up. And nobody knew what had happened to the other half, there was no contact, nothing on social media, nothing at all. And there was no point in trying to chase them up either, because one has to assume they've made a conscious decision not to do it. And I can only guess for reasons why. I was aware of

one man who came to see me before I left England in 96, and took off into the Atlantic on my boat. That was my escape. And he was a fireman. And I was completely unaware of the condition as it was at that point. I was more concerned with just let's get away. Looking back now I realise you got a serious problem, and nobody seems to know what's happened to him. So there may be a tragedy there. Across the board. Yeah, it's an interesting question. Why does why Why some people are affected? And why not others? I've been really trying to find a common denominator here. And I don't honestly think there is one. It must be something to do with our genetic makeup and a whole range of things to be honest.

Steven Bruce

There was a festival. And if you've seen this, there was a fascinating article in The Economist me last week about some research looking into the genetic common factors between between people suffering, stress. Yeah. And it was stress related illness, it wasn't specifically about PTSD. And yeah, it seemed that there it's possible there might be something in people's makeup that makes them more susceptible, I don't know. But then again, there are certain there are different grades of stress that you can be exposed to

Andy Shaw

yes can

Steven Bruce

also be exactly

Andy Shaw

you don't know what I mean, for example, the last person I just helped, as we were saying earlier, I was just explaining it to only last week I was with him. He deployed to Afghanistan. And when we started talking about the nitty gritty detail, if you like, there were certain things that occurred during that it was Herrick 14, I automatically assume well, these must be the triggers. But when we started talking about it, he said, No, no, I saw I joined up to do you know, it was great. It was something completely different, that I would never have guessed, that actually generated the problem. And obviously, we focused on that. And it was actually a mundane situation. It wasn't war fighting. But it was a tragedy. And that was what I've done all the damage. Now, just to round that off, I would say roughly 75% of the people I've been involved with the last 12 years. That's a swag by the way.

You got it. That's only 5%. We've got problems that began in childhood, about

Steven Bruce

to ask you, though, in your own childhood, you just said that you had several boarding schools run away from home. So it's not the stable childhood that we all know, hope for our kids.

Andy Shaw

And that enables me to understand this perhaps a little bit better. But so I think, you know, the roots of these problems may go all the way back to Walter birth in some cases, and trying to unravel that in a position or to put you in a position where you can make, you know, fundamental conclusions about the roots, if you like, or the susceptibility of some people. I think I'd be very difficult to be honest, Steve, because every single case is completely unique. And it's quite surprising sometimes what people do respect react to, not necessarily the most obvious thing.

Steven Bruce

You mentioned Afghanistan. I've got a question here from another anonymous person. Who apologises for the length of the I don't even know it's a question. It might just be an observation. This person's daughter's partner was a guard sergeant, and is a veteran of Helmand in 2009, where he was part of a mortar section. He had a tough time there and subsequent times in private shipping security as well. He now works in a very civilian job. And I really admire the way he's demilitarised himself, I think of him as a son. We'd like to do what I can to help. I don't want to push him or overstep the bounds of our relationship. I know he has very bad night as and when we've had a few drinks or more watching rugby, he can get into a state where he frankly worries me. It might not even be Afghanistan, it could be as difficult childhood, but it sure looks like PTSD to me. I've never been in the military family myself. But ideally, we'd like to guide him in a direction that can help him resolve his past experiences. He has little faith in the army to help and pretty much feels he's on top of it anyway, but I'm not sure. What can I do? And maybe more importantly, what do I not do to help him? That's a very point pertinent points, isn't it? There's a lot of questions in there. About not pushing him if he doesn't want to talk about what he should be doing. I mean, it sounds like it sounds exactly the sort of thing that you do with your clients, with your people who come to you. What are your thoughts on this person dealing with her?

Andy Shaw

She's in a very difficult position. Not to talk about the man away per se. But the the guiding principle is that we cannot help anybody that is not fully compared prepared to help themselves. Is that your guiding principle or as a general guide? Smile? Yeah, yeah. Because I know perfectly well, it isn't going to help things I asked them to do what make any difference if they don't actually believe in it, and don't engage in it. So why is that relevant? Well, just to go back to what I said a bit earlier on the conversation, the individual, the Staff Sergeant if that's what he was, has to recognise as a problem himself. The first problem is to get him to actually recognise there is a problem. Now, I had one guest, whose parents came to a presentation I gave an extra some years ago, and it's straight after, this is exactly what our son needs, you know, how do we do all this? I said, Well, here's my number, you know, get him to give me a call when he didn't. So I got back in touch and said, Can you give me his number? So they did I rang him as soon as you knew or was he put the phone down? It took three years to get into actually answer the phone. And what turned out was his wife had finally reached the end of her tether, and she gives her an ultimatum. You either talk to that guy Andy or I'm leaving with the kids. And that's what did it so he had to be pushed out And if you go onto our website and have a look at the various videos that are available there, you'll see his story. The website is called the mountain way. That's right. Yes. It's WW mountain weight.org.

Steven Bruce

Mountain way.org, not the mountain. That's right. Yeah, mountain way.org, we'll get that up on the screen for everyone's reference.

Andy Shaw

You know, so that's the first problem this gentleman's got is, is obviously seeing signs, it sounds like he's on the right track, it probably is PTSD. But the individual needs to actually accept there's a problem here before you can do anything with it.

Steven Bruce

So you're not suggesting that this question as daughter should say, she's leaving with kids, if they've got kids, but maybe find some way of applying some pressure to, to seek help.

Andy Shaw

And in my experience, that's very difficult. Because it's simply a case of denial, they will not accept it. I mean, they've been steeped, and particularly in the army. And again, you know, we're not kept badger over here. But you know, the army as well as I do, they're a bit more formal, in certain things a bit more rigid, a bit more old fashioned, perhaps, and particularly the guards. And so I can imagine the kind of training he's had and the kind of indoctrination if you want to call it that, and therefore his attitude to this, it'd be a huge admission of failure, he'd be massively ashamed of the whole thing. And that's what you're fighting in order to get them to believe. Now, if he's actually had any form of treatment beforehand, and it has made a slight amount of difference. You've also got to deal with cynicism, because he doesn't believe he's going to help. Yeah. And and the more outrageous they are, like myself, for example, who outside the establishment, not mainstream, the less likely they are to even engage with us. So you've got a real problem there to break this all down. Somehow, rather, somebody in the family or somebody may be external to the family that he respects. Yeah, there's got to take him one side. Look, mate, you need some help. Come on, stop messing about Yeah. And

Steven Bruce

maybe your starting point is just out of by sheer coincidence, saying I was watching this show the other day. Yeah. This bloke who was talking about PTSD, AMC interesting and so on. So maybe that's an avenue to stop. Yeah, cessation can be a good

Andy Shaw

way of doing it. Yeah. Yeah. I'm,

Steven Bruce

rarely get this many questions coming in this early in the show. That doesn't mean there's no big problem. That means people are really interested in what you've got to say. And I don't want to ignore these questions. But the thing that might well be burning in people's minds at the moment is what, what helped people currently get offered and why isn't inadequate, right? If every

Andy Shaw

single person I've helped has been through the whole range. Yeah. What is the whole range? Well, it generally starts off with recognising as a problem, and then going to see their GP, let's assume we're talking about people who are outside the military, because a lot of cases it actually begins in the military. But that outcome is always the same, they are medically discharged. And sometimes it's absolutely brutal. People at all handing your ID card, don't go back to barracks, you're no civilian.

Steven Bruce

And there's no follow up medical care provided you're gone. And

Andy Shaw

in some cases, you can't get access to your records gets worse might. But anyway, let's put all that one side. So we're dealing with people who recognise as a problem. How does this work? Your GP will refer you probably to a therapist of some sort the NHS treatments of CBT, you've probably heard of EMDR, I think NLP has been more or less discarded now. Right? And of course, he

Steven Bruce

is guarded, because it doesn't work for PTSD, or because I

Andy Shaw

don't know, I know, it was recognised treatment and no longer is. So I'm afraid I don't know the reasons why. Because the other solution, of course, is medication. And there's a whole range of medications, with names. Hard to describe rarely, but I'm sure your audiences

Steven Bruce

will be resistant to putting people on medication for all sorts of reasons. I think we all are, just before we move on from it. Are there cases where cognitive behavioural therapy or EMDR are beneficial?

Andy Shaw

Yes, definitely. There's no question about it. I'm not an expert in either of them. All I've done is read the the book for Dummies to give me a rough indication of what happens. And I've never actually been sort of treating myself so I can't speak from personal experience. But I've met all the people I've helped have all tried all this sort of stuff. And those are the people where it didn't work. I suspect and I've got no idea of statistics here. They are probably the minority. So no, they are recognised treatments. That definitely work. Yeah.

Steven Bruce

So the middle minority are the ones for whom it does doesn't work. Doesn't it doesn't Yeah, that's right. Okay. So you're dealing with more complex cases of complex PTSD. We are

Andy Shaw

I think you could say we're at the end of the chain. There's nothing beyond us, really, in terms of hope. And, you know,

Steven Bruce

wherever we ask the person chiropractors often thought that that's, that's our opposition as well. Same thing. Yeah. Yeah. Because people come to us after they've tried everything else, which is we either get great successes, or we just Okay, so what is it that's different about what you do?

Andy Shaw

Well, as I say, my first principle is I can't help anybody. It's not When in doubt themselves, once we've established they, they are prepared to engage. In other words, I think we can get them to believe, then it's a case of building the trust. Now this is where the time factor varies. The minimum period I think is necessary is a minimum of two months. And that's building up over a period of zoom conversations, and then face to face meetings, and so on. Until we get to the point where I feel we can commit, at which point we start thinking in terms of spending money. That's the critical element from the charity point of view. And then now, you know, they're confirmed as a guest on the mountain we programme.

Steven Bruce

So when you say spending money, what you do you mean by that? Are you about to come on to that? Well,

Andy Shaw

I'm talking about the money. I take them out to the French Bernese for 15 days, in the summer, and I take them to the island of Ibiza in the winter. Now, the academic, if you like all the theoretical side of the programme is identical for both. The reason I'm not using the mountains in the winter is simply

because they're serious mountains covered in snow. And in spite of our title, we're not actually mountaineers, we're walking in beautiful country, and it's always pitched at the level of the individual. Lot of veterans don't actually want to climb a mountain or walk up a mountain. And that's why I've got the better option as well. But the other reason is just can't do the mountains in the winter. So the outdoor side is there to act as a counterpoise. And it's lots of other factors as well. The three main things that I practice are, first of all meditation, and I get them into that as early as possible. And this is to give them a sense of control over best described as the blackfog as a kind of permanent washing machine cycle going around the head of negativity of the horror of the event, or whatever it was the despair and hopelessness and so on, it just keeps repeating, until we've got to sort of find a way of breaking that cycle. And that's what meditation does. It takes them a while before it has any effect, of course, and this is why it's keen, I'm very keen to find out whether they are going to engage in this, because you've got to remember, you're dealing with people who are very cynical, yes. But to me, we've got over that. And that can only be built up by personal experience by talking to me and listening to me, and then I do a lot of listening with them. Then. Sorry, my mind's just gone blank. Well, guided reflection is a very simple way. And there is actually there's nothing to these things. It's a way of giving them the confidence to talk about the issue, right. And I use a lot of analogies. So I describe our mind as a multi storey car park. You know, the conversation you and I are having now is probably on the middle level, this is a serious level. If we're going to run a show later on tonight, we'll be on this on the top level, we haven't been having some fun. But in the basement is where all this stuff is. And that's the place where most people don't want to go. And there's a general belief with PTSD that actually getting people to talk about the issue is the wrong thing to do. I've seen many references to this. Everybody's entitled their opinion, but my view is the opposite. I think no, this is what you actually need to do. But you've got to find the courage within yourself, you've got to find the right time, the right place and the right person. So

Steven Bruce

it's not that you're forcing this information, oh, no, you're giving them the opportunity, no

Andy Shaw

forcing whatsoever, it has got to come from them. And then cognitive reframing is our psychologist Dr. McGuire calls it but I call it positive thinking is the third element. And that's much harder to define because it can take any direction that needs to take with the individual. But essentially, what I'm asking you to do is to practice to do it becomes instinctive, looking for the positives in the negatives. And if you can get this weight off, I believe you can see the positive in depth you go that far. I know that sounds a bit thin. But I my belief is if you've got 1% of positivity, that's better than any amount of negativity. So it's a question of practising and one those three things. And that follows the theme of the programme. So we start off with moving towards the centre point, which is roughly about day seven, which is where we intend to talk about the event, whatever it is, usually, when I meet for the first time, it's like the dams burst. And if there's a phone call, I think, Oh, my goodness, this is going to cost because it'll be on my phone for at least three hours. And it just comes tumbling out. So I have to let that happen. And then I have to put the brakes on and say, Look, this has to be controlled. If we don't give this the gravitas it needs, it won't mean anything. So this is a serious event, I'm taking it seriously, you must do the same thing. And so I'm forcing you into a form or structure if you like, but it's not really a powerful imposition is really a case of just follow the flow, right? And it's through this process, that I get them to the point where they actually talk about the

issue. And that's around about the midpoint. And from that point onwards, we're going upwards. And then the tempo changes because we're now looking at all the positive sides of life and everything else.

Steven Bruce

So what's the significance of the mountains in this is this just because Andy likes mountains? Why could they not just go and sit in St. James's Park and look at the ducks and do the same sort of thing? I'm being facetious No, no,

Andy Shaw

you're not. It's a very valid question, Steve. I And people do often ask this sort of question, what's the synchronizer I actually think Mountain is a spiritual places as I do with the sea. And because I believe that I have a total believer in the transference of energy. I'm getting off track a little bit, but I'll come back. I describe myself as a mirror and a sponge. The mirror reflects the truth. And this usually frightens them, because they think I'm gonna give them a bollocking, I say, No, all I'm gonna do is praise you. And that frightens them more, because they've never had it. And if you think about the sort of brutal military training, it's very rare to get the praise and what these guys have never actually had praise. They don't know how to handle it. But that's what the mirror does. And the sponge absorbs negative energy. Now, when I first heard of this concept, I was very sceptical. I thought, Oh, we're going down the road here.

Steven Bruce

So where did you hear this from? Oh, just

Andy Shaw

in research online, usual things, you know, and talking to our psychologist when Pat joined us? Who? Pat Dr. Patrick wire is our clinical psychologist. He's my governance lead. Okay, make sure I'm not wandering off to foreign that sort of thing. You know? All

Steven Bruce

right. Now this is that. I'm sorry, we have to come back to the original question. That's an interesting aspect of what you do, because so far, it's just been nd Yeah, but actually, now there is someone who has a conventional medical qualification who's involved in this as well. That's right, the two together and I can see some real synergy happening here. Yeah. Okay. So I

Andy Shaw

used to work out for heroes. And I left them and came to us, right? So

Steven Bruce

St. James's Park in the ducks.

Andy Shaw

Well, okay, the spirituality is one big thing, because we live in a very fast, digital, plastic, materialistic world, we don't have religion, most of us, unfortunately. And we need something in there. And the only way to replace it is with nature, of course. And so you may seem a statement of bleeding obvious, particularly to servicemen who are naturally inclined to the outdoors life and mountains and the sea and light sort of stuff, of course. But these guys have lost all that is surprising, actually, when you're dealing with some people how little they actually had in their career, as rural means we have an assumption everybody loves. That's not necessarily true. So in some cases, it's actually an introduction, the very first guest had never been available his life, that alone was an achievement for him. But that's part of it. If I, I want to give these guys back their own self pride, they've lost it totally. They've got no self esteem whatsoever. If you consider suicide as being the ultimate end stop. You It's not difficult to visualise a route that descends that point in which you lose all these natural elements that we take for granted. Yeah, we've got to restore that. Because if they don't have that back, what's the point of going on in life? So you're trying to convince somebody? No, that's not the option, mate, there's a much better option then is to stay alive. Now, if you can get a guy up a hill, literally walking, no crampons or any technical stuff, not interested in that. But literally just walk up a hill and stand on top and maybe do a bit of meditating and get the view and all the rest of it uplifting stuff?

Steven Bruce

Yeah. What sort of meditation? Do you do? Is this Andy's meditation? Or is it

Andy Shaw

I'm a bit of verse to labels, to be honest. And I know that sounds like a cop out. But you know, the sort of most common phrase today is mindfulness meditation. And mindfulness is a great concept. But I don't think they knew about it. I think people like you, and I'd be mindful of our lives is just that somebody decided to take it. And I won't be cynical to say make money out of it. But I mean, it's influenced the concept and just help a lot of people understand it. So it's a great advantage.

Steven Bruce

It's had its benefits. Yeah, giving it all I'm told, it's been embraced by the NHS. Two

Andy Shaw

elements, as far as I'm concerned is, first of all, the ability to empty your mind. So to control it through breathing, of course, a standard way of doing it. The other aspect is actually meditating on a particular topic. So when we're on the experience, and I just explained that word, it sounds a bit

grandiose as well. The word course has connotations to military people, you know, you have to pass into a course, there are standards you're assessed, you can fail it all that kind of stuff. So got rid of that word, I just got an experience. I noticed you call up people who come along guests as well, rather, their guests, right, so I won't let them pay. Most of them can't afford it anyway. But the payment side is it's an added complication, changes the balance as well, between me and the guest. Yeah. So we take the money out of it altogether. Sorry, I'm losing my track here. Now, what was your question? Because originally

Steven Bruce

it was it was about why you had to go up a mountain. Yes, that's right. And so we've talked about meditation, we talked about mindfulness. And I can now see that I'm, personally I can quite understand, sorry,

Andy Shaw

the other side of the meditation, empty mind and the other one is to meditate on a particular topic. And the first thing I use is this very first morning, and we start a routine with drinking a pint of water, get them out of bed at 730 on the dot monitors, lazy hanging around stuff. I mean, it's not a process course. But you know, I am. Yeah, we got to get up on time. What happens after that doesn't matter.

Steven Bruce

And if I may interrupt I need to explain to everyone who's who's watching that passes is a term meaning to all intents and purposes meaning military and actually means Navy, but this means it's a very military thing is

Andy Shaw

right, exactly. And they need that they need that bit of structure they need that bit of self discipline really invented myself

Steven Bruce

something that there's tunnels Like it's exactly the opposite of what you're saying. But that loss of structure is that what happens when they leave the military? Would they be happier if they were in an organised body of people, not military, not uniformed, but told when to get up told when their meals are and told what their job is during the day. And just given that organisation?

Andy Shaw

I've looked at some of the American solutions. And that seems to be one of the basic tenants they have. Right? It almost looks like a boot camp. Yeah. Does it work? I will, I think so for them and not so suitable for our culture where they would work on I don't really know. But I have met too many

veterans who have lost complete self discipline have gotten no structure in their lives, no routine at all. You know, they do online shopping, they never go out doors there staring at the TV and you know, all that kind of thing. And that must compound the problem. Yeah, it does. Exactly right. But no, no, it's just about the meditation. It's a very simple thing. The point about this is, and again, this sounds a little bit condescending to the service personnel. But I generally think that there are the suspicious of anything that isn't immediately apparent. Transparency is important. And the more complex things are, try not to say smokes and mirrors. But there is an element of that. Let's take the perceiver effect as an example. The more distrustful they are, because I'm trying to beat don't break down the cynicism. I want them to actually believe in this. The real challenge is getting him to believe that something so apparently simple can actually help. Because it looks like how can I make a difference? I've had all this medication, I've had the CBD and everything else, nothing seems to work. Convince me that's going to work. That's that's my challenge. But once you've gotten past that barrier, and they are engaged, well, then it does actually make a difference. So that's why I keep it all dead simple. So no, we don't go into yogic flying or transcendental meditation or anything of that nature. And everyone, Steve, I wouldn't even have to do it anyway.

Steven Bruce

There's a fundamental flaw in what you're doing, isn't there in that it's all you? Yes. And that means how many guests can you accommodate per year?

Andy Shaw

Well, working on the principle of minimum two months per person, and it's one on one, always one on one, I've often been asking you to a group thing. No, the answer's no, I couldn't possibly cope with two different sets of personality at the same time. I mean, I, my full attention goes on to that guest for that period, is actually in the frame if you like. So that works out at five a year. I've only achieved that once. That was two years ago, as a result of the COVID nightmare, where I'd real problems getting people out because of all the restrictions. I made a big effort. But unfortunately, it only has two months to raise all the money. Spend some time my family, do the social media, blah, blah, blah, it goes on, and no time

Steven Bruce

just thinking. I mean, yeah, Lord, I mean, you have got a family of your own. Somewhere, and you know, here you are away from them at the moment. And for 10 months of the year, you're up a hill with people who need your services that must be putting a lot of strain on you. This isn't about you this show, but I'm sympathetic.

Andy Shaw

In reality, it isn't 10 months, the bulk of that two month period, I'm actually in the office and we are doing stuff remotely. If you look online, yes. But I mean, the experience itself is 360 hours. And that's literally one to one wherever we happen to be whether it's an apartment, and I'd be throw up in the hills, or whether it's the chalet and the Bernese. And there's a preceding three day period where I'm

preparing them for the experience, which we call open door. And I'm doing one right here in a few days time. Not far from here now.

Steven Bruce

Okay, I'm gonna turn back to I'm seeing questions coming in at the corner of my eyes. So let me turn back to some of these things here so that people don't feel they're being left out, Michael, there are lots of interesting, Hannah Hannah says, Thanks for sharing all this. She has a lot of clients who have fibromyalgia. And many have some form of PTSD. Is it your experience, that there is some form of physical pain, chronic pain as part of the PTSD picture?

Andy Shaw

Well, back to my beliefs again, I'm afraid no scientific evidence except for conversations with people like Dr. Pat and other professionals. It is my belief that if you have a mental health problem that's unaddressed there will eventually be a physical problem as a result, and I actually believe it works both ways. Yes. So in other words, there needs to be an holistic approach to these solving these issues. I'm not saying that Fibromyalgia is necessarily related to PTSD, PTSD, directly, but every single person I've come across, including myself, has got some form of physical problem, physiological problem, not cancer. Not at that level, because we got there beforehand, but that is a suspicion I have that if his unaddressed it will eventually lead to something of that magnitude. So yes, I mean, it's worth considering. I had what they call them. cysts. I can't remember the sebaceous cyst appear on my head to my head or one of my neck. No reason why they just suddenly a bit they'd been removed. Of course, they weren't, you know, medically serious things but uncomfortable and unsightly. My hair went white fairly quickly. There was a story I didn't actually see this but I heard one of the people We ambushed, woke up a few hours later and found his head completely gone white literally in hours. I think if you've got skin problems, digestive problems, those sort of things, you could say there's maybe something else underlying all this, if there's no obvious

Steven Bruce

and failure to address either of them is Yes, exactly.

Andy Shaw

So I think if you've got a physiological problem, you should be looking behind that a little bit and asking, is there anything else in your life

Steven Bruce

that well, and that of course, is, you know, as you saw from my introduction here, is kind of what I'm hoping that people will take away from this, someone comes in with a physical problem, when they need to sort of have the cues that will give them the the incentive to ask questions about what what other stresses are going on in your life. Now, if you're my patient, and you've come to me in 1990, with I don't know backache or something like that, which I had were very unique. But you've come

to me with backache, and I'm doing all my usual tests and examinations and stuff like that, what in you would have been the things I should have noticed that made me think, hang on, there's a bigger psychological component to this perhaps, and I thought, I

Andy Shaw

don't know that it'd be now that you might have recognised To be honest, because we're very good at hiding things, we're back to that denial thing. Remember, I used to wear the mask, the mask was slipping. At the end of my time, in the core, I've started to reveal the real personality, I couldn't stop it. I think you've got to ask questions. You've just got to take a little bit of time and watch the most the best indicator of all the sleep patterns. Are you sleeping alright? Now what is right, what is correct sleep? I've always understood it to be eight hours, unbroken, waking up fresh, but maybe has it changed as well. Some people are different. There are people that have different requirements, and possibly other people as well need less than younger people are not really sure

Steven Bruce

why that was the change in someone's sleeping patterns. Yeah, maybe you only need seven hours. But what's changed recently,

Andy Shaw

I think, if you're talking about something as serious as PTSD will be dramatic, there will be a real change, they'll only sleeping for several hours, or they can't get off to sleep at all. Or they're having nightmares and all that sort of stuff, you know, and just not proper sleep, basically. And I suppose the first thing is look for signs of tiredness. And if they're looking generally tired and sleep, it's diet, of course, it's exercise, it's the basic things. If they haven't got that structure in their lives, that simple routine, then the balance is disturbed. And this is where you're going to get the problems. And

Steven Bruce

I suppose it is rare that we will get our adult patients in with their partner have the right to be but if they can, somebody can give him some sort of clue that we would otherwise not see. So PIP has just asked that question, what we'll be looking out for in terms of recognising PTSD. So that was a good answer for that one. Thank you. anonymous person, again, difficult question. But is there ever a perception from the ex servicemen that when someone outside the services family tries to offer help? There's an element of a dark sort of stolen valour on the part of the outsider intruding into the horror that they can't comprehend?

Andy Shaw

I don't quite fully understand why would you

Steven Bruce

as a as a servicemen suffering all of the things that you described? And probably a lot of things you haven't actually gone into here? Would you actually resent a civilian? offering help? Because they can't possibly understand what I've been through? I've got the question.

Andy Shaw

Well, that's one of the things that separates us from everybody else. And this is I hear this very commonly, unfortunately, when you've got these problems, what the way it tends to work is you might get an appointment to go and see, you know, a psychologist or a professional. You have to fit in with their schedules. Usually, it's not close by, you've got to travel to wherever it is. It happens on a day that suits their programme, not you. So you're fighting a lot of things just to actually go and see somebody I've met, there's many people that never actually made it as those that did. So when you get there, and you're starting to tell their story, and you start slipping into military speak, and they don't understand that is so frustrating. Well, it's an it's a trigger for anger. You know, I've got to explain to you what a bloody Chinook is, you should know what a Chinook is. And I've actually heard of these examples,

Steven Bruce

which is apparently unreasonable thing to say. But exactly right.

Andy Shaw

But you wouldn't expect a professional, professional civilian to understand this jargon, and as well as say, unreasonable thing to expect or from Yeah, correct. But unfortunately, PTSD, you don't see it like that. And just to sort of emphasise out a little bit, one of the conditions I think, which can be misread is that they seem to be very selfish. They're not necessarily per se by nature. I try to do as much as I can to identify the personality because I found out quite early, you need to separate the personality from the PTSD in order to understand what it is you're dealing with. So quantify the selfish but it's simply because they're so focused on themselves have become myopic. And this is why the relationships usually suffer because they just forget to do things for their family for their wives or whoever. They're completely self absorbed. And I find somewhere in that experience around about the middle, I have to say to them, you haven't passed me the salt, we're having a meal. And they look at me sort of blankly as What do you mean? I said, Well, I have to keep asking for it. How about offering it to me, you know, as the beginning of them understanding? Oh, right. Yes, it's a long road. Of course, some get it, some don't. But this business about resenting civilians being involved, it's not so much a stolen valid thing. I think it's simply a lack of understanding of that level, which is unreasonable. You can't expect everyone to understand all this. But that's enough for them to lose faith in the treatment. So how do you bridge that gap? It's very difficult.

Steven Bruce

A question from me, which must be a very common one for you. You've got real credibility in this programme. And when there are a few people will have gone through something which is as

traumatic as what you went through in the folklore. And so you've got some street cred when you're dealing with someone who's gone through their own traumatic stress. How important is that? Could you take any other? Let's say it's going to be a servicemen to duplicate your role, or does it have to be someone with experience? I

Andy Shaw

agree, the latter statement, I think in terms of trying to expand my charity and looking for people to do what I'm doing, because I'm getting on a bit now we're going to need somebody to do this. Or more than one? Yeah. I think there's a two critical elements to be able to speak both languages, military and PTSD. Now, not all my team agrees with that. Some of my trustees are a bit ambivalent, I think, well, you know, it's limiting the pool, it might be very difficult to find these people. I appreciate that. And this whole concept might die with me. I hope it doesn't, because it does work for those people that nothing else seems to help. Well, here's another thing. It's absolutely critical. You're talking about credibility, without a shadow of a doubt. But here's

Steven Bruce

a brutal question, then how many of your guests have committed suicide?

Andy Shaw

None. When I'm asked about the success rate, that's as melodramatic as it sounds, that's the only way I can quantify that they have all contemplated it and some have attempted it. Before the programme. Yeah. Oh, yes. Yes. Not after nothing sent no, no. And you keep in touch with them after the programme? Oh, yes. I mean, once once we finish the experience, they enter what's called the post traumatic growth phase, that's completely open ended. And there's no structure to that one, the guy just took to Scotland last week. That's a classic example. We went and sat in a little chalet in a lovely place on the east coast of Scotland and just talked for a week, and ended up with a wreath laying ceremony, but they come on over memorial in Spain bridge, it was relevant to him. The next guy will be completely different. It all depends on what they actually need. But of course, what I show them is really just training, it is not the solution. And that's one of the reasons why I won't accept any pay. Because if you go into a supermarket and buy a loaf of bread, you expect to walk out with a loaf of bread. If you paid me 4000 pounds again, on to this programme, you can be forgiven for thinking I'm cured when No, no, sorry, mate. It ain't that simple. I've shown you what to do. It's everything you do afterwards, it's going to make the difference. That's why there has to be a post traumatic growth phase and keep in touch with these people.

Steven Bruce

Is that what it costs on average to take them? Roughly? around about there? Yeah. Okay. Another question. Yvan, has said he'd like to understand the trim screening that you mentioned earlier on what questions are asked and what stage of training and what is the response in terms of intervention? I'm not sure what stage of training thing there Do you know a lot about the trim, you must know a lot about the Trim Programme.

Andy Shaw

I've had an introduction to it. Simply by going down to whale Island and talking to the people this is the Royal Marines headquarters and seeing what they've got set up. As for its actual, what stage of training, it doesn't work like that there are people who are nominated within individual units to be what's called trim practitioners. Their function is to look at people who've just deployed and come back from somewhere and to try to identify if there's any obvious problems. In reality, I suspect it may be not as I shouldn't be saying this publicly, because I've got no real evidence. But based on what I know, PTSD doesn't sort of immediately become apparent. And in some cases, it takes years before it surfaces. Yeah. So I'm ambivalent about its effectiveness and actually identifying people who may be at risk, because you could argue that everybody that's across the start line, or the line of departure, as they call it nowadays is at risk. The truth is, and fortunately for us, I think the majority don't actually seem to suffer from it. So trim is a huge step forward from what we used to have, which is nothing. But it's only the beginning. I think,

Steven Bruce

yeah. And I suppose I don't know whether it continues so people will be reassessed?

Andy Shaw

Yes, but I don't think it actually works that way. You see what they were doing when they come back from Elise was going to Cyprus or sitting on a beach for 24 hours and just getting drunk. And you know, I mean, I'm not saying they're flippant about it, but what else could they do? You can't take an entire command over 650 blokes and start putting through psychological assessments. All they want to do is get home as fast as possible. They're not interested in sitting on a beach to be honest. I didn't think I was gonna be much help but I'm not saying it's a ticking the box and therefore the mid is abrogating its responsibility but appears to be doing something when in reality So, what does it actually do for PTSD? I would say probably very little. But as time goes on, and you have these people in the system, you know, gaining more experience, I suspect there will be people in units who have got this experience who can say, yeah, it was three years since he was deployed, but he has got a problem. So I think it's definitely a it's a filter, or an identifier, if you like, going

Steven Bruce

back to the mountain wave. Michelle has asked that. But she says, you said that the people who come to you are very often at the end of the chain, they've got they've gone through every other remedy, could they come to you sooner, before they try the MDR? Well,

Andy Shaw

I believe if you are able to identify this as early as possible, you could be a lot more effective, you wouldn't have to go to the lengths I feel we sometimes have to go to. But if you're not on a waiting list, well, the problem I've got Steve is it's a bit like managing aircraft over Heathrow on a foggy day

running out of fuel. Bearing in mind what I said earlier on about people being apparently selfish, when they're not that naturally selfish. So also they have no tolerance, there are a lot of elements, which are all the negative side of human behaviour. And I had one particular person or two and very nasty simply because I didn't deal with them immediately. Now, what I've got to be careful of here, from the business point of view is the reputation we have when you're an amateur as I am, you have no real credibility, you know, it's very thin. The last thing I need is people on social media saying the man always a load of rubbish, you know, that bloke shows rubbish, don't go near him and I sort of stuff. So I've got to try and manage the numbers that come on to this commensurate with what I can actually handle, which is why I'm trying to expand so we can help more people. How do you do that?

Steven Bruce

It's very difficult, because it's finding people to replicate what

Andy Shaw

I do. What I do is not do this. I don't advertise. And they come through the chain through word of mouth, or somebody might stumble across a website, that sort of thing. We got

Steven Bruce

it. I mean, how do you get how do you find someone to duplicate what you do? Oh, who are you finding? Well,

Andy Shaw

we haven't started yet. Because we haven't got the money to pay on. The first thing I'm trying to do is get a fundraiser on board. So we got a rake. I've been living hand to mouth for 12 years. And my team were very frustrated. And when we have this conversation, I say, look, lads, remember the Blues Brothers. We're on a mission from God. Don't worry about money. And stupid enough, I'm right. But the money only seems to come in trickles and spurts sufficient and adequate to do what I'm doing. It is not adequate. I'm modelling the wage. I'm on three pensions, which is not enough. So I'm just about breaking even right. And that's no good way to build a charity. So I need proper funding in order to actually put all we've got a five year business plan is waiting to go we just need the money. Right. And I'm trying to find that right now. Okay.

Steven Bruce

Mary says, I read an interesting book by Peter Levine, PhD about the healing of PTSD. He bases his theory on fight flight and freeze where the individual is stuck in the freeze phase, reliving the situation over and over again and this manifesting in somatic shutdown. His approach is complex with the intention of moving the individual individual out of that shutdown phase. Is that a concept you're familiar with? I've

Andy Shaw

heard of it. I have heard of it. I haven't heard of that particular gentleman's name. Or I might have read it and not remembered it. But it's I've definitely heard of this. There are different ways of dealing with this. And the other one that comes to mind is hypnotherapy. We're not so convinced it's the right thing for us. But I don't doubt it has helped some people I have met some people think it's been very integral,

Steven Bruce

it's clear from what you've said that there isn't a one size fits all answer. No, there is EMDR might work. Yes. CBT. might work. Yes. So far, everyone who's come through your programme, it has worked for us and asked you how many that is, but doesn't matter because there's a success rate of 100% which is good. And I think that will resonate with the audience. Because, you know, we don't like this idea that everyone expects you. Here's one pill and you'll fix because it's just not the way the human body. Let's get a few more questions. And if we can, we haven't got much time left. Martin says it's a privilege listening to you. And it is very true. It's humbling to hear what you've been through. And we owe you and people like you a great debt. So let's just blowing smoke up your ass and get as much smoke as you want. Rachel says it's she surprised you haven't tried EMDR or CBT? So is there a reason for that?

Andy Shaw

I'd never even heard of it. I knew nothing about it. You know,

Steven Bruce

actually, you're right back back then. It existed.

Andy Shaw

I just realised things. Something's got to change. You know, my marriage had failed. I had attempted suicide. That was the second lowest point decided, okay, there's no future and no one got to move in the other direction and things evolved. And this is the strange thing about it. There is a kind of mystery to this, which I know I'm drifting off course a little bit here but I really can't take a lot of credit for mostly what I'm doing. The PTSD occurred as a result of events that I was caught up in, but I didn't manufacture those events. I tried to get a conventional life going with maritime security that didn't work forgive the pun, but the wave had gone through by the time I tried doing it. And then suddenly there was an opening door moment when it became apparent. This is what you've got to do. I think I explained to you earlier on is that presentation I gave back in the unit I fought in originally 30 years after the war. And all these young guys wanted to talk to me about their problems. And that's when it became obvious you got to do something about this. So there was a clear moment when the decision was more or less made for me. As for the credit of what I actually do, well, again, it's purely common sense to be honest. So it wasn't until I started looking at this in 2012 Seriously that I first saw this phrase EMDR but I didn't actually see the phrase PTSD until 2008. I was sat in a barge in the South China Sea trying to clear my MasterCard debt. And once we got

above the line of border computer, it was a bit daft. It's typical me wasn't it was in Malaya. So I had to learn Malay before I could switch the computer, because it wasn't configured like our computer monitors, all that sort of stuff. And I started Googling, like you do. And then suddenly this stuff started coming, I realised Oh, my God. Now I know this is self diagnosis, and everybody would tell you, totally the wrong thing to do. But by that point, I'd already gone past the point of going to medical help. Say

Steven Bruce

if you want any diagnosis anywhere else, it may be the only thing there is for you.

Andy Shaw

Exactly. That's right. And we are talking about a time when this is becoming you know, more, it's growing. We're on the front edge if you like, you know. So knowledge about things like EMDR CMT CBT, I had no knowledge at all at that time.

Steven Bruce

I suspect I know the answer to this question, do you have any experience of PTSD which is not connected to the military? Or Gambia guessing you don't close

Andy Shaw

as I can say to that, as a number of ladies get in touch with me due to domestic violence, right, or abuse? And yes, I think that definitely suffering from PTSD. They don't qualify for what we do, because we're quite specific. It has to be a veteran. And a veteran, by the way, in case your audience doesn't know is anybody who's been in uniform for more than 24 hours, right? So I've helped people never actually got out of basic training, but they have a PTSD. So that's all we've got for criteria are you a bonafide a veteran? Have you been diagnosed by a competent authority? Are you addicted to anything because that gets in the way if you are that changes everything. And do we are excluded from the programme if they have tried to geriatrics I tried with alcoholics not tried with gamblers or sex addicts yet, but it's the same thing, any form of addiction overrides the consideration for PTSD. And if you talk to Alcoholics Anonymous, in my limited experience, they say the opposite. They say deal with the PTSD first, then we can deal with the alcoholic problem. And I'm saying the reverse deal with that. And it's not workable. The only way I think we can do this is to run it in parallel, but that's going to require a much bigger organisation than we

Steven Bruce

Keith says for people outside of the military or ex servicemen, how does the NHS This is a great question. Bedwell says when he noticed the NHS fit into this is your programme recognised by the NHS? Is there any help there where you have mentioned EMDR, and so on, everything that people are talking about seems to be via the private route. Interestingly, yours isn't the private route in the

sense that they're not paying for their treatment, someone is somewhere through the charitable donations and so on. But you're not accepted by the NHS as being an option.

Andy Shaw

I made a very brief attempt to sort of let them know what we were doing and they weren't interested, we're going back quite a long time. And I found out with quite a few others, including health arrows, they weren't interested. So why do you think hopefully, he didn't really give me a reason to be honest. I spoke to their in house psychologist and she was quite dismissive. I think, rightly so. I mean, you know, they're using standard practices are accepted. We're not under nice regulations, for example. And actually, just to talk about that topic, if you've got the time. One of the reasons why we go abroad, people often said to me, first of all, can you do the group thing? No, impossible. And the second thing is, why do you need to go abroad? Well, I refer to a thing that I call the black man syndrome, you might remember Sergeant Alexander black man at the Royal Marine who was convicted of murdering Taliban. We're talking about soldiers that have been a war we're talking about people who've been on the battlefield, unless you've been there, you're not really aware of the the realities of all this sort of stuff. And there are things that people are a bit they're not happy to talk about. Then you add to it, the whole I had to issue which is retrospective legal action being taken against soldiers, which has been definitely hijacked. And then look at what's been going on with veterans for Northern Ireland. still ongoing at the moment, people have been dragged back 40 years after being there to face a court and all the rest of it. So the veteran community are very frightened about talking about anything. Now it is my contention. If you can't talk about the real issue, then we're wasting time. So when I go abroad, I'm not under any regulations. The French when I go to the campsite, the lady runs it. She's convinced I'm gay, because I keep turning up strange men. reassured that I'm actually I've got a wife look, you know, but But the French don't mind anyway. But the reality is, it's private. You know, this is a little cliché. You know, what happens in France stays in France. I mean, it's between me and the guests and nobody else. There is a firewall between me and the trustees. They don't need to know all this information and they never asked for it. So they are assured they can tell me whatever they want. Aren't, there's no judgement involved. I don't judge in any sense. And that enables them to feel I can talk about the things I didn't want to tell anybody about.

Steven Bruce

Okay. Paul was sent in something which looks quite interesting here, says dry needling. Acupuncture provokes a response in him, so much so that he can't tolerate it, the hairs on his neck go up, palms just break out in a sweat, and he loses concentration amongst other things. He hasn't sought help, but he assumes it's PTSD due to trying to get a line into a casualties vein. Because we were only 800 miles from Antarctica and be out in the elements for weeks, the veins have kind of retracted as medics for to save his life. Even typing this as brought on his symptoms, hence, he doesn't trust himself to needle a patient. So I have right okay, so I guess Paul is here talking about himself applying acupuncture to others, which I didn't get at the beginning. He looked for help around 2013 and couldn't get on when he couldn't get on a plane back to the Falklands turned his car around at the gates of Brize Norton at this time Afghanistan was on and he felt more current and divert deserving servicemen deserve the support. He felt PTSD was a time expired thing. And he says he's probably wrong on that. I suspect you'd support him in that time expired? Well, meaning that you only got so long before nobody, nobody assumes you've got PTSD anymore.

Andy Shaw

No, I'm not sure we go with that, to be honest. Yeah. I don't know. Well, you know, once the problems in trench is pretty obvious to in fact, I had a cut today, this afternoon in Northampton and talking to the barber. The guy next door said, Yeah, my grandfather's got it. And we started talking, he was in the SES, and you hear these kinds of things all the time. You know, as soon as I hear SSD, or red flag goes up. He might have been I don't know. But it's the biggest regiment in the world, isn't it? I've met the guys in every bar in Spain. But no, without being cynical, he was talking about his conditions. He was in his 70s. And I gave him my card, of course. And I said, Well, tell him to give me a call. You know, we'll see where it goes. I haven't heard anything yet. But the point being is 70 something. And he's got very visible problems. So no, it doesn't go away. Yeah.

Steven Bruce

And it's, it's been a it's been a huge pleasure to meet up again, it's been a very enlightening conversation. And and I hope that everyone's taken something that they can use from this, if they haven't, I know they'll have been fascinated to hear what you've had to say, because most of us don't have the faintest idea what it's really like to be inside PTSD. Thank you for sharing that we've had 501 people taking part in this as well. So there's a there's a load of people who've seen you live on this, there's a number a huge number, we'll see this on the recording as well. I'm loath to offer, your details will be able to get in touch because you can only handle a limited number of people per year. I'd love to explore how we can help in terms of promoting the charity finding the funds to to get you the staff, you need people you need to get more guests through the programme. But that's perhaps a something very different. I didn't I didn't mention your book. And I was going to talk about the man in the mist, which is one of your two books. I read this is funnily enough, it's about a Royal Marine in the Falklands War in a fictional unit. But I suspect there's an awful lot of personal experience in that. Was that therapeutic writing? That

Andy Shaw

was a cathartic exercise. Yeah. I've always wanted to write and found plenty of excuses to never actually start. Yet. When we reach Portugal, having you know, sail out of Plymouth in August 96. Stopped, there was no reason to not do it anymore. That was where it began. Yeah, it was extremely cathartic. It was a very exciting journey. I didn't do it the way the textbooks recommend you do it, which is typical me unfortunately. So it didn't mean to say it was going to be a best seller of any sort. But I look back at it and think yes, that was a significant part of it. And that is why I brought out into the programme. So I would encourage people to learn something, whether it's a guitar or whether it's painting or sculpting in clay or something of that nature. And that leads towards what I call the resolution. And that's the last part of the experience. And we go through a ceremony which they design and hence the need to be on the top of a mountain. And all these guys have built something stupid a hand grenade it was fantastic look like the real thing. There was a ball bearing in the middle of it, which came from the body of the man who was killed the cause his treat it PDSD Mark built a Russian anti tank mine blew up. I know that

Steven Bruce

sounds sounds alien and ultimately that this is effectively his PTSD. But he just replicated he had built it. Yes,

Andy Shaw

that's right. Yeah. And then you throw it off the mountain. Now we're getting, it's symbolic. There's a lot of symbolism involved. So you know, the artistic side of life is also what I call the Zen warrior phase. I exploring your female side if you want to want to have a bit of race. Getting away from the old fashioned Nafi fighting mentality. A lot of soldiers have a lot of veterans have that never get out of which is part of the problem. So encouraging them to do other things. So writing is part of that. The current guest is right Writing such fantastic poetry, I'm going to make a book of it. It's really good stuff. Well,

Steven Bruce

that's really interesting to hear. And I know you took up playing the guitar, and I was going to ask you to play us out this evening. So that proved to be just a little bit that might destroy your credibility. If I have one criticism of your book is that if you haven't got a military background, and probably a naval background, you'll struggle with some of the terminology where there is a glossary and give us what the terms mean. And it's been a treat. Thank you very much for coming.

Andy Shaw

It's been a privilege. Thank you, Steve. Well,

Steven Bruce

I promised you an interesting show. And I hope we lived up to your expectation. I mean, I've certainly learned a hell of a lot from talking to Andy about PTSD. And I hope that what you've heard this evening will be helpful for you in dealing with your own patients or people who are associated with those with PTSD. So this evening, my thanks to all team behind the scenes of course for helping to put together such great broadcast my thanks in particular to Andy Shaw for baring his soul in such a very helpful way. And my thanks to you especially for joining us. I do apologise for the military terminology that you've had this evening but it's been great for me to be talking to a fellow boot neck. So Andy and I are going for a little run ashore and a few goffas I hope you have a wazzer evening yourself. APM out