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HYPNOTHERAPY HELPS HOMECOMING HEROES

With Remembrance Day fast approaching and the United Kingdom's ongoing involvement in war zones like Iraq and Afghanistan always in headlines, the troubles homecoming heroes have in adapting to their return to civilian life is often overlooked.

Jill Stuart of Severn Complementary Health, a member of the National Council for Hypnotherapy, is participating in a programme offering a free consultation/session to help homecoming servicemen and women cope with their return to civilian life after the stresses of warfare.

Such sessions, says the NCH chairman Paul White, will help with relaxation, removing anxiety, dealing with depression, processing traumatic events, dealing with loss, re-adjustment and building self-esteem.

Many returning servicemen and women have shown a high rate of stress.

Everyone reacts to stress in different ways and to different degrees. Some people have more stress than others. Some people handle stressful situations better than others. Each person is triggered by different stressful situations, depending on their own make-up.

“Stress is one of the biggest threats to people's health, happiness, and well being,” says White.

“Stress may cause confused thinking, depression, over-eating, excessive drinking, reckless driving, high blood pressure, heart problems, and a myriad of other health problems. The symptoms of stress are sometimes insidious and undetectable, until one day you feel overwhelmed with life. Everything bothers you, from your work to your favourite pet at home. You may even start doubting your sanity. All of this results in the feeling of being out of control.”

Stress may be triggered by an event or episode.

Once a person learns to recognise stress triggers, they can learn to introduce new, alternative behaviour when experiencing a stress trigger.

Hypnosis will help a person recognise stress triggers and, while in the hypnotic state, be better able to see alternative perspectives and behaviours in stressful situations.

In essence, someone can learn to reprogramme thoughts and actions while in a trance state to help develop new behaviour in the waking conscious state.

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John Barry, research psychologist with City University, in his summary on the Warrior programme (a charity based in the UK aimed at 'connecting the disconnected' including ex-army personnel) said the programme helped improve the psychological functioning of people suffering from the effects of traumatic experiences, especially those ex-army services personnel.

This programme uses cognitive behavioural therapy – recognised as one of the most effective treatments for conditions where anxiety or depression is the main problem; neuro-linguistic programming which can change, adopt or eliminate patterns of behaviour and timeline therapy, an internal process that allows unresolved negative emotions from the past to be accessed and resolved safely and swiftly.

Research by Eitan Abramowitz and others in 2008 into hypnotherapy in the treatment of chronic combat-related PTSD patients suffering from insomnia, evaluated the benefits of add-on hypnotherapy in patients with chronic PTSD.

Some patients were treated with medication and add-on hypnotherapy as opposed to others receiving symptom-oriented hypnotherapy.

There was a significant main effect of the hypnotherapy treatment, the team found, with PTSD symptoms as measured by the Post traumatic Disorder Scale.

Additional benefits for the hypnotherapy group were decreases in intrusion and avoidance reactions and improvement in all sleep variables assessed.

Modern hypnotherapy, concludes White, has become the most dramatically effective short-term therapy developed to date, which means that many problems and issues can be transformed dramatically using hypnotherapy.

Helping homecoming heroes re-adapt to life after the stresses and trauma of military duty is one of the services the National Council for Hypnotherapists can offer.

The National Council for Hypnotherapy is the UK's largest independent, not-for-profit governing body for Hypnotherapy practitioners. The high standards it requires for membership ensures that all of our therapists must have achieved a certain level of training and demonstrated competence in practice. In addition all our members are bound by a strict Code of Ethics & Practice, which includes the requirement for Professional Indemnity Insurance. For more information visit their website at www.hypnotherapists.org.uk.

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