

It is easy to forget, that those who serve on the front line, be it at home or abroad, often see and experience awful things so that you and I do not have to.

But this bravery does come at a cost for some and they need your support!

"Every night she lies across my feet in bed which is very calming and has reduced the number of nightmares I have, but if I do have nightmares she licks my face and if that doesn't work she will gently paw at my face until I wake up."

Shaun about Cassie, his PTSD Assistance Dog.



What is PTSD?

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is the **brain's natural response** to an extremely traumatic experience or experiences.

For those in the Armed Forces, it's often triggered by being in combat. For those in the Emergency Services, it can be triggered by life-threatening experiences such as having to deal with horrific roadside accidents or stabbings. They can be situations where the person feels intense fear and/or helplessness.

People who suffer from PTSD can have various symptoms that make life very difficult and disabling - just because you cannot see the injury doesn't mean it's not there. Typically, sufferers will experience or feel anger, grief, flashbacks, guilt, despair, fatigue, depression, emotional numbness, sleeplessness, loss of trust, feeling overwhelmed, fear, work/family problems, frustration, insecurity and self-doubt.

Dogs can really help!

Research is currently being carried out in both the US and Canada looking into the benefits of specially trained dogs in terms of mitigating the symptoms of PTSD.

Dogs are able to 'draw out' even the most isolated people. Through engaging with a dog, veterans are able to overcome emotional numbness and lower social barriers.

Through training a dog veterans learn new skills which develop their sense of 'worth'. They learn to communicate with less frustration and fear.

By bonding with a dog emotionally, veterans feel more able to be out in the world, to engage; it's much easier to talk about dogs than yourself!

Having an Assistance Dog means working as a partnership. There is a need for responsibility, for continued training and routine which involves going out at least twice a day, this physical exercise also helps someone feel better.

An Assistance Dog is able to perform specific tasks that will make life easier for the veteran, allowing them to regain their independence and confidence, they also give non-judgemental friendship, comfort and importantly 24/7 assistance.



IMPROVEMENTS

Noted for veterans and service members (with PTSD) who are involved with service dogs.

Increase in patience, impulse control, emotional regulation

Improved ability to display feelings, decrease in emotional numbness

Improved sleep

Decreased depression, increase in positive sense of purpose

Decrease in startle responses

Reduce anxiety & lower blood pressure.

Decrease in pain medications

Increased sense of belonging/acceptance

Lowered stress levels, increased sense of calm

Service Dog Training Program for Treatment of Posttraumatic Stress in Service Members - Yount, Olmert, Lee published: US Army Med Dep J. 2012

What trained assistance dogs can do?



"She ensures I get through each day and night, always on duty even when at play or asleep, if she ever fully sleeps because she always seems to be there when I need her, even before I know it myself. I can now return to sleep which is something I could not do before she came along."

Terry about Bella, his PTSD Assistance Dog.

Specially trained dogs can do many things like practical such as fetching items and other 'classical' assistance dog tasks. Our dogs are also trained in more 'specific' tasks for the particular veteran and their PTSD condition, such as:

- **Nightmares;** our dogs wake you, nudge, lick & calm you.
- **Medication;** our dogs can retrieve medication safely and on alert.
- **Panic & Anxiety;** our dogs are trained to distract you when you feel tense.
- And **much more...**

Why does it work?

Bonding with a dog releases the hormone oxytocin in the brain which impacts positively on trust, empathy and reduced anxiety - allowing for a sufferer to engage more in social activity. Oxytocin is also being researched specifically in relation to treating PTSD.

Hi,

We want to tell you all about our registered charity; Service Dogs UK!

"He has enabled me to find a way to accept love as an emotion again... He is my lifesaver"

Lee about Ajax, his PTSD Assistance Dog.



We train and provide Assistance Dogs specifically trained for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), from rescue, for veterans of the Armed Forces, Emergency Services, MCA and RNLI.

We select rescue dogs to be trained as PTSD Assistance Dogs to the highest international standards, so they and their veterans will have Public Access (as covered by the Equality Act 2010).

Having a PTSD Assistance Dog can mean more or regained independence, confidence, 24/7 support & a different way of coping with daily life for a veteran.

We continue to support both, veteran and assistance dog, as part of our ongoing commitment to 'those that serve', past or present.



Why rescue dogs?

We feel that our veterans will have an empathy with rescue dogs. They know what it is like to be in a difficult and sometimes desperate situation. Now, they can change a dog's life for the better and change their own lives at the same time. Doing something positive is a very powerful feeling! Rescue dogs, like veterans with PTSD, have their 'battle' scars and being able to help each other empowers both.

make the difference!

We need **your support** to do what we do!

donate

Via JustGiving you can set up a direct debit, give a one-off donation or set up a fundraising or "in memory of" page. Visit justgiving.com/servicedogs-uk to donate this way also means that we can automatically receive GiftAid, meaning your donation goes even further. Alternatively you can set up direct debit or donate with the following details; Bank: **Santander**, Sort-code: **09-01-28**, Account No.: **82363380**, Name: **Service Dogs UK**.

Fundraise

See our website for oodles of excellent fundraising ideas.

Foster

Visit the site and to find out how you can become an essential part of the charity by fostering a rescue dog under assessment for a PTSD Assistance Dog life!

find out more...

Visit: ServiceDogsUK.org for lots more information, including how to apply if you are a veteran.

Like & follow...  facebook.com/servicedogsuk
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Service Dogs UK is a registered Charity in England & Wales (no:1165409) and a company limited by guarantee (no:9553131) registered in England & Wales. Registered address: Fareham Marina, Lower Quay, Fareham, Hants, PO16 0RA



SERVICE DOGS UK

for those with PTSD who have served

PTSD Assistance Dogs, from rescue, for veterans of the Armed Forces and Emergency Services for independence, confidence, 24/7 support & a new way of coping.

