

JENNIFER SMITH

We consider ourselves incredibly lucky to have Psychotherapist and former TRP member, Jennifer Smith, conducting much-needed research into the impact of having an unwell combat veteran within a UK family.

"I currently work as an Adult Psychotherapist but I have a Health & Social background that includes academic qualitative research - this is a type of research that can be very effective when used for understanding what people think and feel about the experiences that they have in their lives.

I was an active member of the Ripple Pond between 2016 and 2019, and in 2020 I undertook a small-scale research project via Exeter University about the people who use The Ripple Pond as a peer support service. Bringing to an end my membership was an important decision that ensured other TRP members did not feel uncomfortable about my viewing their posts and perhaps 'researching' them without consent.

As a child, I grew up with a Father who had served in the Malayan Emergency campaign during the 1950s. He spent 15 years in the British Army working in special forces that engaged in Jungle combat. His Father was a soldier in the First World War who spent three years in the trenches in France. Although my Father had died in 1993, I approached The Ripple Pond as I felt compelled to connect with people who might understand my challenging upbringing within a family containing a parent who was a combat veteran. I found the experience of being a TRP member extremely useful. I strongly believe that military families have a particular cultural context that can be difficult to comprehend in terms of what life is like within the British Military, for both serving personnel and the families of those who serve. Understanding this context greatly enhances the prospect of insight into the reality of the lives of military families.

My route into psychotherapy is linked to my military family background, but I am also still a researcher. The impact of having an unwell combat veteran within a British family is significantly under researched. There are limited British peer support resources for such families and apart from The Ripple Pond, it is not possible to self-refer to existing organisations.

I am embarking upon a new research project to explore the experiences of members who use The Ripple Pond as a peer support service, as I seek to understand more about the context of family lives that contain members who are wounded combat veterans.

It is my aim that this research will make some contribution towards both understanding and providing services for such military families."

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