



## Louise Reynolds - *Ellie*

“ I knew *deep down inside* was the Kris I married ”

It was after her husband returned from his third and final tour in Iraq that Louise noticed he was different; he was no longer the person she had married. He was angry all the time and snappy. He didn't want to go out and just locked himself away in the house.

Louise and Kris married in 2000. He was in the Light Infantry and their first posting was Edinburgh and Louise admits that, while they were there only a little over a year, she really struggled and it was Kris at this point who had to support her. In February 2001, they were posted to Germany and Louise loved it from the start; she got a job in the local Forces school and they settled into Army life in Germany.

Kris had previously done tours of Ireland and Bosnia so when they found out he was going to Iraq they took it in their stride and got on with it - over the next few years he completed 3 tours of Iraq including the invasion, countless exercises in Poland and 1 tour to Canada.

He had a couple of really tough tours in Iraq and lost members of the battlegroup; after noticing the change in his behaviour and with some persuasion, Kris sought help and he was diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and the real battle began. Louise explains, "The next couple of years were beyond tough - I had never known anything like it. We were in Germany so I had no support yet I had to be there to support Kris 110%. I was still working and becoming increasingly isolated as others just didn't understand what either of us were going through.

People thought Kris should just 'snap out of it', others were also increasingly questioning why I was still there? Simple - I loved him and knew deep down inside was the Kris I married."

Eventually after lots of treatment Kris was sent to Canada on a live firing exercise - this would mark the end of his Army career. He was flown back to Germany after his mental health spiralled into decline and was medically discharged in March 2008. Back in the UK, they struggled on for a couple of years not really knowing where to go for help and Kris struggled with work and keeping a job.

He eventually sought help through Combat Stress where he had a number of residential stays to help with his condition. Whilst there Kris and Louise were given more information about Help for Heroes and the Band of Brothers and Band of Sisters fellowship networks - they both joined and now often go to the events at Help for Heroes Recovery Centre in Catterick with their 6-year old daughter.

"It has been a long and hard road, Kris is now on medication for his PTSD but still struggles with simple everyday tasks - I am still there to support him and always will be. He has learnt a great deal through Help for Heroes and Combat Stress and, whilst he will always have PTSD, we have both learnt to live with it and know how to deal with given situations."

Louise named her bouquet after their daughter, Ellie. After she was born it was discovered that one of his triggers was children crying, due to things he had seen in Iraq. "Looking back now Ellie is the reason Kris sought help and they now have very close, strong relationships - so much so that if Kris is having a bad day, regardless of where he is, he will phone and talk to Ellie as she immediately lifts his spirits and mood.

“ *She has had so much to deal with her in 6 years and is an amazing, caring child who understands that Daddy has a poorly head - I will always be amazed at the recovery Kris has made with Ellie by his side.* ”



*'Ellie' is a relaxed and carefree bouquet, with brightly coloured blooms to represent Ellie's fun nature. The stunning arrangement has beautiful colours in its core: blue Iris, three pink Roses and cerise Germini. Subtle colour tones perfectly compliment this: one white and three lemon Chrysanthemum, lilac Lisianthus, and Solidago. And don't forget: We'll donate 15% of the sale price from every bouquet to support Help for Heroes.*

*"If we hadn't found Combat Stress and Help for Heroes I don't think I would be writing this today as the wife of a veteran and I can never thank you enough for the support given."*



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Louise found the day working on her floral design an amazing experience, "It was lovely to meet up with other members of the Band of Sisters, something I very rarely have a chance to do. It was also great to have a day away that I didn't have to plan!"

"The staff at Flying Flowers were very welcoming and informative and seemed genuinely interested in hearing our stories."

