

# Army vet with PTSD and spine injuries to cycle 385 miles to highlight men's mental health

Tuesday 1 June, 2021

Five years ago Nick Wilson found himself staring at several empty bottles of painkillers and morphine, as he attempted to end his life.

On June 12<sup>th</sup> army veteran Nick (44) begins what for him will be a gruelling 385 mile bike journey between Margate and Land's End...despite suffering 7 prolapse discs in his spine, Fibromyalgia and chronic daily pain. It is a part of a wider #385challenge fundraiser he has organised to help other organisations raise funds for their services, following a challenging year for the voluntary, charity and social enterprise sector.

Why 385 miles? "That's to represent the 385 (average) men who take their own lives in the UK every month," says Nick, from Towcester in Northamptonshire.

June 14<sup>th</sup> marks the beginning of Men's Health Awareness week. Of the people lost to suicide 75% are men. It is the single biggest killer of men under the age of 45.

Nick says: "My spine disorder is degenerative. Every day of my life I am in chronic pain but I try to focus on ability rather than disability and I want to show others with physical and/or mental health challenges, you can thrive in life, opposed to merely survive."

Nick served in Afghanistan, Iraq, Kosovo and Northern Ireland and has been diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder having witnessed horrific war scenes over an army career of 14 years.

He describes the 385 bike ride as "a serious challenge fraught with danger and unknowns" but he adds: "That's the whole point...I'm still finding my way back to better mental health. I want to make it clear that it is possible and that physical health and mental health are in many ways part of the same equation."

The former soldier is critical of current mental health provision saying that too many people are taking their lives while on waiting lists for therapy, something he is only too aware of personally following the system failing him only 8 weeks ago whilst in crisis. He is passionate about inspiring, educating and empowering both individuals and organisations to better understand mental health.

Nick is also calling on people around the UK to join in with their own form of 385 challenge. He says: "We already have someone aiming to lose 385 ounces in weight and another person performing 385 pull-ups. What can you do 385 of during Men's Health Week?"

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