



A BRAVE FACE

TRIGGER & SAFETY SHEET

FOR VETERANS AND SERVICE PERSONNEL

» The Trigger and Safety Sheet pre-warns audience members about show content and themes, helping to minimise potential triggers for those living with Post Traumatic Stress

**Also available free from
participating theatre box
offices/front of house**



**⚠ WARNING: THIS DOCUMENT CONTAINS SHOW SPOILERS
For the use of Veterans and those living with Post Traumatic
Stress to pre-warn of potential triggers during the show**

VAMOS THEATRE: A BRAVE FACE

Trigger and Safety Sheet: for the most brave and honest.

A *Brave Face* is a difficult, universal story. It doesn't try to preach or convert, just to give a voice to those who've been robbed of words, who've experienced atrocities that we can't imagine, who've lost their mates in conflict, and sometimes have even lost themselves. Researching *A Brace Face* over the last two years has been painful and uplifting, but worth every second. Military and ex-military have guided us every step of the way; they've been a guiding light and our admiration and our respect for them has grown and grown.

The Trigger and Safety Sheet has come out of this guidance and is aimed to support Veterans and families through the performance, so that there are no surprises. It can't pre-warn about every potential trigger; we know that Post Traumatic Stress presents itself in a unique and personal way. The story may also make you recognise and acknowledge that you are also going through what you are watching, which you may find hard. It is a total plot spoiler; don't read it if you don't want to. The door is always open for you to walk out of for a while and come back in your own time. Thank you for being here.

SCENE 1: Packing up

Ryan leaves home; with the sad ending of mum and sister, Katie, being left behind.

SCENE 2: Camaraderie, training and journey to Helmand

A 26-week training course condensed into 5 minutes which moves seamlessly onto a Chinook, and introduces a little Afghan girl, Khatera.

- |microphone icon| **Sound:** contains radio static and electronic beeps
- |lightbulb icon| **Lighting:** may contain high frequency LED lighting
- |projector icon| **Projection:** shows the flickering blades of a Chinook

SCENE 3: Playful Khatera

In this scene, Ryan and Khatera make friends (whilst she also tries to flog him stuff). She's a lovely kid and reminds Ryan of his little sister. She has a doll which she isn't willing to sell.

SCENE 4: Letters home

Ryan writes home, mum sends a parcel back. We meet Khatera again, but now she is anxious that she shouldn't be caught hanging out with Ryan.

SCENE 5: Daft song

This has been taken directly from those military dance films on You Tube. Whilst fun and silly, they also speak on an emotional level, as often they were made before a difficult mission and sent home to stop families worrying; is that ever possible?

» From here, the story gets harder...

SCENE 6: The worst day

In this scene, Ryan experiences two major traumas (PTS often comes from multiple traumatic episodes). First, he finds the decapitated doll belonging to Khatera, and he sees her, badly-beaten, standing at a distance. He loses control for a minute and his best mate has to take point. Ravi moves forward in his place and stands on an IED. When Ryan comes to from the noise of the explosion, he realises Ravi is dead and that he is injured.

🔊 **Sound:** contains gunfire, an electronic representation of an explosion; radio static; electronic beeps; breathing: sounds of war in flashback

💡 **Lighting:** contains a sudden blinding flash of light, high contrast and fast changes of light, and high frequency LED lighting

ฉาย **Projection:** contains repeated builds of bright light and fast flickering

SCENE 7: Middlesborough nightclub

Back home, Ryan and Jimmy are out on the town, drunk. Ryan acts in the way he's been trained to do; in confrontation, he fights. He ends up throwing up in the toilets and when alone he experiences flashbacks and fear.

🔊 **Sound:** contains sounds of war in flashback

💡 **Lighting:** contains flashing colour effects, and high frequency LED lighting

ฉาย **Projection:** contains rhythmic pulsing coloured projection and fast flickering

SCENE 8: Supermarket

Ryan has a job in ASDA. He finds it demeaning and it's not where he wants to be. His mum comes to visit and brings Jimmy with him, who's been promoted. Whilst Ryan is working, there is a loud bang when a shopper drops her basket - it makes everyone jump and Ryan drops to the ground, terrified. The civvies stand and stare. He loses his job and his mum takes him home.

 **Sound:** contains a loud crash as a basket is dropped; sounds of war in flashback

 **Lighting:** contains high frequency LED lighting

SCENE 9: Pillar to post

Ryan moves from Job Centre to local charity to seeing a doctor and getting prescribed anti-depressants. It shows how hard it is for ex-military to cope with all the systems in Civvy Street, with its one size fits all approach. His mum is there (whilst holding down a job and looking after Katie) and has her own anxieties about Ryan, trying to help him at each step of the way. Who's there to support her?

 **Lighting:** contains high frequency LED lighting

SCENE 10: Living back home - the numb bubble

This scene is taken from research into the 'numb bubble' feeling. Ryan is back at home with Katie and mum, but he's no longer interacting with them. He's not taking his pills because of how they make him feel, but instead self-medicates with alcohol. The scene shows the contagious effect the decline in Ryan's mental health is having on his family. It could be hard to watch if moments are recognisable. Ryan goes to sleep on the sofa; mum knows better than to move him.

SCENE 11: Home under siege

This scene is taken directly from an account of an ex-soldier from Liverpool waking up in a night terror and trying to protect his family, believing his house is under attack. Like in Scene 6, *The Worst Day*, it begins with his trauma of realising Khatera's horrendous fate, and ends in re-living Ravi's death. The pain in this scene is also seeing how his night terrors affect his family.

 **Sound:** contains an electronic representation of an explosion; low frequencies; radio static; electronic beeps; breathing: sounds of war in flashback

 **Lighting:** contains a sudden blinding flash of light, high contrast and fast changes of light, and high frequency LED lighting

 **Projection:** contains repeated builds of bright light and fast flickering

SCENE 12: Binned

The very first article that inspired *A Brave Face* was of parents finding their son, who lived with PTS, in a wheelie bin. The image and horror has stayed with us throughout the research. The scene is also a metaphor for Ryan's feeling that he has been 'binned' by the army, and is at rock bottom. Obviously this is an impossible experience for a mother, especially when he refuses to accept her help.

SCENE 13: The attempt

Ryan attempts to take an overdose. There's no easy way to say this. He doesn't succeed in his attempt, but his cry for help is met by his little sister waking up. Katie doesn't spot the pills and is oblivious to what Ryan's going through. She's absolutely in the moment and is furious and upset with him because she's wet the bed and is blaming this on Ryan.

SCENE 14: The hope

Ryan cries for the first time. Like so many suicide attempts or thoughts, it's the family, often children that prevent it happening. Katie connects with him on an equal level, she is non-judgemental and adoring of her big brother. Her communication is genuine and truthful. Ryan reconnects with this. We hope that Ryan finds enough reason and meaning in his life. We are not ending on a happy Hollywood note - this wouldn't reflect the years of learning to live with Post Traumatic Stress. We are more than aware that ending our story here is hard, but we want civvies (and everyone) to understand the reality, and the seriousness of this condition. That's why we will take our masks off and speak at the end, to connect with our audience 'unmasked'.

A word from the cast

After the show, the cast will talk briefly about the partnership between Vamos Theatre and NHS Veterans' Mental Health Transition, Intervention and Liaison (TIL) and invite you to give your feedback in the foyer.

If you have been affected by *A Brave Face*, or want advice, information or support, NHS England is working hard to be in the foyer after every show. Alternatively you can call NHS TILS directly; the numbers for each region of the country are:

NORTH: 0191 441 5974

MIDLANDS & EAST: 0300 323 0137

LONDON & SOUTH EAST: 0203 317 6818

SOUTH CENTRAL & SOUTH WEST: 0300 365 0300