Deptherapy: helping heroes through Scuba Diving

Life has a way of introducing you to inspiring people who change the way you see the world. I met two of these people in November 2015, when I had the exceptional opportunity of playing a small part at Sarah Waddington's Solicitors' Deptherapy tour in Turtle Island, Thailand.

Deptherapy is a charity programme dedicated to helping British soldiers, who sustained injuries during their military service, through scuba diving (www.deptherapy.co.uk).

When I was in Thailand I somehow found out that Simon, my PADI instructor and a certified Deptherapy instructor from Abyss Fuerteventura, was coming to Turtle Island. He was to be accompanied by two fellow countrymen, Chris and Scott, who were to do some scuba diving and attend dive courses.

I was invited and also volunteered to assist and dive with them as a buddy. They were such a jolly bunch – the most talkative people I've ever met. The first evening we met we sat by the pool for a long chat and they told me their stories.

Chris and Scott sustained injuries in the line of duty during their time in the military. Scott lost a leg, while Chris lost both. They explained to me how they went through tough times after losing their limbs. The healing process was difficult. Diving allowed them to move freely again.

As they spoke to me I realised how wrong I was to assume that, because of their injuries, they must be depressed and unhappy people in need of constant assistance. Nothing could have been further from the truth. They were larger than life.

I'm sure it was not always like that and, as they said so themselves, they had their dark moments. Truth is, I never served in the military, so I can't even begin to imagine what these men must have gone through.

For Scott, diving was a fun activity which he did for the joy of it. Chris was more enthusiastic to take it to a different level. "I want to become a dive master and an instructor after this," said Chris. "It's going to be a tough one, but I can manage," he insisted. His words and determination remain ingrained in my mind.

We spent almost a week together diving and doing exercises underwater. The first course we did was the rescue diver course. It was my favourite dive course during which I got to play various roles: I was Chris's buddy, a panicked diver, a lost diver, a victim and a nightmare diver. All my roles were a part of rescue scenarios Chris had to go through to become a PADI certified rescue diver.

Although Chris has no legs, he had to meet the standards required by PADI. The standards were adapted, not changed, so he could reach them. And reach them he did!

Later that week Chris, Scott and Simon attended some TecRec diving courses using side mount diving techniques. The different positioning of scuba tanks made it easier for them to be buoyant and, in a way, made the dive more comfortable.



For me this was a learning experience like no other. I felt inspired by the willpower Chris and Scott showed. Chris's desire to become an instructor was eye-opening – I had failed to even start my IDC due to lack of I-don't-know-what exactly. Meeting these guys changed me for the better. They opened my eyes. And for that I say thanks to all who I had the opportunity to meet and dive with at Turtle Island.

Check out how Chris talks about his experience with Deptherapy.

About the author:

Andrej Hribernik grew up around scuba diving. His father gave him the first taste of compressed air and taught him to respect and love the sea. Years later he decided to left his current job and devote his life to diving becoming Divemaster.