

My Personal Journey With Anxiety



Peer Support Service



MINDSPACE

I never would have believed how disabling and debilitating anxiety was had I not experienced it for myself. A few years ago, I suffered a severe bout for about 4 months with all the accompanying physical, emotional and psychological symptoms. Every day I would wake up with my heart racing, my stomach churning and my hands shaking for no reason at all. I wasn't interested in anything or anyone, had no appetite, couldn't eat and lost weight. Sleeping and concentrating were extremely difficult for me and I became very weepy, indecisive and felt very inadequate. I couldn't look after my husband, daughters and my elderly parents which made me feel more sad and guilty. Anxiety turned me from a confident, capable and outgoing person into someone who became very withdrawn, uncommunicative and unable to manage, or cope with, even the simplest of everyday tasks. Yet I truly could not have "snapped out of it" or "pulled myself together" or stopped experiencing all these symptoms. If I could have, I would have. Nobody would choose to live like this. Anxiety dominated everything!

My family were very caring, supportive and sympathetic and this worried them greatly. Unfortunately none of them had ever experienced this degree of anxiety so couldn't really empathise with me. They knew I wasn't feeling well but didn't really understand how I felt or why I was feeling this way. Neither did I!

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I had absolutely no reason to feel anxious and never had experienced it to this degree before, but I just couldn't stop it. I then became anxious about the anxiety. When would it stop, would it ever stop, was this me for the rest of my life? It was all consuming and so difficult to live life like this day after day but everyday I got up, showered, dressed and persevered.

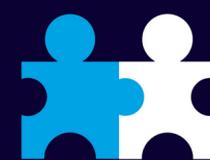
The support of my family, friends, church and Mindspace played a vital role in my recovery. Talking with them and telling them how I was feeling was so important and something I probably won't have done in the past, being a private person. As I opened up so did others and I discovered how common anxiety was and how many people were suffering in silence, alone and struggling.

Mindspace was a tremendous support to me. Everybody was wonderful and I'll never forget how much they helped me! I clearly remember the first time I attended Mindspace and shared the fact that I was suffering from severe anxiety. The relief I felt when someone told me that they had "had similar anxiety and that it would go away" was huge. They were able to empathise with me. They "got it", they understood and had experienced the nature of anxiety, it's symptoms and the debilitating effects it could have on an individual's life. Talking to someone with a similar lived experience was invaluable and they were able to offer reassurance, guidance, help and hope in a situation and at a time when I felt hopeless.

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I benefited too from the courses run by the Recovery College and from mindfulness practice. Gradually through the help from my family, friends and Mindspace, my anxiety thankfully lifted and I became my old self again. I had suffered for only 4 months, and it had been so difficult to function during this time even with all the support I received, but I become very aware that many people live with differing degrees of anxiety, affecting their lives daily, often with no help or support. Perhaps they feel ashamed, embarrassed or are frightened of being labelled if they open up and the repercussions that may result from this.

I can hardly believe that this happened 5 years ago and I'm so relieved the anxiety has never affected me since. For years I had worked as an ITU nurse looking after people's physical health, but this experience opened my eyes to mental health and the importance of taking care of it too. So many people suffer with mental health issues in society but unlike physical problems they can't be seen. The impact on people's lives as a result of this is huge, causing great distress, struggles and difficulties. I was aware of the positive impact and benefit professional help and support I received from Mindspace had on me and I was so grateful and appreciative. Because of this I wanted to give something back and, after completing an accredited course, I became a peer support worker enabling me to help and support others in their struggles as I had been helped.

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I feel very privileged to be able to do this and find it incredibly rewarding. I can't emphasise enough the importance of talking to others, sharing how you are feeling and seeking help which is out there.

It's not only good to talk, it's therapeutic and vital to aid recovery. Seeking help from someone who has been through what you are going through to me is the best and most effective kind of help because they "get it" and understand how difficult it can be. Together you can devise a plan and the actions required to give you the confidence and support to start your recovery journey, tackling one day at a time. No one needs to, or should, go through this on their own! If you feel peer support could help you please contact the Peer Support Service at Mindspace and tell them how you are feeling.

Anxiety can be all consuming and so destructive, restricting people's abilities to cope, and their lives, but by seeking help and advice, sharing with others, learning simple tools and coping mechanisms it can be lessened. It doesn't matter if you are struggling a little or a lot, help is there. Please take it, it really can change your life for the better.

← hope →

**The Peer Support Service can be contacted by
emailing peersupport@mindspacepk.com**