

Dear Emma,

A BIG thank you to you once again for all your help and support in my treatment. I have decided to write about my experience in the hope that someone may read it and think – yes that is how I feel.

I like to think of myself as fun, easy going with a great sense of humour and love everyone. I have a lovely job in education helping children and adults - helping people is just up my street.

I have never been troubled with depression/anxiety before so I was very concerned 5 years ago when the Doctor told me I was suffering with this debilitating problem. He prescribed medication which did help at first with the panic/anxiety attacks. Being 52 years of age I felt that having a lovely loving home, son and husband I shouldn't be feeling like this. How wrong I was? Gradually my problem seemed to worsen despite taking the medication. It took me until last year to realise that yes, I did have a problem. I seemed to have this urge to help everyone I came into contact with, especially if they had a problem – putting them first – and all the time thinking that this would help me. When my rages/bad thoughts started within me whilst at work, driving my car, in the supermarket or even swimming I felt that I should seek professional help.

I couldn't hold many thoughts in my brain and remember anything without struggling. Thinking back I seemed to listen to everyone else's problems which would swamp my brain with all sorts of silly worries. This was giving my family and colleagues cause for concern as I felt that my head would explode with thoughts that is the only way to describe it. Waking at night was a real pain and they say having a pen and paper by your bed helps - this didn't help me and just compounded things and made me think even more at the dreaded early hours of the morning. I just needed someone to help me get all these thoughts out of my head and to be able to give my brain a rest. As part of our schools' support we have the use of a 'Wellbeing' service through our Schools' Advisory Service. So I thought I would make use of it. I found them extremely supportive and helpful.

Hence, along came my counsellor Emma. At my first session I was very nervous and worried about what she would say to me, and thinking would she also say 'come on you are ok, you don't need help. How very wrong I was. From the moment we met I felt that I had met someone who would listen to me properly and wouldn't stop me from talking about my worries. She didn't change the subject as friends often do and most importantly said "you do have some issues with work related stress that is having an impact on all aspects of your life, but nothing that cannot be changed through understanding why you react a specific way and then changing how you react to situations and those around you based on your new understanding".

First of all Emma reassured me that my sessions were confidential and the only two exceptions to that rule were Emma's supervision and contacting the authorities if she felt that my life/others were in danger. My employer would not be contacted, that was even less to worry about in the space of the first couple of minutes. She felt that I should have five sessions to start and a further 3 sessions followed. Each week I felt a little more relief lifting from my shoulders, I went through the tearful stage but this is normal Emma said and soon disappeared, gradually emerged the old me, but with a new outlook. I found the daily diary helped greatly and I will certainly carry on with this to write down the good parts and bad parts of my daily life. I can now remember clearly the date of each day – as simple as that.

I now feel like my old self again and feel happy and calm within my-self – what a wonderful feeling this is. It also made me realise that helping the world was not the answer.

If you are thinking about getting help – don't hold back have courage to take the first step forward. I shall always be grateful for Emma's support and professional approach to my problem and know that I can contact her any day if I need further support.