

Patricia

Patricia, who joined the Step into Wellness (SiW) sessions a few months ago, wanted to share her recent journey - highlighting the impact of local lockdowns and how they negatively affected her health and wellbeing.

Thanks, in part, to the support provided by the SiW programme, Patricia has a more positive outlook, has gained confidence and is taking time to look after her own wellbeing.

This is Patricia, and this is her story, written in her own words.

My Story

In February 2020, just before the first lockdown, I had a very bad fall and damaged my knee. Unfortunately, this injury caused other health issues to flare up.

I have struggled with anxiety and panic attacks all my life, and now, I wasn't able to get out of my 2nd Floor Flat. It remained that way for 12 months. During the lockdown, I couldn't have any visitors and wasn't able to visit my 85 year old Mum - **I found myself in a dark place.**

My mental health difficulties had now taken me to the point where I felt I was at the end. **I felt as if I was in a deep pit and there was no way out.**

To add to my problems, I was also going through a horrible relationship breakup - **'lockdown' had a large part to play in the breakup, and subsequently, I fell apart.**



I lived on crisps and delivered takeaways - I was asking volunteers to take my bin bags away because I couldn't get down the stairs from my flat. **All of this just added to my mental and general health problems. I put on so much weight and I was getting no exercise at all.**

Finding Step into Wellness

After lockdowns ended, I, unfortunately, lost all of my volunteer support. Fortunately, I was given a link to the Age UK Cornwall 'Step into Wellness' programme. **I knew only too well that I had to do something to turn my life around, so a very dubious and anxious me decided to find out about it.**

From the very first phone call, it was amazing! The volunteers and facilitators were understanding, provided non-judgmental support, kind words of encouragement and shone a light at the end of a long tunnel. At first, I was terrified at the thought of the programme being on Zoom, but it was great. The facilitator has a lovely way with people and a great understanding of how COVID has affected so many. **There is lots of conversation and laughter - we are always made to feel very much at ease.**

“After the first session, I felt that I had a renewed hope and something to look forward to”

5 Steps

We have followed the 5 Steps to Wellbeing through 4 weekly sessions of 1 hour.

Our first session was all about connection - we explored how social connection can lower anxiety and depression, helping us regulate our emotions.

The second session was focused on being more active. We had the benefit of a certified exercise trainer to take us through easy exercises that could be done standing or sat on a chair. The exercise session was fun. I definitely proved to myself that I could be a little more active and I have incorporated a few of the exercises into my daily routine. In turn, this has helped me manage the stairs a little better.

The third session covered mindfulness. This means knowing what is going on inside and outside ourselves, moment by moment and the **final session** covered learning & giving and how it can have a direct positive effect on your mental wellbeing.

The content of these sessions helped me better understand the need for building confidence in yourself. **It also helps with being aware of the need to take time and care for yourself, something we often forget to do. Me time IS essential - this course has definitely helped with this.**

The Way Forward

At last, I am taking small steps forward. Although my panic attacks and anxiety are still difficult to deal with, I will be receiving some extra support to help me deal with them.

I am now able to see my Mum again each week. This small thing has made a world of difference to us both and makes us feel so much happier. Also, I have re-engaged with my local food bank. I used to support them before COVID - now I'm hoping to volunteer with a bigger food bank in my area.

Finding myself again, gaining some confidence and knowing that the effort is so worth it has improved my wellbeing. **Yes, you have to make the effort to reap the benefits. But I can thankfully say that I am on the way up. This programme is a way forward. Please, if you are in any doubt at all, just give it a go.**



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