

Jon... My Story

Jonathan (Jon), 45, Level Crossing Manager, recently experienced a breakdown which was caused primarily by a protracted move from one part of the country to another, learning a new role, and the concurrent death of both my parents within the space of one year.

About me

I have worked in the rail industry since 1994, on graduating from university. Following a move into a new role in a new part of the country I was becoming increasingly short-tempered, and finding it difficult to switch off from work. Especially after two accidents at level crossings in my area, which I could not have prevented but nonetheless felt responsible for. I was also finding that the job was not quite how it had been sold to me, the training had been woefully inadequate, and the (then) office environment was not conducive to concentration. I was dreading turning on my phone in the mornings, for fear of what might have happened overnight. Eventually, I just broke down in tears outside the door to the building one morning, was sent home by my line manager and advised to consult my GP, which led to my being signed off with acute stress, subsequently anxiety and depression.

Support and Managing my mental health

Rather than use Care First, I decided to make use of the Suffolk Wellbeing mental health service, which resulted in my taking a course on stress management. I found this course useful and it was a series of lectures, which were aimed to give you the tools to become your own therapist. A series of booklets were distributed, and downloads for relaxation techniques made available.

I also arranged my own personal counselling sessions, which lasted for approx. 7 months. At first I had my doubts about counselling, but as time wore on, we 'drilled down' to find out which influences and experiences in my past/present life cause me to react to certain stimuli as I do.

I opted to arrange my own therapy, as I did not want to attend a set number of Care First sessions, because once the limit of sessions they were contracted to NR to provide had been reached, I would then find myself needing to start all over again with someone else.

Both my original and subsequent line managers took on board everything that I said and did not push me into doing anything I didn't feel comfortable with. Both left me in peace to sort myself out, but were available if needed. When I met with my current line manager before returning to work, all I wanted to do was leave on ill-health severance; however she

stressed that her role was to keep me within the organisation, and duly made arrangements for me to take on pressure-free work within our department.

Where I am now

As time wore on, I began to feel more like my old self, and instigated a medical review which has now seen me cleared to resume normal duties as a Level Crossing Manager. I have since accepted a permanent post back in this role.

I am receiving continuing support from my line manager, so that I can be eased gently back into my role. I am also continuing to receive support from family and friends.

My advice to other is **don't** maintain a stiff upper lip and carry on- recognise the signs and get help before the safety valve finally blows.