

## **Lorna...My Story**

**Lorna, 26, experienced depression as a result of the cumulative effect of some normal life events (university, moved, moved again, more university, moved again, bought a house etc.) followed by family bereavement and an unpleasant relationship and the split thereafter, all in a relatively small amount of time.**

### **About me**

I would consider myself just an ordinary 26 year old woman, I love to laugh and see the sunny side of life. I joined network rail after completing a master's degree to progress my career. I play netball for a local team and am an auntie to 2 gorgeous nieces and 2 cheeky nephews.

Following the events described above I felt only what can be described as paralysis, I lost all ability to laugh and the joy in life was stripped out. I had very little energy so I slept a lot more than usual. Whilst my work life carried on as normal, I had isolated myself from family and friends in an attempt to conceal the changes in me, I had no idea what was happening.

### **Support and Managing my mental health**

The diagnosis was particularly difficult, because I always considered myself as a resilient individual, and I felt like I had failed myself. I didn't know how to ask for help and I didn't want to upset those I loved. I was building my career, and was incredibly anxious about what that would mean in terms of progression. On the other hand, getting a diagnosis helped things fall into place and I felt some sort of relief, I understood what was driving the changes in me and I could finally do something about it.

My first step was to seek professional advice about how to overcome this. As a result the doctor prescribed me medicine to take the edge off and I also undertook cognitive behavioural therapy for managing anxiety. I approached my line manager to make them aware of the situation, and they were incredibly supportive and took a real interest in how I was recovering.

It was frightening to open up, but I knew that this was the only way I was going to get through it. Being around friends and family made me feel good, so I stopped isolating myself and began to open up. I had a support network for work and for home as the feelings often became intense at random times. This meant that I could be myself and stop pretending that nothing was going on. I listened to myself more, I grieved when I needed to grieve and I partied when I needed to party.

I carried on with life as normal except I was honest when I was struggling.... I even got a cat (not to deliberately conform to stereotypes!!).

## **Where I am now**

Whilst I am still trying to get my head around it all, I feel like me again. My relationships with my friends have improved and I feel incredibly humble to have had a great support network at work and at home. I learnt a lot from this experience and I am resolved to believe that what I have gained will far outweigh the costs.

My advice to others experiencing mental illness? YOU ARE NOT ALONE!! You would be surprised at the amount of people who could empathise with you. It is a frightening reality to accept, but be brave and open up. Learn from my mistake, hiding away only exacerbates the situation and going through difficult times is nothing to be ashamed of. Listen to yourself and do what feels right for you, if you need to grieve, then grieve... if you need to party, then party 😊