

Phillip...My Story

Philip, 33, has always suffered with mild depression

About me

I am someone with a great sense of empathy. Sometimes I am high on confidence, indeed the grandness in differences between low and high points make me difficult to be around.

I have worked for Network Rail my entire adult life. Whilst an 'office worker' I also have some operational experience and enjoy being part of a railway family with a wide range of departments, people and experiences

I had always suffered mild case of depression and low self-esteem and have always been quite open about it. Though I would do little about it, as I often felt it was others causing me to be unhappy. Also I would have periods of happiness where upon I'd not see the relevance of doing anything about it. For a long period of time, even if support was offered I was so 'I'll do it alone', I generally ignored any advice.

It started to get 'worse' for me, during a difficult situation at home and work. After being reported missing after a self-harming issue at work, I was asked to leave the company for a short period of time for my own safety. I was seen as a danger to myself and so was taken by the police to hospital to check my state of mind.

Support and Managing my mental health

My mental health has had an impact on my work life. I feel I can be difficult to be around which means making enemies has always been easy even though as I do genuinely not wish to make others lives worse 'on purpose'.

When I am in hospital on a drip after another overdose (the 4th / 5th within three months – and yes I will admit, I was so low this was a cry for help) I found it difficult to engage with people at work. As I reflect, how else could I think they would react? And whilst this was a difficult time for me, it was clearly a difficult time for team members also; how do you speak to someone at such a low point? A thankless task

Whilst I felt I had no one to turn to, I will accept I had alienated myself so much, and was so against wanting help, I would have blindly turned it down. As I was on a spiral of destruction and no one could help at the time.

I did however receive Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and when I 'remember' what was taught at my therapy classes, after a difficult introduction to it, it is a benefit. I just need to remember the positive two parts that work well:

- "Can you do something about x" "No" "Then do not worry"
- "Do something for its own sake"

I ended up having to leave my role into another department, where upon within my first month I was asked to leave for a month. My new line management had taken a hold of the situation and dealt with it. This firm action was what was needed.

Ideally I tend to think I should have been forced on 'gardening leave' earlier? Though I don't suppose you get trained all that well to deal with a 'me' going through this. Again, it was new and worrying time for all. And indeed, whilst I was going through a difficult time, it is clear my experience was having a negative effect on others in the close and wider team.

Where I am now

Things have good days and bad days. The bad can spiral out of control, I then default to having low mood and struggle to contain my negative thoughts. However before I could never just be content at something, now I try and just relax and enjoy whatever brings me happiness. Going the cinema is a favourite, and allows me to 'switch off'. I try and stay fit, using exercise as another avenue to turn my mind off – though if suffering injuries this can cause further anxiety.

The most positive thing for me is spending time with people who care. Too often you fortune tell about other people's opinions of you, that you often forget about the people who actually love and care about you and wish nothing but your happiness to be high

I can work on my positives and have to accept my weaknesses.

I put in the hours required for my role and try to up skill myself, learning as much as possible in any way I can, putting these learnt skills into practice does make me feel a little better.

Advice for others is to challenge yourself - learn something and then action and see the positive result. Also do something where you put others first, we spend so much time thinking about how bad you are in your own life, any chance to think about others is good. Especially if you can bring joy to someone else's life, thus proving maybe you aren't so bad after all....