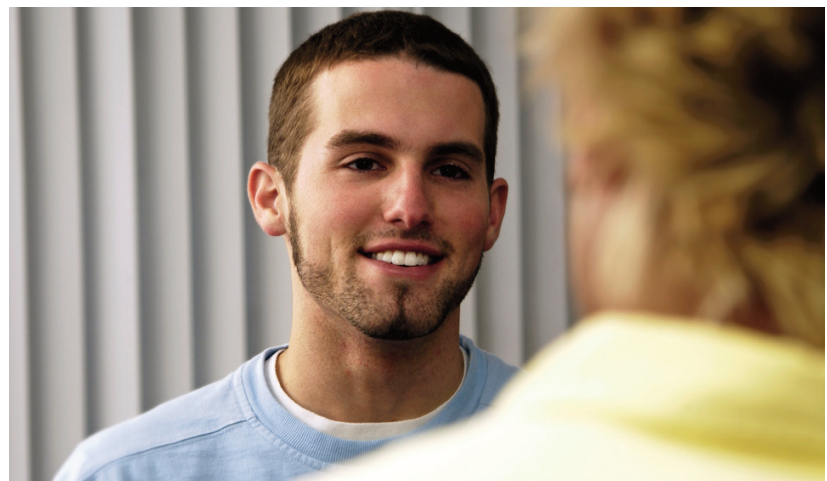




Cambridgeshire and
Peterborough
NHS Foundation Trust

Crisis - what crisis?

A self-help manual designed for people who experience symptoms of personality disorder



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Hello, and welcome to your recovery manual. This manual is a self-management and recovery system, designed to decrease and prevent intrusive or troubling feelings and behaviours, increase personal empowerment, improve quality of life, and assist people in achieving their own life goals and dreams.

I am Hayley, and I currently work as a peer support worker. I have created this manual specially for people experiencing personality disorders. This may be helpful even if you struggle with traits of personality disorders. Look through the contents and see if you feel this could be helpful for you. I felt it would work best as a manual that includes things you can be always exploring or thinking about. I would like you to be able to refer back to this book to seek advice from the person who knows you best: YOU.

Recovery is quite a broad term, and means different things to different people. Receiving a diagnosis can quite easily become the main focus on our identity – particularly when we are feeling unwell. While unwell, at times I felt my identity *was* my mental health, as all the conversations I had (and all people spoke to me about) was my mental health. There were a few years when I believed that I was nothing more. I want to show you that your mental health doesn't define who you are; it's a small part of you, compared to all the pieces of you that make up you who you are. I believe remembering who you are aside of your mental health is an effective way to view your recovery.

I spent a lot of my life believing that somebody else had all of the answers; that if I found **that** person, then I would be healed. I never thought to take the time to try and understand myself the best way I could. It helped looking at photos of myself as a child and thinking “does that child deserve sadness and distress? Does anyone? Why can't I learn to look after her?”. You don't need to be waiting for that ‘person’ – you can learn to save yourself.

I have learnt that hiding in the fog and believing that life will always be a battle makes it harder to move forward. It can feel like a big load to carry, but when separated in sections it looks more manageable. It is important to remember that you should take your time with this process. Don't feel under pressure to do this to please others, because this manual really is just for you. It is your manual, and I have written it with the aim of this being a useful document for you to refer to. Make it your own.



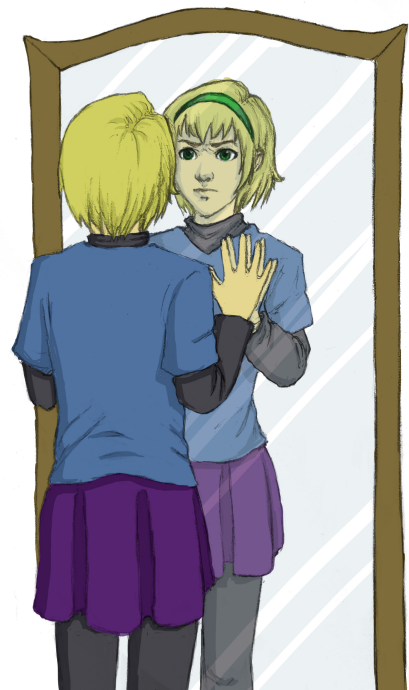
Chapter 1

About me

I am going to start with the 'About Me' section. I found during episodes of illness I have lost track of my identity. 'Who I really am' seemed like something I couldn't articulate, and I found I couldn't really describe myself.

I have noticed that when I become unwell I seem to forget things like who I am, how I come across, and what I bring to other people. It can be helpful to re-cap on who you are, to help prepare yourself for moving forward.

You may find this incredibly easy and question its purpose, but identity is a huge thing; it makes you who you are. What separates you from anyone else? If this is challenging, feel free to ask for support. You can also ask others close to you which qualities you bring that are completely individual to you.



Describe yourself when unwell

What is normal for you? (E.g., quiet, distant, angry, tired, irritable, depressed)

Emotionally, how do you feel when you are unwell?

Does your mood change quickly? Do you find you get more emotional? Do emotions feel more intense? Maybe you feel numb or empty, or get angry more often?

How do you feel physically when you're unwell?

You might feel more tired, or maybe unable to sleep. Do you eat more, or less? Maybe you're less active, and isolate yourself? Do you struggle to express yourself?

Describe yourself when at your best

What is normal for you? This can include whether you are introverted or extroverted. Whether you laugh easily? Are you outgoing, or do you tend to be more reserved?

What do others see

Ask somebody you trust to share their insight into what they notice about you that's individual to you. (e.g., creative, loving, funny, shy).

What do you care about/prioritise when you are well

Being a good friend, politics, animals, family, music? What have you studied? What would you like to revisit in your life that you once really enjoyed?

How do you feel emotionally when you are well?

This can include difficulties you experience in daily life aside of your mental health: maybe you are shy, self-conscious, sensitive, unpredictable, spontaneous, or confident. Do you laugh easily? Do you get anxious easily?

How do you feel physically when you are well?

Do you have a lot of energy, and can stay awake all day? Do you eat differently when you are feeling better? Do you do any exercise when you feel well? How much sleep do you try to have/need to have to feel physically well? What time do you usually go to bed/wake up?

What do you value and live your life by?

For example: trying to see the good in people, not judging anyone, making people happy, learning about the world, travelling the world, giving something back, working, being in education, being a good friend/mother/sister.

What do I need to do to re-charge and self-soothe?

If you find this difficult to answer, and you don't feel you have any effective self soothe skills, try to write what you would like to try (such as yoga, mindfulness, exercise, or creativity) that you could aim for as a goal.

What do I do that helps keep me well? (Weekly/Daily/Yearly)

Do you have contact with friends daily? Do you write a diary, try new hobbies, or treat yourself? Do you do your hair and nails, or try to cook your own food?

What do you care about/prioritise when you are well?

You might prioritise being a good friend, thinking about politics, caring for animals, or just enjoying music. Do you socialise regularly?

What qualities in yourself do you feel pride for?

Open minded? Adventurous? Passionate? Caring? Motivated? Kind? Understanding? Calm?

What do you admire in others?

List a few people you admire...

Can you name family, friends, authors, actors, musicians, politicians, or anyone at all you admire past and present? What in them do you find admirable?

What do you value and live your life by?

Do you try to see the good in people, and not judge anyone? Maybe you try to make people happy, learn about and travel the world, or give something back? You might value

work, or being in education.

If you had a magic wand, describe what your future life would include...

This could be a job, people you want in your life, where you would live. What you would like to see in the world?



Chapter 2

Dreams

I think being able to want something so much that it becomes a dream is a positive thing. For example I didn't think I would make 18, I now use everything I care about to help with the stigma of personality disorders. Which at 18 I would have felt pride for who I am now. The ability to be sensitive towards others can make you more empathetic. Can make you hold an ability that could be an asset to you. Don't underestimate yourself, you can still surprise yourself. Try to open your mind to all the possibilities.

- What sight would you love to see?
- Would you like to travel?
- Do you want to explore volunteer work?
- Do you want to learn a musical instrument?
- Do you want to become a person you would have valued for meeting when you are younger?
- What would you like to achieve in your life?
- Who would you like to be close to in your life?
- What do you care for? Who do you care for?

I would like you to use the next page to think about these questions, think about what you want in your life and what you feel is important to you. You have the power to start moving forward.

[illegible]

Chapter 3

Distraction

This is a list of possible distractions to help how you are currently feeling.

Feeling extreme emotions means you need to try and bring yourself down. It means everything is feeling too much, too fast or too slow. You need to develop a way to self soothe, and there are lots to choose from.



What are you feeling?

Angry, frustrated, restless, irritable

Feeling these emotions can be really hard to carry and to contain. These emotions don't have to dictate how you act, you can get through this.

- Rip up a newspaper
- Hit a pillow
- Kick a football
- Throw ice cubes into the bath so they smash
- Go on a fast walk with/without music

Avoid dealing with conflict/confrontation when you are feeling this way.

Depressed, sad, lonely

- Wrap up in a blanket
- Make your environment as comfortable as you can
- Watch something 'easy viewing' something that isn't likely to provoke any discomforting feelings. It can be music videos on youtube, or a program/film you have previously enjoyed
- Massage your hands with a nice-smelling moisturiser
- Write all your negative feelings on a piece of paper and tear it up
- Write in your diary
- Listen to a song or piece of music you know won't provoke more difficult emotions
- Have long bath/shower (fresh bedding, fresh PJs, brush/dry/straighten/style your hair)
- Play a game on your phone

Depression can feel lonely so I would encourage you to try and reach out for some support and comfort.

Anxious, panicky, tense

- Make yourself a hot drink and drink it slowly, noticing the taste and smell, the shape of the mug and its weight in your hand
- Do a reality checklist – write down everything you can think of about where you are right now, such as the time, date, colour of the walls, all the furniture in the room, etc.
- Take a warm bath or shower – this can help change your mood by creating a soothing atmosphere and a distracting physical sensation

If you are feeling on the edge of a panic attack, please look at the 'panic attack' section (see section 5).

Dissociative, spaced out, numb

- Run your hands under cold water, feel the sensation on your skin
- Chew a piece of ginger or chili, or some strong gum
- Drink a glass of ice cold water
- Have long bath/shower (fresh bedding, fresh PJs, brush/dry/straighten/style your hair)
- Listen to loud emotive music, or watch something that will provoke strong emotions in you.

If you're experiencing urges to self harm

Doing tactile things has been helpful to me (touch)

- Try a hand massage, but really hard one so that your thoughts are relocated in the same way they are during self harm
- Exercise in some way – short, fast walks can do the trick. The ache in my thighs after speed walking relieves some of that excess emotions I am carrying
- Put ice, in the centre of your palm. Watch it melt, take that time for yourself

I have found that I feel an impulse to destroy something, which previously led to self harm.

- Tear up paper/card helps with that feeling
- Kick a football (not at anybody!)
- Using a red pen on your body or on plain paper
- Stick sellotape or a plaster on your skin and peel it off

Be inventive, and think about what you could try. Keep an open mind. Know this feeling will pass.

You will never be able to recreate the exact feeling that self harm gives you. Some of these ideas may seem silly or ineffective, but I once thought the same, and now use quite a few on the list. Self harm for me could feel like walking round in circles. I didn't really learn what was happening underneath until I removed the self harm. It's a distraction, and while I know it can help it really is like walking on a treadmill: it goes forever and never moves. Its not very pretty, and looks at a grey wall. It worth seeing what else is there.

Everyone at a stage will have to manage their wellbeing, even those don't struggle with their mental health. It's the same reason people go to yoga, meet friends for catch ups,

plan holidays, or take long baths.

Self soothing applies to everybody.

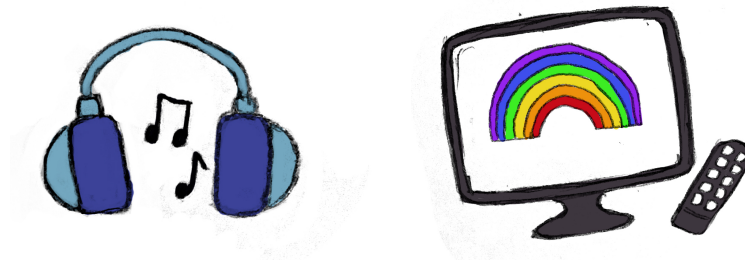
Because of this you can ask friends and family what they do to self-soothe, and how they tend to manage stress.

Learning how to enjoy my own company has been a massive thing to help me learn how to manage my emotions. I choose to do this in a few different ways. Music is always a big part for me.

Finding out what distracts you can actually lead to a hobby that can actually help your mental health long term.

I know people who have suffered with their mental health and have used things such as exercise as a way to help regulate their mood, and improve their sleep. I know the idea of 7 mile runs doesn't sound great to some people.

After I left hospital I used to walk for miles and miles with music playing. I still believe that was a big changing point for me. I started to feel like I was part of more than my own mind. There was a fast world going past me, with chaos but also with magic, with secret smiles and lots of dogs.



Doing this kind of thing will allow your mind to wander, and allows you to learn over and over again no matter how horrible a memory or an emotion is, after about 15 minutes you have overcome it again. You can start to take charge in little ways.

Write a list of 5 distractions on the next page. Then add to it when you new ideas come along. These pages can include your favourite programs, favourite bands or singers, art, sport and books you have enjoyed.

My distractions

Distraction; plural noun: “a thing that prevents someone from concentrating on something else.”

Allow everything to collect together in your mind before acting on anything.

Write down your own list of distractions. When you use them put a little tick and date so you can see how often and how effective they actually are. Make them relevant to who you are, think about what naturally calms and makes you feel content. Remember – it's possible to use the same distraction technique for many different emotions. I use music to help with various emotions, but the type of music varies according to how I'm feeling.

I'm feeling... angry, frustrated, restless, irritable

[illegible]

My distractions

I'm feeling... depressed, sad, lonely

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My distractions

I'm feeling... anxious, panicky, tense

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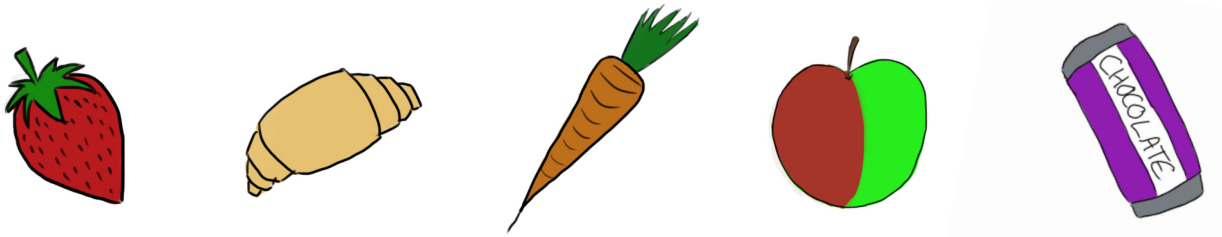
My distractions

I'm feeling... dissociative, spaced out, numb

[illegible]

Chapter 4

Food



I personally feel that food and disordered eating seem very commonly linked with personality disorders. I myself suffered with bulimia for years; it was a way to regulate intense emotions I was experiencing. It also helped me sleep. All of my destructive behaviours gave me something I didn't know how else to get.

If you feel at this time that thinking about food would be too difficult, then don't; this is your pace, not mine. I don't know how much this has affected your life, and I don't want you to feel you have to explore this right now.

I wanted to include a place in this book where you can explore whether you feel food and your body image plays any role in your struggles. I personally have always found 'food diaries' quite triggering. I found thinking about food (even more than I was *already* thinking about food) would feed the obsession – which it did! So, as I suffered with disordered eating, I have a few ideas. Fill this in.

Foods I would like to include in my diet daily:

Foods I would like to include in my diet weekly:

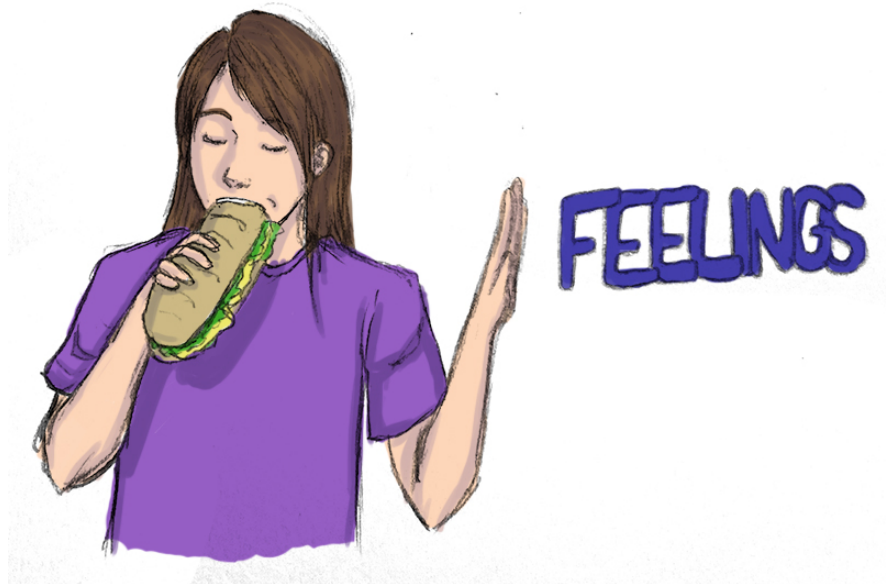
Foods I would like to include in my diet monthly:

You might have noticed during that that you struggled to make any choices – and that's fine. Just try and think 'What is a good thing to try and include in my diet?'

Taking care of your body will help with your energy and your sleep.

Eating disorders can consume somebody if they are struggling to cope with their lives. They happen to a variety of men and women of all different backgrounds, and each occupy their own individual place in somebody's life. I have noticed through working with people with personality disorders how food seems to be a factor and a coping strategy/distraction. You may have experienced eating too much (or too little) as a way to manage intense

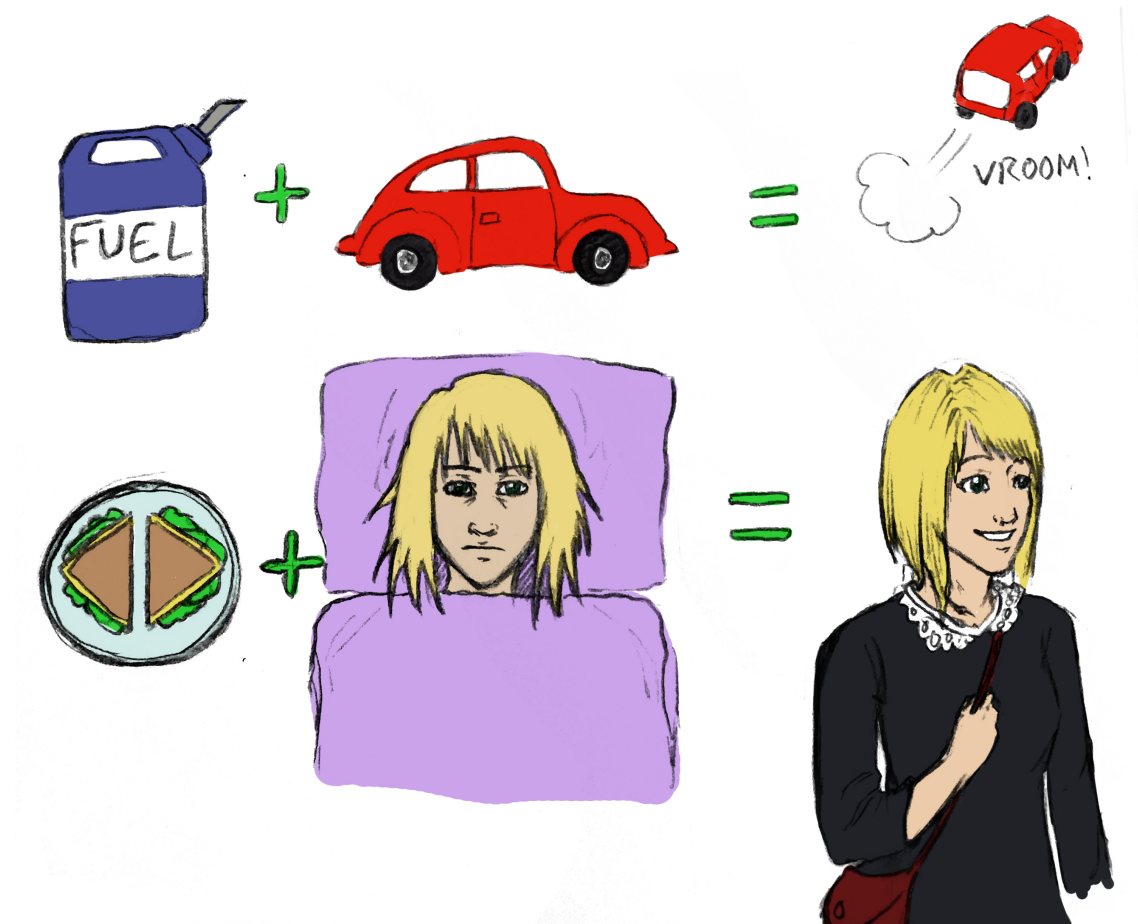
emotions, or give you something to focus on, a welcome escape.



If you feel food is closely tied into your emotions you might consider thinking about food from a different perspective.

Getting stuck in the “I’m worthless, I’m fat, I’ll eat all the ice cream until I stop feeling like this” rut is tedious, exhausting and it gets nowhere. No small or large amount of food will be the answer to what is upsetting to you.

I personally thought about food in a factual way, in order to untangle it from my emotions. I think food is fuel. You need fuel to talk, and be someone's friend, and to get out of bed. You need food to study, or look after people/animals, and to have any energy to enjoy your life.



In order to get well you have to eat. I know it isn't as simple as it sounds – I understand that. I often wished for a 'food pill' I could take once a week to make it easier, but it won't always be this hard.

I had to remember why people ate and see it for what it is. Trying new foods helped me become more healthy with my food choices. I needed to start again. You may be able to recognise triggers for 'over or under' eating. It might be worth remembering the feeling you have when you feel this urge, and to see if you can overcome that emotion with a distraction technique. Or consider doing a distraction technique before you are allowed to start eating if you struggle with eating large portions.



Either way use this space to write down what you want to achieve in terms of body image/health and food.

- Do I want my eating to change? **Y/N**
- Do I want my body to change? **Y/N**
- Do I want to learn to cook more meals? **Y/N**
- Do I want to explore my feelings towards food and body image? **Y/N**

If you would like support to change any habits – whether its learning more about nutrition, or learning to cook/discovering healthy meals you can make on your own – there is help for this.

You are not alone with your eating struggles. Here is a UK charity called ‘b-eat’, which supports the recovery of eating disorders, and there is support and advice on the b-eat.com website. Also there are people you can call if you find that you aren’t coping and food seems to be taking over.

<https://www.b-eat.co.uk>

<https://www.b-eat.co.uk/support-services>

The second link provides a telephone number helpline and an email address you can use for support. You can seek out advice from a dietitian if this would be helpful to you. Try writing down some food/eating related goals. Inform staff if you would like any support with your food/diet/body image. If you are not in hospital, ask your GP for a referral to see a dietitian.

Please use the following pages to write down any recipes, food goals, or anything else. This can be dieting goals, or aiming to fill it with recipes of new foods you have tried. Use this space to explore how you feel about food.

How can I move forward in terms of improving my eating habits? What do I want to achieve by changing my eating habits? What is stopping me achieving this?

[illegible]

Use this page for recipes and food goals

Maybe think about what barriers are getting in the way of you succeeding with your food and cooking goals. How could this be changed?

[illegible]

Use this page for recipes and food goals

[illegible]

Chapter 5

Panic attacks

Am I having a panic attack?

- Find somebody close to you (text and inform them if that's easier).
- Ask them if its possible for them to help distract you, ideally ask for some funny stories, and to talk about good times you have previously had.
- Ask them for a little support and for them to distract/talk to you. (Once I actually asked someone to tell me in detail why they prefer their new puppy to their previous husband) Request that they not ask to talk about why you are having a panic attack until you are feeling better.



If you are alone/prefer to be alone

- You need to find somewhere you can sit down.
- If you're struggling to breathe easily, try and sit with your back straight to help you take in more air.
- Breathe in for 4, hold for 7, release for 8. You need to calm your breathing down.

I want you to try and fixate on something real around you – something physical. When I last had a panic attack I was sat on the grass hiding under a tree. I was looking at the leaves and trying to put my full attention on what was outside around me and not inside me.



There is a full world going on outside your head. You can get through this.

Try and improve your environment, depending on where you are. Make sure you feel secure and safe about where you are at the moment.

Know that its not about anybody else at all – its only you who is experiencing this. Some people suffer with panic attacks; it's not a planned or deserved. It's just one of those things.

Maybe try texting a friend, or putting on a song that you find comforting. Let yourself be comforted by what you have around you. Curl your hands together, keep them warm.



I want you to go through these emotions in full knowledge of the fact that they will lessen. Know that it ends as it begins. You need to try and find some perspective.

Try and see yourself from a distance and have perspective that this is happening.

Allow yourself to look around and focus on something outside your mind. Try to look at something so far away from you, like the sky and the clouds. Try to feel a connection with where you are.

You are worthy of the end of this panic attack. You may feel alone right now, but people are struggling in the same way all over the world. You are not alone in this.

Push your hands into the ground, using all your weight. Feel your weight spreading across your hands and your fingers. See how you feel physically. What does your skin feel like? Do you feel tingling? Dizzy?

You need to take care of yourself in order to recover from this.

It will end, it has always ended.

Ask yourself the following questions...

- What can I do later on today to self-soothe?
- Is there anyone I can see or speak to after this to help take my mind off it?
- What should I cook/eat later?
- What can I watch or listen to later to keep me feeling comforted?

You are entitled, like everyone else, to self soothe. You will know when you're ready to re-join the world. You have done really well. You are strong.

Use the next page to write down the date/time and what helped during this panic attack if it is relevant to your recovery.



Date:

Time:

Have I had a panic attack? Y/N

Do I feel particularly anxious today? Y/N

How long did it last (1-10 minutes) (10-30 minutes) (30 minutes-1 hour) (over one hour)

Do I think there is a reason why this happening today, at this date and time? What helped?

1.

2.

3.

What will help if this happens again? What will I do differently?

Date:

Time:

Have I had a panic attack? Y/N

Do I feel particularly anxious today? Y/N

How long did it last (1-10 minutes) (10-30 minutes) (30 minutes-1 hour) (over one hour)

Do I think there is a reason why this happening today, at this date and time? What helped?

1.

2.

3.

What will help if this happens again? What will I do differently?

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Have I had a panic attack? Y/N

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How long did it last (1-10 minutes) (10-30 minutes) (30 minutes-1 hour) (over one hour)

Do I think there is a reason why this happening today, at this date and time? What helped?

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Date:

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Have I had a panic attack? Y/N

Do I feel particularly anxious today?Y/N

How long did it last (1-10 minutes) (10-30 minutes) (30 minutes-1 hour) (over one hour)

Do I think there is a reason why this happening today, at this date and time? What helped?

1.

2.

3.

What will help if this happens again? What will I do differently?

(If managing panic attacks is a priority for you, please ask for more of these diaries)

5.1 What are panic attacks – underlying causes of panic

(This section is taken from <http://www.anxietycoach.com/>)

Genetic Predisposition

The first thing to remember is that there is almost certainly a genetic predisposition to panic attacks. Some people are born likely to develop panic attacks under the right circumstances, and some people couldn't have a panic attack if you paid them. We're all born with a variety of innate tendencies. If you have panic attacks, this is one of yours.

Anxious trends during childhood

A second reason why people develop panic attacks is that as children, they may have grown up in an atmosphere which, for one reason or another, failed to teach them that the world was a safe place in which they could happily pursue their own enjoyment. Maybe the parents were themselves anxious and over-protective, perhaps in response to their own anxiety disorder. Perhaps the child learned to spend too much time and effort taking care of others, trying too hard to please others, and feeling responsible for the happiness of others.

A Response to the challenge of emerging adulthood

The third reason why people develop panic attacks is that they have often experienced a period of high stress and stressful changes in the year or so prior to the onset of the panic attacks. These might have been bad events, such as feeling trapped in a bad job or relationship, or experiencing the loss of family and/or friends. Or they may have had a lot of changes which weren't bad in themselves – finishing school, changing jobs, getting married, moving, buying/selling a home, having babies, etc. – but which had a cumulative stressful effect on the person to the point that he/she found it hard to cope with them all.

It's interesting to note that, for most people who develop panic attacks, it usually begins in their twenties or thirties - the years of establishing an independent life for yourselves when you are most likely to experience these kinds of changes.

What These Factors have in Common

What causes panic attacks to invade a person's life? Genetic predisposition, early childhood experience with anxiety and risk, and challenging changes on becoming an independent adult. What these three factors have in common is that none of them were under your own control. These are all developmental events in life which happen to some people.

The factors which cause panic attacks are not something you could have controlled. There is therefore no reason to feel guilty, ashamed, or apologetic about having

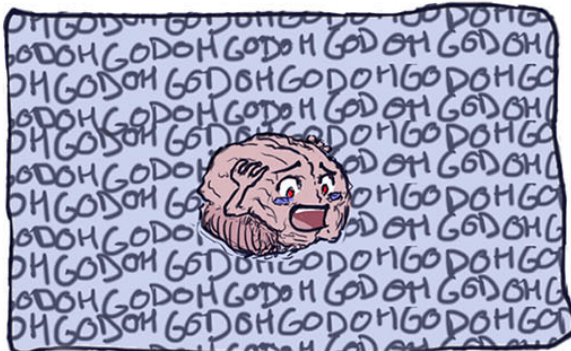
panic attacks. They are not the result of living badly; or of making bad choices; or of being “stupid”, or cowardly.

Your Problem, not your Fault

It was helpful for me to recognise possible triggers that can help you understand your own cycle, and can help (or hinder) you. For example, I have recognised that I am more likely to experience a panic attack if I am not sleeping very well, and if I have found it difficult to express how I am feeling (and have been holding a lot of things that I am struggling to put into words).

Can you think of any events or situations which tend to raise your levels of anxiety or panic? How can you help yourself with this?

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Sometimes, my brain does this. ↑
Potential reasons include:

- unexpected phonecalls
- social situations
- leaving the house
- nothing whatsoever



Most of the advice I get - both from therapists and self-help books - is 'Be kind to yourself.'



It's good advice, but hard to follow when what I really want to do is this. ↑



Some things help. Pills helped for a while...



...but I'm meant to be figuring out 'healthy alternatives,' so I've been making lists of other ways to shut my brain up. Tiger and blankets are usually a good start.



Next step is distractions. Colouring books are fab and they make great designs for adults now, too. If you can manage it past the brainscreaming, books or short stories work well too.



Eventually it all settles down.
attemptingintegration.com



But it makes it really hard to get **LITERALLY ANYTHING PRODUCTIVE DONE**

Chapter 6

Drugs and alcohol

Unfortunately people who struggle with their mental health have increased risk of developing dependency on drugs and/or alcohol.

People use these substances for different reasons. About two thirds of people with borderline disorder seriously abuse alcohol, street drugs, and/or prescribed drugs.

Alcohol and drugs are often abused by people with a personality disorder to temporarily relieve the severe emotional pain that they experience, especially when under stress. Predictably, this relief is short lived. Even worse, the use of these substances markedly increases many of the symptoms of borderline disorder making substance abuse treatment all the more important.

It seems likely that some of the genetic risk factors in personality disorder may also be among the group of genetic factors that predispose people to alcoholism and drug abuse.

Having a dependency on a substance means that you never actually learnt how to help yourself in a crisis. You will feel that you really need that substance, because it can fix what's happening right now (or at least be a distraction). This is hiding away, and it's easy to do! It works similarly to self harm, as nothing has really changed once you have self harmed. Facing your demons and your past can seem unrealistic and too difficult, but that's why you need to face them at your own pace. You need to own this path.

Addiction is defined as not having control over doing, taking, or using something to the point where it could be harmful to you.

What causes addictions?

There are lots of reasons why addictions begin. In the case of drugs, alcohol and nicotine, these substances affect the way you feel, both physically and mentally. These feelings can be enjoyable and create a powerful urge to use the substances again.

Being addicted to something means that not having it causes withdrawal symptoms, or a 'come down'. Because this can be unpleasant, it's easier to carry on having or doing what you crave – and so the cycle continues.

Often, an addiction gets out of control because you need more and more to satisfy a craving and achieve the 'high'.

How addictions can affect you

The strain of managing an addiction can seriously damage your work life and relationships. In the case of substance abuse (for example, drugs and alcohol), an addiction can have serious psychological and physical effects.

Some studies suggest addiction is genetic, but environmental factors (such as being around other people with addictions) are also thought to increase the risk. An addiction can be a way of blocking out difficult issues. Unemployment and poverty can trigger addiction, along with stress and emotional or professional pressure.

Getting help for addictions

Addiction is a treatable condition. Whatever the addiction, there are lots of ways you can seek help. You could see your GP for advice or contact an organisation that specialises in helping people with addictions, such as the AA.



Addictions can dominate your mind and your life, and can make you feel like you are the addiction, but the addiction is separate from who you are – and always will be. There is always a story behind an addiction that's completely individual to each person; there may be crossings of similar events, but everyone needs to find their own path to recovery.

Do/have I struggle with alcohol/drug misuse? Y/N

Do I feel I would like further advice and support regarding this challenge? Y/N

Do I want to change how I use drugs/alcohol? Y/N

If you feel you would benefit from some external support there is a charity called addaction.
<http://www.addaction.org.uk>

This website can help to come into contact others who are experiencing similar things. Have a think about whether you feel your use of alcohol/drugs may be another barrier to recovering. Think realistically about whether you need to try and get a better understanding of yourself and your vulnerabilities to temptations of using substances.

If previously in your life you have experienced difficulties with any addiction, how can you realistically look at managing this in the future? You may need to look at friends/family who could make moving forward more challenging.

12 Step Programmes of Recovery

(This section has been written by a lady who has battled with addiction, and shows everyone how you can turn your life around.)

There are a variety of 12 Step Programmes that have been born out of a need for Fellowship and support when facing addiction of any sort. The definition of addiction amongst these groups is often said as 'anything you use to distract you from yourself'. You become a member of these groups by simply having a desire to stop using whatever that substance is and many recovering addicts have found the support and love from these groups which have helped them to gain the tools of life to grow, move forward and help support others on their recovery journey. Each group is entirely self supporting and autonomous – elements that addicts find essential to embed a self sufficient ethos within their path of recovery.

When joining a 12 Step Programme of Recovery, you attend meetings and gain a sponsor from within those who has the kind of recovery you are looking to live. This sponsor helps to guide you through the 12 Steps of Recovery which are written by recovering addicts to get to the root of addiction and help you to be free of active using. It all sounds like a very tall order so remember, easy does it. Addicts didn't become addicted in one day so recovery will be a long and highly thorough process which will help to gain the tools to live life without the use of substances.

12 Step Recovery Programmes specific to alcohol and drug addiction are Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous.

Visit their websites below and go along to a few meetings to see for yourself the way of the 12 Step Programme. Always remember to keep an open mind and focus on the similarities rather than the difference with those around you as it is in those ties that will bind you together on your recovery journey.

Alcoholics Anonymous: <http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/>

Narcotics Anonymous: <http://ukna.org/>

Use this space to talk about any issues you have had regarding addiction. This can be anything you have felt a dependance on that has become a barrier stopping you from living your life to the fullest. Use the page to think about when these issues began and what influences and pressures contributed to the addiction/addictions.

[illegible]

Chapter 7

Self-harm

This page might not be applicable to you, or maybe only some of it will. Or maybe it will all be relevant! Self-harm is different for everybody, everyone has different methods and they get something slightly different from it.

Different ways people might self-harm are these.

- Cutting, burning, biting
- Substance abuse
- Head banging, hitting, punching
- Taking personal risks
- Picking and scratching
- Neglecting oneself
- Pulling out hair
- Eating difficulties (over/under eating, purging)
- Over dosing and self-poisoning
- Making destructive decisions

There is no 'typical' person who self-harms. It can be anyone. An individual who self-harms cannot and should not be stereotyped; they can be of all ages, any sex, sexuality or ethnicity and of different employment status etc.

This is your page. I want you to use this time (if you feel it's an appropriate time and you have been feeling safe in yourself) to explore your self-harm.

Do I self-harm? Y/N

How old was I when I first self-harmed?

What happened?

Do I want to stop self-harming? Y/N/Don't know

If you don't want to stop or aren't sure, why do you think that is?

Do you feel you have control over your self-harm?

Have you ever felt you have had control over your self-harm? If so, what was different for you?

If it is appropriate/helpful to you do a pros and cons list to self-harming.

- Pros (“It makes me feel better, it stops how I am feeling, I like how it feels, it works”)
- Cons (“Having scars, having secrets keeps me in the same place, it hasn’t solved my problems so far so maybe it isn’t the answer. It isn’t worth it in the long run.”)



Try to use this space as a place to explore the subject of self-harm. I myself was a self-harmer for years and for me the longer I self-harmed the more complex the reasons for my self-harm became. I wear my scars every day, and some days I don't want to, but I do. I believe that the longer you know someone the more and more their scars disappear. That's because you are so much more than your self-harm or your scars.

Ask yourself what you have done previously to deliberately cause yourself-harm.

- Why did you do it?
- When did you do it?
- How did you feel before and after?
- Did you get what you wanted from it?

It can be hard work, but the view of freckles on my arms covering my scars brings me hope that something beautiful can come from something so destructive.

You can use this space to document when (and where) you have had self-harm urges, how you overcame them and whether you could have managed it in a different way.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

What can you try instead of self-harm?

[illegible]

Chapter 8

What am I feeling?

This section is designed to help you understand the emotions you are experiencing most frequently. You may be at a stage where you aren't really sure what is going on inside your head – this section can help you gain more insight into your experiences when you're feeling distressed.

Date:

Time:

What am I feeling (circle). Add any other emotions you are feeling that I haven't written.

Despair, anger, frustration, boredom, love, fear, numb, disconnected, alone, weird, tired, irritable, confused, out of control, fearless, reckless, I don't know what's wrong, physical illness, too hot, too cold, fragile, vulnerable, weak, small, strong, disassociated, mischievous, creative, destructive, fed up, lifeless, agitated, achy, wired, empty, light headed, spaced out.

Wanting to feel better is a lot of the journey.

Use the rest of the page (or your diary) to try and express what you're experiencing. This is your space – you can use it to describe these emotions, and what they feel like to you. Do you notice any physical sensations that happen when you're feeling certain emotions?

When you have recognised an emotion, write down exactly how it feels underneath the list of emotions. Then add these emotions to your 'distractions section'.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Date:

Time:

What am I feeling (circle). Add any other emotions you are feeling that I haven't written.

Despair, anger, frustration, boredom, love, fear, numb, disconnected, alone, weird, tired, irritable, confused, out of control, fearless, reckless, I don't know what's wrong, physical illness, too hot, too cold, fragile, vulnerable, weak, small, strong, disassociated, mischievous, creative, destructive, fed up, lifeless, agitated, achy, wired, empty, light headed, spaced out.

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When you have recognised an emotion, write down exactly how it feels underneath the list of emotions. Then add these emotions to your 'distractions section'.

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Time:

What am I feeling (circle). Add any other emotions you are feeling that I haven't written.

Despair, anger, frustration, boredom, love, fear, numb, disconnected, alone, weird, tired, irritable, confused, out of control, fearless, reckless, I don't know what's wrong, physical illness, too hot, too cold, fragile, vulnerable, weak, small, strong, disassociated, mischievous, creative, destructive, fed up, lifeless, agitated, achy, wired, empty, light headed, spaced out.

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When you have recognised an emotion, write down exactly how it feels underneath the list of emotions. Then add these emotions to your 'distractions section'.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Date:

Time:

What am I feeling (circle). Add any other emotions you are feeling that I haven't written.

Despair, anger, frustration, boredom, love, fear, numb, disconnected, alone, weird, tired, irritable, confused, out of control, fearless, reckless, I don't know what's wrong, physical illness, too hot, too cold, fragile, vulnerable, weak, small, strong, disassociated, mischievous, creative, destructive, fed up, lifeless, agitated, achy, wired, empty, light headed, spaced out.

Wanting to feel better is a lot of the journey.

Use the rest of the page (or your diary) to try and express what you're experiencing. This is your space – you can use it to describe these emotions, and what they feel like to you. Do you notice any physical sensations that happen when you're feeling certain emotions?

When you have recognised an emotion, write down exactly how it feels underneath the list of emotions. Then add these emotions to your 'distractions section'.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



Chapter 9

My Crisis Plan – part 1

These pages are set up to help you recognise when you are becoming unwell – what helps, and what doesn't help. It is also about you recognising what factors/events/triggers can cause you to struggle, and pre-planning these things to make it easier if they happen. It may be a little difficult to fill in, but also could be an real eye-opener to understanding what happens to you when you fall into a crisis.

You may feel, at times, that you deserve a destructive response to certain events. I myself have wanted to sabotage my recovery by deliberately not pre-planning how I would cope in certain situations. This cycle in your mind will only be broken by you, and by your willingness to try and to learn to help yourself.

List of triggers

- **People**

For example family tension, people who you struggle with.

- **Change**

For example changes in circumstances with work, hobbies, or relationships.

- **Life Events**

For example winter, summer, anniversaries, large gatherings, big group meals.

Now try to imagine this triggers taking place and how you could pre plan a way to cope in an effective way that you feel is helpful and realistic to the situation.

Planned responses to triggers

- **People**

For example, if you have to attend a family gathering get in contact (before the event) with somebody you feel you have a good rapport with. Making that contact could make the whole experience a lot easier to manage. If you don't have anyone you feel comfortable contacting, inform a close friend for some support during and after the event.

- **Change**

Change happens to everyone and we all experience events that are unplanned and catch us off guard. Struggling with managing emotions can make you more susceptible to stress and more sensitive to change. Having a reliable use of distraction techniques may be helpful, also utilise your support network if you feel you need external support.

- **Life Events**

Anniversaries that bring back a lot of memories can be very challenging. I myself make plans with close friends on the days that I find challenging. Something low key that involves little stress, like the cinema or meeting one (or a few) close friends for a catch up. You can learn to manage these memories, and explore them when you feel you can, and when you are supported. They don't need to take hold of you every year. These memories are separate from you, and you are bigger and stronger than your memories.

If you are aware that an event is coming up (a wedding, a party, a meal) and you know you are likely to be filled with emotion and overwhelmed, you will need to pre-plan what you will do and where you will go if things become too difficult.

I find that when under a lot of stress I feel unable to make a decision. But you can still make a decision, you just need to make that plan in advance.

Use the next few pages to fill in if you are aware that a triggering or difficult event is upcoming.

- Today's date:

What event am I anxious about?

- When is the event happening?
 - What can I do to prepare myself for the event?
 - Who can I contact during this day/event?
 - How can I best look after myself during this?
-

- Today's date:

What event am I anxious about?

- When is the event happening?
- What can I do to prepare myself for the event?
- Who can I contact during this day/event?
- How can I best look after myself during this?

- Today's date:

What event am I anxious about?

- When is the event happening?
 - What can I do to prepare myself for the event?
 - Who can I contact during this day/event?
 - How can I best look after myself during this?
-

- Today's date:

What event am I anxious about?

- When is the event happening?
- What can I do to prepare myself for the event?
- Who can I contact during this day/event?
- How can I best look after myself during this?

- Today's date:

What event am I anxious about?

- When is the event happening?
 - What can I do to prepare myself for the event?
 - Who can I contact during this day/event?
 - How can I best look after myself during this?
-

- Today's date:

What event am I anxious about?

- When is the event happening?
- What can I do to prepare myself for the event?
- Who can I contact during this day/event?
- How can I best look after myself during this?

Chapter 10

My Crisis Plan – part 2

This section is designed for you to recognise when you when you are at the later stages of a crisis, and you need immediate support. This may involve more support from your GP, crisis team, or possibly a hospital admission. There are also charities, such as 'Mind', which may be able to help. Contact details for Mind, and other charities, can be found at the back of this manual. It might be helpful to show the people who are supporting you what is the best approach for when you are feeling very unwell. Make sure that you have filled in the support network section of this manual in case someone needs to make a phone call on your behalf.

Late Warning Signs

- **Physical** (e.g., *I can't sleep, I can't sit still, I have no appetite/too much appetite, I feel physically drained*)
- **Emotional** (e.g., *I believe everybody dislikes me, I believe others want to harm me, I feel like there is no point, I feel very emotional/very numb*)
- **Response plan** (e.g., *More contact from people, increase medication, reconnect with people I trust, make a weekly crisis plan.*)

Describe what you believe others see when you are at the later stages of a crisis.

Try to describe what its like to be you when you are in crisis. Describe it to your best ability.

Things that help me

Think what others can do to support you. Where would you like to be? What surroundings do you feel you need to help self-soothe/recover? (E.g., walks with a friend, help cooking preparing meals, support shopping, support in the evenings.)



Treatment approaches preferred (think about the ideal environment for you when you have reached this stage)

One-to-one support, staying close contact with certain people, support with daily tasks, support with self harm urges, to not be alone very much.

Things that don't help me?

Such as alcohol/drugs, isolation, or feeling misunderstood. You may not want to talk about your mental health when you feel this unwell; you can request for support to help distract you by talking about other things to take your mind off the situation.

Treatment facilities

Maybe you would prefer support at home, supportive phone calls, the crisis team, regular contact with support workers, or staying with friends/family for a few nights.

Is there anybody you would wish to avoid contact with during a crisis?

I have, at times, fallen into a crisis and found making a weekly/daily plan has been helpful to me. Even small tasks can help you feel like you are fighting this. I will show you an example of my last plan. There is a lot to be said for going through the motions, even when you feel there is little point in anything. You may want someone to support you in planning these days – they can feel like such long days but it will get easier.

Monday

- Wake up before 11am

- Contact certain people every day. Make them aware of the situation and keep them updated
- Take morning medication at a fixed time
- Eat
- No alcohol
- Have a bath/shower
- Take evening medication at a fixed time
- Be asleep by a reasonable time

This plan was helpful to me when I was struggling with depression and struggling to do daily tasks like showering, cooking, or getting dressed felt like attempting to climb a mountain. Keep the plan simple and take pride in achieving some of your plan even if you can't manage it all. Try to be as patient with yourself as you would a close friend.

Remember this plan is personal to you. If you are feeling like you have had enough and really can't manage please use your distractions/support network. If not, use the following section 'I am in Crisis'.

Remember that you have overcome this before and you can do it again. The more you use this manual, the more aware you will become of how to best help yourself. You can learn to help yourself with positive activities and people around you who make you feel safe.

I have made a few weekly plans in case you want to try what I use as a 'Weekly Crisis Plan' This can include appointments, telephone numbers and planned meals, and even things you can watch/listen to when you are feeling at your lowest. When your mind is lost in a cloud these simple prompts will help you. Losing sleep or not eating very well can be detrimental to your mental health. Physical health can have a huge affect on your mental health. Remember that you know yourself better than anybody else. You just need some hope.

Have some hope from me. HOPE.

10.1 Weekly Crisis plans

10.1.1 Week one

Monday

Daily plan:

-
-
-
-

Tuesday

Daily plan:

-
-
-
-

Wednesday

Daily plan:

-
-
-
-

Thursday

Daily plan:

-
-
-
-

Friday

Daily plan:

-
-
-
-

Saturday

Daily plan:

-
-
-
-

Sunday

Daily plan:

-
-
-
-

10.1.2 Week two

Monday

Daily plan:

-
-
-
-

Tuesday

Daily plan:

-
-
-
-

Wednesday

Daily plan:

-
-
-
-

Thursday

Daily plan:

-
-
-
-

Friday

Daily plan:

-
-
-
-

Saturday

Daily plan:

-
-
-
-

Sunday

Daily plan:

-
-
-
-



Chapter 11

I am feeling unsafe, and/or in crisis.

Breathe in for 4 seconds. Hold it for 7 seconds. Release your breath for 8 seconds.

Everything is going to be okay.

- Where are you? Are you somewhere safe?
- Can you get somewhere safe?
- Do you need to make a phone call?

Make your environment fit for your sensory needs.

If you are finding the world too big, loud, and bright then close it down: shut your curtains and create an environment you feel safe in.

If you feel isolated and the world feels too dark or grey then add some colour. Put on some lights, open the curtains, and even the windows. The fresh air could help.

If your hands are feeling tingly or numb try applying tea tree oil or coconut oil on them. Focus on your hands. If you are cold, grab a blanket and curl up to comfort yourself.

Try to accept the feeling that you have; let it sit in you, be still.

It is a feeling, it cannot hurt you or control you, you are safe.

Like the friends and family you care for, you are also deserving of help and support.

What you are experiencing is happening to you, you are not causing anyone else to be in danger because of how you feel right now.

You have fought some many times, and you have always always won. You can overcome these moments and become stronger for it.

Before you do anything you need to choose what is the safest and most effective way of you helping yourself.

Here are some options:

If you can, try informing somebody that you are struggling and ask if it's possible to talk with you. Have a think about it being the right person and remember that you are looking after yourself, like you would do if this person needed support. If you feel that you don't want to talk to anybody you know, there are a few numbers you can call at the end of this manual (see section 17). If you feel you want to act on an impulse, no matter what, please read the next section.

Acting on impulse

Making big decisions when feeling overwhelmed can go very wrong. For example getting upset one day at work and deciding to quit your job whilst being THAT upset won't be very practical – and it will cause this crisis to spread further than it needs to. I have learnt this the hard way! I personally always sleep on a big decision that could cause any conflict, because I am aware that I can get carried away by my emotions, and when overwhelmed I don't think further than 5 minutes ahead. There are a few ways you can give yourself the space and the time to make a decision you won't regret. If you have harmed yourself in any way you need to phone for help.

This is the section to read if you feel overwhelmed with emotions in some way, and are making a decision as to whether you should (or shouldn't) do something that could have big consequences.

I would like you to now come up with a list of 3 things you HAVE to do before you can act on an impulse:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

You are most likely feeling quite desperate and on edge, and I appreciate you trying to fight this. These fights will get easier! Here are some examples that I use.



- Have a cup of tea/coffee/water. Take your time with it.
- If you feel safe enough, go for a walk and really think about the decision you want to make
- Use one of your chosen distraction techniques for 20 minutes

- See if you can seek support from others (text/call someone)
- Write down the pros and cons of the decision you want to make

After I did this list, I found that to have somewhere simple for my thoughts to go was really helpful. When your mind feels like chaos, give it strict rules until it calms. After doing your three things, it's likely that your emotion won't be as escalated. Take time to realise how hard you have tried and that you're worth the fight.

Pros to making the decision:

Cons to making the decision

What will my decision look like in 24 hours?

What will my decision look like in a week?

Will my decision help what I am experiencing long term?

Preparing to make a call

If it is someone you know?

- Are they available to talk at this time?
- Are they somebody you feel happy to talk to?
- Will they be free at this time of day?
- What do I want from this conversation?
- What do I feel would help by having this conversation?

Remember to have a few options of who to call, so that you don't rest everything on one person/distractor.

If you feel unable to call somebody you know then there is a lot of options of volunteers across the country on the following pages.

'What I am meant to say?!'

The first line you say can be a hard one to start on a helpline.

Try: "Hello, I was wondering if you could listen to me and help me calm down"

There are people out there who do want to help you. The volunteers in these buildings want to help you – that's why they are there. I was a Samaritan when I was 18, and I met some incredible people.

If you feel as though you could combat this on your own, try using some of your distraction techniques. If you feel you need more support look at the list of helplines at the end of the manual.

Please remember that even the biggest of storms always pass and will dissolve. There is a lot of strength in riding out your emotions, it is worth riding this wave.

For helpline numbers, turn to the end of the manual.

Chapter 12

My support network

This is a chapter for the details of the people closest to you.

Medical support:

Doctor: Telephone number:
Address:
Email:

Consultant: Telephone number:
Address:
Email:

CPN: Telephone number:
Address:
Email:

Any other support workers you include in your support network when managing your mental health:

Name:

Relationship with this person:

Job role:

Contact number:

Email:

Name:

Relationship with this person:

Job role:

Contact number:

Email:

Friends/Family

Who would I like to contact when feeling unwell.

Name:

Relationship with this person:

Contact number:

Email:

Name:

Relationship with this person:

Contact number:

Email:

Name:

Relationship with this person:

Contact number:

Email:

Name:

Relationship with this person:

Contact number:

Email:



Mental health charities and support groups

This will, of course, depend on where you will be living when you leave hospital.

If you are in Cambridgeshire/Peterborough here are a few selections.

Mind is a mental health charity in England and Wales, which offers information and advice to people with mental health problems. You can find Mind in most cities.

<http://www.mind.org.uk>

On this website you could find out where your local Mind is and how you could possibly have a look around and see if there are any groups you would be interesting in joining in. They are varied across the country as to what they offer. You can read stories of others who have experienced mental health episodes, for some inspiration that you can move forward from this.

You might also be interested in seeing if you could get involved in supporting your local Mind.

In Cambridge I found support within **Cambridge community arts**. I joined a few years ago and did some singing. I met like minded people who had been quite isolated because of their mental health. It was a safe place to start and rebuild my life. This below is on their website (also below) they offer a variety of groups, including music, drama and photography. If you are interested there are contact details on the website before. **<http://www.camcommarts.org.uk>**

Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB)

You may have external problems that may be causing you to be unable to move forward. Having financial and housing difficulties can make the situation a lot more trying. If you are struggling with more practical issues that have taken a back seat since you have felt unwell, **<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk>** can offer support. If you require some support to discuss issues such as debt/housing/work, the CAB is a good place to start.

Advice can be offered over issues such as benefits, work, debt and money, housing, law and rights, discrimination, tax, and education.

The first thing you need to do is recognise what is best for you.

What will help you? How can people help you in the best way possible?

This is the Cambridge CAB website. <http://www.cambridgecab.org.uk>

Main office – 66 Devonshire Road, Cambridge CB1 2BL

Drop-in (no appointment necessary).

Monday to Friday 9.15am – 12.45pm

They are located five minutes walk from Cambridge Railway Station and the guided bus stop, and near many major bus and road routes. From town you can get the Citi 1, 3 or 7 buses to the station. Parking is available on meters outside the Bureau (limited to 2 hour stays) or at the main Railway Station Car Park. There is a bicycle park for clients at the front of the building.

12.1 Recovery Colleges and Peer support

Recovery colleges are colleges which provide a collaborative, educational learning environment, and aim to convey messages of hope, empowerment and opportunity to all.

The recovery colleges facilitate courses designed for people who feel ready to invest in their recovery journey. The trainers who work there have themselves done the peer support course and now are using their life experience to promote recovery in others. I did the course myself in 2010 and it was hugely inspiring, and a turning point in how I viewed my personal story.

The courses can bring together people who are beginning to move forward and start to think about what they hope and value for their lives. Recovery colleges are places to have open conversations with peers who have had shared experiences. Recovery colleges are designed to build a community upon people to give and receive support empathy and mutuality.

At the courses you will be encouraged to have debates and in depth discussions surrounding stigma and experiences others have had. There are courses that challenge self belief and can build on skills you already have. (such as arts and crafts).

Peer support, for me, was a lot about being empowered to listen to myself and to learn

about myself. It's about realising you are the best tool to help yourself in a lot of ways. You hold a lot more control over your life than you may sometimes feel.

If you find the idea of being a peer support worker a possible option, then I would advise you to go to your local recovery college, meet the trainers, and see how you find it. The colleges put on one day 'taster' courses to show you what the peer support course entails.

What is a Peer Support Worker?

“Someone with significant experience of mental distress, who works alongside others with similar difficulties in order to facilitate recovery through promoting hope and providing support based on common experiences.”

(– Dr Julie Repper, Recovery lead Nottingham Healthcare Trust)

- Someone with lived experience of mental health issues / mental illness
- Someone who is employed specifically as a result of their experience
- Someone who has the ability to share their recovery journey with others
- Someone who can motivate and encourage others

A peer worker is someone who can:

- Hold the hope for a person receiving services and believe in their potential and strengths
- Value every peer as a unique human being
- Accept peers where they are at
- Listen non-judgmentally to experiences of peers
- Encourage people to make their own choices
- Trust the authenticity of a peer's personal experiences
- Express a genuine concern for a peer's wellbeing

Why does it work?

“ When people identify with others who they feel are ‘like them’, they feel a connection. This in turn fosters an environment where individuals can share suggestions and tips for their recovery with each other, and try out different strategies, with the support of their fellow peers.”

(– Sherry Mead, 2001)

Here is a list of the local recovery colleges.

Cambridge area

Recovery College Cambridge
128-130 Tenison Road
Cambridge
CB1 2DP
recoverycollegeeast@cpft.nhs.uk
01223 884431

Peterborough area

Recovery College East
Silver Birch
Gloucester Centre
Morpeth Close
Orton Longueville
Peterborough
PE2 7JU
01733 746660 or 01733 746662

King's Lynn area

Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust
Chatterton House
Goodwins Road
Kings Lynn
PE30 5DP
01553 736018

Norwich area

Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust
Hellesdon Hospital
Drayton High Road
Norwich
NR6 5BE
01603 421169

Suffolk area

Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust
Haymills House
Station Road East
Stowmarket
IP14 1RF
01449 745297 or 01449 745299

Great Yarmouth and Waveney

Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust
44 Kirkley Cliff
Lowestoft
NR44 0DF
01502 533141

This website might help provide more information.

<http://www.cpft.nhs.uk/about-us/recovery-college-east.htm>

It might be worth looking at getting some more support to add to your support section, through the recovery college.

Joining the WI (Women's Institute)

The WI is a place where people identifying themselves as women over the age of 18, gather together to learn new skills, campaign on issues that are important to them and connect with like-minded people.

Going along to monthly WI meetings automatically connects you to the country's largest women's voluntary organisation, and with that, the opportunity to make positive changes to your life and those in your local community. You'll learn things about yourself, the world around you and the endless opportunities that being in a supportive community of women presents!

Each group is run by its members and celebrates their contributions by hosting a Programme tailored to their interests so feel free to shop around and try them all. There are some wonderful groups up and down the country waiting to welcome you!

If you are in Cambridge city, there are many for you to choose from; Cam City WI, Cambridge Blue Belles WI, Cambridge LadyBirds WI, Castle WI and Mill Rd WI.

The following websites give you a glimpse of these WIs and what they are up to:

Cam City WI - <http://camcitywi.blogspot.co.uk/>

Cambridge Blue Belles WI - <http://cambluebelles.blogspot.co.uk/>

Cambridge LadyBirds WI - <https://cambridgeladybirds.wordpress.com/>

Living outside of the city, you also have access to a raft of WI groups. Visit the National WI website on <https://www.thewi.org.uk/> and type in your postcode to the 'search for a WI' field to locate your nearest group.

Membership fees apply to join the WI and cover from January to January. The full fee as of 2016 is £37.50 per year and changes depending upon what time of year you join. Once you've paid for your membership, sit back and enjoy the rest of the year's meetings with no more cash to hand over.

Note that there will be a small visitors fee for visiting the groups to cover its costs which normally include refreshments like hot drinks and homemade cakes!



Chapter 13

The Past

Everyone you meet has a past, everyone has had a childhood, everyone has had hard times, memories, and influences.

I found it important to take ownership of my past. I previously have felt like I didn't have control over my memories. I felt owned by my memories and felt a lack of control over my thoughts and emotions.

I want you to own your past, instead of it owning you.

If you feel you will need support for this, please ask somebody you trust; do not do this if it doesn't feel right for you.

Use this space to write your personal story. During the peer support training there was a 'personal story' day, where we told our stories. I was surprised at how moments that felt like hurricanes in my mind could be heard and understood in seconds. I also wrote down my own story and it felt smaller than it had felt inside my head. I found it gave me perspective and helped me view myself from a different perspective, and actually wish I could give 'little me' a hug.

I'm not asking for a novel with your face on the inside cover. When doing this, start small; try numbering your years, and writing where you were during that year. Slowly add what happened in each year. Start to see how things progressed in your life and how your mental health has shaped parts of it. I hope you too can see that memories becomes less scary the more you face them. I no longer fear my memories, and I know they don't define me.

I'll even help with starting the first sentence :)

I was born in...

[illegible]

[illegible]

Chapter 14

Volunteering, work, education, and hobbies

Looking ahead can be daunting if your life has been quite consumed with mental health struggles for a while. All options relating to moving forward can look terrifying, and possibly even not realistic to you at the moment.

You have to know that there isn't a race to find what you believe suits you best. There is a process for everyone to try different things, in order to find out what they enjoy the most and get the most from. You have a lot of options in terms of moving forward – you need to make sure this is your choice and nobody else's.

It can be a big step starting a job or college. But it doesn't have to be all at once – you need to pre-plan what you are ready for, and be careful not to set yourself up with something that's too difficult.

14.1 Volunteering

Luckily in Cambridge there are several volunteering placements. I have been myself to a few – some while I was unwell, and some supporting others as part of my job as a peer support worker.

To people who haven't previously worked, or people who are thinking they would like to try a new direction in their lives, I would strongly recommend volunteer work. By doing volunteer work you are giving yourself the flexibility to create your own schedule, and to explore a lot of options. I would recommend you do some research to see if there is a volunteer centre close to where you live.

The website <https://do-it.org> will allow you have a search in your own town and in the area you plan to be living.

Here are some examples of volunteer work I been part of:

Sexuality

'Sexuality' is a support group designed to support young people, aged 14-24, to offer support and a safe place to discuss mutual struggles and find solidarity in not being alone in your thoughts. I found this group magical, run by a dedicated lady called Miriam who set up the charity 25 years ago. It's a light-hearted group in which members take part in a wide range of activities such as games, challenges, crafts, cooking activities, silly sports, creative arts, and discussions about all things LGBT. If you yourself have had struggles with sexuality you could offer to volunteer yourself and help support the young people that go. The group is inspiring.

<http://syacambs.org/lgbt/2byougroups/>

These groups are run weekly in Cambridge, Huntingdon, Ely, or Wisbech.

Animal Care

There are always animals in need of care. Somewhere I enjoyed was

<http://www.rabbitresidence.org.uk>

This is a charity where they rescue and home stray or neglected rabbits. The work I did when I volunteered there was helping with maintenance because of the weathering of the rabbit hutches, holding giant (and cute!) rabbits, and both cleaning them out and feeding them. It was rather practical work, but I am sure you could always request to just visit and meet some giant rabbits :)

There are many animal charities available, including the Blue Cross cat rehoming centre (**<https://www.bluecross.org.uk/>**), where volunteers socialise with the cats and prepare them for new homes. Shepworth Wildlife Park (**<https://sheprethwildlifepark.co.uk/>**) and Woodgreen (**<http://www.woodgreen.org.uk/>**) also have volunteer opportunities.

Caring for others

Before working in mental health I did a variety of care work.

Here are a few job ideas if you feel interested in caring for others.

Scattered across the country are special needs schools. These places are very inspiring. They accept volunteers, and often volunteering will increase your chances of getting a permanent position. There are also weekly groups where you can be a 'play worker' which involves working with one or two children on a weekend morning (or in the summer holidays), and helping to support the various activities taking part. This can be quite messy work with paint/sand, and is very hands-on! On the do-it website you will find options of where you could go to help support adults or children with learning disabilities. Types of special needs vary in severity. People with autism, Down's syndrome, dyslexia, blindness, ADHD, or cystic fibrosis, for example, may be considered to have special needs. However, special needs can also include cleft lips and/or palates, port-wine stains, or missing limbs. To learn about these different types of learning disability, google away!

Volunteers are always needed to help people with their various struggles. These vary greatly. I would advise that you take your time going into different levels of care work as they can be quite emotionally demanding. But you can also have the most rewarding moments working in this areas.

14.2 Work

Returning to work can be a big step to take. If you are planning to return to the place where you were before you became unwell, I would recommend getting in contact with old work colleagues. If you are unsure about whether to return to your previous jobs try doing a few little activities here.

Pros (what I liked about my previous job)

Pros (who did I enjoy working with? Am I in touch with any of them?)

Cons (what I didn't like about my previous job)

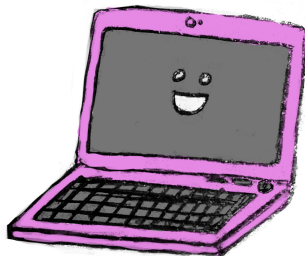
Cons (is there anyone from my previous job I am anxious about seeing after being off for so long?)

Do I want to explore different options for work? Y / N / UNSURE

I believe in order to be realistic if you are planning to return your previous place of work, I would recommend making some communication with people at work so you can start to feel more 'in the loop'. Even if it's just a few emails it could help you start thinking about what your future will be like.

14.3 Education

You may be interested in returning to education. This can be quite daunting when you have been out of education for a while – you may have had bad experiences in education which are holding you back from pursuing what you would like to study.



I would recommend making contact with a college, either via email or phone. Attending an open day is an easy way to find out what kind of courses are offered. You may want to do some GCSE's or A levels, or gain some other qualifications. Colleges and universities offer support for people with learning struggles such as dyslexia, and also mental health problems that affect your ability to go back into education.

Is there a course, or area of education, you have always wanted to learn about/explore?

I want you to think about what is holding you back from investigating your local college. Think about how you can work around this, who you could ask for support with this, if you feel you need support.

Would I like to return to education? Y/N

What would I like to study? What area would I be interested in investigating?

If you are interested in extending your study beyond college, then you might want to consider applying to study for a degree at a University. There are many courses available, and several Universities offer non-traditional delivery methods, such as distance learning (see the Open University, for example). If this is something that interests you, talk to a career guidance councillor at your local college.

You have nothing to lose by sending an email, and this could be the beginning of something that could change your life.

14.4 Hobbies

If you are feeling completely confused as to what you want to do, or what you feel ready to do, it might be a good idea to build on your daily activities and possibly try out some new hobbies. Hobbies can actually really build on your social circle and you may discover a passion or talent in an area you never would have guessed. This could help you get a better idea on what you are best suited to do for work/volunteer work.

Here is a little list of hobbies you might want to explore.

Physical:

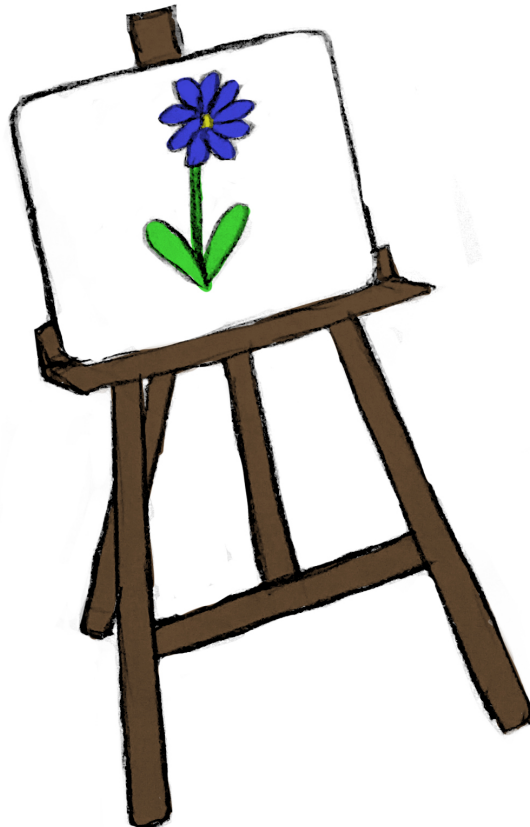
- Try going to an exercise class – you could maybe ask a friend. You don't have to jump into the deep end and go to bootcamp! Going to pilates/yoga can really benefit you emotionally. It could help you learn to manage uncomfortable emotions feel some level of contentment.
- You could look to join a gym.

- You could try going for walks. Let your mind naturally clear itself and enjoy the endorphins when you have slightly achey legs the feeling of achieving something positive for yourself.



What hobbies do I do?

What would I like to try?



Creativity

People can be creative in so many different ways. I'm not necessarily saying you could paint big pictures of elephants and join a folk band. Being creative can happen in lots of ways. Creativity is helpful for everyone but it has particular benefits if you struggle with self expression. Which I do.

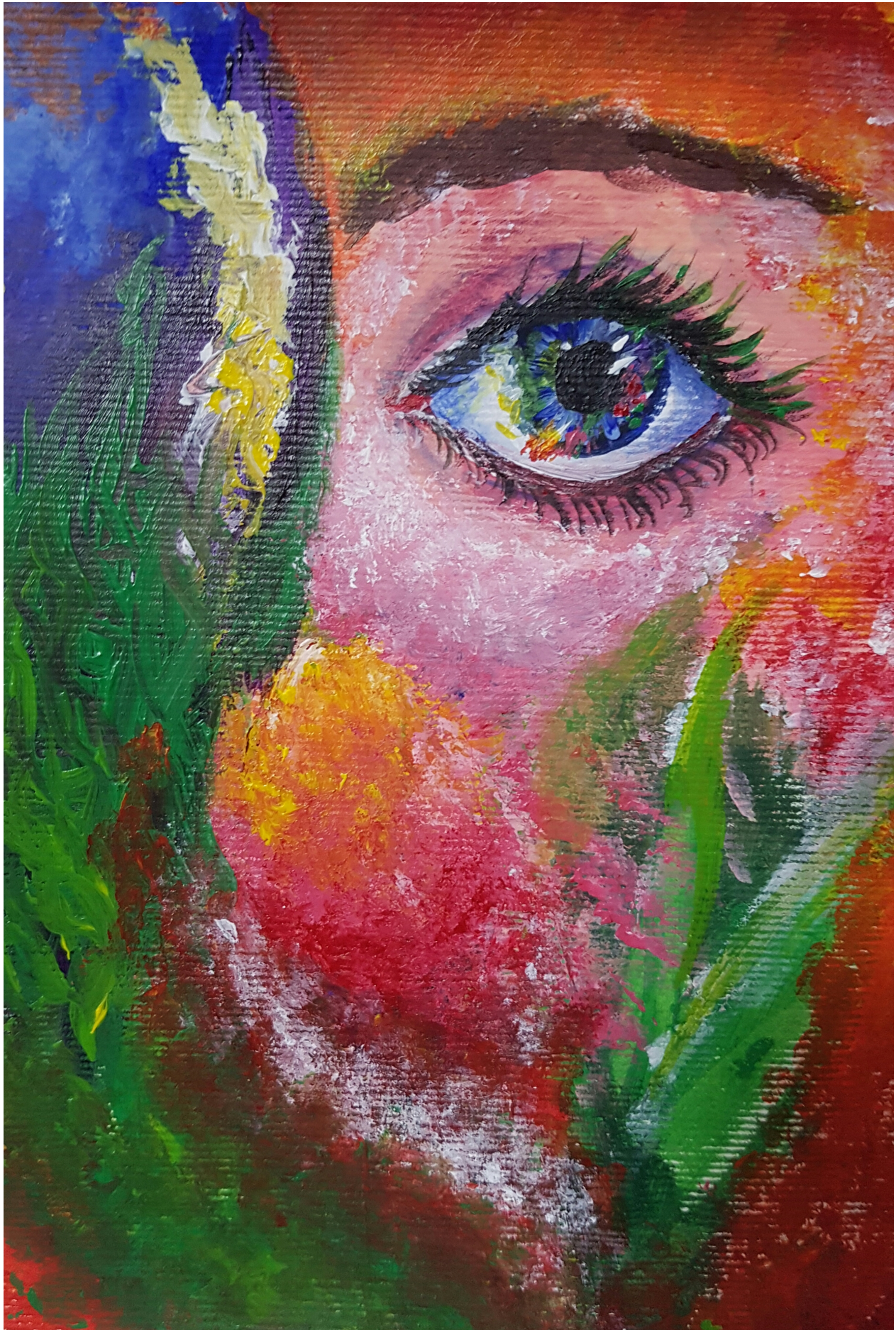
Here are some ideas:

- Go to a music gig, and discover new music.
- Look into learning an instrument, or possibly trying singing.
- Write a diary.
- Do some creative writing about something you feel passion for. Maybe write a poem to describe how you have battled with with your mental health.
- If you struggle or don't enjoy drawing, there are some beautiful adult colouring books, where you could enjoy the use of distraction and make something beautiful.
- If you enjoy art why not look to go to an art class?
- Photography. Now we all have amazing cameras on our phones you can explore this interest really easily. Whether it's a group of your friends, or the sun coming down, capturing these moments and printing them off can feel satisfying and comforting.
- Reading. You could re-read some books you enjoyed a lot previously. If you haven't ever been much of a reader you could find that is another little place you could take your mind when it feels directionless. If you aren't sure what to read, ask people around you what they would recommend.

Do you feel you are creative in any way? Y/N

Would you like to explore being creative in some way Y/N

What can I do to explore my creativity?



Chapter 15

Discharge

15.1 Discharge from Hospital

Being discharged from hospital can be difficult. It can be hard to express feelings regarding this. I have made this discharge section as a reflection of the time you have spent in hospital.

What was happening in my life before I was admitted?

What things have been difficult during my admission?

What good things can I take from my time in hospital?

Feel free to include people who have been positive influences on you, and any memories you would like to keep.

What are my plans for the next month?

What are my plans for the next year?

15.2 Discharge from community team

What was happening in my life before I supported by the team?

What things have been difficult during my time with the team?

What good things can I take from my time in with the team?

Feel free to include people who have been positive influences on you, and any memories you would like to keep.

What are my plans for the next month?

What are my plans for the next year?



Chapter 16

About the authors

Hayley Foster

I am a peer support worker currently based on Springbank Ward at Fulbourn Hospital. I have worked in care for over 10 years, and have previously worked with people with learning disabilities, people with special needs, and elderly care. I have a passion for poetry and music, and have recorded albums of both. At home I have a cat, some guinea pigs, and a massive grey rabbit who eats the house. I enjoy watching horror films and emotive documentaries.

I wrote this recovery manual while I was struggling with my mental health, and I hope it works as an interactive manual to guide your recovery. Remember that you know yourself best.

Joanne Croxford

Joanne Croxford proudly contributed to this manual based on her living experience as a grateful drug addict in recovery. Empowered and enabled by her lived experience, Joanne has successfully fused the NHS with the Women's Institute (WI), by establishing the first outward facing and recovery focussed WI's to meet in an NHS environment. Friends and colleagues describe her as a force to be reckoned with who is committed to social change and has a passion for gardening, animals and the greatest love of all - SELF LOVE!

Elise Evans (AKA Froggy)

Elise is 25 and lives near London. She was diagnosed with BPD in 2015, after leaving medical school due to deteriorating mental health, and has experience with self-harm and scars, drug addiction, and eating disorders. She was thrilled to have the opportunity to contribute her art to this amazing project (thanks Hayley!). She's better at pictures than words, so she'll leave this bio short and say that she hopes that everyone reading this booklet finds happiness, peace and love in their lives!

Matt Bothwell

Matt Bothwell is an astrophysicist at Cambridge University (he is also Hayley's husband). He kindly edited and typeset this document – without Matt this manual wouldn't exist.



Chapter 17

Mental health helplines and services

Whether you're concerned about yourself or a loved one, these helplines can offer expert advice.

Call 111 and press option 2 for the First Response Service, a 24-hour service for people in mental health crisis. This service is for anyone, of any age, who is registered with a GP in Cambridgeshire or Peterborough. Specially-trained mental health staff will speak with you and discuss your mental health needs with you, instead of you having to go to a local A&E."

Anxiety UK

Charity providing support if you've been diagnosed with an anxiety condition.

Phone: 08444 775 774 (Mon-Fri, 9.30am-5.30pm)

Website: www.anxietyuk.org.uk

Depression Alliance

Charity for sufferers of depression. Has a network of self-help groups.

Website: www.depressionalliance.org

Mental Health Foundation

Provides information and support for anyone with mental health problems or learning disabilities.

Website: www.mentalhealth.org.uk

Mind

Promotes the views and needs of people with mental health problems.

Phone: 0300 123 3393 (Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm)
Website: www.mind.org.uk

No Panic

Voluntary charity offering support for sufferers of panic attacks and OCD. Offers a course to help overcome your phobia/OCD. Includes a helpline.

Phone: 0844 967 4848 (daily, 10am-10pm)
Website: www.nopanic.org.uk

OCD Action

Support for people with obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD). Includes information on treatment and online resources.

Phone: 0845 390 6232 (Mon-Fri, 9.30am-5pm)
Website: www.ocdaction.org.uk

PAPYRUS

Young suicide prevention society.

Phone: HOPElineUK 0800 068 4141 (Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm & 7-10pm. Weekends 2-5pm)
Website: www.papyrus-uk.org

Rethink Mental Illness

Support and advice for people living with mental illness.

Phone: 0300 5000 927 (Mon-Fri, 9.30am-4pm)
Website: www.rethink.org

Samaritans

Confidential support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair.

Phone: 116 123 (free 24-hour helpline)
Website: www.samaritans.org.uk

You can also email the Samaritans if talking feels too difficult.
jo@samaritans.org

Sane

Charity offering support and carrying out research into mental illness.

Phone: 0845 767 8000 (daily, 6-11pm)
SANE email: sanemail@org.uk
Website: www.sane.org.uk

Refuge

Advice on dealing with domestic violence.

Phone: 0808 2000 247 (24-hour helpline)

Website: www.refuge.org.uk

Alcoholics Anonymous

Phone: 0845 769 7555 (24-hour helpline)

Website: www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

Cruse Bereavement Care

Phone: 0844 477 9400 (Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm)

Website: www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk

Eating disorders, Beat

Phone: 0845 634 1414 (adults) or 0345 634 7650 (for under-25s)

Website: www.b-eat.co.uk

Parenting, Family lives

Advice on all aspects of parenting including dealing with bullying.

Phone: 0808 800 2222 (Mon-Fri, 9am-9pm. Sat-Sun, 10am-3pm)

Website: www.familylives.org.uk

Edge café

The Edge Café is a community cafe and social enterprise in Cambridge – a working cafe open to the public but with a recovery-based focus.

The Edge Café

351 Mill Road, Cambridge

CB1 3DF

01223 212 478

Website: <http://theedgecafecambridge.org/>

Childline

Childline is a free 24-hour counselling service for children and young people up to their 19th birthday in the United Kingdom provided by the NSPCC. Childline deals with any issue which causes distress or concern, common issues dealt with include child abuse, bullying, mental illness, parental separation or divorce, pregnancy and substance misuse.

Phone: 0800 1111

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have any concerns about any of CPFT's services, or would like more information please contact: Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on freephone 0800 376 0775 or e-mail pals@cpft.nhs.uk

Out-of-hours' service for CPFT service users

Contact Lifeline on **0808 808 2121**
7pm-11pm
365 days a year

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