**Caroles’s Story with Anxiety and Depression**

**Trigger Warning: This story contains references to self-harm and suicide.**

My story begins in the autumn of 2007; my eldest child had just gone off to university. I felt sad and there was empty feeling inside, but I didn’t for one minute think that there was anything more to it than that. A few weeks went by, and I was gradually losing interest in life, I wasn’t eating properly, and I was making excuses not to go out. In the end a good friend of mine said that she was getting worried about me and urged me to go to see my GP, to appease I said that I would, but thinking that I knew better I didn’t go.

By this time my husband was starting to notice but again I managed to fob him off. A few more weeks went by, and I think even I knew I wasn’t right but not wanting to bother the GP I left it, eventually after my friend spoke to me again; this time I capitulated and made an appointment. The GP asked me lots of questions and then said that he thought that I was suffering from anxiety and/or depression, but he asked me to go back in weeks time because he wanted to assess me. I duly went back the following week and the GP said he wanted to put me on an antidepressant which I agreed to. Starting on a low dose I was going regularly to the GP until he had me on a dose which he was happy. Nothing remarkable about that I hear you say and no you’re right.

Three years later in the autumn of 2010, my second child left school and went to work, by this time I had been successfully weaning myself off of my tablets until I was on the starting dose. There became a shift in my behaviour again I was not eating properly I was shutting myself away and I was becoming suicidal. My husband was working away up in Manchester at the time so there was myself and my two boys at home, I was struggling to cook and when I did, I couldn’t eat it and I was becoming very aggressive. I remember going back to the GP and he increased my antidepressant until I was on the full dose. Around this time, my youngest son and I went up to Manchester one weekend to visit my husband there being an exhibition that we wanted to go to. I was struggling but I tried to pretend that everything was okay and thought that I was doing a good job until on the train going home, we had a first-class ticket and there had been problems and so the train was ‘mega’ busy and so therefore the train was deregulated and there was two men sitting next to us.

This was bad enough but then the one sitting next to me started making phone calls in a really loud voice; I don’t know what came over me but I starting getting really aggressive with this stranger next to me, I don’t remember much but I do remember that this chap was then being was aggressive back and my poor fifteen-year old son was trying to calm me down and he was explaining to these strangers that I wasn’t well, I felt so embarrassed then.

Then everything becomes a bit of a blur, my husband had to come home and I become under the care of crisis team. It was decided that I needed to be admitted to hospital and I ended in Langley Green hospital where I was weaned off my original antidepressant and put on new one. I was assigned a care co-ordinator and two weeks later I was back home and started back on the road to recovery again. With the help of my care co-ordinator, I was able to make sense of things and get my life back on track.

But sadly, that’s not the end of the story because three years later in 2013 when my youngest son left school things to spiral out of control again, I was trying to deal with the feeling of uselessness on my own but not very successfully. Whenever anyone asked if I was okay, I would say that I was fine, but the truth was that I wasn’t okay I was ashamed to be feeling like I was.

Here I was living a comfortable life with a husband who really cares for me, who works hard and is successful. I work because I want and not because I need to. I have brought three well adjusted children who I’m proud of, so what more could I want, so I started to blame myself that it was all my fault and that I had no right to feel like I did. I stopped eating and started making excuses whenever I was invited out.

Eventually I became under the crisis team again, and after a few days it was decided that I should be admitted to hospital again. Sadly, this time it wasn’t a quick fix, I was to be in there for ten weeks. For the first three weeks I seemed to be getting worse, I shut myself away in my room and the pills they tried had an adverse effect. Then came one particular evening I was feeling desperate, my husband had been in to visit and I just wanted to go with him; in desperation spoke to a nurse but felt that they didn’t care.

I laid on my bed sobbing I could feel myself getting more and more worked up but was powerless to stop myself. I remember looking over at my handbag and as I looked it occurred to me that it had a detachable strap; before I knew what I was doing I had taken it off and I put round my neck, I was tightening the strap, pulling it tighter and tighter but it didn’t seem to be having any effect. After what felt like hours the same nurse came to find me as I hadn’t come for my meds, and when she saw me, all hell broke loose. She sounded the alarm at the same time trying to loosen the strap, she told me not to be stupid which made me pull it tighter. Eventually they cut the strap off and I’m taken to the clinic where I had to be assessed.

To cut a long story short that was the turning point for me I was seen by a different doctor and was given one-to-one sessions with a psychologist. I was put on different medication and at the same time was given help to regain my confidence.

Prior to my breakdown I had been doing a counselling course, I had almost qualified and naturally felt very disappointed but at the same I came across a peer-support worker and I wanted to find out about it.

Seven weeks later just before Easter I was discharged, it had been a long hard struggle, I felt really bad having put my family through all that with me; I felt really guilty.

It was having the one-to-one sessions with a psychologist that was turning point for me, he helped me to be able to regain my self –worth and to rebuild my life again.

I joined CAPITAL Project Trust and did the Peer Support training, and I have been a Peer Support worker for around for around five years now. In that time, I have slowly been getting my life back on track. Due to my own experience with anxiety and depression I’m able to see the triggers and know how to guard against them.