



Staff Suicide Prevention Training Saved Me

I did not type that statement lightly. After possibly the bleakest period of my life so far (and believe me, I have had terribly dark periods prior to this one) I genuinely attribute my survival to the training my team and I undertook, and the resources available to me from the Partnership.

At the beginning I felt as if I was wading in treacle, trying to navigate a complex and frustrating personal life alongside juggling a job that I felt increasingly demanded my time and attention. I naturally did what most of us in this line of work do when we're having a wobble, I threw myself further into work to keep busy and tried to make sure everyone was happy and thriving, whilst I was inwardly drowning. I buried my head and focused on making sure I was 'successful at work', whilst in my private life my world was crumbling, and I felt powerless to do anything about it. The more I pushed myself, the emptier I felt. You wouldn't have known this from the outside. From the outside I was the same cheery person you'd know me as, except my smiles and laughter were forced and my attention would easily wander. When the mask slipped you might have caught a fleeting glance of the 'real me' but I so easily slipped that mask back on and carried on regardless.

The treacle became thicker as the world around me fell apart, I ignored how bad my situation had become. I had no control of major aspects of my life, and I was in freefall. Instead, I pushed myself harder, not even taking time off when my I had to quickly leave my once treasured home and move back into my teenage bedroom. My job gave me structure and routine, yet I was still unable to sleep and eat and I felt like I spent most of my time in tears. I was still giving so much of myself to people, I

hadn't realised just how empty I was. I was exhausted and running on empty. It was inevitable that at some point something had to give.

I'm not a stranger to intrusive thoughts and suicidal ideation. I've dealt with these thoughts on and off for years. I know this is due to my neurodivergence, and intrusive thoughts and passive suicidal ideation can be quite a common 'release' valve when you become incredibly stressed or overwhelmed. I'd never acted on these thoughts as they were transitory moments, not actual plans to end my life. I'd describe them as being like a strobe light, there for a second but when you close your eyes you can see the faint outline that it existed. I'd push them to the back of my mind until they finally disappeared completely when I started medication for my condition, and I felt as though I had my life back for a brief time. The way I felt following my life falling apart was completely different.

Somewhere between my head burying and my breakdown, we did the Staff Suicide Prevention Training. I came away and got on with my work and my life, the training becoming a blur in the whirlwind that my life had become during this time.

I'm sure my colleagues noticed the change in me during this time. I had several who regularly texted me just to check in and see how I was, I don't know if they'll ever know how much their kind words and care helped me through some very lonely days. They tolerated my increasingly dark humour and flippant remarks, but I know there was genuine concern for me, and I will be forever grateful for their support.

I can tell you the exact day this all hit me. On reflection it was actually a great day and my hard work had paid off again, but I couldn't relax, and I couldn't focus. It was as if there was a storm brewing inside me and all hell was about to break loose. I was jittery and fragile, and I honestly don't recognise the person I was that day. I was on autopilot and by 5pm I couldn't force another smile or pretend I was ok, when I quite clearly wasn't. I got into the car at the train station to drive home and broke down. I don't think I stopped crying at all that night. At that point I genuinely couldn't see a way out of the despair and anguish. I felt like a failure. I felt as if I'd thrown away all opportunity to be happy and that maybe people would be better off if I wasn't a burden on them anymore. Those words, they sound so clichéd, yet they are so common in people who are suicidal. I realised I needed to take some time away from work with immediate effect, because I needed to fall apart privately to be able to work out how to put myself back together again, and truthfully if I didn't take the time off, there probably wouldn't be anything left of me to put back together.

Those first few days were the bleakest days of my life. I genuinely felt as if there was nothing left to live for. In all the years I'd had intrusive thoughts, they had never ever made me feel this way. This was different, and I knew I desperately needed to seek help. It was too easy for me to walk out of the door and not look back. On one hand, this terrified me, but on the other hand it felt like it would solve a lot of my problems. I spoke candidly with my family who offered me comfort and support and my friends rallied round and offered their unwavering support.

On day 3 or 4, through my almost constant tears, I opened the [Partnership's Suicide Prevention website](#) to see how and where I could seek help. I knew I had several risk factors because of the training I undertook, so I knew I needed to be honest and open about how I was feeling, because I did not want to feel this way any longer.

To be honest, I didn't want to feel anything. I wanted to be numb. I couldn't cope with the raw emotion which seeped into all areas of my life, causing confusion and frustration, and leaving me questioning my sanity. My GP prescribed me a medication that helped me to cope with the

overwhelming emotions. This took the edge off the emotional pain and allowed me to start to think logically, rather than emotionally. I referred myself for counselling through the Partnership's [Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing Hub](#) and was referred into an appropriate service to start to deal with the root cause of my breakdown.

I was off work for a timeframe that I set and was able to control. I am thankful that my line manager didn't press or probe as to why, they just allowed me to take the time I needed to deal with it all and checked I had access to the support that was available. The beginning of my leave was a blur (maybe that was partially because of the medication), and it frightens me to think about those days. Writing this down has been cathartic and helped me to find the strength to really reflect on the early days.

I am genuinely thankful that not only had my colleagues undertaken the [Staff Suicide Awareness Training](#), but they were also able to support me when I'm sure I was probably quite difficult to be around. I felt as if I was a sponge that sucked all the joy from the room, I was so low, and full of pain and anguish. They didn't give up on me, they persevered and truly cared. They told me not to be so self-critical when I was tearing myself apart, and they kept reminding me of my worth, not only as their colleague, but as a person and a friend. I am truly lucky to have these wonderful people in my life and they are a credit to this organisation.

I was surprised how quickly I was able to put myself back together once I sought help. Like a Japanese Kintsugi vase, the cracks are still visible, but they are gilded and beautiful and I am proud they have become part of my history. I am reminded that my resilience knows no bounds, and my self-worth is not tied to societal norms. I am now focusing on everything I DO have, rather than everything I don't have, and engaging in the counselling I've accessed through the hub.

I'm almost more scared of being associated with the perceived stigma of suicide and suicidal ideation, than I am of the fact I was genuinely considering enacting it a matter of weeks ago. In part, this is why I'm writing anonymously. I'm sure there will be people close to me and my experience who recognise this as my story, but for everyone else I'm just a faceless survivor and proof that these feelings DO pass. For a few fleeting days I forgot about all the joy I have in my life, and just how devastating it would be for the people that care about me and love me, if I was no longer around. I am one less statistic for West Yorkshire because of the training, the website and the mental health hub, its that simple.

The turnaround in my life after a few short weeks has been nothing short of incredible. I'm feeling like my old self again, my smiles and laughter are real not forced, and I have the twinkle back in my eyes. I have regained control of my future and started making plans. In fact, a wise colleague quoted a line of a song to me when I returned to work, and it stuck with me:

"Life is what happens to you while you are busy making other plans"

I couldn't think of a better way to put it myself.

*For more resources visit the [Staff Suicide Prevention campaign 'Check In'](#)