



a way

back to life

Shared Reading group member

“I really believe that it’s the reading groups that have helped me more than anything else - they are a different kind of medicine and it’s through them that I’ve found a way back into life.”

I used to work full time but in 2012 I had a nervous breakdown and ended up in hospital for a month, with anxiety and psychosis. I was given ECT and medication and I did CBT as well, but it didn’t work for me. I was discharged but went back into hospital a second time.

I started attending a reading group in Birkenhead - it was a nice place to go, friendly.

My confidence needed to be built up again and just by getting out and going to the group, that was a first step for me. It’s about coming up to a normal level and finding out that people aren’t all that different from yourself really - that really helps with your confidence.

When I came out of hospital the second time The Reader asked me if I wanted to volunteer. I do that three days a week now. Being industrious helps me and working together in a group to find out the meaning in a story or a

poem gets the mind working in a good way, livens it. And you feel calmer as well, more in tune - you’re on the same frequency as other people.

In the reading group my thinking is more focused and I don’t dwell on things or just sit there ruminating – that’s what I often do at home. You’re amongst people and that makes a difference. It’s therapeutic - it takes you out of yourself and puts you in a different state of mind.

You have light-bulb Eureka moments, like “Oh, yeah, I’ve felt that!” or “I’ve never looked at it that way before.”

Probably these are just thoughts that most people in society have on a daily basis, but because of the situation you’ve been in, they can be quite valuable moments - they help to put your mind back together again. When you’ve been on tablets and had different treatments, things can become quite foggy.

Some minds are very clear and can bring up memories and thoughts quite quickly; other minds might have a few layers of mud over them, and there are things that battle to get out through that mud.

I haven’t been in hospital since December 2014.

I don’t have weekly visits from the Community Psychiatric Nurse anymore and my psychiatrist has just signed me off now into nurse care - that’s progress. He is happy about the way things are going for me, getting out a bit more and doing things. I told him, “*Actually it’s the therapy of reading the books and going to the groups that’s helped, not the drugs*”. He just laughed, as if to say “*I know best*”. But I really believe that it’s the reading groups that have helped me more than anything else - they are a *different kind of medicine* and it’s through them that I’ve found a way back into life.

Get in touch and be part of the story

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