

19th February 2010

Dear Helen,

I am so impressed with the outcome after attending ADASE's Mind over Moods course I've written this recount for you.

"One night I drank 2 bottles of wine, ate a packet of sickly snowballs, rang my parents sobbing on the phone about marital problems and then took painkillers to dull my thumping headache and nerves. The next day I stood alone on the sand of an isolated beach looking out to sea as the waves rolled into shore. It was winter 2009 and I was thinking, could I do it, just keep walking, the water would just engulf me and I'd be gone, the pain, the sadness, the tears, the despair, the loneliness, the uselessness, the ugliness, what felt like a loveless marriage, the anger and dissatisfaction, the not being heard, the being trapped. **But the kids,** how could they wake up with no answers, where is Mum, why? To leave them to live knowing their mother committed suicide is selfish. That their mother felt suicide was the best answer. I don't want them to think suicide is part of their choices if they feel they can't cope when and if their life gets too tough. **I'm stronger than this.**

A friend called into my office and out of the blue we talked about how she was dealing with an inability to cope satisfactorily with changes in her life. I opened up and told her a little of how I was feeling, and had been feeling for a long time. She recommended I attend an upcoming ADASE meeting. Given we live in a small town where everybody knows everybody I was apprehensive about going along so we went together. After completing the application form I was accepted into the 11 week Mind over Moods course. I was thrilled. I felt somebody heard me and there was a plan, a solution.

Attending every Tuesday night was an absolute delight. To be surrounded by like-minded people that 'got it' was amazing, I hadn't felt that warmth and understanding before – there wasn't anything I could tell them about the way I felt that would surprise or confuse them. That in itself was a move forward and I looked forward to each Tuesday. After each meeting I would go home and found that I would be quiet and a little reserved as I processed the information from that night. I didn't talk to my husband about the meetings or the content – he

didn't understand and couldn't work out how I just didn't 'get over it' or 'stop over-reacting.'

As a result of the 11 week course I feel I have a network of people that have a special place in my phonebook, although we have separated now after completed the 11 weeks course, our lives will remain connected because of our common link.

On reflection I am pleased to say that ADASE provided me with the tools to understand my body and how to work to repair my own mental health in a number of ways including:

- Understanding and managing my automatic thoughts.
- Discovering my core values and the impact my core values have on my opinions and attitudes.
- Empowering me with the confidence to articulate my needs to health care professionals.
- Improved confidence in myself, my expectations and my values.

The difference attending ADASE's 11 weeks course has made to me on a day to day basis:

Before ADASE	After ADASE
Sobbed uncontrollably at least four times a week	Mild tears four times in three months for identifiable reasons.
Angry everyday	Mild dissatisfaction every 3 weeks or so for identifiable reasons.
Extreme sadness and feeling absolutely defeated	Nothing!
Never laughed out loud or smiled.	Laughing out loud when things are funny
Lacked genuine interaction with family	Now, we all talk and laugh together
Physically – shaking, aching bones, headaches, increased heart rate, hot flushes.	Nothing!
Extreme anxiety – feeling out of control	Mild anxiety sometimes – but I can know manage my thoughts and overcome the feeling
Lack of understanding as to what was	I don't feel like that anymore, I'm not

going on with me, didn't talk to anyone, thought it was just me hating the world and everyone in it. Felt like I was going mad and must be just an unpleasant person.	ashamed of my condition and have confided in a couple of close friends.
Absolute lack of confidence in my, judgement, opinion, appearance, ability at work and socialise.	I don't care so much about appearance and my ability at work and to hold down friendships – what will be, will be. I trust my own judgement and respect my own values.

In addition I've reconnected with my sister that I haven't spoken with for 2 years after conflict, we laughed on the phone at Christmas time.

My relationship has improved with my parents – I have a better understanding and compassion for the challenges they faced as young parents. I respect their needs now and where they are at in their lives.

My marriage is responding positively. I better understand the needs of my husband and I don't see them as his rejection of me. Best of all I feel calm and confident in expressing my needs.

Without having that chat with my friend in the office that day and attending the first ADASE meeting I have no idea where I would be in the future, perhaps a burden on our medical system, a patient in a mental health facility, divorced, estranged from my children and friends, unemployed or dead!

I have found joy again – didn't think I ever would, and I'm surprised at what small packages 'joy' comes in.

THANK YOU ADASE."

Anonymous participant | October – December 2009