



## Speaking from Experience Anxiety Disorders

### Transcript for chapter 4 of 7: Family & friends

**Amber (diagnosed 4 months):** You'll be sitting, maybe at the dinner table, and then all of a sudden you'll start to feel anxious, or twitchy and nervy, or hot. And then somebody may talk to you and then half way through the conversation, you're suddenly bright red or you feel like you need to leave the table and you're uncomfortable with the people that you care about – or that care about you.

**Karen (diagnosed 2 ½ years):** You start telling people about your worries, and you know what you sound like. So, with me anyway, I realised that no one wants to hear about a sick person all the time – and someone who's worried all the time. Like with my children, I worried sick about what they were doing if they were home late, but I never shared that with them, because I wanted them to have a normal life. I didn't want them to be paranoid about walking out into the street. I wanted them to play and do things. So, I kept it to myself.

**David (diagnosed 3 years):** My ex and myself share the same group of female friends and they were very sympathetic towards me and what I must be going through. I would quite often talk to them about how I was feeling and... I guess they didn't come up with any diagnosis themselves, but they were just good to talk to.

**Anne (wife of Keith, diagnosed 25 years):** Keith tends to get very tired because of this. Therefore, evenings tend to be non-social most of the time. So, gradually, because you're not prepared to go out to dinner at 9pm and stay out until midnight, you can't do these things, your social life implodes.

**Amber:** You don't normally go to a dinner party and say, "Hey guys, I'm here and I've got anxiety! And I feel like this...so this happens" But, I've found that now, I'm trying to actually do that with people.

**Karen:** I thought that I had no friends and I never really left an image on anybody but, looking back on it, I didn't leave an image for them to remember me by. I wasn't sharing who I was, so they didn't really know who I was. It used to upset me, because people I had worked with for 10 years may not even know my name.

**Amber:** If like, say for example, my mum, or my family, or my friends, or someone I haven't seen for a long time, I say, "Hey, how are you going? I've been diagnosed with anxiety, I get this and I feel this. So, it gives them an understanding of how I feel. That way, I don't feel as intense if it does start to come on. Then they understand why I want to leave, or why I feel like stopping the conversation.

**Luke:** In the past, I guess my anxiety has affected a lot of my relationships, because I've probably been more reserved. For the simple fact that, you know you've got a problem and you don't want to expose it. So, I guess you keep to yourself more.



**Carole and Kate (Diagnosed 5 years):** It takes a lot of stress of you when you open up and then they give you feedback and then there's room for support. Once you've let all the steam off.

**Keith (diagnosed 25 years):** My family have been extremely helpful. I don't know why - I've almost ruined her social life!

**Karen:** I think the best way a family can help is to listen, and understand, as best they can. Even if they don't understand, to at least make out like they do.

**Carole and Kate:** People around them need to be supportive and think, 'well, hold on, they don't want to be like this'. So, you need to be supportive and calming.

**Amber:** Everybody needs to be loved, and feel loved. When you feel ill, or you feel sick and you just want mum or, you know, those types of things; anxiety is a form of feeling sick sometimes. You need to feel loved and that you're supported, to be able to beat it. To get up and be, and exist.

**Luke:** I see a psychologist. That's a big help. I guess there's not that many people in your life that you tend to be able to talk about these sorts of things with.

**David:** There must be at least one person in your life, a mother, or a brother, or a sister or someone or a friend, who will not laugh at you, won't ridicule you. Who'll just sit down and listen and ask you what you're feeling. I think that's important. To talk about it – it's nothing to be embarrassed about.

**Keith:** At the start of my anxiety, right up to the present moment here, my wife has been a tower of strength. There's no other word.

**Luke:** As far as people in my life that I can talk to about my anxiety, for example, my mum. She just makes herself available. There to be able to talk to.

**Carole and Kate:** I relied on mum a lot. Because I'm really close to her and she understands and I've just relied on mum my whole life. Well, she's my mum. Every time I'd get a panic attack, I'd go straight to her.

**Gwen:** Just talking to them quietly and say, "we're going to get through this". It's only something that's a passing thing. Let's just breathe carefully, just get through it. It'll be over soon. Just quietly go through it. If you can get them just quietly accepting of the fact that it's going to be just something that happens, rather like a rainstorm or thunderstorm. It's not going to be there forever. It will be over. Yes, it's a bit frightening, but we will get over it. It's no great problem.

**Amber:** Definitely counselling, groups, anything like that. Sometimes you're anxious to go to these things. So, even someone you can call and just say... just for a chat even. If you're feeling like you can't leave the house or, you know, anything like that, if you're feeling really anxious.

**Carole and Kate:** Hearing someone else that has it as well, and knowing that you're not alone and knowing that they can tell you what they go through and you have something in



common to talk about, that you know you can help each other with. She can offer me her support – and vice versa.