



Speaking from Experience Anxiety Disorders

Transcript for chapter 5 of 7: Treatment and support

Anne (wife of Keith, diagnosed 25 years): We had realised what it was, that it was something that was going to be there for the rest of his life and had to be controlled. We were going to have to do something about it, and get him onto a path where he was going to be able to enjoy life. Whereas at the particular stage he was not enjoying life at all.

Karen (diagnosed 2 ½ years): It's not as easy as just taking a little pill and away you go. You've got to work with your life and change a few things, the way you think and your beliefs.

Luke (diagnosed 5 years): To see a psychologist is helpful, because it makes your problem more real. Plus they can teach you more about it. Plus you get... because it starts to consume you, you get a chance to get it off your chest, a lot of your worries and stuff, just talking about it.

Amber (diagnosed 4 months): My psychologist has been wonderful. I'm seeing him through a very holistic way, and he's addressing things... he's helping me understand the core of why I feel what I'm feeling, and when I feel what I'm feeling. I found that talking about it with him, or with other people that suffer the same thing, helps to understand it more.

Karen: When you first go to therapy, you think that you're going to start feeling better. But it takes, it took me six months to ever walk out of that office feeling better. I always felt worse, because you're talking about it, and by talking about it it's more real.

Carole (mother of Kate, diagnosed 5 years): Kate's seen a couple of people where she just didn't go anywhere with, because she felt that she couldn't really talk to them about what she needed to talk to them about.

Kate (diagnosed 5 years): I didn't feel like I could open up to them. You have to feel comfortable with them, and feel like... you just have to feel comfortable, and feel that you can open up to them.

Karen: I guess the idea is to challenge bad thoughts, to challenge what you're thinking as not real, and not rational. And I've actually got to be quite good at that I think.

Kate: I used to have panic attacks to the point where I couldn't control it, and I would have to have tablets that would knock me out. But then I learnt how to manage them and as I kept doing that, I... it just got so much easier.

Anne: Keith read a lot more than I did, but we both read and thought about it. Between that and the psychologist, we managed to get a path where we got him living a fairly good life.

Carole and Kate: Counting backwards.

Carole: It was something that we came up with together.



Kate: You just count backwards, and it just takes your mind off it because you're thinking, "10, 9, 8..." and you have to think of the next number, so it's taking your mind off the anxiety.

Carole: To count forwards, you're just so used to doing that, but to count backwards... We started off with 900 though...

Kate: And it's harder to say...

Carole: 899, 898...

Keith (diagnosed 25 years): I still now, at least three or four times a week, sit down in a quiet corner and relax. Thinking about the lovely tea Angela will make me. But it's a great thing. We're both keen bridge players, and if it started to get a bit stressful, I can "sigh" and induce this feeling of relaxation. It's good.

Luke: I keep up a certain level of exercise because it... personally for me it makes you feel five times better.

David (diagnosed 3 years): I think that the problem with depression and anxiety is you just don't feel motivated. I'm not hiding, or jumping under the couch, but people will come around and lean their bikes against my window and I'll think, I just don't want to do this. If I'm unlucky enough and they catch me, then I have to go. And I love it, it's great, to get out for a ride. I think you forget, I think you forget you're miserable. You're anxious, you have no choice. Where I live it's very hilly, and there's no time for anything else.

Anne: One of the things that we found wonderful was walking on the beach or by the bay, whatever the weather. Just walked along the beach at Elwood or somewhere and it just calms you. Or find somewhere, it might be something else that calms you.

Keith: All weathers – Winter, Summer, whatever. But it was great.

Amber: I found now that when I do go somewhere, I'll take something that feels nice in my hand, or something that's going to calm me, that I believe in – just something. And every time I feel that way I just get it out of my bag and play with it or touch it or feel it and it kind of calms me down again. To balance me out again.

Anne: There might be some things which it would pay not to do. I wouldn't go bungee jumping if I were you, or put yourself in a situation where you know it's going to be high stress. But on the other hand you can't avoid stress. So just learn to cope with it, breathe deeply if you can feel it coming on. And as I say, it will pass, this attack will pass, the period of anxiety will pass and there will come a calm period in your life.

Karen: I'd never really voiced my concerns, whereas now I do. I deal with them, I don't walk away. I think what my main trigger was... it was okay for me to walk away but I was leaving it inside and I was thinking about it over and over and over again without showing it. Whereas now I find that I deal with things that concern me, and by doing that, just that one little thing, I find that, it might seem anxious at the time I'm dealing with it, but I can shelve it.

Kate: I just tell myself that I can control it and it's just my mind playing tricks on me. Sometimes I just pretend that it's... I don't know, like a monster and I'm just punching it out. Like the monster is anxiety and you're just punching it to get rid of it.



Anne: Maybe somebody would like to go “let’s go swimming together” or whatever. Just something that’s a routine sort of thing, nothing too much. That steadiness can get you through when you’re like this (shaking). Sometimes that steadiness helps – at least I think so. It has helped us.