

Story 5 Male aged 54

I was very reluctant to attend the Help for Health course – Family background (fathers mental health problem from when I was 4) failed attempt at psychotherapy (result resignation from job – 1990) family relationship problems, loss of mother 2 years ago and finally resignation from short job as care assistant last year followed by 6 months on Incapacity Benefit.

I went because I was very much needed to go – I was going nowhere. I had no answers to some problems, but I was in denial. My walking/arthritis/any physical problems were okay, and I would sort out any relationship/work problems to people I didn't know.

I kept going although some bits were very difficult for me because I was learning a bit about myself and what ways of improving relationships and believe it or not I enjoyed it – meeting other people (everyone's got problems). Thinking about and discussing a variety of topics and at times having a good laugh and joke.

The therapist and the group were very friendly and reassuring, good at listening and they offered advice when/if needed.

The course offered a golden opportunity to look at yourself and relationships with others, and work out your own way of dealing with sorting any problems, the emphasis being on the importance of "valuing yourself" and expressing clearly your own wishes and limitations – not always easy. The techniques presented to help assertiveness and to relieve stress and help relaxation were excellent though not always easy to put into practice at times of real difficulty.

I have recently started voluntary work and which I hope to increase and move back with employment gradually, difficult because I have been out of work a long time and I am not young. I remain optimistic about this and about improving family relationships – despite recurring difficulties. An excellent course which helped me a lot. Not to be missed.

