



Speaking from Experience *Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)*

Transcript for chapter 6 of 11: Mental health

Julie, 58: It did impact on my mental health, because when I first was diagnosed I did – I became very fearful. And in that whole process I became, I think, quite sad. I felt like there was no life after COPD. That was it – that was the end of life as I knew it.

Chris & Reg, 83: There is an unhappy side of it that can be a problem. I haven't personally had much of this. I've been conscious of the black dogs hanging around, but I can chase him away quite well because of my happy marriage and my happy life.

Ruth, 72: If you concentrate on something else, for me anyway, it takes away the thoughts about feeling sorry for yourself. And I don't say depression is everybody feeling sorry for themselves, because depression is something that happens with illness. I just have been more fortunate than most people, perhaps, in controlling it.

Chris & Reg, 83: If depression starts to creep in, either the patient or the carer, you must do something about it and not let it go on because it's something that doesn't go away by itself sometimes. So you need to seek professional help. There's lots of helps there, but you must ask for it.

Colette, 45: I was starting to panic when I was exercising and that created... A couple of episodes I had were just hyperventilating which, to me, a thought was an attack. Because I'd convinced myself they were an attack. And I went through, step by step with the doctor, what had happened down to the pins and needles in my hand and my hand going numb as this attack's coming on and all I was doing was panicking. So she gave me... I have these fabulous two breathing techniques that I now do from the very start of an exercise class. I don't wait till I'm actually at a peak level in the track. From the start of my class, I breathe in through my nose and I push the air out through my mouth very, very hard to instill in my body that it hasn't got the ability to hyperventilate, which is constant oxygen and no release of carbon dioxide.

Ruth, 72: The breathing procedure – once you learn the breathing procedure – is a help, but not when you're in a full blown attack. Now, I actually hadn't really had any form of anxiety neurosis until last year. And I went to hospital with a very bad attack and then went to a rehab afterwards and developed this anxiety neurosis in a very small room with a very hot bathroom – and I found I couldn't get into the shower. Now, I've dealt with a lot of things in my life and been able to overcome anxiety. And I couldn't believe it – I couldn't overcome this. So quite rightly, the doctor said to me, "Do you want to see a psychologist?" And I said "Yes."

Colette, 45: You do get quite tired, because you do lose a bit of oxygen. But I got to the point where I'd say, "I can't go to the gym. I'm too tired." Or we'd go to do something and I say, "I just can't breathe, I just haven't got any oxygen," which was my little game with it, "I haven't got any oxygen." And I'm going back and forth to this specialist. She's a lovely, lovely doctor. And her team are fantastic. And they were really looking after me. And finally all my results came back, and she's saying, "Yes, you've got it, but we can't find any



evidence that you're as bad as you're claiming to be." And I got really embarrassed about that, and almost put-out, initially. I'm like, "Well, I AM bad. You know I'm bad. I'm sick!" Not quite in those terms. Anyway, we went through my results and she said, "Your recovery from our tests is athletic-level. You're quite fit." Yes, I have a very high heart rate and I get these little palpitations and things, but it wasn't anywhere... she said, "I'd like you to go and see a psychologist because I think you need to talk it through with someone who asks the questions the right way." So I did that.

Ruth, 72: Anybody with COPD should ring and find out who the district nurse is and make themselves known to that district nurse and get them to come out. They are a wonderful help, a district nurse. She said to me, "We have a psychologist – would you like to see him? – from Restoring Health. He'll come to the house." So he came to the house and I explained that I couldn't get into the shower. And he said, "That's easy. Get into the bath." And that was the start of me getting over it.

Graham, 69: To help me cope with my mental attitude, I build model trains. Now, this might sound a bit... weird, but it gives me a sense of satisfaction that I've built something in miniature... that looks good and works. But apart from that, it gives me... a stimulated mental attitude towards... I've created something, like I used to when I was a carpenter. I built something out of nothing.

Julie, 58: On those sad, dark days, you know, it's not... It is about choosing how you think. I think you have to really sometimes work at how you're thinking. You've got to change that thinking around. It comes back to choice, you know? I can choose to wallow in it and say, "This is not fun at all." And sometimes it's not. But I can also choose to say that everything's OK too, within the scheme of things. I've still got all my limbs, you know? I feel for these people that are... It is true, there's always somebody worse off than you. There is always somebody. That always keeps things in perspective, when you think about that. And, yeah, I do have a fairly good life, you know? It's not the one that I really wanted. It's not the way I might have thought my life was going to turn out, but in the scheme of things it's not too bad. It's not too bad at all.