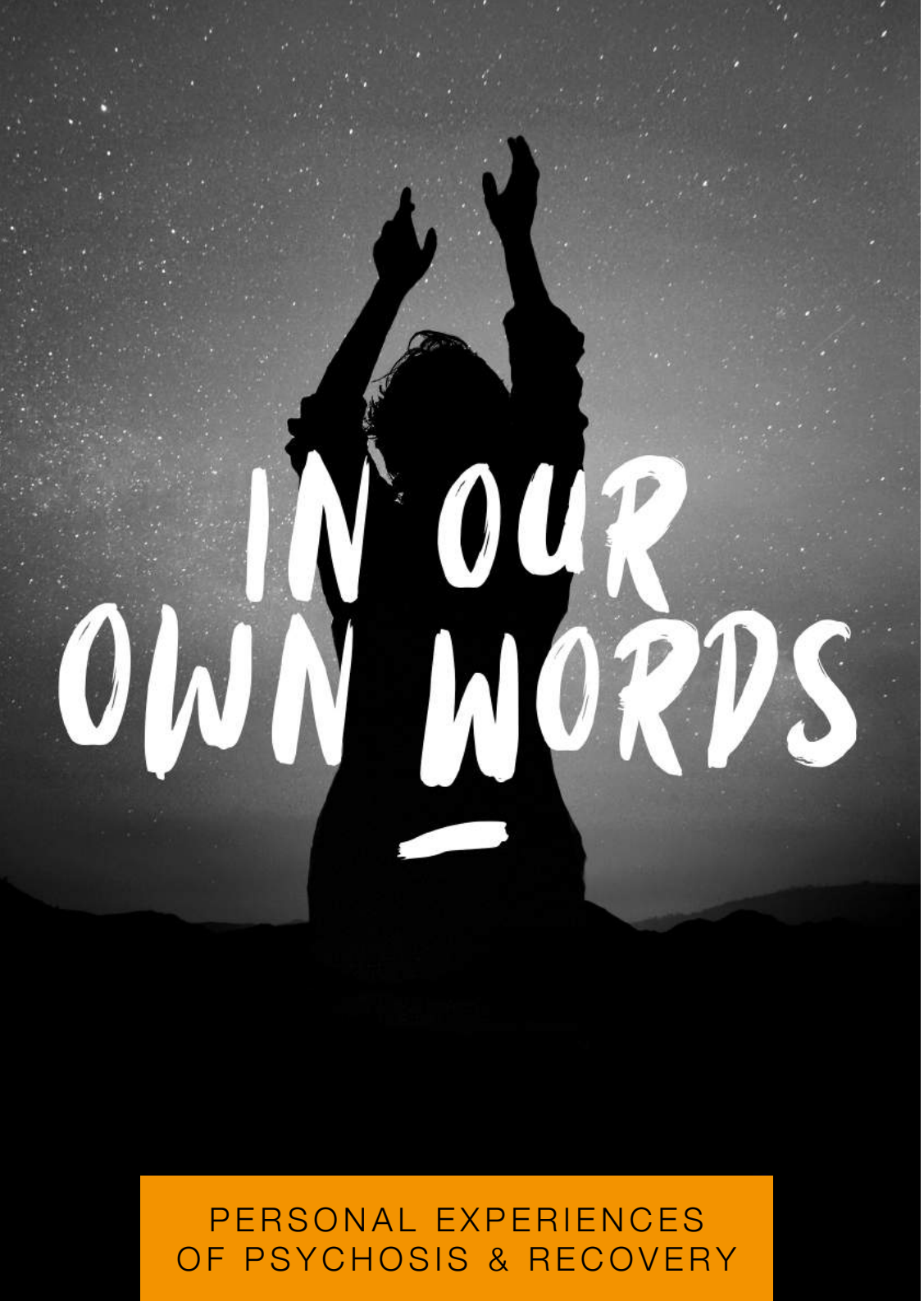


PERSONAL EXPERIENCES
OF PSYCHOSIS & RECOVERY

In Our Own Words is a booklet created by people who have personal experience of psychosis. By sharing our own stories of both adversity and recovery, we hope that it will help others with similar experiences to realise that they are not alone, that psychosis can happen to anyone and that recovery is possible.

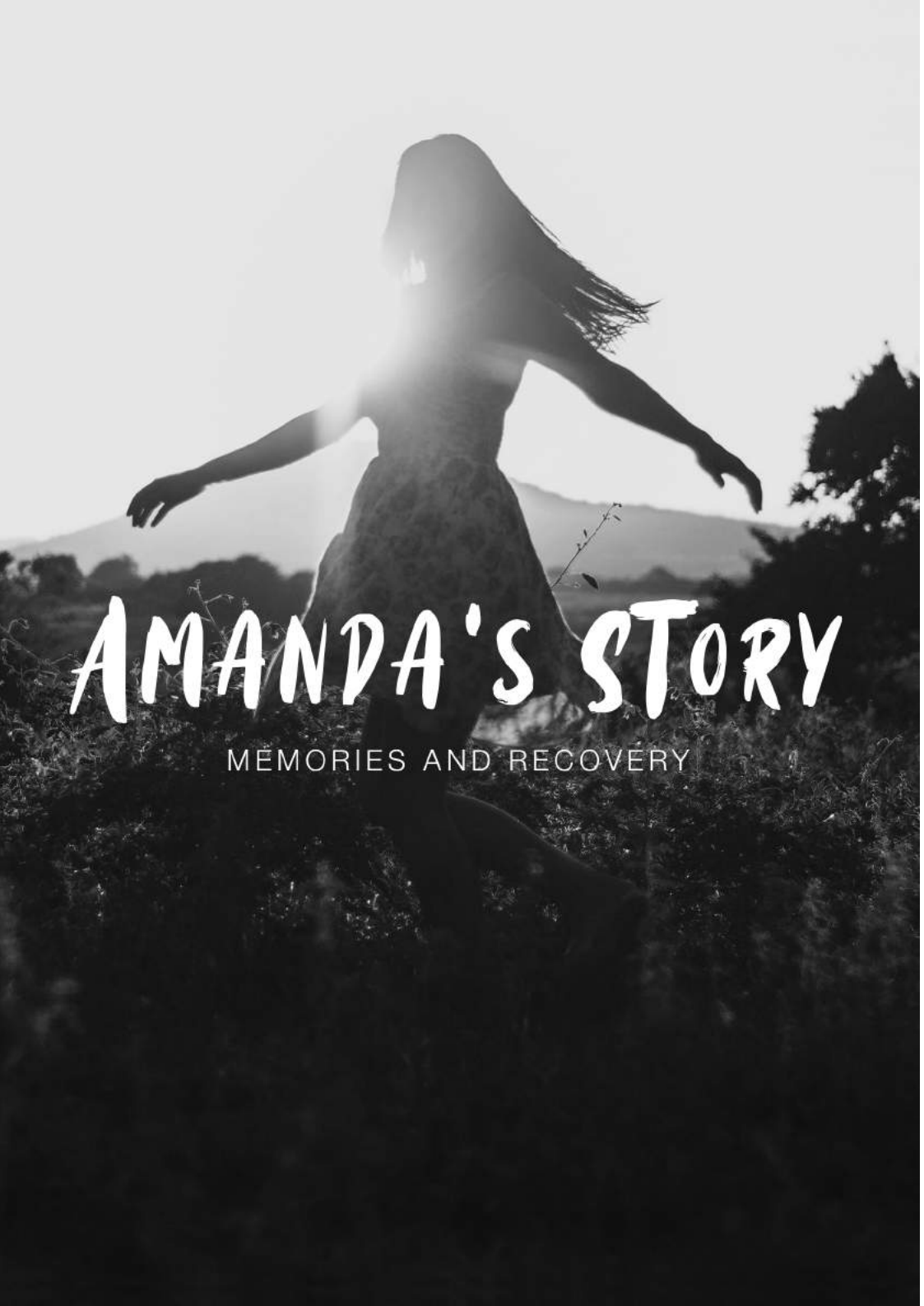
Everyone's experience of psychosis and recovery is different and unique, so it's important to remember that this booklet is not designed to be a 'How To…' manual. Psychosis is complex, and there is no right or wrong way to recover.

However, we hope that readers will identify with some aspects of the stories and art captured in this booklet. And perhaps even feel empowered to share their own stories to promote recovery and help breakdown the stigma and misconceptions associated with psychosis.

By giving our experiences a voice, we also aim to help family members, friends and health professionals build compassion and have a better understanding of how individuals may experience psychosis.

'People start to heal the moment they feel heard'

Cheryl Richarson



My illness began in 2016 soon after the birth of my son. After a long and difficult labour, I was discharged from hospital feeling tearful but immensely happy and energised. Once home, I felt almost superhuman rushing around the house preparing bottles, cleaning, washing clothes etc all whilst not needing to eat or sleep. I soon began to feel completely overwhelmed by my immense feelings of happiness but I assumed along with my husband that this was normal behaviour for a first-time mum.

However, after hearing the devastating news about the death of a friend's baby a few days later, my mental state began to quickly deteriorate. I became convinced that my baby was going to die and was terrified that people were trying to take my baby from me. In order to save my baby, I believed that the universe was communicating to me through changes in the weather, voices in my head and via TV and radio.

Moments to be cherished such as late-night cuddles enjoying the warmth of my son in my arms were replaced with delusions, hallucinations and mania. Haunted by demons and visited by angels, I was frightened, elated, exhausted, energised, sorrowful and ecstatic all in equal measure. My mind continued to unravel in front of my family until I completely lost touch with all sense of reality. At this point it became clear that I was seriously ill and in need of urgent professional help.

I was eventually admitted to a specialist Mother and Baby Unit (MBU) where I was treated for Postpartum Psychosis and later diagnosed with

Bipolar Disorder. I was extremely lucky to be offered one of only five beds available at an MBU, where I received specialist treatment for six weeks without the heartbreak of being separated from my baby.

My illness was the most difficult thing I or my husband had ever had to face. My journey to recovery, like many others has been a real rollercoaster of emotions. I found adjusting to my new antipsychotic medication difficult, I often experienced upsetting flashbacks and I found it incredibly difficult to talk to others about what had happened, terrified of the stigma attached to mental illness. I felt shame, embarrassment and guilt for things I'd said and done during my psychosis and worried that people would now question my ability to be a good mother.

But with wonderful support from family, friends and from the Early Intervention in Psychosis Team (EIS), I began to slowly piece my life back together and grow in confidence as a new mum.

Below I have listed some of the things that helped me on my road to recovery. I understand that everyone's experience of mental illness and recovery are different, but I hope that people reading this will find it useful.

Reconnect with the world around you.

I found this really difficult at the beginning especially after a long stay in hospital. But slowly as I started to meet up with friends and join baby groups to meet other first-time parents, I felt my confidence begin to grow. I realised that I had spent too much time inside my own head, terrified of the world beyond the safe cocoon of the MBU. It felt good to start interacting with the world around me and to feel connected with others.

Express yourself and get creative

For many years I had used writing journals and poetry as a way to manage difficult feelings especially when experiencing episodes of depression. However, following my psychotic episode, I found writing down my thoughts and feelings almost impossible. Writing reminded me too strongly of the endless hours I had spent, frantically scribbling down all the bizarre, distorted thoughts that raced through my mind during my psychosis.

But the creative writing group, which I was encouraged to go to by my care coordinator, provided a safe space for me to explore creative writing again. I realised how much I had missed expressing myself through writing and I was happy to discover a new playful way to approach poetry and journaling which made writing even more enjoyable. I learnt that I could use writing not only to express dark thoughts or anxieties but also as a way to notice and better appreciate the positive things in my life. Losing myself in the creative process has really helped my mental health and I continue to write, draw and paint whenever I can.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

I was offered CBT (a type of talking therapy) by the

EIS and it became a real turning point in my recovery. CBT taught me coping strategies to manage symptoms, identify my triggers and break my unhelpful cycle of negative thinking.

Although it was difficult at times to talk about personal experiences, it really helped me to make sense of things. I began to understand myself better and find acceptance. I still have difficult days when my mood is low but I now feel better able to cope and to be kinder to myself, knowing that things will get better.

***O**ne day at a time*

I found the slow pace of my recovery extremely frustrating and disheartening at the start. I was constantly placing unreasonable demands and expectations on myself. But then a friend said to me, 'if you were recovering from pneumonia, you wouldn't expect yourself to go out and start shovelling snow.' Once I started taking one day at a time and celebrating achieving even small tasks like cooking a meal, life became easier.It can be hard to accept but recovery takes time.

***V**oice your opinion because it matters!*

There were times during appointments with my psychiatrist when I felt disempowered and unable to ask questions about my medication or care plan. But with support from my care coordinator, I learnt that recovery is a collaborative process and that my thoughts and opinions mattered.

My care coordinator supported me by helping me prepare questions to ask at appointments and by having a chat with me after to discuss how it went. Feeling empowered to ask questions about my care really helped to make me feel part of the solution and not the problem to my recovery.

***E**very day can't be good,*
but there's good in every day

I found that developing an 'attitude of gratitude' really helped me to see the positive in my life and appreciate the world around me, even on 'bad days'. I kept a gratitude diary which I would try to complete daily by writing down five things that I was grateful for that day. I learnt to be grateful for simple pleasures such as going for a walk in the sunshine or a nice cup of tea.

***R**each for your favourite tunes*

I would describe music as my mood stabiliser. I have a playlist of tunes that lift my mood when I am low and tunes that help me chill out when I am anxious or in need of relaxation. I love to listen through my headphones so I can get totally immersed in the music and the feelings it brings.

I try and go for a walk regularly to listen to my favourite tunes as it always makes me feel better. I truly believe in the healing power of music, and love the quote by Debasish Mridha, 'Music can heal the wounds which medicine cannot touch.'

***Y**ou are not alone!*

As I became more open with friends and family about my experience of psychosis, they began sharing their own stories of mental health illness.

Sharing our stories helped me feel less alone and at times we were even able to laugh about our experiences. I think talking to others with similar experiences is incredibly healing and has a really positive effect on a person's recovery.

I was discharged from the EIS service in 2019. Despite still having days when I struggle with my mental health, overall I am happier and more confident than I have ever been. I have made new, stronger friendships, I have a busy social life and a fantastic relationship with my little boy. I am no longer on antipsychotic medication and I am hopeful about going back to work once my son starts school.

I didn't choose to experience psychosis but I do choose my story of psychosis to be one of hope. I am now a Peer Support Volunteer for the EIS. My aim now is to share my recovery story with others who have experienced psychosis, to bring hope and deliver the message that; You are NOT alone. You CAN heal. You CAN recover. You CAN live a fulfilling life.

"I felt that I could control the weather, the sun became a beacon helping me in my fight against darker forces. "

Felt painting, by Amanda

MY MEMORY OF PSYCHOSIS

I'm at home with my husband and our three day old son when we receive some devastating news; a close friend has just given birth to a stillborn baby.

Then, my mind shatters in an instant, dark thoughts overwhelm me, the sickening realisation that my new born baby will die, I MUST save him. I look out of the nursery window, cheery blue sky turns inky black, hail pours as tears fall down my cheeks. My thoughts are controlling the weather. I feel the universe communicate to me via the radio - Keep him alive! Keep him alive! Every song carries meaning, lyrics scream out at me 'baby don't leave me', 'baby I love you', always the words baby, baby, baby! Secret messages just for me, I must write them down. Notes all over the house, a reminder to everyone to 'keep my baby alive'.

It's night time, I don't need sleep, too many thoughts are racing through my mind, voices inside my head start chattering to each other, a nurse, midwife and doctor discuss my state of mind, quietly and discreetly, they know I'm listening. But soon the voices in my head become louder, fighting for attention. Frustratingly I'm struggling to write down everything they say, words pour onto my page at lightning speed, I MUST document my thoughts, they are momentous, they will change the world, I am special.

I'm exhausted, when did I last sleep? Eat? Drink? I hear drumming in my head and a physical sensation, like a wave washing over me, I'm about to

give birth, I can feel the baby moving inside me, I lie on my bed, I'm terrified. I can't feel my legs, I'm in my bedroom the midwife is by my side, she reassures me it's the epidural, her soft touch soothes me, but why does she look like my cat? My husband enters the room and looks scared.

Mental health professionals from the crisis team arrive at the house, trying to convince me that I'm mad and need help. I'm not fooled, I know they are there to take my baby away. My husband is on their side but I'm not scared, I know how to outsmart them all, they'll never take my son from me. They are like puppets in a play and I'm the puppeteer, my power over them is thrilling. I'm always one step ahead, the universe is on my side and I feel its abundant energy fuelling me. I don't need sleep, food or drink to sustain me, I am superhuman.

It's night-time again and I am lying down in a darkened room, my aching body is heavy with fatigue and my skin is burning. I feel a dark presence in the room, a feeling of foreboding. Someone I recognise, a family member, holds my hand gently and begins to pray over me. Their face begins to slowly transform into a demonic creature, it's twisted grotesque features terrify me but the sound of prayer comforts me.

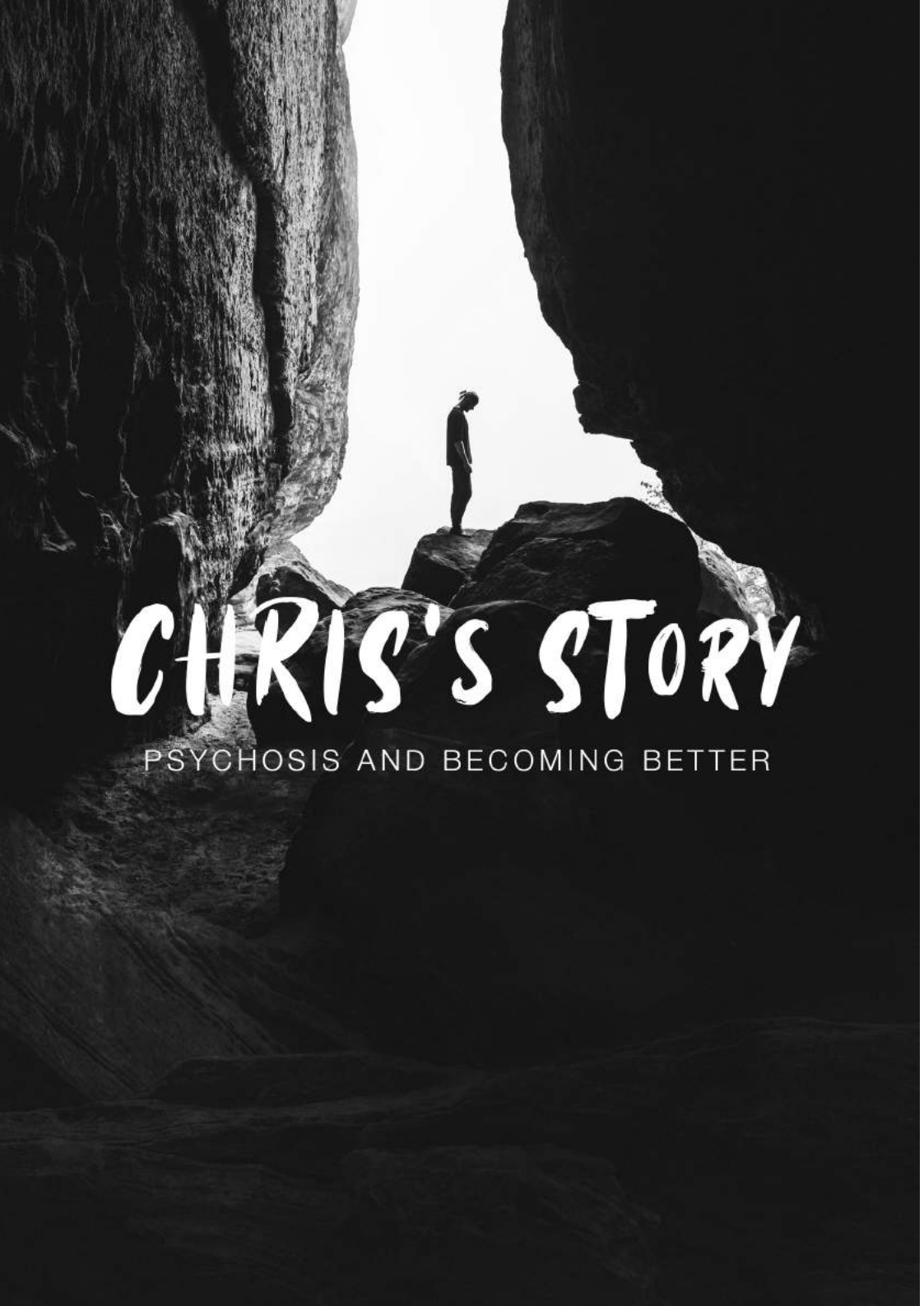
The room becomes flooded with heavenly light, and I feel the presence of angels surround me. The demon face dissolves as I'm touched by the hand of God. I am in rapture, images of life events quickly flash through my mind, like watching a film of my life in fast forward. Everything suddenly makes sense, it was all part of God's plan, the jigsaw is complete. Tears of happiness, intense colours, bright and dazzling, life is extraordinarily beautiful, I can't stop laughing, I'm euphoric.

I know I'm being watched; hidden cameras record my every move. It's part of the game show. Can the Psychologists predict what the 'crazy person' will do next? It's all a set up but I feel excited to be part of the show, I know I can out manoeuvre them. Perhaps I'll be famous? My mind races, I see symbolic meaning in everything around me, connections are made at the speed of light. My brain processes information at super human speed, I have extraordinary cognitive abilities. I must create; write, draw, sing, dance. A 'mad' genius, I feel liberated, invincible, destined for great things.

I'm in an ambulance, where's my baby? I'm in A&E, a sterile treatment room, I'm all alone, I hear the familiar drumming noise and a wave of dread passes through me, I know what's coming, I'm going to give birth again. I'm frightened, the ghostly figure of my friend looks on holding her still born, I close my eyes and slip into darkness. I awake in another hospital, this one feels different, full of light and colour, it feels safe.

Rainbows are painted on the walls. I sing 'Amazing Grace' at the top of my voice over and over again while a nurse gently holds my hands and sings along. His voice calms me. Relief floods through me, I see my precious baby is here waiting for me.

We are saved.



My intention in writing an account of my psychotic breakdown is to help someone who has been similarly affected and is in the process of recovery. By reading these words, you have already recognised you have a problem; this is the first and the most significant step to getting better. By identifying this problem, you have demonstrated insight into your condition. Having recovered from psychosis, I can honestly say that gaining an understanding of my condition was the path to healing.

Some parts of this account may be challenging to understand as they are personal to my experience. What I can say clearly is that psychosis contains stages, and getting better is possible and very probable. I hope that you can identify with these stages, relate to them, and see that there is light at the end of the tunnel.

BACKGROUND

My life before the breakdown was relatively stable. I am a middle-aged man with a wife and kid, happily married, and running my own business. I had been under considerable stress due to the company struggling financially. I felt a great responsibility to the staff and my family and also worried about losing my house and income. I was turning to alcohol more frequently and using other forms of escape. I was never depressed; it was more that I suffered from highs and lows. Now I can see that I was swinging more between mania and anxiety. These conditions were not necessarily all negative.

Mild mania is a form of enthusiasm and energy, and anxiety can create prudence and caution. All of which are beneficial to managing a business and life.

THE BEGINNING

One evening I had been out with some work colleagues and clients. Later that night, I could not sleep. I started thinking I was being squeezed out of the company by my partners, and I needed to protect myself. These thoughts snowballed as I connected more and more events into this theory, seeing each increasing the evidence that I was right. I passed over a threshold between reality, and now what I can see as fantasy. I could not let go of the idea of this conspiracy. It possessed my every thought.

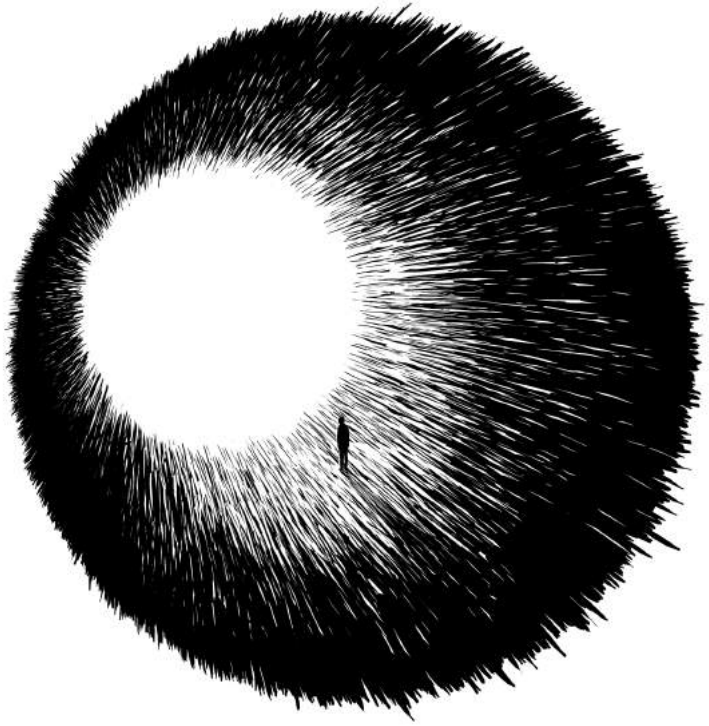
After a week, things reached a crescendo. To maintain my theory (or what I saw as reality), I unconsciously increased the scope of the plot against me. Close friends and family, neighbours, and 'enemy agents' - all were united in working against my best interests. My mobile phone had been hacked and was starting to send me messages via websites, videos and random typing. The programmes on TV started to appear to have been made especially for me. 'They' were watching and listening to everything I did and said.

I had not slept for three days and started dreaming while awake. The nightmare contained a gruesome and inevitable end. I was to be framed, arrested, tortured and killed if I did not do the bidding of the evil forces behind these actors, or I was to sacrifice myself by setting myself on fire. I was descending into hell.

THE DARKEST NIGHT

On the recommendation of a friend, my wife took me to see a psychiatrist in Harley Street. It involved an overnight stay. The consultation did not go well from my wife's perspective. I explained to her that he was an MI5 agent, but I was satisfied that I had kept up my appearances by playing along with the game. That evening I descended into another level of despair. It was my 'dark night of the soul'. I knew that the following day I would die, whether by my hand or by theirs. The life of my wife and child depended on it. I did not see this as suicide. It was not about ending the pain; it was self-sacrifice. In my delusional mind, it was the 'right thing to do'.

Through the night, I 'talked' directly to the dark forces that were seeking to destroy me. I could communicate with them via the hotel room mirror, although they did not answer. But I knew they could hear. Through the window, as I lay in bed, I could see two bright burning red eyes in the sky, staring at me - the devil that was orchestrating my whole experience. My hotel room had become a prison, and 'they' were coming imminently to bring this story to its inevitable conclusion.



"I became pure light
and it became me"

Pen and ink drawing, by Chris

THE BRIGHTEST LIGHT

As morning broke the events took a different turn. The sun had risen and was shining brightly through the window. It revealed that the two eyes were, in fact, red lights - the kind they put on top of cranes for aircraft safety. It was a revelation. It was not a pair of evil all-seeing eyes staring down at me. Maybe there was hope, and I could escape. A wave of relief swept through me. At this point, the sunlight surrounded me, I became pure light, and it became me. I am not a 'believer', but at this moment, I felt as if one with God.

The travel back home started well. I had escaped the hotel and visited heaven. I was happily greeting people in the street and had an urge to give away money, of which my wife did not approve. At the very least, I thought of myself as an instant convert to Christianity but secretly harboured a hope that I might be the new messiah. But pride always comes before the fall.

SECTIONING

The train ride back had started well, but once I had taken my seat, the carriage became a new prison. Each table of people became representative agents of international governments that were vying for my possession. I became hysterical and started verbally abusing my fellow passengers. At this point, my wife called for an ambulance to pick us up from the station. She found this decision intensely painful; she saw it as a betrayal. It was the only

course of action she could take - with hindsight I wished we had sought help from the NHS earlier.

I was sectioned later in the day and spent my first night in the psychiatric department of my local hospital. This experience was terrifying. In no part was this due to my treatment - at every moment, the staff were caring and considerate. I was still in my distorted version of reality, and the hospital and staff were just playing their part in my persecution. I was also intensely afraid of the other patients; in my mind, they were all to be my torturers and executioners.

TURNING POINT

The first few days are now a blur, partly due to the necessary medication but also the further breaking up of reality. At the time, I thought I was in a game show, or the subject of a secretive and state-sponsored psychic experiment, or was it an extended interview to become a secret agent? During this time, I reached a total breakdown of my sense of self. On the third day, I had a particularly verbal argument with my imaginary persecutors. This climaxed in what I can only describe as an 'out of body' experience. I separated into animal and human, dropped to all fours and bellowed like a cow. While also being conscious, as if riding this beast.

From here on, things started to very slowly get better. I came to make some great friendships with many of the other patients. There was great camaraderie between us. We were all in the same boat and shared stories of how we had wound up here and the strangeness of personal experiences. The initial fear subsided quickly and gave way to some genuinely good times. My wife and close family started to visit, and after about two weeks, I could make day trips home. I was discharged after three weeks and returned home under the care of a mental health nurse, who would come to be a very valued friend.

ROAD TO RECOVERY

The first few months at home were challenging, in a different manner from the weeks of chaos that preceded them. My idea of myself lay shredded in tatters. Self-reflection became difficult. Was I feeling this way because I was still psychotic? Or was it the antipsychotic drugs I was taking? Or was I experiencing rational thoughts considering what had happened? Or was I right all along - there was still dark forces at play? I would find myself sitting in a chair for hours, or not wanting to get out of bed - the only desire to lose myself in unconsciousness or nothingness. The unwavering support of my family and the weekly visits from the nurse became a lifeline. They provided anchors as the waves from the storm started to subside.

Luckily, I was able to start seeing a NHS psychologist. My nurse had strongly recommended I take this course of action, and I had come to trust her judgement. I also made the decision that I was going to take this seriously, I sure as hell did not

want to return to illness and hospitalisation. I had an initial introduction to the Psychologist, and she agreed to take me on as a patient.

GETTING BETTER

I decided to be honest in my therapy sessions, and no stone should be left unturned. I wanted to work this out once and for all, for myself and others. I had a feeling that this was all connected to early childhood experiences. My father died when I was ten, then my uncle and grandfather all within a year of each other. These deaths had a profound effect on my mother as well as myself. I won't go into detail, but it was only through the help of the psychologist was I able to link these childhood experiences to my worldview and how they had contributed to my illness, but also had surprisingly positive impacts to my life. As a child, I had to grow up quick, which made me both resilient and vulnerable.

Each session lasted an hour, sometimes longer. It was like putting a giant jigsaw puzzle together - sometimes you put down a piece, or form a part, then eventually you put the parts together to create the whole picture. Each session needed a day or two to process. As time went on, I could feel myself reforming, often accompanied by feelings of relief and happiness. But this reforming was not back to my previous self - it was a better, healthier and more truthful version of me.

Writing this account has given me the opportunity to reflect on my journey and how it fits into a widened experience of life. From being on the brink of suicide to experiencing bliss – all are within the possibilities of any human experience. I am thankful to have lived through it, and to have received the wise guidance that helped me navigate. As a consequence, I am no longer fearful, no longer stressed, and now have my hand firmly on my rudder as I move forward into the future.

What parting advice can I offer? Things take time, don't be so hard on yourself - whatever happened, it needed to happen, think of it as a course correction. Take some time to work it out, with the help of professionals, only through this process will you find a better path in your continuing journey.

For anyone that may be feeling a little lost or hopeless - As a Psychosis survivor I can say - It gets better! My journey to recovery at times has felt insurmountable, slow and somewhat stagnant. Fast forward a year later and I'm back into the swing of things - Confident as ever and ready to take on life's next challenge.

Let us address the unwarranted stress and panic the global Coronavirus outbreak has had on us, including the heightened emotions of The 'Black Lives Matter' Movement. Whatever day, month or year you may be in, it is safe to say that just by looking at the world's most current affairs and the level of injustice floating in the air, keeping up with worldwide events can be extremely exhausting.

On the brighter side, we continue to acknowledge the celebration of life, the daily thoughts and feelings we actively recognise and not to mention being able to overcome our own individual battles. That in itself is an enormous accomplishment - So congratulations!

Remember that stress is inevitable. Take time to find 'Your own way' to manage this.

IT ALL BEGAN HERE

At the beginning of 2019 during my last year of University, I had a single manic episode of psychosis. Surreal to say that I can speak about it now so openly.

The whole motion of being taken to hospital to being transferred to a unit as an inpatient was an

extremely scary and a life changing experience. There were times I'd be extremely happy and other times extremely low all in the space of 5 minutes. The one thing that I can say that kept me grounded - alongside the support of my family and NHS staff - was the very few nurses of Black and Minority Ethnic heritage that encouraged me and could sympathise with where I was coming from.

This may not directly appeal to you however being a 4-week inpatient can feel like an arduous task to get across your genuine needs, feelings and emotions, especially when you feel so convicted to "SPREAD A MESSAGE OF LOVE" - In my case.

Take a moment to acknowledge how far you have come. Not many people can go through what you have and still be willing or open to receiving guidance. Give yourself credit where it is due!

THE JOURNEY TO RECOVERY

Upon being discharged from Hospital, I was absolutely ecstatic to be going home. I had yet to realise that a pile of assignments and exams still awaited my labour. When so close to graduating it can really feel as if it is the end of the world. I was more concerned with the fact that I felt as though I didn't have it in me to re-do another year. Impossible.

My focus (secretly) really remained on getting everything back to 'normal' as quickly as possible. Given my hard-working nature, I was almost forced to take some time out to RELAX. We tend to live life as if it is an emergency; always planning the next 'thing', gathering, what to do tomorrow. I realised that it's okay to take time to focus on yourself, do you and embrace life.

GETTING INTO THE SWING OF THINGS

It took some weeks, if not months of practice to get into a routine. I was okay with this so in this time I...

- Took part in local programs provided by the NHS. Joining a 'Weight management program' participating for 1 hour a week of discussions around healthy eating.
- Used referrals provided by the weight management program to take part in exercise at my local leisure centre.
- Opted to speak with an NHS volunteer who had overcome a similar experience. It was quite delightful to recognise how much we could relate to our stories.
- Worked on taking small steps with NHS Staff to increase my confidence to travel independently.
- Added to my assignments a little at a time and when I felt like it.

DOING THE THING(S) YOU LIKE MOST

Although I was extremely anxious and constantly tired when moving home; listening to music, brain training games and exercise formed the basis of my

recovery. Regular visits from family and NHS Early Intervention Team really helped to process the whole experience naturally. Some added self-care days and reading helped me to relax also. I can only encourage you to find something you feel passionate about; take a midday nap, eat your favourite meal, catch up on Netflix, read an old book. Life is too short to not do what you want (within reason) - So do you!

THERE'S STILL WORK TO BE DONE

The road to recovery is interesting…to say the least. I've learnt so much about myself. I think that progress can always be made but acknowledging how far you have come by practicing gratitude unlocks a new, brighter outlook on life.

TELLING YOUR STORY WHEN YOU'RE READY

There is power in your story. When you feel ready then share it - Only if you want to. I took it upon myself to tell a few friends. The one thing that motivated me to express this was that I would never want anyone to tell my story for me. Speak your truth.

Lastly, there are so many myths to dispel in an African household when it comes to your religious family understanding the scope of Mental Health. It is okay to have an off day and express your concerns. Hope and faith are useful, work at your recovery in your own time. My faith increased more during this time even though some days I had completely had enough.

'But be transformed by the renewing of your mind'. Romans 12:9

'Do not despise the days of small beginnings'. Zachariah 4:10

RESOURCES

'Black African Asian Therapy Network' BAATN is a large directory to search for local professionals specific to your area. I found a great additional resource for individuals of Black, African, Asian and Caribbean heritage that can be used to speak with professionals of your background. Psychologists and therapists who look like you and me.

If you feel that your cultural needs haven't been met, ask your NHS service for cultural groups, leads and resources that are available to you locally.

Recommended read 'Don't Sweat the Small Stuff' by Richard Carlson. Helpful for creating a more peaceful you.

Wishing you a happy healthy recovery. Fortunately, I was able to graduate at the top of my class and now doing internships within Banking & Financial Services - There is always hope for you too! Experience breeds resilience.

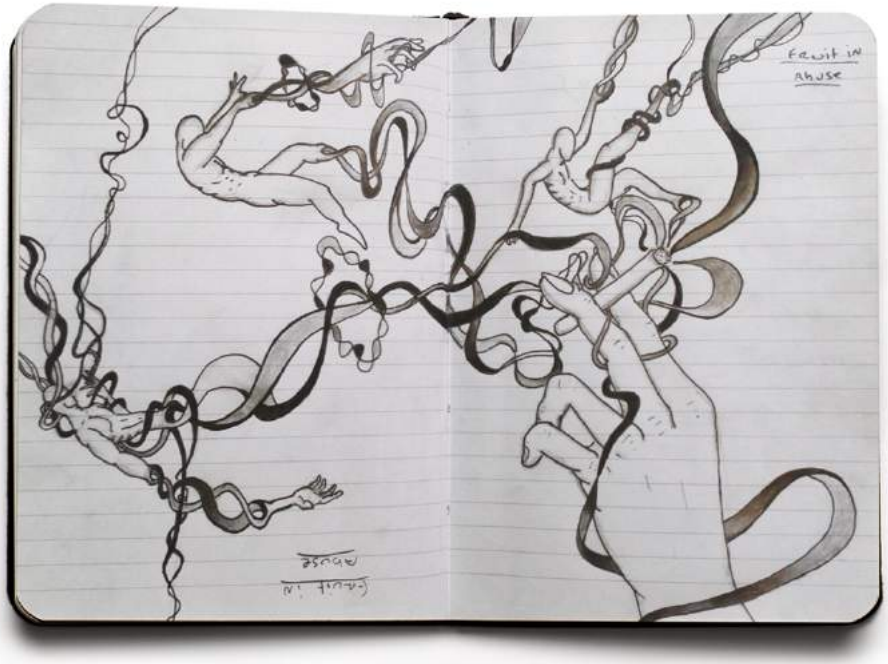
Warm Regards, #PsYcHoSiStEr

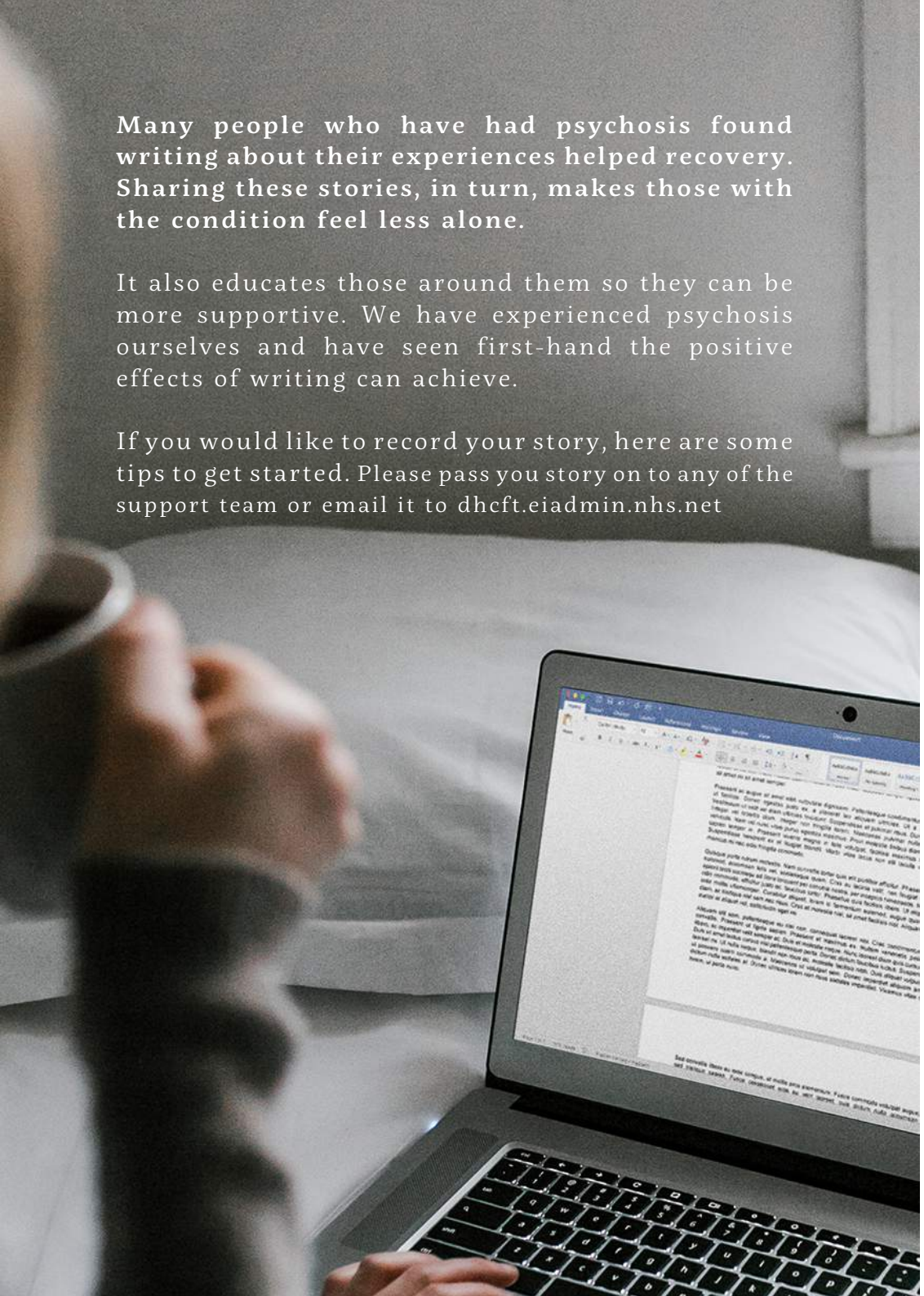
FRUIT IN ABUSE

Poetry and artwork by Craig

Your heart warms me
Like the Northern Lights

With four, three, two
I feel in tune
Feel to branch
To split
And to bloom
Squeeze pinch me
Pinch and I'll bruise
And release in to ether
In my abuse
So where does this piece fit
I'm confused
And can't shake the certainty
It is in you
From my purple take red
I'll keep the blue
And know certainly that mine
Is with you
For your heart warms me
Like the Northern Lights
When sunkissed I'm ripe
Peel my fruit
Squeeze strain me
Strain out my youth
Release grip me
Release grip and let loose
I'll bathe in your glow
Just to feel pruned
So where does this piece fit
I'm confused
And can't shake the certainty
It's in you
From my fruit
Pull seed
And go and seek root
I know certainly
Mine are in you
And your heart warms me
Like the Northern Lights





Many people who have had psychosis found writing about their experiences helped recovery. Sharing these stories, in turn, makes those with the condition feel less alone.

It also educates those around them so they can be more supportive. We have experienced psychosis ourselves and have seen first-hand the positive effects of writing can achieve.

If you would like to record your story, here are some tips to get started. Please pass you story on to any of the support team or email it to dhcft.eiadmin.nhs.net

We respect your privacy.
You don't have to disclose your identity - you could use just your first name or make one up.

We want to hear your voice.
Feel free to express yourself and speak from the heart. Just write what you want to say.

Say it with a picture.
Some of our contributors have also shared drawings, paintings or sculptures. Could this also be helpful to do?

It's Ok to be honest.
We know, at times, that psychosis can be very unusual. But these parts of your story can be very relatable to people who have experienced similar events.

Make it short or long.
Write a few hundred words or over a thousand. There is no right or wrong length.

Getting more inspiration
Please take a look through some of the stories in this booklet.

Pearls of wisdom.
The journey to recovery can be very individual. What did you discover that helped?

Parting words
What encouragement can you offer someone who is at the beginning of their journey through psychosis? You are in a unique position that can really help.

GLOSSARY

Crisis Team. A community based mental health team that supports people for short periods who might otherwise need to go to hospital, for example due to psychosis, severe self-harm or suicide attempts. This is only if it's safe to keep them at home by offering extra support. They usually include a number of mental health professionals, such as a psychiatrist, mental health nurses, social workers and support workers.

Care Coordinator. A care coordinator is a role in which someone oversees and coordinates the support for a person who is in the care of a mental health service. They bring together the different specialists whose help the person may need and are responsible for monitoring and evaluating the care delivered.

Post-partum Psychosis. Psychosis that affects a mother and occurs soon after having a baby.

Mother and Baby Unit. A specialist inpatient mental health unit for some women, in exceptional cases, with mental health problems either during pregnancy or after the birth of their child.

Bipolar Affective Disorder. A mental health condition that affects your mood for a period of time. It involves periods both of feeling very low in mood and lethargic, and feeling very high and overactive, typically with a decreased desire or ability to sleep. In some cases people also experience psychosis.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. A type of talking therapy that can help manage your problems by changing the way you think and behave, based on the concept that thoughts, feelings, physical sensations, and actions are interconnected.

FURTHER INFORMATION

North Derbyshire Early Intervention in Psychosis Service works with people aged 14-64 who experience psychosis for the first time. They may be experiencing hearing voices, changes in perceptions, increased feelings of suspicion, distressing beliefs and thoughts, or changes in behaviour such as becoming more isolated or less motivated.

It is a multi-disciplinary community-based mental health team including Psychiatrists, Psychologists, Nurses, Peer Support Volunteers, Occupational Therapists, Family Therapists, and Support Workers.

The peer support volunteers who have made contributions to this booklet may be available to discuss their experiences of psychosis with other people using the Early Intervention in Psychosis Service.

For more information about the volunteers, you can speak to your Care Coordinator. To make a referral to the team call 0300 123 4451, this is a freephone number and open 9am to 5pm on weekdays (excluding bank holidays). Alternatively, contact your GP to discuss a referral with them.

"Within the darkness and chaos there were moments of astounding beauty "

Mixed media painting, by Amanda

EMERGENCY SUPPORT

For urgent support, call your mental health team in office hours. Outside of office hours call your GP, they may be able to arrange a crisis assessment if appropriate.

Emergency **999** and ask for police or ambulance.

NHS **111**
(Free from call charges, open 24 hours)

OTHER SUPPORT AVAILABLE

Derbyshire Mental Health Support Line **0800 028 0077**
(Open 24 hours a day, for all Derbyshire residents)

Saneline **0300 304 7000**
(Out of hours support 6pm-11pm)

Samaritans **116 123**
Email: **jo@samaritans.org**
(Free from call charges, 24 hour)

Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM) for men
0800 58 58 58
(5pm - midnight)

Papyrus for people under 35 **0800 068 4141**
SMS: **07786 209697**
(10am – 10pm)