

Opportunity

Recovery

Personal strengths

Optimism

Hope

A collection of personal recovery stories



Kate

I am an award-winning children's illustrator and designer, and a workshop leader. I have also been diagnosed with an acute and transient psychotic disorder.

'Acute' means it can happen suddenly; 'transient' means it doesn't last very long – up to 17 days. 'Psychotic' means I always suffer from psychosis.

Stress and anxiety are the main triggers. In January 2005, the company I worked for announced that it was moving to Norfolk, and I had the choice to move with them or be made redundant. At the same time there was a family bereavement and I had a health scare. I became very stressed and couldn't sleep.

In April 2005 I was admitted to the Radbourne Unit for three weeks as I suffered my first psychotic experience. In October 2005 I started to go back to work gradually and in February 2006 I was made redundant as I decided to stay in Derby. In August 2006, we had to sell our house and move into a rented property. This is when I suffered from depression. Ever since being poorly I had been suffering from flashbacks of being psychotic, too.

This is when I got referred to the Early Intervention Service (EIS) and started to get help from many NHS professionals, including home visits from nurses. In November 2006, I was having a chat with an occupational therapist and we discussed the idea of making some cards for Christmas. I sold a few to local florists, newsagents and a library.



This was extremely difficult to do as I had a constant feeling of butterflies in my tummy. Some nurses said that I suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder as I can remember being poorly very well.

I gradually got more confident to sell cards at local craft fairs and design new ranges for seasonal occasions. Then I decided to do a free 'focusing on creativity course', and I got a grant to start my own business. During the course I met a jewellery maker who introduced me to a creative director and I started to get paid freelance work. Having this encouragement, I started up my own company. I'm now represented by an illustration agency and have done freelance work for Moonpig, Igloo Books and Marks and Spencer.

During all this time, since 2005, I have suffered from four psychotic relapses and a few minor episodes. I have been lucky enough to be looked after by my husband and family. During these episodes, I forget how to eat and lose all track of time but I'm highly creative. I get obsessive in mark making on paper, my senses are heightened, colour and sound become brighter and intense. I draw and record every moment with photography and in a doodle diary.

For me, drawing and creating is a release process. When I'm extremely poorly I talk using single letters. I draw pictures with food. I do carvings on the soap in the bath. When I got an intrusive thought, I scribble it down. As I get better, I sit and draw in the back garden. Or I'll sit in the car while my husband goes to the supermarket and

draw the traffic and the people walking past.

In November 2012, I heard there was an art group starting for the EIS with a local artist. I became a volunteer for the All Being Well art and social group that meets every Thursday afternoon at the Lodge in Arboretum Park in Derby.

In April this year, the artist in charge of the group decided to concentrate on her own creative path so handed the All Being Well Group to me. Since then I've been the facilitator of the group. I've also run workshops for CAMHS, at the Radbourne Unit, and with Erewash Recovery Team at Brooklands.

I really enjoy helping and being with people that have suffered similar problems like me, and I want to do more of this type of work. I get so much from helping others and I want to pass on what I have learnt through having this mental health condition to others. And I want to give something back as a thank you as I've been overwhelmed with the support the NHS services have given me.

People ask me why I use blue butterflies so much.

I've loved blue butterflies since I was a child and one of my earliest memories was seeing them (the Common Blue) on a summer walk with my Mum during a holiday near Padstow. There were too many to count that day as they darted from one purple heather to the next. And have you ever as a child made butterfly shapes with your hands in the sun, creating the shadows? Blue butterflies have popped up at various



times for me and each time it's been a magical experience.

When I was in hospital I had a nervous feeling of butterflies so I began to draw lots of butterflies and give them to the friends I made in the hospital. When I came home I still had the feeling of butterflies every time I went out, so I continued to draw loads of butterflies. The blue helps calm me and gives me focus to create the best possible result for my clients.

And maybe the best reason of all was that from my Grandad's house I was allowed to choose a piece of furniture when it was cleared because he had to go in a home. I chose a bureau and when my Mum cleaned out a drawer, at the bottom wrapped in newspaper she found a tile with 5 blue butterflies on it. So I can honour my grandparents and include my passion at the same time. How lucky am I!

"Examples of my poorly artwork. The teardrops (in the tulip drawing) are a common feature. I started to draw teardrops when I was admitted to the Radbourne Unit; someone had left a bottle of Vosene shampoo in my area, which featured a yellow teardrop on the bottle. I used that to start to get better – drawing the teardrop and re-drawing it. As an alternative to crying I would draw lots of teardrops, some with sad faces and then they would have smiley faces. The colour yellow is a colour of strength for me now too."



Tulips are my favourite flower and a flower of strength and hope for me, my Grandma once told me while arranging tulips to make tulips stand tall in a vase, get a pin and make a hole in the stalk just below the flower head and your tulips will stay tall in a vase.



I would get up really early in the morning and draw turtle doves that were in my back garden, I would watch them eat so that would be a reminder for me to have breakfast.