

# Sharing lived experiences of Youth Mental Health, and insights into the help available

Neil, Emma and Charlotte - parents and daughter interview



#hellowyellow @YoungMinds




## From Charlotte's perspective


What has helped and what continues to help - hopefully this provides some useful insight.

My main diagnosis is EUPD, which stands for Emotionally Unstable Personality Disorder. I received this diagnosis while in a Mental Health Hospital back in January 2019.

In July 2020 I started a 15 month DBT (Dialectical Behaviour Therapy) inpatient program and I'm now near the end of my "journey" of being a patient in hospital, and will be getting discharged back to my home - I'm very excited.

DBT was identified as the best therapy for EUPD and I can definitely say it has helped me, and I've learnt many skills. One of my favourites is Pros and Cons. When I'm feeling the urge to self harm or engaging in problem behaviours I've learnt to weigh up the positives and negatives of doing so. Each time I've come to the same conclusion that there's far more negatives than positives. There are many skills and techniques - it's about being aware of them and finding the right ones for you.







Don't get me wrong, I still struggle a lot with urges and negative thoughts, but the skills I've learnt and I'm still learning have helped improve my quality of life.

DBT has saved my life without a doubt, but I've also recognised that the hard work and effort I've put into my recovery has saved me too. If I wasn't given this last opportunity of a life worth living I would probably not be alive today. Yes - that's horrible to hear but that's the tough truth of mental illness.

I also couldn't have done it without the support of my friends and family! So thankful for all my cheerleaders helping me along my recovery.




## From our perspective as parents - Neil and Emma



A cause worth fighting for : Supporting Charlotte with her mental health has been a challenge, but one that we learnt to take a day at a time. Trying to predict or plan for what's round the corner was impossible.

'It's been a journey' : So many reality shows use this analogy, but it perfectly sums up how we've looked back over the years we've been supporting Charlotte. A road with many twists and turns. A rollercoaster with lots of highs, but the higher you go the further and potentially faster you fall.

And the highs and lows weren't reserved for just Charlotte. We both felt 'at fault' for Charlotte's illness. What did we do to drive this? Why didn't we spot it earlier? Why can't we stop it ? Learning to acknowledge that it's something out of our control was difficult but important - ultimately teaching us that we were not to blame.





**'It's good to talk'** : From the outset we felt unable (or perhaps even reluctant) to open up to family, friends and work colleagues. Perhaps a mixture of embarrassment, a lack of understanding and not wanting to burden them with our problem lead us to try and work through it all by ourselves. But we soon realised we needed help.

**'Your parents know best'** : A common perception, but one we learnt isn't right to use through supporting Charlotte. We have, and will always do what we think is best for Charlotte, but we had no knowledge or understanding about the illness. A broken leg = take her to the hospital, a bee sting = apply bite cream...

**...Mental Health illness** : Increase your knowledge as a parent, recognise the things and situations that can cause distress and listen to your young person.





**Visual aids :** Have helped Charlotte to indicate her feelings - a sign on her bedroom door, a whiteboard for a smiley/sad face, a red or green coloured wristband.

**Managing expectations:** What Charlotte could do one day (like going to the shops) would sometimes be a big challenge the next. We (me !) would get frustrated by this - "but she knows how to do it so what's wrong?" Things can change and we learnt to adapt and help Charlotte develop skills to be able to cope with these situations more consistently.

**Work together:** We've learnt to work with Charlotte by listening and ensuring we're not adding to any stress or pressure. Pushing her too far too quickly has back-fired in the past !!!

**Look after yourself:** Don't ignore your own well-being. Make sure you do something for yourself, something that you enjoy, something that makes you happy.





And a final thought...



Your young person is not an 'attention seeker'. Instead they are 'seeking attention, seeking love, seeking support, seeking anything but loneliness'.

Don't ever give up.



Thanks to Charlotte and her parents for giving us your perspectives and insights into life with mental health issues

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