

Dear friend,

I want to tell you about a remarkable young woman called Mary\* who has been supported by our Therapeutic Counsellors.

Mary (aged 24) had been forced to separate from her birth family in her mid teens after years of sustained emotional and physical abuse by both her parents. Mary described how since this time she had been experiencing extreme panic attacks, hearing voices and she worried that she was mentally ill. She had been assessed by her GP and Consultant Psychiatrist but no mental illness was noted and their assessment was that Mary had experienced trauma and anxiety. Both agreed that counselling would be a good option for her.

When she first attended counselling Mary appeared introverted and lacking in any confidence. She was uncertain about her self worth and what life held for her in the future. Her body language reflected a young woman who was experiencing real emotional distress.

In her initial counselling sessions Mary explained that she felt her life was passing her by and this led to increasing thoughts of low self worth and self harm. Mary had attempted an overdose earlier in the year and was currently self harming. She was unhappy with herself, her friendships and even supportive family members.

So what happened in counselling for Mary? She took time to reflect on the experiences in her life which had taught her low self worth. She slowly began to explore the close friendships and family relationships which had offered her more affirming experiences. Mary learned about how her anxiety worked and gradually she took control over this by learning to breathe deeply, relax and distract herself with activities she loved. This was not a simple process and Mary herself described how at times she felt her progress in counselling was like two steps forward and one step back.

As Mary began to change her inner self, she then began to change her outer world. She moved to a college course which better matched her personality and creative talents. She increasingly spent time on her interest in making music, reading and writing poetry. Mary brought this creativity into her sessions and we used this to explore what she was learning about herself.

Mary moved on in her life and obtained a job in a local grocery store, making friends with other young people who worked there. As a result of this she began for the first time to have a rewarding and enriching social life. Each session would bring stories of achievement related to her college work, her part time job, her latest poem, her reflections on life, ideas and affirming life experiences. This contrasted with on-going reflections in her sessions about her sadness and anger regarding the manner in which her parents had treated her. Mary also began to see a world outside of herself and developed empathy with respect to the lives of other people she met or observed.

Most remarkable was the transformation for Mary not only in terms of her thoughts and feelings but also in terms of her body language, her presentation and her outer confidence.

Counselling provided Mary with the opportunity to begin to explore the abusive experiences she had experienced in her birth family. She became more able to understand that her negative self esteem had been the result of unrelenting emotional abuse from her parents.

Mary, is a young woman who, by her own account, really benefitted from attending BCM's Therapeutic Counselling Project. It helped transform her into a person she had never thought she would become.

Like me, you may feel moved by this story of a life transformed. But this is just one of many that I could tell you. All our projects work with people for whom life has been or continues to be a struggle. We witness many success stories along with, sadly, some on-going battles, but we don't give up on anyone.

**You too can be part of this work.**

You can help young and old to be strong, live a better life, be the people they never thought they could be.

**Please will you make a donation to help us.**

I'm pleading with you, as I'm sure Mary would if she had the chance to speak to you herself, to donate as much as you can to help fund our work throughout all our projects. The need is real and we need **your** help to meet it. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

**Rev Richard Johnston,**  
Superintendent

**P.S. Please don't wait. It will only take a minute to write a cheque and it will help for a lifetime! Or you can click on the DONATE button to the left to make a donation online. Thank you.**

\*Name has been changed for reasons of confidentiality.