

My Story 005

Since March 2007, Stitchlinks have been asking people to tell us their Story, and also asking whether knitting and stitching has been helpful to them.

All Stories are voluntarily offered and anonymity is guaranteed. Only once we have been given permission do we publish so that others can appreciate and take inspiration and comfort from them.

This booklet is one of a series that contains a small selection taken at random from the long list of Stories we have received. Each is reproduced as it was entered on the online survey form, with the only exception of taking out any way that individuals can be identified.

Read at your leisure and be fascinated, comforted, thrilled, encouraged and inspired.

You are not alone.

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Story 199

“...calmness and sense of achievement...”

My Mum taught me to knit aged 4 years old, and since then, I was able to make all my own dolls', Gilbert Golliwog's and teddy bears' clothes.

It was a social pastime, sitting around the fire, with the family knitting, and part of my Irish heritage, traditional. The calmness and sense of achievement as a small child was very great. By the time I became a teenager, I could make fair isle sweaters and fashionable jerkins, which my friends could not even buy in the shops. My cousin was very deaf and attended a special needs school. The Teacher taught herself to knit left handed in order to communicate the knitting skills to my cousin.

This was a brilliant achievement for both of them!

Story 36

“Would recommend knitting to anyone who needs help with anxiety and/or depression.”

Have been crocheting 25 years, took up knitting several months ago. I have rheumatoid arthritis, crochet was painful.

Oddly enough, knitting not as hard on my hands. Also seems to help me with flexibility as long as I don't overdo. Also very soothing for anxiety. I am a social worker, employed in a stressful position, with a master's degree.

Would recommend knitting to anyone who needs help with anxiety and/or depression. The rhythm of it is soothing, also a healthy distraction from problems. I also enjoy crochet, but it does not have quite the same effect for me.

Story 66

"...my family thinks that cross stitching was my cure."

In 1996 my two daughters and I were involved in a head-on car accident.

One of my daughters walked away (suffering to today with a great deal of survivor's guilt). My other daughter who was handicapped prior to the accident was in the ICU of the hospital for 7 weeks and a rehab center for 8 weeks. I suffered a severely fractured ankle, a blown knee and head injuries causing short-term memory loss for several months.

When I returned home from the hospital after a 5-day stay, I thought I could just pick up my cross stitching which had been my passionate hobby for many, many years. I tried to cross stitch once again. I looked at the chart, picked up the threaded needle and fabric but could not remember what to do...I had forgotten what to do after looking at the chart. This was so very frustrating. This continued for four months.

With therapy I learned to walk again and especially retrained my brain to continue with the hobby I so love. To this day I must cross stitch each and every day...if I don't do so, I feel like something is missing. I am so fortunate that this hobby helped to bring back my short-term memory problems, and my family thinks that cross stitching was my cure.

Story 85

"...within minutes I am absorbed in whatever pattern I am working on"

I have been stitching for about 15 years. As an alcoholic who struggles with this addiction, I have found that my stitching keeps me sober! As anyone who stitches can tell you, alcohol and counting don't mix!

During times of stress or high anxiety, I can pick up my stitching and within minutes I am absorbed in whatever pattern I am working on. I find that I can't really fret over things while I am absorbed in my stitching.

8 years ago when my Mother entered Hospice care, my stitching kept me calm and able to deal with her dying. I had just started a large Lavender & Lace pattern called "The Quiltmaker" and as I worked on it each night she would comment on how it was coming along. I put the last few stitches into it the day she passed away. When I look at it now hanging in my living room I can go back to the hours I spent with her during that time. My cross stitch has traveled with me comes with me to work and gives me a huge feeling of accomplishment when a large pattern is finished and hanging in my home.

I know that there are people who look at my hobby as "just a way to pass time" but to me it is much much more. It truly does keep me sane.

Story 160

“...a fantastic distraction for patients during long stays within hospital..”

I commissioned an artist called Idit Nathan to work in the department of Medicine for the elderly at Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge 5 years ago now to try and address issues of ageism and attitudes to growing old.

A variety of stitching techniques were used to produce contemporary artworks in collaboration with the patients which were then displayed within the hospital. The success of the project were many including the raised profile of the department and care for the elderly, the workshops run by the artist also offered a fantastic distraction for patients during long stays within hospital, during which they were also able to tell their stories and so giving the care staff a greater understanding of the patients, thus helping the staff to see past the illness to the individual and so giving patients great dignity in care.

You can still see some of the work on the Addenbrooke's website:
http://www.addenbrookes.org.uk/serv/nonclin/arts/past_projects/lighted_rooms.htm

I'm sure you are also aware of the Arts Council Research Report number 36

Telling Your Story helps others to appreciate their own circumstances. Please help by completing the survey at www.Stitchlinks.com