

My Story 014

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, take inspiration and draw 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 179 From email

“Crocheting and knitting take away that 'useless' 'in-valid' feeling...”

I have a long history of Crohn's Disease from age 14 years, which was much improved by a ileostomy in 1979.

However, for some time I have been suffering from joint and neck pain due to a deformity in my spine and neck when I was suddenly rushed to hospital after my bowel blocked and I was in a life threatening situation. My bowel continued to block repeatedly and I was diagnosed with adhesions (I have had five surgeries over the years) I was often very breathless which I thought was to do with the strain of coping with pain, however, low oxygen levels were noted during my stays in hospital and I was diagnosed with COPD and I now have chest physiotherapy and use an inhaler.

Because of these new health problems I was forced to give up my job as a further ed. lecturer and this made me depressed, especially as I had come late to education at 38 and did a degree and post grad further ed cert. There was a long struggle to gain qualifications but I was only able to use them for my benefit for 8 years. I was so frustrated.

I had flirted a little with crochet in the 1960s (I am 55) (I was taught by a nurse on night duty when I couldn't sleep) and knitting when my daughter was born in 1972. Apart from making a few items for my daughter - mainly because we were a low income family - my knitting dropped off and I never really 'caught the bug' until my current health problems started to swamp me.

With the thought that “I have got to do something so I am not as aware of my pain and discomfort so much” I took up crocheting again but this time I found my passion on the internet (my computer next to my partner is my best friend -I would probably starve if I wasn't able to order food on it!) I then decided that - as I was nowhere nearly as competent at knitting as I am at crocheting I would use my computer to teach myself in a step by step sort of way so book marked every knitting and crocheting site going! It is like taking a course and this gives some structure to my life.

When I get bad bouts of jointpain breathlessness and abdo pain I take my analgesics and head for my computer. I am sure this has helped me from sinking further into depression.

One of the things that really gets me down is that although my GPs are women and absolutely wonderful most of the specialists I see are men and I have noted that they do not seem very interested in middle aged women with a medical history.

I have decided that I am sick of being patronised by patriarchal surgeons and am going to ask to be transferred to the women surgeons that looked after me when my usual surgeon was on holiday.

Crocheting and knitting take away that 'useless' 'in-valid' feeling you get when you are chronically ill. I can be useful again: producing 'cool' crocheted items for my grandchildren! I love poetry and rhythm and I feel that the rhythm of crochet and knitting are very soothing.

So I guess that has given me some confidence back. I thought that it was only me that used knitting and crocheting as therapy until I found out about the research you are doing. It sounds very interesting. I can certainly vouch for the fact that taking up these crafts has stopped me sinking into the abyss.

Story 38

"knitting and crochet ... allows my creative drive to find a safe vent"

Crochet and knitting have helped me deal with the frightening, inexplicable and unreasonable behaviour that my husband started to show in increasing intensity when I was expecting our 3rd daughter. His deteriorating mental health condition led me and our family to some very frightening places where the only unchallenged outlet for me was to crochet and knit.

2 years ago at the height of his delusions and paranoia I was able to escape to become a lone parent of 3 very young children. But life was safer and calmer being able to lock the door against it.

My crochet helped me stay sane through these times, and helped me think things through or not think at all. The things I made in those very bad times were often to help a charity (do something positive when a lot of the time in my own life I could do nothing to help my husband) or to give to my children through what must have been an equally dark and difficult time, or to enjoy the rewards of learning something new.

Strangely the whole process enabled me to retain some inner connection with myself. Now the "incidents" in our life are more sporadic and shorter lived it is my knitting and crochet that continues to challenge me; allows my creative drive to find a safe vent; provides me with a means to give when money is tight; gives me a tremendous amount of pleasure relaxation excitement self-awareness; and also offers me a safe platform to share a bit of myself with others."

Story 226

"...really good for weight loss.."

Stitching and knitting are really good for weight loss, as I find that having something to do with my hands helps so much.

Also, going out to my knitting group has helped my social skills so much - as I know being solitary is bad for my depression, and I also had to conquer my fear and go and meet new people when I joined. I have also met some of the loveliest people through my online cross stitch forum

Story 150

"I was able to teach others"

As I became more proficient - I was able to teach others

[Honestly – that's what was written]

Story 58

"... I would get a real sense of achievement with each day's stitching.."

I learnt to cross stitch when I was studying for the finals of my degree. At the time I first started suffering from depression and found it difficult to concentrate on anything for any length of time, so I dictated all my notes onto tape, listened to the tape and just stitched away. I was never very good at revising but this seemed to do the trick.

Ever since then it has been something I have really enjoyed, as well as being my main form of therapy in my battle with depression, binge eating, self harm and panic attacks.

I had a complete breakdown at 30 and was unable to leave my house for several months. I felt totally inadequate and unable to cope but cross stitch helped me because I felt safe and could create something beautiful that grew before my eyes and I knew it was all down to me. It helped me to realise that I wasn't a worthless person and I would get a real sense of achievement with each day's stitching - it even gave me a reason to get out of bed when I was at my lowest.

It was more than just doing something to pass the time although I admit that times just flies by when I stitch but it was something that was personal to me and that I could do without being judged criticised or hurt. Because I had a focus I found that I wasn't concentrating on being ill and I slowly began to recover. Ever since then my stitching has never been far from my side and it helps me unwind after a difficult day at work I can just immerse myself in it and stop worrying about the outside world.

I stitch every day even if it's only for half an hour it's "me" time. If I feel stressed anxious or panicky I know that after a few rows of stitching I will feel much calmer and relaxed more in control.

Thanks to my lovely friends at Stitchlinks I know that I am not the only person to find stitching or knitting so therapeutic. To be honest without my stitching I don't think I would be as happy or as well adjusted as I am today. "

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