

# My Story 016

**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 14

*“...it has been a constant source of enjoyment and a way to relax”*

Looking back I think I first started to suffer from depression when I was at school, due I think to feeling different to my peer group.

I was bigger than average by the time I was 12, and had suffered from horrific acne from the age of 9. I wasn't interested in discos or illicit drinking and was often bullied for being a “goody goody”! I became very reclusive and spent most of my spare time studying. By the time I reached the end of senior school I was already battling not just with an eating disorder, but also trying to keep this hidden from friends and family.

On leaving school I moved away to train as a Physiotherapist. I loved the challenge of the course, but found the change of lifestyle almost destroyed me emotionally. I began to suffer more and more periods of low mood, and the bulimia got progressively more difficult to control.

During this time I met my husband and then things got worse. I started to suffer panic attacks and was referred to a psychiatrist.

It turned out I was suffering from a form of post traumatic amnesia due to an incident that had happened during my mid-teens. Dealing with the repercussions of this took every ounce of patience XXXX had. At the same time we were faced with the prospect of taking on XXXX's children from his first marriage, then aged 9 and 2.

Throughout all this the one thing that remained constant was my knitting.

I don't actually remember learning to knit, but I remember the first thing I made at school at the age of 7. Everyone else was struggling with the activity, but as I had already been taught the basics by my Grandma and my Mum, I flew through the process of creating a purse. Before long my Mum introduced me to patterns and I was hooked!

I can't imagine not being able to pick up my two pointy sticks and immerse myself in the process of converting balls of yarn into items of clothing. I can plot major events in my life by what I was knitting at the time.

When I was at Physio College I bought cheap acrylic yarn to make jumpers to keep me warm. I also learned to crochet granny squares to make myself a blanket for my bed-sit. When XXXX's kids arrived I found myself making children's clothes and school jumpers.

Then I found out I was expecting a baby, after previously losing one at 16 weeks. I loved being pregnant as it was the only time I seemed to have my bulimia under control. I knitted like a demon as I had to spend a large part of my day with my feet up! By the time xxxxx was born I had blankets, cardigans, jumpers, trousers, hats, mittens, bootees, and all-in-one jumpsuits in white, cream, yellow and turquoise!

Over the next few years however, my bulimia got worse and so did my self-confidence. I felt useless most of the time and eventually had to resume my acquaintance with the world of psychiatry after taking an overdose. For the first time I had to admit to having a mental illness and accept the limited help available.

I remember taking my knitting with me when I went for my weekly appointment with the psychiatrist as I needed something to keep myself busy, and to take my mind off where I was. The mental health centre was in a really old building and I really hated going there. Knitting helped me through this rough patch and although I don't remember what I made during those years, I know that without the repetitive action of knitting I would have been driven to more extreme compulsive behaviours.

After the loss of another baby I found I was pregnant again, nearly 8 years after xxxxx was born. By this time I had gone back to work and having spent 2 years commuting an hour each way to work, had found a job five minutes from home. yyyyyyy arrived in spring 1998 and I was soon back at work.

I can't believe that I will celebrate ten years working at the local MS Therapy Centre this summer. Although MS is a degenerative condition the centre is a very positive place and I am sure this has helped me to keep going to work as much as it helps the patients. I am sure that my experiences of depression have enabled me to empathise much more with my patients, and have therefore made me a much more compassionate physiotherapist.

My Life to the outside world looks ideal. I am happily married, with two lovely daughters, a dog and four cats. I have a job I love and people who love me. I help run a Rainbow group, which keeps me quite busy, and I am secretary on the school parents committee. In spite of all this I found myself back in the spiral of depression.

This time I knew the signs and was able to discuss it with my doctor. I was put on anti-depressants and referred for Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT). Eighteen months later I have just completed my introduction to CBT and am waiting for the full course to begin.

On the positive side, this year I discovered Stitchlinks while reading a copy of Simply Knitting magazine. Suddenly I found somewhere that I could share the highs and lows of living with depression with people who didn't condemn me for feeling "unhappy" or expect me to "pull myself together". Through Stitchlinks I have learned more about myself and how to manage daily life with depression. Having shared experiences with others I have found myself feeling so much less alone and thus more able to cope, and the support I have received from other members of Stitchlinks has encouraged me to persevere with my CBT.

Grandma was the one who taught me how to knit and crochet, and even at the age of 94 was still interested in what I was making. My latest challenge was to knit a pair of socks before my 40th birthday. I was full of enthusiasm when my fiberspates sock kit arrived and couldn't wait to cast on. The wool was so luxurious compared to the cheaper acrylics that I usually knit with. I immediately downloaded the Stitchlinks guides to knitting socks and cast on. It is a long time since I can remember being so enthusiastic about something I was knitting.

I now wear my hand knitted socks with pride and just wish Grandma could have seen them as she often told me about how she knitted socks when she was younger.

Until I joined Stitchlinks I never thought about what knitting has done for me, but I now realise that it has been a constant source of enjoyment and a way to relax. Although at times the joy has not always been there when I've finished something, I know that I have made the most of what Grandma taught me all those years ago.

## Story 17

*"I was hooked immediately"*

Having been ill for 6 months with ME a friend gave me an easy cross stitch kit to do. I'm not a 'crafty' person but I was hooked immediately.

Seven years on, and still ill, I am still sewing and always have a project on the go. I have done small things e.g. bookmarks, coasters, and loads of cards, and my walls are decorated with the larger projects e.g. maps, birds, flowers.

Although I really enjoy doing cross stitch, and am delighted with the results, there are many times when I simply cannot do any sewing because I am too tired to concentrate. I have found with experience that doing cross stitching when tired equals lots of unstitching the next time I pick it up!

**Story 18**

*“it does give one a sense of achievement and the control in life”*

I have not done too much cross stitching lately but I have returned to knitting although the jumper I have just finished I began in November 2003 and left it unfinished.

When I thought about why it was unfinished I felt it was a mixture of confidence, what's the point and nobody knits now. However, I finished it in February this year, have worn it several times and am now halfway through another one.

For my Christmas present to myself I promised myself some more knitting as I think I realised it does give one a sense of achievement and the control in life plus you have the choice of what colour you want the garment to be, the style, and within one's expertise the pattern.

I have also developed an interest in finding wool manufacture and grown here in UK. The jumper I finished is merino wool and really lovely and soft and warm! I think the local origin of the wool also comes from my desire to support local crafts and industries. As I work full-time in a fairly demanding job and live on my own I noticed the actual practice of knitting soothing can be done whilst listening to the tv or radio and provides a link with the past when most woollens were hand-knitted."

**Story 21**

*“I can relax when knitting”*

I found that knitting is pleasing and relaxing, I have found that as a craft, that most people can have a view on knitting, so it is opening up my social circle and given me an aim.

I can relax when knitting and it stops me wanting to eat, when I'm bored. I suffer from migraine and it can relax me if I can try and do knitting for at least 1/2 hour. I feel that my hands are also in less pain as long as I don't over kn

Telling Your Story helps others to appreciate their own circumstances. Please help by completing the survey at [www.Stitchlinks.com](http://www.Stitchlinks.com)