

Case study

From Heartbreak to Healing: A Man's Journey Through Loss, Anxiety, and Fatherhood



Introduction

Mark, a male in his thirties, sought support from the Holloway Neighbourhood Group's Stress Project Therapy Centre after experiencing significant anxiety and depression following the breakdown of his long-term relationship and subsequent difficulties in accessing his children.

"I thought I could handle everything on my own, but I was drowning."

Referred by his GP to our low-cost counselling therapy program, Mark aimed to navigate his emotional distress and improve his mental health while coping with the challenges of fatherhood in a separated context.

The Person

Mark is employed and has two young children from his previous relationship. Since the separation from his partner a year ago, Mark has faced considerable emotional turmoil. His upbringing in a family that emphasised emotional restraint made it difficult for him to express his feelings openly. Mark had always envisioned being an involved father, but being denied regular access to his children left him feeling powerless and overwhelmed, increasing his anxiety and feelings of inadequacy.

The Problem

Following the relationship breakdown, Mark's mental health began to deteriorate. He had symptoms of anxiety, including racing thoughts, insomnia, and panic attacks, as well as depressive symptoms such as hopelessness, withdrawal from social activities, and difficulty concentrating at work. Mark's distress intensified when he was only able to see his children sporadically, leading to feelings of guilt and fear of being perceived as an unfit father. Despite previous attempts to seek help through a few online support groups and self-help resources, Mark found little relief. His emotional struggles began to affect his work performance, further contributing to his sense of isolation and despair.

Response To The Problem

At The Stress Project, Mark engaged in psychodynamic counselling, which allowed him to explore the underlying emotions and unconscious patterns stemming from both his childhood and recent experiences. The therapeutic process involved 26 weekly sessions where Mark was encouraged to articulate his feelings about the separation and its impact on his identity as a father. Short-term goals focused on reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression, while long-term goals aimed to help Mark develop healthier coping mechanisms, enhance his emotional expression, and promote a more positive self-image as a parent. The sessions also encouraged Mark to reflect on his relationship dynamics and identify patterns that could inform his future interactions.

Outcome

By the end of the counselling program, Mark showed significant improvements in his mental health. Using the CORE34 OM questionnaire, his scores reflected a marked decrease in psychological distress, indicating increased emotional functioning and a greater sense of well-being. Data was collected through regular feedback sessions and self-assessments, where Mark reported feeling more in control of his

emotions and equipped to handle the challenges of shared parenting.

"I find strength in my emotions and feel that each challenge makes me more resilient."

Conclusion

Mark's experience at The Holloway Neighbourhood Group highlights the profound impact of counselling in addressing emotional distress related to relationship breakdowns and parental challenges. Through the therapeutic process, he has made substantial progress in managing his anxiety and depression, leading to a more hopeful outlook on his role as a father.

Our Stats



107 referrals



186 people accessed counselling services



2159 counselling sessions delivered

between 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024

Phone

020 7700 3938

Website

www.stressproject.org.uk

Address

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