

GAMH Later Life Matters South

Case study April 2015

Impact of Befriending, Mindfulness and Complimentary Therapies

Background

Joe (name changed) is a 65 year old man who was referred to the South Later Life Matters project by his Clinical Neuropsychologist as a result of:

- episodes of low mood related to physical ill health
- feelings of isolation
- lack of confidence

A planned knee replacement operation, at that time, delayed his access to the service. However, after a period of recovery from the knee replacement, he was able to start with the befriending service and then went on to take part in the Mindfulness course and also received Complementary Therapies.

Joe described himself as isolated, having lost his sense of value. At first, he was reluctant to see anybody and took a while to build a trusting relationship with the project Coordinator. Joe is a retired professional who has had a number of on-going physical health difficulties such as:

- chronic heart disease
- osteoarthritis
- high blood pressure
- eczema

After he retired, he had gained a lot of weight which made him feel **“embarrassed to meet people”** and as a result he stayed home very often. A breakdown in the relationship with his wife also caused him to feel stressed and alone. Joe has three children, all living in London, and he only has short telephone conversations with them.

Impact of befriending

Joe was matched with an experienced volunteer befriender in July 2014. To get to know each other, they began by meeting at a local café near Joe's home, along with the project Coordinator. Joe stated that he was feeling **“very nervous nights before the meeting”** as he would be **“meeting and talking to a stranger”**. He wondered what they would have in common and what they would talk about. However, Joe quickly felt relieved and enjoyed the chat with the befriender, despite coming from very different backgrounds. They agreed to meet every two weeks once they had gotten to know each other a little better and Joe felt more confident.

Joe stated that it has been a **'perfect match'** with the befriender as they share similar values. He explained that:

“The befriender not only gave me the support that I needed but has also opened my eyes to see things from a different perspective”

Joe said that the fortnightly meetings with the befriender have been **“refreshing”** and have been the major factor in helping him:

“get back to my old determined self”

After a few months of using the befriending service, Joe started attending a weight control programme where he meets with a group of people once a month. He is now walking 20,000 steps a day and has been recording his everyday calorie intake. He has:

“lost five stones in weight and eight inches from my waist so far”

This accomplishment has helped him to rebuild his confidence and find himself again. He attributes being able to attend the course to the support of his befriender.

Impact of Mindfulness Course

As a result of receiving support from the Later Life Matters South project, Joe feels better able to talk to people he doesn't know;

“I don't feel so strange around people I don't know”

He said that he had surprised himself by enjoying meeting with the people at the Mindfulness course, and in the weight control programme, who share similar health problems. He has also just registered with a gym, which he is attending twice per week, where he aims to meet new people and keep his weight and health in control.

Using the Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory, Jim answered some questions about how he felt before and after the course and the scores were as follows:

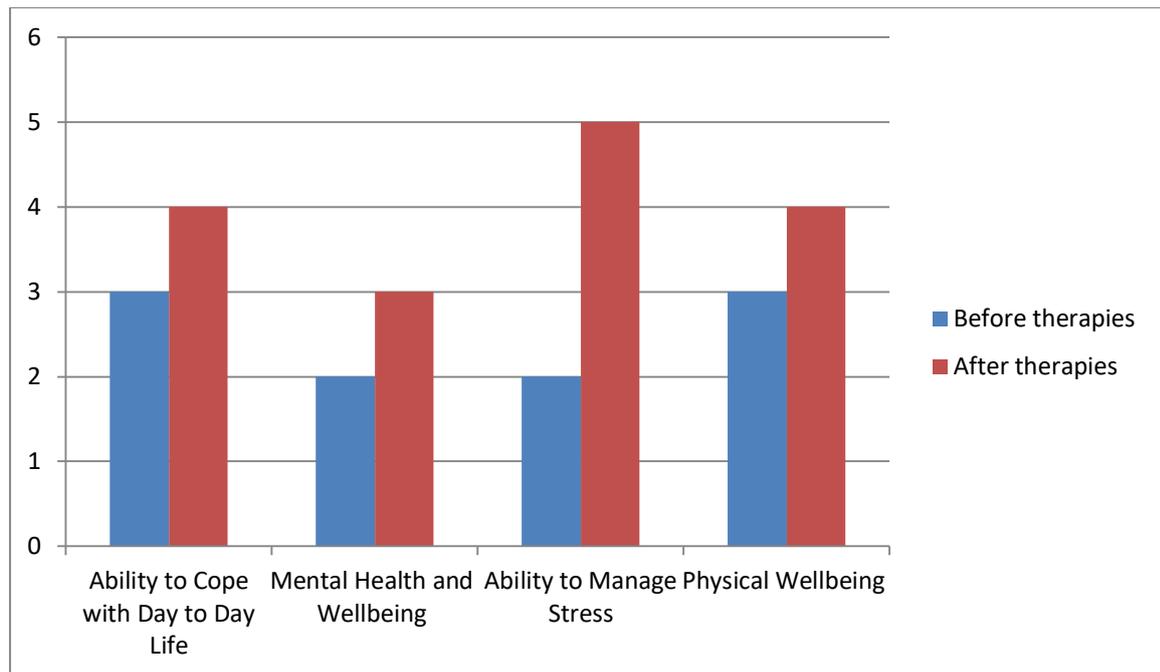
	Joe's Score	Highest Possible Score
Before the Mindfulness	37	56
After the Minfulness	46	56

Joe credits feeling **“a good bit better”** to attending the Mindfulness course. Joe also said that he continues to practice the techniques that he learned at the course. He finds it:

“helpful in directing my focus on things”

Something he felt he had lost since his breakdown.

Impact of Complimentary Therapies



Lack of sleep was also a major problem for J. Staff gave J some information about the positive effect complimentary therapies can have on sleep. At first, J had been a reluctant to try the therapies but was encouraged by staff to give it a try. J experienced a reduction in medication as a result of receiving the six sessions of complimentary therapies as well as having an improved sleep pattern:

“I took only one pain reliever instead of eight and I am much calmer”

On his final evaluation form, Joe asserted that the project is:

“an excellent alternative to medicine”.

Joe also stated that the service has been excellent. He said he **“wishes he had known about it sooner”**. At present, staff are working with Joe and the volunteer towards a planned ending. Joe said that he feels prepared for the ending and is:

“confident that I can move on with my life”