

#ENDTHESTIGMA

**time to change**

let's end mental health discrimination

**CHAMPIONS**

**POETRY BOOK**

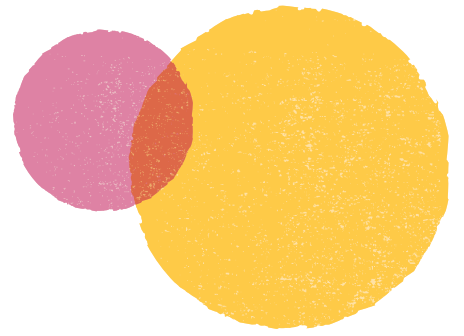
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# INTRODUCTION



**Hello there,**

We really hope that you enjoy our poetry book, but before you get stuck into reading the fabulous poems that await you, we thought you might be interested to know that this anthology of original poems is created by Time to Change Champions with lived experience of mental health problems. This book was produced during the COVID-19 lockdown as Time to Change hubs (towns and cities) across England rapidly transitioned to operating fully online as we continued our work towards ending mental health stigma and discrimination. Four hubs in particular (Birmingham, Kingston, Warrington, and York) began talking and soon enough our idea was born...

We decided to use the voice of Time to Change Champions up and down the country to produce a video recital of a mental health stigma poem to share during mental health awareness week 2020 which at the time was only six weeks away. We needed to quickly choose a poem and thoughts were sparked around any existing poems that we could use.

Time to Change York Champion Lauren Ruddock had written and performed her own "Time to Change" poem at a mental health open mic night in York just weeks before lockdown was officially announced and ultimately that was the poem that was used to create our national poetry video and inspired the rest of this book. Lauren's "Time to Change" poem is the first poem shared in this book and the Time to Change Champions recital video can be viewed on YouTube <https://youtu.be/gpgemAzFQCI>.

We know from our own experience, as well the experiences of fellow Time to Change Champions, that reading, writing, and listening to poetry can be a fantastic way to share messages which have the aim to end mental health stigma and discrimination. All of the poems that you are about to read have been written by Time to Change Champions and we hope that you are as moved as we were when you read these incredible pieces of work.

We give huge thanks all of the Champions who have taken part in the production of this book. Please visit the Time to Change website **[www.time-to-change.org.uk](http://www.time-to-change.org.uk)** if you would like to find out more about our work to end mental health stigma and discrimination.

Thanks for reading,

**Andrew, Persephone, Jayne and Emma**  
from Time to Change Birmingham, Kingston,  
Warrington, and York



# A MESSAGE FROM JO LOUGHRAN, DIRECTOR OF TIME TO CHANGE

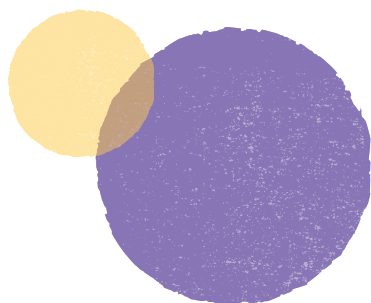
Wordsworth called poetry “the spontaneous overflow of feelings” while Robert Frost believed poetry came “when an emotion has found its thought and the thought has found words”. Poetry, as a mode of expression, allows us to communicate something about our inner lives and our being that is often impossible through any other medium.

At Time to Change, we believe that sharing our lived experiences of mental health problems is important: it is a way to communicate with others, and ultimately to help to break down the stigma around mental health problems.

That’s why we are delighted to present this collection of poems by our Champions across the country. Poets, from Emily Dickinson to Sylvia Plath, from John Clare to Edgar Allan Poe, have often dealt more or less directly with themes of mental distress and mental ill-health.

The poems in this collection deal with a wide range of experiences, often in challenging terms and frequently with startling eloquence and power. But they all share one common aim: to express what it is like to have a mental health problem, and to show the person who lives behind the diagnostic labels and stigmatising terms.

We hope that these poems will be shared far and wide, as a way to continue our mission of breaking down the stigma faced by those of us with mental health problems.



## TRIGGER WARNING

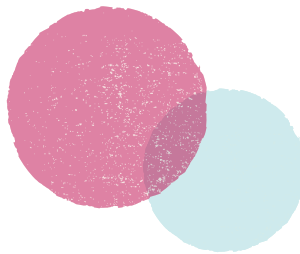
**Champions share some of their own lived experience of mental health problems within their poems and some content may be triggering for readers. If you feel uncomfortable with anything you read please stop reading and look after yourself.**

**You can access further support through the services listed on the Time to Change website. <https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/mental-health-and-stigma/help-and-support>**

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# MESSAGE FROM LAUREN

## Time to Change Champion, York

Firstly, wow! When I wrote the 'Time to Change' poem in early 2020, it helped me to express how the Time to Change movement was impacting me and also allowed me to directly challenge stigma within the poem. The poem itself was inspired by the passion and energy in the room at York Champions meetings. I have performed the poem at an open mic in late January 2020, receiving an incredible response.

So when York coordinator Emma asked if she could put this poem forward for the collaboration in Mental Health Awareness Week, it was a huge surprise!

Happy reading!

## TIME TO CHANGE

### Lauren Ruddock, York



Stop and think  
Think about how you talk to me  
How you talk to him or her  
Don't hate or discriminate  
Just because you can't see illness  
Doesn't mean it's not there  
Their pain is real  
Struggle so valid  
They aren't just a problem  
Not an attention seeker  
Not creating drama or making it up

They're as ill as a child with food poisoning  
Or the rugby player with a broken arm  
You wouldn't tell them to just  
"Man up"  
"Get over it"  
"Keep your chin up"  
You can see their illness  
You treat them the same  
So why treat someone who has inside pain,  
like in the brain  
Depression  
Anxiety  
They aren't just this or that  
They are people too, remember that

Their illness doesn't change them  
Nor does it change their skills, competence  
or ability  
All it seems to do is add labels  
Diagnosis seems to be the chequered flag for  
discrimination and stigma to begin  
Treated differently because their illness is invisible  
But why?

It's time to change  
Change how you think  
Change how you act  
People like me, we're the same as you  
Just like if you had flu  
Yes we've been or might be still ill  
But treat us the same as we would you

Change your prejudice  
Learn about mental illness  
We don't choose this illness  
Why would we?  
It hurts and its pain  
Then to be attacked by you and your words  
Makes us feel so much worse

So for you we think it's time  
Time for you to change.

## I'VE BEEN PUSHED DOWN SO MANY TIMES

**Alisha Spencer, Durham**

I've been pushed down so many times I  
think maybe this will be the last.  
As I lie here, I feel like I'm fading.  
My memories are invading.  
The pressure of surviving is building,  
As I lie here on the cold floor,  
I don't have the strength to get up  
anymore.

But I will, I will rise.  
I'll keep fighting I will survive.  
Every day might be a struggle, but I'll push  
through.  
There's so much to live for, both old and  
new.  
I'll find the strength to push my-self up.  
I WILL SURVIVE.

## ANXIETY AND ADHD

**Laura Hasluck**

Living with Anxiety and ADHD  
Is extremely hard for me  
Every time I communicate  
I end up in such a state  
Trying to say what I want and need  
Is such a very hard deed  
The pain I feel deep inside  
Is very hard for me to hide  
The words can all come out wrong  
And then it's not too long  
Before I'm back to being alone  
With no friends and back at home.

## I'M A LITTLE BIT OCD

**Andrew Ewen**

OCD, does that involve cleaning and fidgeting  
with the light?

You hear this simplistic question, from people  
who are supposed to be bright.  
It is actually one of the most complexed and  
debilitating disorders around.

Some of us struggle in silence, keeping our  
problems to ourselves and barely making a sound.

When someone has OCD, it can control a person.  
These false stereotypes and stupid myths will  
cause people's understanding to worsen.

For suffering goes so much deeper than what  
people can see.

Think before you voice your opinions and belittle  
a devastating disorder;

By saying I'm a little bit OCD.

## STIGMA

**Karen Read, Worcestershire**

Speak again of kindness and patience.  
Talk and listen together.  
I am just like you.  
Go away the platitudes and  
unconsidered reactions.  
Mental Health is as important as  
Physical Health.  
Accept that we can challenge  
Stigma together.

## BREATHE IN - BREATHE OUT



**Sabrina Phillips**

Breathe in - breathe out -  
Four times - count it now -  
You did it wrong - now start again -  
*It's all for them - it's all for them.*

Bad letters - worst thoughts -  
Frozen while my mind contorts -  
My fingers touched - I'll start again -  
*It's all for them - it's all for them.*

A decade on - a lot has changed -  
I'm more open to talk about what's going on  
inside my brain -  
I'm not alone - I'm not ashamed -  
*I've broke the chain - I've broke the chain.*

But that doesn't mean to say -  
my obsessions and compulsions are locked away  
I've come to realise the following is true -  
OCD, you haven't got me - but I've got you.

## ANGELS OF THE NORTH AND SOUTH

**Brian Turner, Ipswich**

Angels of the north and south,  
Help us out.  
Angels of the east and west,  
Do your best,  
Let me do the rest.

## MENTAL HEALTH

**Abbie Timbey, Durham**

You make so many of us feel so mad at the world  
You make our views of this world so blurred

You make 1-4 of us feel so lonely and isolated  
You make so many of us believe that we have  
been defeated

You affect a quarter of the UK's population,

You take away one life every 40 seconds,  
2160 lives per day  
This makes me ask why don't we have our say

How do you make society believe this is  
acceptable  
This society makes so many of us so susceptible

Many of us want to speak out about this

But society has made it so hard for mental  
health to be taken seriously  
We only ever hear about a suicide if it is a  
celebrity

People think teenage years and early adulthood  
is such a breeze  
But if that's the case why are so many young  
lives being taken away by this horrible disease

Mental health isn't attention seeking it's a  
serious issue for so many of the population

We need to stand together and be kind

We need to talk about this and raise awareness  
about mental health

If your suffering from mental health speak up as  
you will never be alone

We can beat this together.





## I AM

### Helen Wilson

I am the burden, the numbness, the pain  
I am the tearful, the restless, the weak

The alarm clock screeches and I ask myself why,  
My limp body hangs, as heavy as my mind,  
Sinking into the mattress, or maybe I'm pushed?  
Either way, there's no change, no chance,  
no surprise.

I am the darkness, the problem, the cause  
I am the hopeless, the lonely, the wrong

Curled up in defence, with no attacker in sight  
I struggle to see clearly and I thrash out and scream  
My head is pulled downward, or maybe I'm forced?  
Either way, the tears come, the pain floods, I  
give up.

I am the downer, the frowner, the weight  
I am the issue, the fragile, the lost

Suffocated by my mind, my thoughts spiral round  
Exhaustion all over, held hostage by myself  
I can't stop the torture, or maybe I can?  
Make it stop for an hour? A minute? A day?

For I am the fighter,  
and for now,

I am free.

## WITHOUT YOU

### Pauline M Ruth, Halton

Walking.

The sound of empty footsteps  
echoing through the dim light that is  
night. Night of my hopes, my fears.  
Tears, through the dimness  
glisten, purity cleansing the anguished mind  
for a space in time.

The all-healing, all-powerful, be all and  
end all - time.

Silence but for the far distant  
monotonous tone of a timepiece,  
rigidly marking away life. Silence -  
soothing, permissive, conducive to thought.  
Deadly capacity of the human race -  
the innate ability to  
think.

Think! Hours spent in apparent tranquillity.  
Meditation - the path to despair.  
Why? Why is it so?

Unfairness - injustice - names bandied around  
a feeling.

Deep, deep, in my self lies a  
nothingness, hollow, empty only to  
be completed one imaginary day  
when you return.

Hope is never lost; mislaid during  
the tortuous period when life halts,  
but regained centimetre by centimetre  
when reason takes its hold.

Still tears drop, uselessly.

People look, hazy shapes through  
the damp coloured curtain, but in  
ignorance. Concern? Their faces betray  
their timidity and so  
they pass, wandering along life's  
hazardous route, leaving the  
tears and the pain behind to  
one who knows.

# TO YOU, THE GIRL WITH THE BLUE HAIR

**Yvette Dukanovic, Birmingham**

To you; the girl with the blue hair and her daughter in the pram.  
Be kind to yourself and don't let your anxiety take control.

Be kind to yourself and recognise your worth.  
You've got this and you don't have to justify your hurt.

Your feelings are valid and they mean so much but take them as they are.  
Some more than others can cause you worry whilst the rest can lay safe in your heart.

A fear of being misunderstood; smiling on the outside but what's inside, worry about things every day.  
Don't let these thoughts overtake your mind and believe that people will stay.

Walking into the room, staying out of sight please don't think her rude.  
She may look towards you without always a smile but believe that she's not in a mood.

The anxious thoughts are swirling and taking a hold.  
She'd like to talk to you but it feels so bold.

Worry to say the wrong thing...  
Worry to say nothing at all.

Feelings of guilt for not giving enough, not interacting as everyone else.  
Her mind playing tricks and making her feel that it's best just to keep to herself.



So to you; the girl with the blue hair and her daughter in the pram, please take care of you.  
When you feel the anxiety rising up, just stop for a deep breath or two.

What you're doing is great so don't let it be that you bring yourself down for what you do.  
Be true to yourself and always be proud to be you.

You're struggling, you're coping every day; fighting this anxiety in your own way.  
Be kind to yourself, please do remember, so to push negative thoughts away.

It's not suffering though, with this mental illness, just managing it day by day.  
Although it can be difficult to keep anxious thoughts at bay.

Kindness matters to everyone, including me; the girl with the blue hair and her daughter in the pram.  
I can't wait around for it to come; I must be kind to myself and take care to love who I am.



# THE HELPLINE TELEPHONE OPERATOR

## Anonymous

The Helpline Telephone Operator - answering all calls both day and night,  
Signposting, and referring,  
Into the darkness bringing light,  
Keeping apart yet bridging the gap,  
Offering support by having a chat.  
Making a contribution to our great nation's **WELLBEING**;  
In this time of isolation,  
Confusion and fear.

Even those established in **RECOVERY** are feeling the strain,  
Without their usual support  
They're plunged back into pain.  
The Helpline's a Lifeline to maintain some connection,  
When restrictions are over  
We'll resume full interaction.

We are all heroes on Mental Health's Frontline,  
'Super' ones at that,  
Each having but one super power, it's  
'The Best We Can'.  
Crisis **PREVENTION** is what we're aiming for,  
Or trying to embody kindness and understanding  
Just a little bit more.

Working in **PARTNERSHIP** with our great NHS,  
United in our efforts to relieve mental distress.  
The whole world is in meltdown, an unprecedented situation,  
For us,  
An opportunity,  
For much greater love and compassion.

Our team is diverse, yet we all get along,  
Still learning as we go  
But our values are strong.  
**RESPECT** is the best.  
The noblest we serve.

Colleague and team leader,  
Partner and volunteer,  
With back-up support,  
We're all in it together,  
And we're answering every Call.



## THREE FACES

### Tom Edwards, Halton Champions

Hope escapes and my mind burns out,  
One tear, one pain, three faces.  
Lost pride looks back and I shout,  
Loneliness looks out from empty spaces,  
Offering me guilt, drawing me thin,  
Withered, the third face lets no light in.

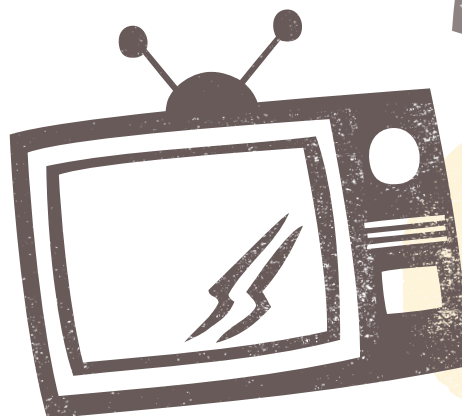
## MEDIA

### Faaizah Mayet, Kirklees

Lights flickering, TV shining  
Blonde girl with the tear marks and red lips smile  
She's quirky and fun and her brightness is blinding  
"That's not what depression looks like"  
I say from my spot on the sofa  
With fingernails scratching over a single line  
A line that hasn't disappeared so far

Gunshots, screams and tears  
But there's only one thing everyone hears  
"He has a mental illness"  
There's a quiet, a fearful stillness  
The world now believes we are monsters  
Don't you see how it is in the papers?  
I ask "Is that person like me?"  
Am I filled with this violence I can see?

Or am I filled with the flowers of grief?  
Curling, unfurling like an autumn leaf  
As the blue shades close in - suffocating  
My heart jumps, I am barely breathing  
Only just surviving and smiling  
Every social interaction leaving me recharging  
Because I don't want people to see anything



I don't want them to align me with the man with a gun  
Or the monsters creeping through the streets  
"I promise I'm fun"  
I speak through gritted teeth  
As I cover the stained colours bleeding through my soul  
My life is a masquerade - full of pretending  
But don't we all have to pretend we're whole?  
We are all one and the same - creatures surviving.

## TAMING THE FEAR

### Zena Hockley, East Essex



Out of nowhere anxiety seems to find its way  
Penetrating my body and mind making me stay  
My thoughts rant and rave attempting control  
There's no easy escape, it will take its toll!

My heart beating loudly consumes all sound  
Still the uninvited guest keeps coming around  
The air gets harder to reach making me weak  
Tears fill my eyes as safety is all they seek

Boldly standing with anxiety face-to-face  
I'm caged with it now and locked in place  
Panic sets in as I fear there's nowhere to go  
An inner voice mocks "Why does fear grip you so?"

Breathing deeply through a rhythm of replies  
Resigning casually anxiety stops with the lies  
Drawing on all my strength to tame the fear  
Weakened but triumphant, nothing more to see here.

# TORNADO

**Jamie Lee Curry, Blackpool**

While my head was a tornado tearing through my life

It was loud so loud

It was dark, grey and heavy

Unconsciously isolating

It was fast everything spun around so fast

Confusing everything in its path

It was exhausting like trying to swim against the ever persistent tide pushing me backwards

Then came the colourful waves of elation and relentless explosions of ideas

And untameable jubilation

The super powers of endless energy no need for sleep

The arrogant outspokenness

I heard the usual "You're mad" "you're crazy" "that's insane"

And for a while I take it like a compliment and it feeds my energy

Until those words merge with the others and they become endless loops saying "stupid" over and over!  
Playing all the negatives that I have ever heard about myself and "stupid" gets stuck like it's an old  
scratched record, repeating...

Then there was calm

I caught a rope someone threw out for me and I fought to hang on.

I clung to the rope knowing that I had a choice; to let go, which at the time felt like the easier option, or  
to keep holding on and learn how to deal with the tornado that liked to tear through my life.

While I was clinging onto the rope I was learning to deal with having a tornado in my head I could see  
how isolated I had become.

I could see I had been treading water for a long time before someone threw me a life line, until someone  
listened and wanted to understand.

I chose to learn as much as I could about how to tame the tornado

How to listen for the warning signs of its return and how to enjoy the calm times.

I learned to live with the tornado visiting me but also learned not to give it the destructive power it  
once had.

I made plans and back up plans and plans if the backup plan failed, to steer me to safety upon the  
tornados return and they worked. They still work.

Now I look for the people out there dealing with their own tornados. So I can throw them a rope and  
listen and hope that they too learn to tame their own tornados.

# KEEP CALM AND CARRY ON

## Cate Kelly

Step one: breathe  
Step two: focus on the physical  
Step three: hum La Vie en Rose  
Step four: swallow that small white pill  
Step five: it will pass

Tick tock  
Tick tock  
It will pass  
Keep calm  
And carry on  
Tick tock  
Ba-boom ba-boom  
Pulse pulse pulse pulse  
One day  
It will be okay  
There's a light at the end of the tunnel  
This too shall pass  
Keep calm and carry on

My pulses pass in packets of pills and I ask myself  
How many?  
How many  
More times do I have to swallow it down?

They say the small things make the big things happen  
But how many times do I swallow down the small things  
Before the big things start happening

How many more times do I swallow the 'little' things?  
Do I hold them back?  
Do I white and bite my knuckles before it's only scars left

Keep calm and carry on

That putrid despicable idiom is toted around on mugs and bags in windows and on pillows  
Manipulated to cutesy and not-so-funny and not once  
Has it made sense to me?

Keep calm and carry on  
It's very difficult to do the latter when everything you've got is on the former.  
It's very difficult to carry on with normal life  
When there's a cloud above your head with that big word on it for no-one to see.

Keep calm and carry on



Another day another pill

Step one: breathe  
Step two: focus on the physical  
Step three: hum La Vie en Rose  
Step four: swallow that small white pill  
Step five: it will pass  
Step six: it will pass  
Step seven: it will pass  
Step eight:  
Nine:  
Ten  
Eleven  
Twelve  
491  
492  
Step 493: I think it might have passed.

## WRITING A POEM ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

**Grant Cawley, Cardiff**

Writing a poem about mental health is something I thought I'd never achieve,  
Yet here I am, biro in hand and rolling up my sleeve.  
As I roll the sleeve up, metaphorical scars or not, begin to show,  
A quivering hand, the faster heart and a sinking feeling below.  
A spider web of thoughts makes its bed in my head,  
With a deep, visceral sense of dread.

I was happy an hour ago, watching my fat cat chase a butterfly,  
Or an hour before that watching my brother swear at his stir-fry.  
But now I'm a mess with no sense of direction,  
A translucent man in my own reflection.  
The phone vibrates and my stomach churns,  
Is it the stir-fry earlier or maybe it's worms..  
Or maybe it's the anxiety I feel before picking up the phone,  
Then placing it down hoping they think nobody's home.  
Texting is easier, I can take longer to reply,  
Rather than awkward pauses and dead air which kills me inside.

Then I start to think and I interrupt the mind,  
I rewind the tape and see what I can find,  
When I'm feeling like this I am totally blind,  
But the burden of responsibility helps ease the grind.  
These kind thoughts get to the best of us, they try to deceive,  
So I put down the pen and roll up the other sleeve.



## A KIND WORD

### Charlotte Hale

I thought the other day when I woke feeling sad  
That my dreams were shattered had I gone mad  
Mental Health can be no fun sometimes  
A valley to walk a mountain to climb  
So my story starts with this a simple summer's day  
When everything was perfect until the sky turned grey.

When troubled by emotions deep within my soul  
The way out seems to be my future and my goals  
I use to think that I wasn't worthy of anything at all  
But as time has passed I realise I am cool.  
Now I work on mindfulness and positive emotions  
I don't just think of medicine and all those different potions.

When I am unwell I do my best to tell someone  
Or before I know it I won't know who I am  
If I don't ask for help as soon as I am getting ill  
The doctor will have a task giving me more pills  
The home treatment team will arrive daily on time  
I in future will remember to tell someone I'm not fine.

People get to a stage where their illness they can manage  
People get to know what signs to look for something to salvage  
Time is a healer or so they say, yet my body is not healing today  
Such different days to deal with but writing helps the pain  
A poem or two to dull the aching loneliness again

There so much to enjoy even outside with the stigma there  
We have to be brave and give them all a glare  
If people put us down I've learnt a simple code  
We all go to the toilet we are all the same any road  
This makes me smile inside a giggle on my face  
I know I'm quite naughty but it helps when I'm in that place.

Stigma we will fight and we will win the war  
They may win the battle but we are stronger more and more  
For when we stand our ground and admit yes my mind fails me sometimes  
I see that everyone will reach out their hand  
I see that deep down they would like to understand  
I will start another day and put a smile again upon my face  
And know I have support and the world will be a better place.







## I'M TRAPPED IN MY SAFE PLACE

**Lyndsey Rowell, Durham**

So alone yet I feel the busyness outside  
Everything continues as normal while I'm sat  
here alone with tears down my face

Over my front door lies a world of fear  
Multiple scenarios that could go wrong  
judgemental stares from people who don't  
understand that in order to do basic human  
tasks I need to be strong

Mum and dad wish I was normal that I could  
just get out  
There forcing me to walk down the street  
little do they know their daughter is worn-out

All I need is a helping hand someone who  
will take the time help me when I leave this  
house and stand by me and show me the  
hidden beauty I need to fulfil

For I will not let agoraphobia ruin my  
future goal eventually I will be able to take  
back control.

## LIFE SEEMS BAD

**Lesley Caulkin, Durham**

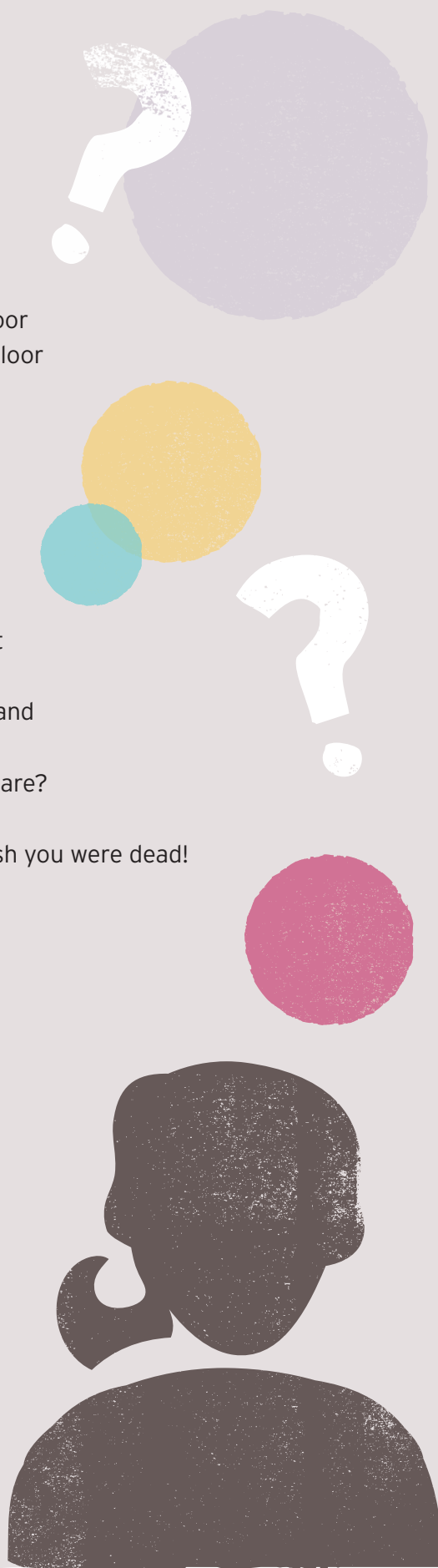
Life seems bad  
I don't see the bright, the good  
I can get like that  
No matter how hard I try the darkness wins  
Things as simple as the toast being burnt  
makes me cry  
The days take forever to go by  
Feeling trapped in a place I wanna leave  
Thoughts/ideas keep me wide awake no matter  
how tired I'm  
No energy to leave my safety my room  
everything becomes a challenge  
Life will get better  
Maybe not any time soon  
It may be a few weeks, months  
But I will see the brightness  
My friends and family are with me  
So many people care  
I will fight for my future  
If you're struggling  
Reach out talk so many people will care.



**HER**

**Lynn Lewis, Durham**

I saw her again today, the young girl in black  
I wonder why her clothes and life, in colour they lack  
The many colours that should fill every person's life  
not the darkness, the worry, the trouble and strife  
The anxiety that's triggered when she walks out the door  
the depression, on the bus, she keeps her eyes to the floor  
Frantically comparing herself to everyone there  
her body, her smile, her clothes, her hair  
Some see her as fragile, an empty shell  
but she's strong and fighting her own living hell  
She secretly whispers to me one dark day  
I really need help but I don't know the way  
My head and my heart won't let me reach out  
because I know people will judge me and single me out  
I tried to reason that there was help on hand  
but she'd shrunk so much in life she simply couldn't stand  
The questions, the probing, the judging stare  
why should I open my heart to someone who doesn't care?  
How can I help you the Gentleman said?  
antidepressants? I don't prescribe them unless you wish you were dead!  
Counselling? I'll refer you but there is a long list  
there's people worse than you, do you get the gist?  
As she walked home I looked at her face  
the hurt, the pain, the feelings of disgrace  
Her thoughts were loud, they made me cry  
I don't want to live but I don't want to die  
Please somebody listen the pain I can't bear  
I'll try one last time to see if someone does care  
I helped her along held her up in anyway  
And gradually with help she began to say  
Maybe there'll be a day when I want to smile  
But baby steps are best not running the mile  
The struggles been hard for that girl of 20  
I admire her courage and strength, she has plenty  
Not everyday is amazing she still fears the dark day  
But 'This too will pass' I often hear her say  
We've become inseparable, firm friends we'll be  
for the rest of our lives because that girl is me.



# STEP INSIDE: KINDNESS TO SELF

**Debbie Brewin**

Leave Fear and Dread at the door  
And step inside....  
Inside is the safety of a warm embrace  
The river of purpose  
And the calm flow of peace  
Leave Conflict and Abuse at the door  
And step inside....  
The rising roar of tidal waves  
Give rise to frothy foam that tumbles  
Sinking into soft golden sands.  
Leave Pain and Fatigue at the door  
And step inside...  
Seek out all sensations  
In the corners of each sinew  
Touching lightly: curious and kind.  
Leave Sorrow and Sadness at the door  
And step inside....  
The soothing swell of belly breaths  
Providing comfort- raising spirits  
Giving life to memories of good things.  
Allow Hope to tiptoe through the cracks

Of broken windows  
Reflected shards - sparkling kaleidoscopes -  
The rich colours of experience.  
Let Joy burst through the door  
And open out....  
Bathe in the glory of your beautiful self  
On the inside...reaching out.



# MORNING HAS BROKEN, BUT WILL IT BREAK ME? NO!

**Daniel Taylor-Lund**

Morning has broken, but will it break me? No!  
I wish I had a magic wand to make us all feel fine  
I wish I had a magic wand to appreciate what's mine,  
I wish I had a magic wand to remind us we're ok  
I wish I had a magic wand to make me want to stay,  
A magic wand I do not have, but experience I do  
I've been here before, it does get better, I can't ignore what's true!  
We must believe, we must have faith, we must be strong, we must be kind, we must look  
after ourselves.  
We are not alone, we are not alone!  
Every life has so much meaning & by helping ourselves we are helping those around us -  
this may not change the world, but it will change the world for us and them!  
We are part of a much bigger picture and that picture needs us - your picture needs you!  
Breathe & believe.

# INSIDE A YOUNG MAN LIES A WORRIED MIND

**Matthew Polson, Warrington**

Inside a young man lies a worried mind  
His search for the balanced life he is trying to find  
After graduating with an honour's degree  
He is dealing with problems he is trying to flee  
He craves the primary school life he once had  
And is now in search for a new fad  
An obsession over cartoons he used to watch  
Trying to replace it with something that's top notch  
His inability to sleep at night  
With particular nightmares he is having to fight  
He enjoys sports like Snooker and Darts  
Whilst listening to music that is in his top charts  
Constantly exercising through walks in the park  
To shake off feelings that create a spark  
A constant fear of involuntary noises  
Coping with his head that is full of voices  
With an enjoyment for going swimming in pools  
In order to ensure he is using the right life tools  
A certain inability to communicate that is fab  
This can sometimes make him very, very, sad  
A passion for learning about mental health  
Discovering some people are quite similar to himself  
Whichever way he navigates through life  
He hopes maybe someday he will have a wife  
But with every beginning comes a new chapter  
In order to ensure that he lives happily ever after.



## MY MEXICAN WAVE

**Mark Dale, East Essex**

Up and down that's my Mexican Wave  
My mood, my feelings my head  
Am I high or low or stable?  
Is my brain alive or dead?

The meds are ok  
I take them each day  
To help it go away  
But it wants to stay.

The Mexican Wave is how I cope  
No bipolar or manic depressive  
I change its name to give me hope  
I don't think it's too excessive.

I live my way with my Mexican wave  
Trying to keep well  
Sometimes it works and sometimes it don't  
But I try my best, oh what the hell!



# CROWSTONE POINT

**Sarah Reeson, East Essex**

Wings black marker, hammered deep in sand:  
point vast river ends, seaside begins.  
Without true history of waters past,  
all life is merely tidal, knowledge waived.

Self's shamed, black life, without marker held  
delineation absent: not one clue  
where painful darkness scores her starting line.  
All else past time, formation without act.

Fear death, quiet moments caught 'neath  
moving shale  
counts next inhale, perhaps last oxygen.  
Her mollusc heart expels sand's blood red surge  
momentum heeded, gravitation's pull.

Present unwavering, ten digits dip;  
water's cold knowledge transferred to hands.  
Dark, warped hunch: scarred, compact weight  
of grief.  
black shore dictates, mind cannot understand.

Emotion cumulus, see breeze relieves  
disintegrating strata, driftwood foam.  
Offshore thoughts switch tack to fill grey sails  
mark long-range forecast, thoughts  
becoming good.

Sleek, solitary black crow turns, tipping  
head askance, stares anguish back to life:  
let future's wings present stronger ascent.  
Her hope needs nothing more than confidence.



# SLIPPING THROUGH THE CRACKS

**Deborah Howard**

Slipping through the cracks, I wish I was dead.  
They may see my body, but not inside my head.

When will I ever be totally free?  
Will they ever see, the real person in me?

I pretend that I'm fine, I am not blue.  
But my heart it does lie, my head is untrue.

Loneliness, and I feel such despair.  
I cannot breathe, wish someone would care.

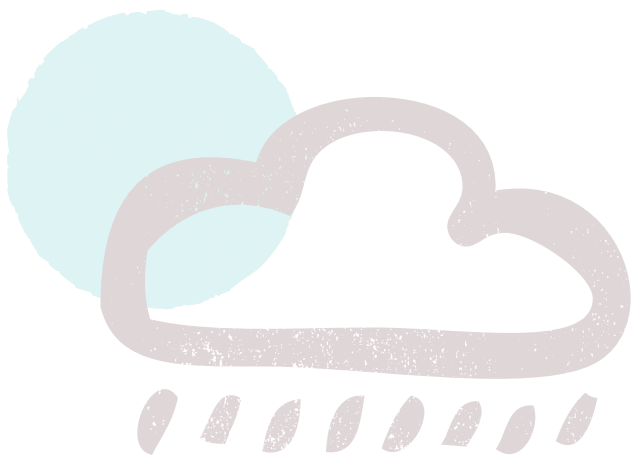
Who am I? Will I ever feel sun?  
Or am I through? Is my life all done?

Getting out of bed, face another day.  
Will these bad feelings and thoughts ever  
go away?

If I ended it now and no longer exist,  
Would they notice I'm gone, would I ever  
be missed?

I'll keep going, this pretence til I'm old,  
Or til no longer can fake and fight the untold.





## YOU STOP, YOU LOOK, YOU LABEL ME

**Fiona Robertson**

You stop, you look, you label me,  
A diagnosis - that's all you see.  
But I am so much more,  
And I am the same person I was before.  
I have talents and I have skills,  
But you look at me and see my ills.  
You laugh and joke about me,  
You think I can't cope, but I don't agree.  
For I am stronger than you know,  
I will bloom and I will grow.

I've suffered hate and felt the pain,  
My tears have fallen like the rain.  
You made me feel worthless, pathetic and small,  
When no-one was around to hear my call.  
I've endured years of discrimination,  
I've felt alone, in isolation.  
I've been called every name under the sun,  
To you it was a game, just a bit of fun.

Now times are changing,  
Still, a long way to go.  
People's eyes are opening,  
Where once they were closed.  
We are talking more than we ever did before,  
But we need to carry on, we could all be doing more.  
So, it's up to all of us to challenge discrimination,  
So that we can create a kinder nation.

## CHANGING TIDE

**Hannah Mason**

Dusk or dawn? They feel the same.  
The crashing waves, the echoing wind.  
Feeling each grain. Silencing the pain.

Friends chasing dreams,  
Dreams are chasing me.  
Each restless night, phone shining bright.

"Kill them with kindness," I said.  
But the kindness was killing me.  
Replaying conversations, my mind's invasions.

Piece by piece. The shattering glass breaks.  
Forming another shield in its place.  
Closing the gaps but can still feel the cracks.

I wish she learnt her lesson.  
So, I can stop doing the time.  
Scars on my soul, under her control.

I could have let it mould me,  
Instead I let it show me.  
With help, comes health.

Just like Jack,  
I fell down. My mind came tumbling after.  
The plea for change, turning the page.

It taught me love.  
It taught me patience.  
It turned me into a patient, "how are you feeling Miss Mason?"

An inner strength, a protected heart.  
Slowly relinquishing the gear of the dark.  
Branded a survivor, got the eye of a tiger.

The comeback kid, again and again.  
Fixing her broken crown.  
Released from her mind. Always remaining kind.

Dusk or dawn? I believe the change.  
The calming waves, the cooling wind.  
Feeling each grain, curing the pain.



# WHAT A ROLLER-COASTER

**Hannah Roberts**

What a roller-coaster ride we have survived,  
The up with down spinning around and around will this ride ever stop fed up of awaiting the big drop,  
BPD what are you doing to me?  
Once a little girl with a head full of dreams now replaced with a mind that constantly screams,  
whatever did I do to make me deserve you?  
I once dreamt of being a nurse now all I feel is your constant curse,  
Look after the sick and the vulnerable too but it's still not good enough I never will be for you,  
Caught in your grasp will I ever get free I just want back the happy old me, fight after fight you still  
control me, me, life and my family,  
Maybe one day you'll set me free but until then it's just me and you my BPD.

## HOPE

**Fabian Devlin, Kingston**

A glimmer in the gloom,  
An exit from the doom,  
A guiding light,  
To help with the fight:  
Hope.  
Allows you to cope,  
In the depths of despair,  
With your soul laid bare,  
Your brain hijacked,  
Your thoughts attacked,  
Your heart ripped out,  
You scream and shout,  
Hope.  
Keeps you afloat,  
Through raging seas,  
Through cries and pleas,  
When you feel defeated,  
Your energy depleted,  
When you've nothing left to give,  
No life left to live,  
Hope.  
There is always hope.

## WHAT DO YOU SEE?

**David, Kirklees**

What do you see when you look at me?  
Is it someone you think you will never be?  
Someone to be feared and named and shamed  
A failure to be stereotyped and blamed  
Mental, a nutter, bonkers, a freak  
These are words I hear people speak  
The things they say wound like a knife  
But I never chose this kind of life  
I think you need to understand  
The power you have in your hands  
To say the right thing, give respect  
And have a positive effect  
To know a different mental state  
And choose not to discriminate  
See the person before your eyes  
Don't be the one to stigmatise  
When all you need is empathy  
To build a bridge between you and me  
Words of kindness and compassion  
Will help to shape our interaction  
Maybe then we both will see  
We share some similarities  
After all it's not so strange  
To realise that it's Time to Change.

# BEAUTIFUL DECAY

Hikma Saleem, Brent, London

I was so close to losing myself today  
It's been hard when the only colour I see is grey  
Sometimes there are flashes  
Gold when my friends smile  
Blue when I look up at the sky  
Maybe one day the grey will go  
And I'll see purple and green and orange again  
I pray one day I can see the light again  
But for now I'll remind myself  
I can't give up just yet

But I'm sinking into the same hole again.  
Ripping out each limb, but like quicksand, I'm still sinking in.  
Desperately trying to claw my way out, to see some light,  
But the soil keeps falling, filling my mouth til I'm choking in the black, drowning in a sea, and I can't open  
my eyes for dirt.  
Maybe if I let go of the wall the weight will kill me faster.  
I'd rather that than another long fall to the bottom, unsure when I'll hit the ground, but sure it'll hurt  
more when I do.  
And I can't stand it hurting more than it already does.  
God, why is it more painful when it's light?  
None of the Sun's rays touch me, and I feel too warm when it's dark outside.  
It's so cold but the Sun is blinding me  
I can't stop shivering whilst people laugh and rejoice.  
The dark clouds understand me. They'll cover me up in this world so cold.  
Blanket me in a numbing balm, while the lightning strikes my skin.  
Make me feel anything other than this burning pain,  
Hitting me like lasers and stone-filled rain.  
I want to close my eyes and never open them again.  
Cause what do I do except let down another friend?  
I try to talk and smile but I'm so sick of this pretend.  
Sick of sitting and waiting for it all to end.  
Tired of gripping to the edge of this hole that I'm in.  
So this time I'll let go.  
I'll let the voices win.

These voices are thoughts swimming through my brain  
And I can't seem to control them  
I can't seem to hold them  
I can't seem to put a lid on them  
They just keep coming out  
In tears, in panic, in shaky breaths  
In these words that I write  
I don't even know what to write  
My mind keeps going  
But my pen is slowing

Why won't they let me feel the air on my skin?  
I feel so warm and so cold, the air's too thin  
Thin and musty and dusty  
And suffocating  
Suffocating what little light I had left to bring

I hope somehow, I'll be able to make  
Something wholly beautiful  
Something without the decay  
Or maybe one day I'll learn I can still be beautiful  
Even with the decay

This tightening in my chest  
It never hurts less  
Unless I squeeze a little harder  
But how hard do I press  
Before I make a mess  
Of my skin  
My hands trying to rid myself  
Of this pain  
That's more like a stain  
On my brain  
That will never come out  
No matter how many times its washed  
A rot in my heart  
A mark on my soul  
That grows and grows  
I wish I could throw it away  
But I don't seem to have any sway  
Over my actions, over the voices  
Over the red and the grey  
All I seem to do is decay  
A beautiful decay  
A life without hope or joy  
But filled to the brim with love and an ache



## SO THIS IS IT

**Andy Crisp, Cardiff**

So this is it.  
The baby we've dreamed of.  
Delivered safely.  
We're all in one piece.

Back home now.  
The tears won't stop.  
They're constant.  
Nothing stems the flow.

Trying everything.  
Distraction, Food, Sleep.  
On repeat.  
The tears continue.

Mama and baby finding their way.  
Getting familiar.  
But not for me, this fairy-tale.  
Reality bites hard.

A blast of fresh air, a drive in the car.  
Going anywhere, getting nowhere.  
Can't outrun reality.  
Or stem the tide of tears.

Rudderless, sinking.  
Bailing out with a broken bucket.  
In need of a lifeline.  
Phone a friend.

Help. At last.  
Relief.  
This IS reality.  
Parenting perfection, a myth.

Embracing the anxiety.  
Always learning.  
It's never far away.  
Yet familiarity breeds.... contentment.

## THINK BEFORE YOU SPEAK

**Lauren Ruddock, York**

Listen up  
Listen here  
You say you listen but you do not hear  
Speak when I'm speaking  
Talk over me  
Say that my illness  
Is a sort of nothingness  
Because there's nothing for you to see  
I've listened to what you've said  
Time and time again  
Always had some time for you  
Shame that you couldn't spend yours  
Hearing what I say to you.  
I hate my mental illness  
What it does to me  
But I do try to help myself  
Make myself feel happy  
Why can't you understand  
This mental illness doesn't make me insane  
In fact look here, into my face,  
I'm perfectly sane  
Invisible illness  
No I'm not mad  
Calling me mad, makes me feel sad  
Actually makes my illness worse  
So why not think before you have to backtrack  
and reverse  
Think of the pain you might cause  
Stigma and discrimination  
That's what you cause  
Good actions and attitude  
Speak louder than stigmatising words  
So think before you speak now  
Of the effects your words cause  
If there's nothing nice for you to say to me  
Why not say nothing at all  
Just be present, be here for us  
It's about all of us here, not just you.





# UNWELCOME INTRUSION

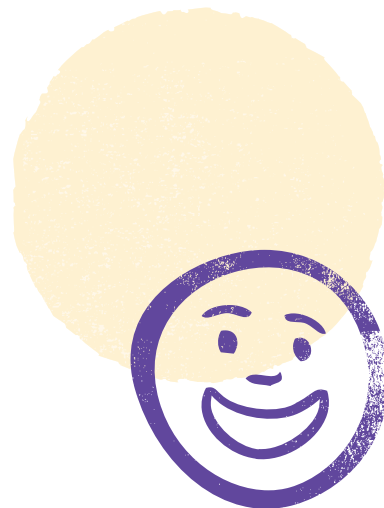
## Anonymous

My intrusive thoughts lead me to believe I am dying.  
I am plagued by the belief I am contaminated by germs, disease, an illness, a disorder,  
the feelings it provokes are terrifying  
and it wreaks havoc on my brain that was once in working order.  
I know my thoughts are illogical, but my brain is constantly on the defence.  
I understand germs will not kill me, the danger I feel isn't real,  
but the thoughts I have defy all common sense,  
like my brain forcing me to think that touching a door is an irreparable ordeal.  
I used to think compulsions were my best friend,  
but now I am stuck in a vicious cycle of unhealthy behaviour,  
sometimes it feels like a journey with no end  
so when I act on an obsession, it is momentarily my saviour.  
I stand at the sink, scrubbing, cleaning until it feels 'just right',  
often it is my only escape so for a moment,  
I am able to believe things will be alright,  
giving me a glimpse that my brain will not always be my opponent.  
It is not easy to resist the temptation,  
it can feel like an impossible feat,  
that's why there is such a need for communication and education,  
so people feel less alone, and the thoughts in our heads can lay in defeat.  
I understand it is hard for people to empathise  
when only my actions are seen and my thoughts are hidden,  
and I am just 'over exaggerating' in their eyes,  
but I feel misunderstood, shameful and guilt ridden.  
This should not be the case,  
we need to speak out,  
I need to feel as if I have a place  
and then like me, people stop having that seed of doubt.  
I need to hold the power, take control of my thoughts  
so I can find peace,  
be rid of this fraught,  
allowing the war in my brain to cease.  
I wish to not be tormented by an intrusive obsession,  
I will break from the chain  
and be free from a sense of oppression.  
It is then, I can finally begin to heal my pain.

## WE ALL GET LOST

**John Eastwood**

We all get lost  
Lose our way  
When you feel alone  
I'll be there, to lead you home  
When you come unravelled  
When the lights turn out  
When darkness calls you  
I'll be there, there to hold you  
Just look around  
I'm there beside you, standing by you  
Look around  
When the world lets go I won't let you fall  
I'll be there through it all  
When you fear tomorrow  
When you've done it all  
When you look back on your mistakes  
I'll be there, whatever it takes  
Just look around  
I'm there beside you, standing by you  
Look around  
When the world lets go I won't let you fall  
I'll be there through it all  
Look around  
I'm there beside you, standing by you  
Look around  
When the world lets go I won't let you fall  
Baby look around  
I'm there beside you, standing by you  
Look around  
When the world lets go I won't let you fall  
I'll be there through it all.



## IF YOU LOOK CLOSELY

**Vicky, York**

If you look closely,  
every now and then,  
that smile,  
that laughter,  
fades.

If you look closely,  
it's replaced with,  
sadness,  
hurt,  
pain.  
Broken.

After a few seconds,  
that smile,  
that laughter,  
returns.  
Turning up to work every day, standing  
in front of many.  
Carrying on.

If you look closely,  
you can see how fake  
that smile,  
that laughter is.  
Covering up  
sadness,  
hurt,  
pain.  
But still carrying on.





## IF I COULD SCHEDULE A DARK DAY

**Kyle Tovey**

If I could schedule a dark day, I'd know just what to do.  
The unexpected twists and turns, I'd warn the family and friends too.  
But of a schedule, a plan, a pending episode there is of course no hint  
When smiling, when ME, laughing hysterically...."Yes" I'm having a good stint.

If I could schedule a dark day no success would darkness mute.  
No self-inflicted limitations or boundaries would I compute.  
I'd feel the same as others or so I'd tell myself  
Those beaming faces full of light whose problems appear to be shelved.

If I could schedule a dark day it would no longer rule,  
deprive, suppress, transform, divide or take me for a fool.  
No second guesses would I make or doubt to self-apply  
I'd know the appointment would soon be over and relations it wouldn't destroy

If I could schedule a dark day, I'd shout it far and wide.  
No inflicted stigma would I fear or sudden change to hide.  
Needlessly fearing judgement, instead have trust that's blind,  
I'd be prepped and ready and not by a blip defined.

If I could schedule a dark day, I'd equip them with my mind.  
Share knowledge, heart, worries and know that by nature we all are kind.  
Sometimes they may misjudge, for fear or lack of time  
But if I could schedule, I'd stop and know  
There are more battles going on than mine.

Whilst we may not schedule, rehearse, practise or such.  
A wide embrace we can all set, to know that you're enough.

There is no need for stigma, no shame to burden should be underlined.

No we cannot schedule and no flicked switch will clear your mind  
But with talk, support and stigma crushed a way through the dark we'll find.

## I TRIED

**Zoe, Kingston**

You are not yourself,  
They said to my face.  
What has happened?  
What has gone wrong?

Nothing has happened,  
I tried to make clear,  
I've been feeling like this all along.

It's not all that bad,  
They said to my face.  
Be optimistic,  
Life can be good.

It's just how I'm wired,  
I tried to explain,  
I'd choose to if only I could.

Just smile - be happy,  
They said to my face.  
You have plenty,  
Plenty going for you.

It's more complex,  
I tried to express,  
I'm barely making it through.

Don't worry yourself,  
They said to my face.  
It'll pass,  
Give it time - you'll see.

It's out of my hands,  
I tried to explain,  
A part of being me.

Cheer up - chin up,  
They said to my face.  
You are smart,  
With your whole life ahead.

I appreciate that,  
I tried to express,  
I'm stuck in a whirlwind of dread.

If you were me,  
I said to their face.  
I would listen,  
Be patient and kind.

If you were me,  
You'd need countless allies,  
In the war against your mind.

## HELLO

**Elizabeth Campbell, Sunderland**

Mental health effects so many parts of every  
one's life, it does not judge the path you choose.  
It's like a fight in your head sometimes you win  
and sometimes you lose.

Losing can leave you with lifelong injuries and  
feeling insecure, its treatment you receive to  
make you feel safe and secure.



# MENTAL HEALTH STIGMA, DECADES ON

**Martin Hall, Kingston**

"Pull yourself together!!"

"If you weren't SO WEAK... !!!"

"You must need a lot of attention..."

"Nutter!"; "Header!"

No-one to talk to amid and about  
All the emotional, experiential pain,  
Social isolation, feelings of imposed shame.

Can't find a word to rhyme...  
Most of the time.

And what does it matter anyway,  
In all the alienation of being made  
To stand out like a sore thumb...  
Or someone who has an extra head -  
From rising in the morning  
Till it's time to retreat to my bed?

Not wanting to contact people  
From my old school magazine -  
Barristers, architects, armed forces officers,  
Moneyed high-fliers -  
Who would likely turn up their noses.  
After all, some of them had previously done so...  
I wasn't going to tell them I'd undergone  
A hellish episode of psychotic depression!  
In response to which I'd been "feeling sorry for myself."  
"Pull yourself together!!"  
"If you weren't SO WEAK... !!!"

And that was just in my twenties...  
Seemingly lifetimes and lifetimes ago -  
Having dropped out of polytechnic,  
Final year looming -  
Then definitely gone WAY against the flow.

An apparent career as a psychiatric patient ensued,  
In later years labelled with manic-depression  
(at least that cleared that up...),  
Still being made to feel guilty, "no good!!",  
A burden, needing to "pull your socks up!", plain lazy ...  
After prolonged spells in hospitals  
Various memories just hazy.

## WHAT IS THE SOUND OF MENTAL HEALTH?

**Mark Dryden**

To some it is silence,  
to some it's a scream.  
It can be a groaning  
or a voice in your dream.  
Sometimes it is breathing  
or a ring in the ear  
which crescendos in sync  
with anxiety and fear.  
But this music inside you  
however chromatic  
is not a symptom of illness  
or a psychosomatic.  
Your sound is your soul  
who is talking to you;  
should not be ignored,  
but listened to.  
Your sound, when translated,  
will offer solution  
to your health, well-being  
and your evolution.  
The only assistance  
that will need to be found  
is one single person  
who can hear your sound;  
to interpret it's function  
and offer clarity.  
The only person who knows  
how to listen, is me.

# VENTRILOQUIST

**Sabika Rezawi, Birmingham**

**I was 7...I watched as my mum washed the blood from my brother's shirt, that's when I learnt blood was deep crimson red, they said we were lucky that he wasn't dead.**

It feels strange to be back at school, should I have told my friend what happened when I went to Pakistan because my mum never spoke about it, should I tell her I'm really scared of adults that I don't know, someone might shoot me or hurt me... nah! She probably won't be my friend

\*\*\*\*\*

**"You did it beta (my child) well done! You never give up!" my mum said. I walked on that stage I got the certificates and the grades, I threw my fist in the air, "yesss! I did it I've always been determined, that's my trait I never give up, I feel so big now, I'm growing...I'm an adult!"**

Will they ever find out that I used to bunk and go and hang out, will my teacher spot my mum on the street and ask her where I was, will they find the paper I hid in my pencil case for the test, will my mum ever ask me for my GCSE results, I only got 4 or 5 and a lot of U'S, I hid them...when will I ever grow up...I feel dumb, I am dumb.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Woo! I married my HERO, he's tall, and he's dark and he's handsome! I wore the perfect MAC fire red lipstick, mehndi (henna) decorated my hands and my churiyyeh (bangles) shimmered as I helped to place the gorgeous red dupatta (veil) so delicately on my head, the bling danced in reflection to the flashes of the cameras...that day was my dream!**

Did I know who I was, I questioned myself, I felt it in my gut when I looked at my reflection when she did my makeup and hair, I couldn't look at myself in the eye, with my real eyes...my souls' eyes. That dream... that day...that reflection...it slowly shattered and it kept shattering into tiny shards so small I couldn't fix them back together, I don't think I wanted to, but I couldn't say that.

\*\*\*\*\*

**I've got this, being pregnant is easy, I just have a fat belly and waddling feet, at least I know how penguins feel! I know I'm going to be an AMAZING mama, I knew from the get go that I wanted kids! And those snuggles and those baby toes...I love them...they are the cutest little things on this planet!**

Why is he so distant! I thought having a baby would bring us closer together, make us into a family...a real family. Why is it that everyone else's partner comes to baby scans and holds their hand! Is it me, do I show him I'm so strong that I don't need him...Those snuggles and baby toes, I didn't feel them...like deep inside, there wasn't love.

\*\*\*\*\*

My ventriloquist voice made me feel like I had handcuffs and blisters on my feet, it was hard to run through life with that darkness and pain.

But the sun came up and the love came flooding back, Rumi said "hold onto your particular pain". And that's what I do...my pain is my power! The stigma was that nobody recognised there was anything wrong.

Mental health Stigma is real... it exists in us, I stigmatised against myself, because I didn't know I had to validate my own feelings. It exists in our families, because they didn't know they had to just say "I support you", it exists amongst our friends, because they didn't know they had to just listen.

It exists till we step up to want change, to fight for change, to make change!

It's time to unveil mental health stigma to show it's true existence...together we have one voice!

Together we can!





## FOR OVER 30 YEARS

**Sharron Kelshaw, Kirklees**

For over 30 years the darkness has swept over me like waves at sea,

All consuming, twisting my mind and my soul, I never felt like me,

I dare not admit to those closest and dear, my troubling thoughts and the immense fear,

I told myself to get a grip, you know you can, but all the time wishing I had ran,

Away from my torment, leaving painful memories behind, to start afresh and clear my mind,

And then one day I said enough is enough, I'm not going to let you control me, and I'm really tough!

I didn't ask to be treat this way for you to mess with my mind, you have taken advantage of me being soft and kind,

So I'm biting back, I'm now taking charge of my destiny, I'm going to look after my mind and rebuild it carefully,

Step by step and stronger every day, I now value myself wow this is headway,

I no longer retreat or hide without word, I tell my closest family and friends my minds a bit blurred, Inform them that mental fitness will be back before long and with their amazing love and support I remain strong,

I now embrace my self- worth unconditionally, and openly discuss my mental health blissfully,

It's a privilege to be a Time to Change champion and be able to give something back, to assist in helping disperse myths and negative feedback.



## THE UNWELCOME VISITOR

**Catherine, Kirklees**

A dark, figure stands in the doorway staring at me head on,  
Grinning widely, I thought that it had gone.  
And yet here you are pushing me back down to the floor  
That crippling, tormenting monster, the unwelcome visitor.

It follows me to bed; it is there when I awake.  
Still bearing its yellow teeth all it does is take.  
It's taken my smile; it's taken the sun.  
It is dark, it's chasing me, but I have no energy to run.  
Life has become a long, difficult chore...and there they still are the unwelcome visitor.

The tunnel is long, it is dark it's bleak.  
Get up, keep moving the people shriek.  
Why can't you be happy? You've nothing to lose, it is nothing  
but a bit of the old school blues.

And yet through the smiles I so painfully wear  
It's still standing there giving me it's evil stare.  
The world has changed from rainbow to black.  
As the unwanted visitor hitches a ride on my back.

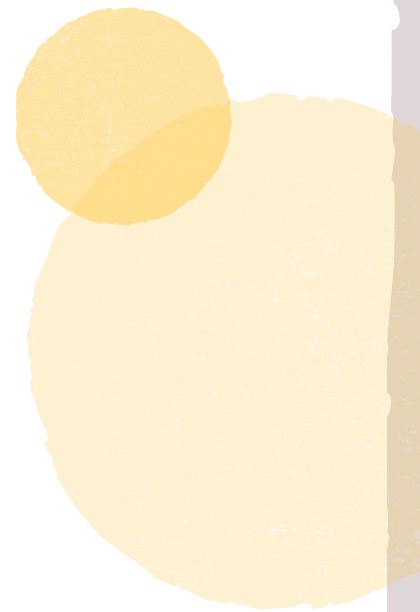
And just as I feel that I should throw life away  
Somebody, something shows me the way.  
Depression, anxiety, panic, self-harm...it throws them like a bullet aiming hard in the calm  
I am tired but there is a pull to reach the other side, I feel stronger, I grin as it yells "it's been  
one hell of a ride!"


It wants me to fall, to retreat and to cry but I turn back one last time and wave goodbye.  
I know it will return...it always does like before...the dark, sad character, my unwelcome visitor.

# IMPATIENT INPATIENT



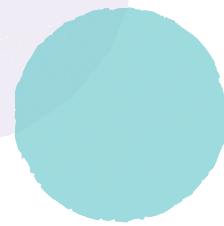


**Evelyn Campbell**

Body burping; stomach a protruding fishbowl.  
Inflamed and sore, it's bullied into expansion  
Mind shrunk it, now stretched by doctors and nurses,  
Intestines all fucked up from lack of food, shitting reindeer poo.  
Bones poking out from unknown unfamiliar places,  
So thin your coccyx sticks out like a tail.  
Hurtfully forever branded with the uncouth stigma of the anorexic.  
Stuck to a sticky pad of assumptions like a fly in honey.  
My whole complex personality lost behind a simple word.  
My creativity, my intelligence, my sports achievements; gone behind eight cruel letters.  
Yet it was deep feelings that cunningly stole my appetite,  
And robbed me of the healthy athletic identity I'd had for 24 years.  
Deep feelings lost behind a label wrongfully associated with shallowness,  
People assuming it's all about food or weight.  
When it's so much so much more complicated than they could ever imagine.  
Neuroscience; brains mismatching the evolutionary stimuli response  
As they say those that wire together, fire together in brains  
So, if eating less stops worries, anxieties, eating more causes them.  
Food becomes the fear, our brains learn to fear the food keeping us alive.  
Yet if we don't eat, we die. We are dying. Walking zombies.  
Using food to calm the chaos, find order in our lives with an eating disorder.  
Our maladaptive coping mechanisms for unpredicted life events.  
Swirling in a maelstrom of feelings, pulled out by the tide to deep waters,  
Incarcerated for feeling too much in cell room 13.  
Now testing the boundaries of my new small world,  
Rebelling against unknown medical professional controllers.  
As I sit round long tables and "therapeutically" am fed,  
With other languid, walking skeleton "patient" inmates,  
Who angrily embrace hysterical rants,  
Grown up anorexics with horse like bulbous knees.  
Begging not to eat more as if you do, you'll fail and die, things will spiral out of control.  
Locked away in an inpatient anorexia facility,  
They won't let you out of unless you gain weight.  
Begging impatiently to escape, trying tricks to con gain on the scales naughtily  
Weights in bras, phones in knickers, whatever to get out of here fast.

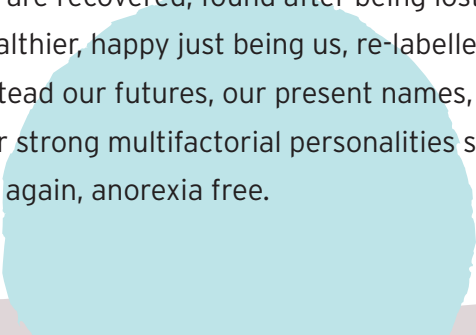

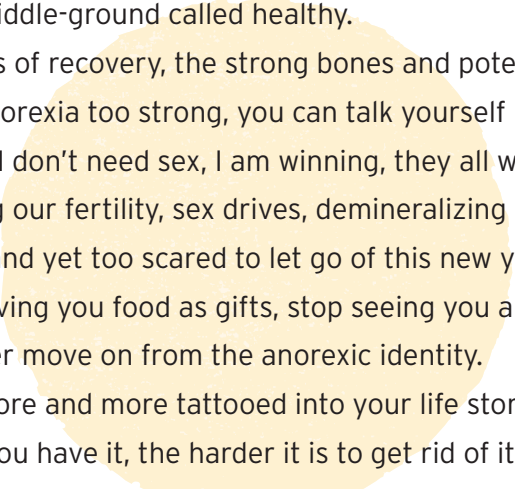
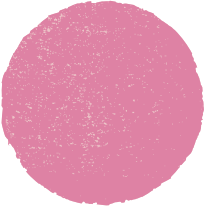




Gain weight or you won't see your loved ones.  
Yet anorexia the crime none of you meant to commit.  
Never a choice; it kind of just happened,  
Genetics combining with environment in a perfect storm of personal reasons,  
Food is thy medicine they claim and yet you don't want their medicine,  
You want to self-medicate on food of your choice.  
Anorexia steals sleep but when you do you sleep, you dream of cheesecake.  
Craving the treats you fear at low weight, that cause you stress to eat.  
That when recovered in the future you will eat for sybaritic pleasure,  
And enjoy with the taste buds of a happy food critic.  
You will marvel then at the idea that you were once scared of a chocolate bar,  
Once recovered they are treats, when anorexic a punishment.  
Once recovered they are desired, longed-for, positive, pleasant.  
Eating to nourish and enjoy, exercising solely to celebrate.  
Yet at this low weight you won't eat it unless they make you,  
You'll make all kinds of promises you'll put off till tomorrow and get around.  
Fat here is failure, so we plagiarize other inmates' tools to stay thin  
Competitively feeling superior to fat relations, they are wrong and we are right.  
If we focus on this, we don't have to think about the bigger picture worries.  
Isolating ourselves off from our loved ones, pushing people away.  
Fighting everyone, slaves to our own psychology.  
As the world preaches didactic sermons on the wholesome success of thinness,  
With everyone "out there" in planet normal trying to lose weight.  
And we are put on weight gain diets "for health", "to recover."  
Going against convention in the name of recovery.  
We can't decide ever what to eat, lose ourselves temporarily in our illness.  
Stop knowing what we like to eat anymore, what makes us, us.  
Big family meals become torturous, restaurants stressful.  
With no idea what is right and wrong, healthy and healthy, bad or good to eat.  
As noisy opinions are shoved down your throat by the over-information internet.  
Whilst the nurses vampirically steal your blood in blood tests,  
And you become a computer, tied up to ECG machines.  
Your heart trace full of ups and downs and peaks and troughs like life.  
And as your hair represents your nutritional status from four months previously.  
So we cry as it falls out like a chemo patient with re-nutrition in hospital,  
Wear our hair always up in tiny bunches, call ourselves balidilocks.  
Sit on cushions as our arses are too bony to sit on the floor without support.  
Breathless from it all, anorexia taking our breath away, slowing our hearts.  
Low weight reducing our blood pressure so we faint in supermarkets.  
With the best intentions, yet stuck in denial, brain locked, rigidly unable to change,







Somehow anorexia is a crafty bugger, and lapses become relapses.  
It's an arms race of therapies, therapists, meal plans and routines.  
As we try and get thin again, gain, lose, develop compensatory behaviours,  
Scared if we eat more, we will spiral to binge eating and get obese.  
Forgetting the middle-ground called healthy.  
Knowing the pros of recovery, the strong bones and potential for babies.  
Yet the pull of anorexia too strong, you can talk yourself round the cons,  
I can adopt kids, I don't need sex, I am winning, they all want to be like me.  
Anorexia stealing our fertility, sex drives, demineralizing our bones,  
Missing old you and yet too scared to let go of this new you.  
As family stop giving you food as gifts, stop seeing you and see instead only the eating disorder.  
Won't let you ever move on from the anorexic identity.  
So it becomes more and more tattooed into your life story,  
And the longer you have it, the harder it is to get rid of it.  
Worrying always about a reality without this addictive emotional crutch.  
As your neurotransmitters affect your mood and eat at life so you can't eat,  
Trust is gained, lost, regained and lost again with each recovery attempt.  
As friends, cousins and relatives don't know what to make of it all.  
The once envied strong athlete, now pitied and pathetic,  
With each meal bringing us back from this weak changeling version of ourselves.  
Stabilizing our moods, driving us back to sanity from all this insanity,  
As we gradually learn good nutrition again, embrace cooking and find balance,  
Learning what tastes and flavours you enjoy in your eat pray love of food experimentation.  
Finding yourself again from beneath the dark veil of eating disorders.  
Empowering yourself towards a future of your choosing rather than anorexia's.  
Where meals bring together loved ones, restaurants opportunities for food adventures,  
Cooking creatively and joyfully with complex ingredients, meals a lovely way of seeing friends.  
Big meals at weddings enhancing celebration and you dance to celebrate.  
Realizing if you don't restrict, you don't crave and binge,  
If you don't binge you don't restrict. There is a healthy middle ground.  
Leaving the impatience of impatient hospitals and patients behind,  
No longer rushing life, taking it at a more walking pace rather than a sprint.  
Evolving not back to the old, you but a new you, one able to survive anything.  
As if you can survive an eating disorders murderous pull, you can face any challenge.  
Through struggles we find our strengths, we are so much more than our eating disordered pasts.  
We are recovered, found after being lost, absent of illness.  
Healthier, happy just being us, re-labelled again, no longer just our "anorexic" pasts.  
Instead our futures, our present names, our hobbies, our strengths.  
Our strong multifactorial personalities shining through in a known "I" and a "me".  
Me again, anorexia free.

## MY POEM

### Lawrence Clarke-Russam

Through all matters  
Of what you do  
And what you say  
And what you think and feel

I will always care for you  
I will always speak to you  
I will always see you  
And I will always provide for you,

I remember precisely  
When you opened your eyes  
For the first time  
And looked at me

I remember watching you crawl  
Over to see me  
And stumbling away  
Falling

I remember the first time you read aloud  
To a full room  
Focusing on you  
Because you were speaking from your heart  
About things that mattered to God

I remember being utterly astonished  
When you betrayed me for the first time  
And hurting  
Not knowing how you felt

I remember crying  
Trying to imagine you being away from me  
Unsafe and scared  
I challenged myself to bear witness

And trust you  
To prove my faith right  
And my doubts wrong  
I will always trust you

No matter how many lies you tell  
No matter many times you violate  
Your own conscience  
I will always believe you

The same way I believed you when you first  
opened your eyes...

## I'D BEEN DRIFTING FOR DAYS

### Deborah Gorman, Medway

I'd been drifting for days through the deserted land,  
Along the spirit road;  
When I came across the oasis and a chance to lighten my load.  
It was a crowded place; full of lost souls like me,  
The churches held their captive congregations  
Singing hymns in silent reverie.  
But I took my communion with Nature  
And was rewarded for my faith,  
With carpets of bluebells on the verge of woods;  
Skylarks rising above the ripening rape -  
Unifying under a rainbow; and the sweet, sweet music  
Of a summer's breath.

## NOW I AM ME

### Lynn Harley-Biggs, Cannock Chase

I remember the times when I felt I was drowning. A vacuum of sadness that just keeps me frowning.  
When you're gasping for air and can't surface to inhale. Overwhelming and suffocating.

**Lynn you have failed!**

I look out of the window and all I can see, is my reflection staring back at me.  
And in my gloom, what I see is disgusting. fat and broad, ewww it's revolting!

I binge and throw up. My eyes burning brightly. I look in the mirror, yep, I'm still unsightly.  
I eat my shame. I feel me growing bigger. I feel people's eyes as they laugh at me and snigger.

And in the glass, I see my shame. Big fat Lynn, that's my new name.  
And in my despair, I see my flaws. Eats too much food, that's the probable cause.

I always feel like I am not good enough. Wish I could be a bit of hot stuff!  
I look at others and think I wish I was pretty. Others look at me, their eyes full of pity.

And no matter how hard I try. I can't lose my weight and it makes me cry.  
Why would anybody in this world want me? No one would buy me, not even for free.

And finally, one day I realised. I'm more than just my shape and size.  
My heart is good, and it bursts with love. There is no person I'm not worthy of.

I met someone. He is really swell. It feels like he likes me as well!  
He compliments me and holds my hand. In public no less! Well strike up the band!

He showers me with love and loves every inch. He sees I'm much more, than my treble chin.  
He makes me laugh and I make him too. He makes me tea and calls me 'Baboo'.

And the world finally comes clear. And I always want him to be near.  
And because of his love and kindness to me. I learnt to be me and to be happy!

There are worse things in the world I can be than be fat. I could be nasty, and, jealous, and I  
couldn't be that!

I could be vindictive and selfish and be ever so mean. But now I am happy. Now I am me!





## WE ALL NEED RAINBOWS

**Karen Shannon, Medway**

Do all you can to be a rainbow in someone's clouds.  
Try your best to bring a bright glow to their darkest skies.  
We all want happiness, no-one wants pain  
But you can't have a rainbow without a little rain.  
Violet, indigo, blue and green, yellow, orange and red.  
Be the shimmering glow of light that stretches overhead.

I've got rainbows in my clouds that help dispel the dark  
When it's hard to see the light.  
A gentle smile, a thoughtful act – such simple gifts to give  
Can bring hope and light in those darkest times when life gets hard to live.  
So please do try your best to be that rainbow in someone's clouds  
Everyone needs rainbows, especially right now.



## DAYS CAN BE DARK AND SUN CAN HIDE

**Arun Kapur**

Days can be dark and sun can hide  
Be truth within yourself and safe place to confide  
Be that person you deserve to be  
Be that person freedom as you see  
In times of shadow, ignite flames of your fire  
Be the person you deserve to be with all your desire

-----

*To go back to our present, we must start from the original teachings.*

*Heavily we rely upon technology at the tip of our fingers, but nothing is perfect.*

*As upon a story we live now, nothing will be ever stronger than the connection with self and humanity.*

*Write a letter, paint a picture, bake a cake, reach out to others, discover who you are.*

*Learn around you and learn about you.*

*For when you become true, will you become you.*





## CORONA AND ME

### Candor Torralba

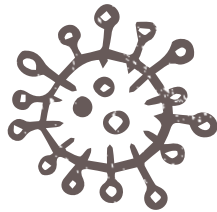
Everything is Ying ad Yang  
There's always pro and con  
Depends on how you look at it  
It's the singer and not the song

I'm loving social media  
It really is a boon  
All your friends and family  
Can join you in your room  
It's not everyone's cup of tea  
And we know it's not the real thing  
But it's good to keep in touch. Go on.  
Grab the nettle. Take the sting

We all rely on certain stuff. Therapeutic  
devices keeping us sane  
Some of these are gone for now  
Which can make us feel greater strain  
But there's other ways of coping. Go on  
Check out something new  
Our leaders are thinking laterally  
So we can do that too

Am I frightened? Do I worry? Of course  
We're the same, you and me  
But just think of all those people who strive to  
keep us safe  
Many at the start with no PPE.  
It's Yang and Ying. It's down, then up  
Just the same as it was before  
At times you frown. At times you smile  
Only now you notice the frowning more

All things come with Ying and Yang.  
There's always good and bad  
Don't let it bring you down  
Don't let it make you sad  
Have hope. Be brave my friend.  
We face a common enemy  
Let's rally to the cause. And care not  
for Ying nor Yang. Rather 'V' for Victory.



## FIRST STEPS

### Sharon Miklosova, Northamptonshire Hub

Heart racing, body trembling,  
Light headed, dizzy, gasping for air,  
Red faced, filled with shame,  
Fear: of everything,  
Of failing,  
Of feeling this way forever.

My counsellor told me  
Shaking legs will hold me up.  
So I stand, take a tentative step.  
I don't fall,  
So I take another,  
And start the hardest journey I will ever take.

You think Mental Illness means I'm weak?  
Then you have never known  
The strength it takes to walk  
On shaking legs.  
To exist,  
Because living is too much for now.

I don't want to just exist.  
I don't want to feel this way forever.  
So heart racing, gasping for air,  
I stand on shaking legs,  
And take my first steps  
Towards a new life.





## WHAT'S ALWAYS MADE ME HOLD BACK

**Michelle Warner, Northamptonshire Hub**

What's always made me hold back,  
When admitting something's wrong,  
Has been the stigma with it all,  
That's been around too long.

I knew that I was struggling,  
Felt the worst I had in years,  
Pretending I was ok,  
Then ending up in tears.

I was going for promotion,  
And thought I'd have no hope,  
People thinking mental illness,  
Meant I couldn't cope.

But something had to change for me,  
I had to get things out,  
Pretending there was nothing wrong,  
Made me angrier and shout.

I knew that there was more to life,  
But found it very hard,  
With people seeing all your symptoms,  
Not knowing they're your scars.

But when I let my guard down,  
Admitted how I felt,  
The reaction I received from friends,  
Just made my poor heart melt.

They said they'd never realised,  
All the things that I'd been through,  
Some went on to tell me,  
They'd had their struggles too.

That's when I turned to Time To Change,  
Telling people where I'd been,  
To get the message out there,  
And make sure that it's seen.

And what I've come to realise,  
And learnt along the way,  
Is others feel like I do,  
But were all too scared to say.

I still have really low times,  
It changes day by day,  
But all in all I've learnt now,  
Low feelings are ok.

I know that I can deal with things,  
And not lose being me,  
If we change how people view us,  
How they think from what they see.

So summarising all of this,  
The point that is the main,  
Is that feelings shouldn't be concealed,  
The stigma needs to change.

## UNLOCKING IN LOCKDOWN

**Njoki Kaguma, Nottingham**

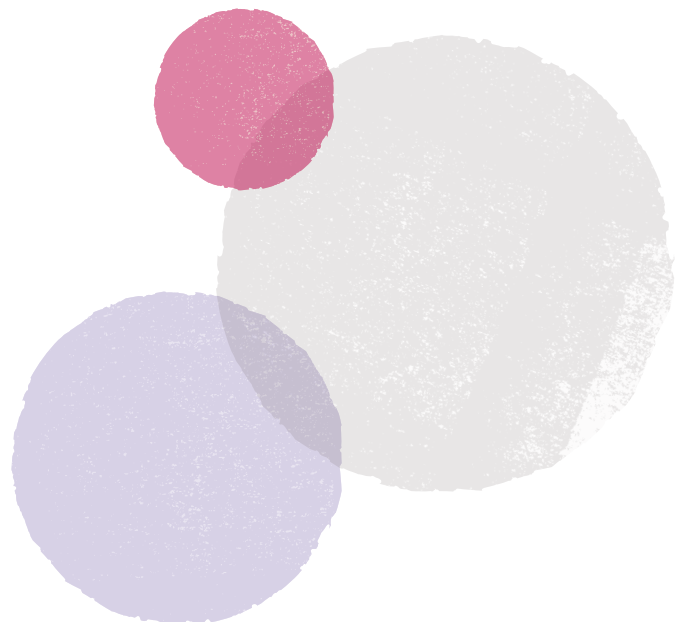
I had just started dating  
When the lockdown was dated  
Do we date from afar  
Do we isolate together  
Together we did  
Until the letter came  
You must shield  
The letter said  
No date to the end of the shielding  
Worry filled our minds  
At least we have each other  
I would rather lose myself on an island  
With you by my side  
But there is a side to me  
That I hide with my smile  
In the mirror practised daily  
But in my house  
I cannot hide the fact that  
I suffered recently from Psychosis  
When I talked about it  
People thought I was dangerous  
They kept away  
My husband left me  
Alone I became  
Genuine love I longed for  
Genuine love I found  
We love each other  
Two souls  
Locked down in love.



## AS I STARE BACK INTO THE MIRROR

**Samantha Horwood,  
Time to Change Buckinghamshire**

As I stare back into the mirror,  
  
The darkness of my soul reaches new heights.  
  
I am the author of my own misfortune, my own  
misery and my own plan.  
  
And then something clicks,  
  
The realisation hits.  
  
I am also the author of my happiness, my story  
and this fight.  
  
So come with me, and you will see, the strength  
that I have got in me.  
  
The daily fight, of looking for the light,  
something only I can see.  
  
So when I'm down, I just need time. Time to  
figure out this brain of mine.  
  
So sit with me, and you will see, the strength  
that I have got in me.





## MAYBE NOT TODAY

**Philomena Turner, Medway**

As I drift my way through darkness, and waste another day  
I NEED to know the answers!!..... but... maybe not today.  
BUT WHEN!!...  
My inner self screams.... Why does my brain defy!!  
Tis the FEAR and the DREAD of the answer....  
THIS is where my weakness lies!!

OH TO BE STRONG!!... and to face the truth...  
But REALLY!!... DO I DARE???.....  
I can now feel myself spiralling into the depths of  
DESPAIR!!!.....

TOMORROW!!..... yes..... TOMORROW!!..  
I SHALL ASK!!...  
As I throw my life away!!...  
WHY is it always TOMORROW??...  
AND NEVER EVER TODAY!!!



## LOCKDOWN MADNESS

**Nichola Connolly, Warrington**

I was on a path of positivity, embracing all that life had to offer.  
When along came this devastating virus, that put paid to that.  
It was a shock to the system.  
Found myself unravelling at great speed.  
No idea how to slow it down.  
Feeling like I was back at square one.  
Falling down a deep dark hole.  
All my fears colliding back to the surface.  
Feelings I had not known for so long.  
It was back with a force I had not felt before.  
Depression, anxiety and panic attacks.  
So strong I thought I was going to collapse.  
I made a conscious effort to pull myself back from the brink.  
I swam the great tidal wave eventually beating the odds to survival.  
I am once again living my best life.  
Full of hope and possibilities.  
I now find that the world is my oyster.  
I am destined for great things.





# I GREW YOU IN MY GARDEN

**Sophia Brown**

## **I grew you in my garden**

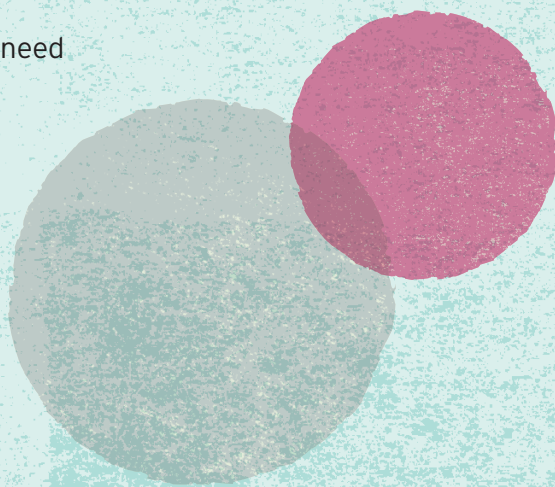
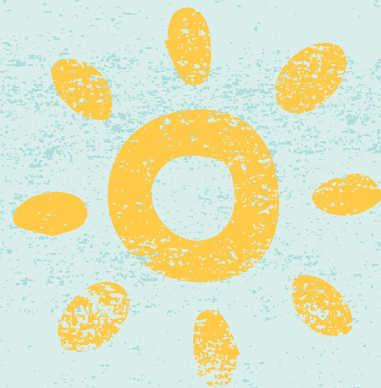
I grew you in my garden, mum said  
I will give you everything that you need  
You are my most precious possession  
My perfect little seed

It is I who will water you, with fluoride-free glass bottled Evian water  
It is I who will turn your lavish leaves to the sunlight  
My precious little daughter  
But why are you wilting? I have given you everything that you need

You are just like your brother  
I have raised another weed

## **I grew in your garden**

I grew in your garden  
Thank you for the light  
See, not all plants need so much water  
What you think I need is not always right  
I did try to tell you, I did try to say  
If you keep watering me like that, I'll wilt away one day  
Though my soil is saturated and I find it hard to breathe  
My brother is a sunflower, a very special seed  
He told me when I was growing, to look deep inside my leaves  
For everything I am, is all I'll ever need



# MENOPAUSE AS THIEF

**Subitha Baghirathan**

Menopause as Thief

Who filled my pockets with rocks  
When my back was turned?  
Who drained my reservoir of energy, interest and focus  
Under cover of darkness?  
When was the date that my daughters' departure to school  
Began to be the prompt for the urge to crawl into bed  
Curtains drawn  
Duvet pulled over my head?  
When did my rationality succumb to my hormones?  
Why are my feelings bubble-wrapped in isolation?  
Where are the advocates, peer mentors, educators?  
Where is the honesty, compassion, humour?

Resentment held

Against the super-woman effort called upon  
For many simplistic tasks  
So lightly carried out before.  
Health-coaching myself now  
Not just part of my paid work.  
The social prescribing I champion  
Spins 360 degrees.  
Needling myself to galvanise  
Knowing the numbing alternative  
Is to fester and be submerged deeper.

My pendulum swings

Inviting in the menopause to take up residence  
Temporary but for an indefinite stay.  
Shake the dust from your shoes  
Take a break off your feet.  
Let's get to know each other  
Learn to be in each other's presence.

With the next beat, my mood shifts its weight, capriciously  
As when I moved my heavy toddler over to the other hip.

I rage, rage, with no gentleness  
Heeding Dylan Thomas.  
I throw rocks at its unexpected presence  
No trespassers tolerated on my land.  
Surliness flowers naturally here.  
The soil is fertile even if my body is no longer.





The choices are scant.  
So, I lace up my trainers for a distance race.  
No finish line to cross  
No medal, banana and goodie bag awaits.  
I will run the mile I am in  
A favoured mantra during my half-marathons.  
Cultivate the affirmation:

**"This place, a lotus paradise.**

**This body, a precious jewel." \***

Live sometimes apologetically  
Other times defiantly

With sleeplessness, memory hazes, ASBO-worthy wind and a truculent digestive system.  
Being my own cheerleader and conveyor of jelly babies  
Every step of the way.

**\*Snippet from Buddhist text.**

## I AM HERE ON THE STEP AND HAVE TO SIGH

**Teresa Moore**

I sit here on the step and have to sigh,  
as I watch people go dancing I wonder why,  
all I ever wanted to do was dance,  
Did I lose my one and only chance?  
Of happiness I felt so genuinely,  
but lost and bound by the chains of society.  
The stigma of mental illness is still strong,  
in this day and age it's so so wrong.  
I think of the life started to get,  
is there any hope out there for me, and yet.  
I have to accept who I am, how I see,  
why is it so hard for society?  
All I wanted to do was dance,  
doesn't everyone deserve a second chance?  
Was it my fault I had to take a pill?  
when I became so mentally ill,  
maybe no one is to blame.  
I was made to feel small and shamed  
and only a few people stood by my side,  
share my life's journey but what hell of a ride.  
Is there any hope out there for me?  
Please let me dance and just let me be.

## HOW DO I FEEL AT THIS PRESENT TIME

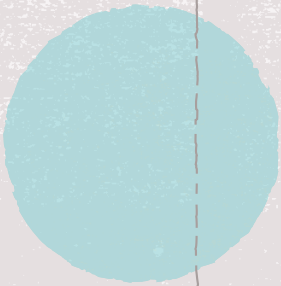
**Miles, York**

How do I feel at this present time  
Anxious and nervous with no sense of rhyme  
What is there to worry  
Just go get a curry  
I put on my shoes and I walk past the loo  
I think what to get with my vindaloo  
As I pace the floor  
I reach for the door  
My neighbour waves as I leave the house  
I nervously walk on like a timid scared mouse  
There's not a word spoken  
Yet I feel like I'm broken  
Where what when or how  
As I mop at my brow  
Still anxious and nervous  
I lose all my purpose  
I flee back at pace  
To reach my safe place  
Chaos and worry  
And no chance of curry  
And what do I find  
No peace in my mind!


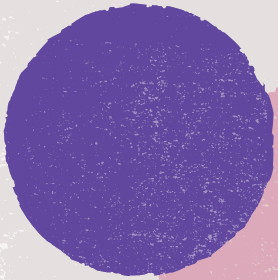


## BE KIND AND GO GENTLE

**Sarah Leanne Pustkowski**



The clouds are heavy  
looming overhead  
weight bearing down  
you feel weakened by their force.  
In comes the pounding rainfall  
thunderclaps start to rage  
they echo in your restless mind.  
Rain continues its dissent  
enough to mask the tears  
drifting silently  
though not unnoticed.  
Their disperse does not stop the intensity  
you are engulfed in every thought over what is  
happening.  
Lightning bolts strike  
everything enhanced  
pain, fear and despair.  
There seems no end.  
Though despite its velocity and power  
you are holding on  
riding through the storm  
with every ounce of being  
Through courage comes the hope you seek.  
You are the light to part the clouds  
to cast your rays upon the land and sea.  
So be kind and go gentle  
this will not last.  
Keep shining through it all  
as one day the two opposites with collide  
revealing a rainbow.  
Each colour vivid and vibrant  
it cascades across the aluminate skies  
bursting brightly to offer a sign of hope.  
This time will come for you  
and for us all.



## STUCK IN THOUGHT

**Simon Crocombe**

My Slouched body day dreams and decides  
Will today be the chance  
Will it be my choice.

It Started stealthy almost unnoticed  
This feeling to go, move, get up you got this.  
But this spark of thought is all I notice.

I will get up, I want to get up! Can I get up?  
Oh but this spark of thought Is all I notice  
It Stuns and Holds  
It loathes and Isolates  
I'm alone.

But I wonder  
Will today be the chance  
will it be my choice.


Wanting to do this  
Wanting to do "it"  
something, Anything

you can jump to it!  
Oh but this spark of thought is all I notice.

This day has gone  
Another unnoticed  
This spark of thought is all I notice.

Over this madness  
holding this hope  
Tomorrow I whisper  
Will be my chance  
It Will be my choice.

but this spark of thought  
It's all I notice  
It Holds and whispers  
Give into me  
Give up to me  
Never I whisper  
Tomorrow will be my chance  
Tomorrow be my choice.





## HOLD STRONG

Victoria Carroll, Warrington, Bolton

Hold Strong  
Moments becoming stretched  
Over time and meaning

Loneliness flowing  
Through the heart and veins  
With feeling

Breathing deeper exhaling longer  
Releasing all the thoughts  
Blowing them in a stream  
To the ceiling

Mind lite with emptiness  
Of words and meaning  
A rush of darkness heavy but rising  
Looking for answers  
Or identity of reasoning

Hold strong in the emotional tides  
Clear the mind, consume the moment  
Take in the processes with senses wide

Immersion of emotions  
Brooding soul searching  
While meditating to reflection

Emit useless illumination  
Suffering and intense  
Which bleeds greatly with feeling

Gather, holding, tormenting and disturbing  
Hold, reversal, twisting, winding  
exhale and absolution.

## AND AS I SIT HERE IN THE DARK

Emma Young

And as I sit here in the dark  
I pray to see the light,  
I long for gentle hugs from those I love  
I long, with all my might,  
They cannot see what I see,  
Nor feel my deep despair,  
It grasps the brightest parts of me,  
Like some rotting velvet glove,  
I cannot find an escape,  
I cannot fight alone,  
My fears and thoughts surround me,  
Like some evil thorny throne,  
But I have been here many times,  
So many I've lost count,  
I broke free once before,  
And will do so again,  
Of that I have no doubt -  
I will not let this beat me,  
I will not be kept down,  
Despite what I have been through,  
I believe a smile can beat a frown,  
So if you're out there wondering  
Is it just me that's flailing?  
I honestly believe,  
You will take the helm again,  
Not sinking but sailing.

# BACK TO YESTERDAY

## Anonymous

When I think back to yesterday,  
My worries were so far away,  
I had no idea I was heading  
For the roller-coaster ride of a massive breakdown.

Out of the blue, I lost almost everything,  
My pride and my dignity,  
My job and my friends.  
I had no counselling,

Nobody talked to me,  
Asked me what had  
Happened to me, as I lost all sense of reality,  
Fuelled by fear and anxiety.

Going to hospital  
Was the worst thing to happen,  
It started a spiral,  
I was falling right down.

The friends that I value  
Love me regardless  
Of my mental health status,  
They know I have suffered, they feel my pain.

Others are far away,  
Now they don't want to know me,  
They don't understand the hell I have waded through,  
Struggling to keep myself living and free.

I look forward to a change in our world view,  
Where people are helped by society  
To regain their sanity,  
Understand the pain in their lives that made  
them break down.

People must understand,  
Anyone can hurt, anyone can fall,  
Sometimes life can make you so uncomfortable,  
You fall by the wayside and lose your  
Joie de Vivre.

Maybe tomorrow, I'll wake up and be equal,  
Enjoy opportunities I was barred from before.  
Have enough money  
To be strong and positive,

Able to contribute  
To a happy community,  
Where people are supported and cared for  
With love and compassion, harmony and joy.


We'll learn to fly again,  
Swooping high and low like a beautiful dark  
blue swallow,  
Back home for the summer,  
Both happy and free.





## HOPE

**Luci Mahon**



Moonless nights,  
Sunless days.  
Blinds down,  
Curtains drawn.  
No food, no TV, just sips of water, lay in bed.  
It's all I could do,  
Felt like I was decaying.  
Then a tap at the door,  
A ringing phone,  
A text alert,  
A hug,  
A cup of tea,  
Able to say how I feel!  
They reached out, threw a lifebelt to pull me back in from the flooded dam.  
I was still in the abyss, but there came the belief I'd get out.  
The hands of friendship pulled me towards laughter, fun, feeling happy, and feeling like myself again.  
A campaign to reduce stigma,  
Definitely a time to change!  
A place to gain confidence,  
To talk to others about mental health issues.  
We're champions!  
I'm not ashamed,  
I broke down,  
Now I'm floating again.  
The buoyancy of kindness, being thought of, being told that they care about me, and being included by them.  
I understood others and what they'd survived.  
The understanding from others of what I'd survived.  
I survived.

#ENDTHESTIGMA

**time to change**

let's end mental health discrimination

**FIND US ON...**



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