

Headway: a reason to live again

I was 26 working in France as a Banqueting Co-ordinator, a Doorman and a part-time model. My life was fun, fast paced and hectic. I worked hard and played hard.

Things are very different now. I have to really concentrate to do even the basic tasks that before I did without a thought. I no longer work, I couldn't cope with a busy lifestyle and need a lot of rest just to function, because using my brain takes a lot of my energy. Headway has been my saving grace, they have helped me to get back on track again, learn to adjust and support me through my ups and downs.

It all started when I was out on the town drinking in Holland; and was found on the ground by a fence. I guess I must have fallen over it, and that was the cause of my head injury. No one seemed to know how it really happened, least of all me. A woman found me and called the ambulance. I had to be resuscitated twice before I even reached the hospital. I had suffered a brain haemorrhage which caused massive frontal lobe damage. I spent 7 weeks in a coma, six months in hospital in Tilburg, and a further 3 years in rehabilitation in Holland.

When I woke up from my coma I thought "God, how long have I been in here, what's happened to me?" From that point onwards it was a struggle. I spent six months in a wheelchair as my legs wouldn't work anymore, I would have laughed at someone in disbelief if they had said that could have happened to me before my accident.

After my lengthy rehab I returned to England where my Mum had organised my move into Berryfield's, a place where people with brain injury can live independently, but with support on site. My family live close by too, which is great. Once I settled into my new home, I started to attend Headway. Headway has helped me in many ways. I have enjoyed the social aspects of going bowling, which helps with my balance and made me realise that I am a lot less disabled than other people. Thoughts like that make you count your blessings. Before my accident I was very active and fit and cycled long distances. I can't do that anymore



because my balance is shot to bits. But I continue to build up my stamina and strength by going to the gym.

At Headway I join in the communications and interpersonal skills group. It's an opportunity to discuss as a group what has happened to us since we last met. We share our good and bad experiences and talk about the things that we have found difficult to deal with. These sessions have taught me to be more responsible in my actions, and to learn from other people's experiences - you know if at first you don't succeed try, try again!

I like the people at Headway; I have made friends with some of the other attenders and value what the staff do for me. Since my brain injury I always have too much to say for myself, which can get me into trouble sometimes! Now I think before I speak; but the staff still have to tell me when I make my stupid statements!

The Care Workers help you to recognise what your problems are and assess you fairly. I get appropriate feedback on my behaviour which helps me to improve the way I present myself when I am out in public. With Headway's help I am getting to know the person I am now, and with perseverance and hard work I can now see the person I could become.

Headway has enabled me to move forward with my life without looking back. I don't keep thinking now - what if I hadn't been out drinking that night? I certainly don't drink heavily anymore! What I do think is that Headway has given me a reason to laugh and live again and I am now planning things I can do for my future! I always say, the die is cast - so get on with it!

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