

All my life I have been a 'worrier'. On two occasions, twenty years ago and five years ago my problems were so bad that they produced physical symptoms. I was not aware at the time but I was suffering from depression. Both times I received help from the NHS in the form of medication and a limited amount of counselling.

My life has always been hectic and until last year I could never make time to confront my problems. I was lucky enough to have a break from work. Once I was off the treadmill I had time to think and realised I wanted to sort things out for good. My life had been in a mediocre rut, just grinding on with little pleasure and depression hitting every few years. I decided I wanted to make the second half of my life better than the first.

I approached Emma on recommendation. It took a few sessions for me to understand what was happening. All we seemed to do was talk, while unrealistically I was expecting Emma to give me magic answers. I did not realise at that time, but the object of the counselling was to enable me to provide the answers. Emma was there to guide me in the right direction and encourage me to think for myself. After all, if I relied on my counsellor to always tell me the answers I would need to have sessions for the rest of my life.

Though I only have limited experience of other counsellors, I believe Emma is different to most. Her personality comes across as part of the counselling. You meet a 'real' person. To me this was a major factor in the counselling. I was not talking to the 'monosyllabic perfect being' that I had previously perceived counsellors to be, but someone like me. She made me feel like I was an ordinary person who needed some guidance, and not an inferior who was weak or wrong.

The counselling has taught me much about myself. My personal lack of self esteem, my tendency to take on board other's problems, and my continual concerns I may have upset some one. I will not change overnight, and I know that I still have problems to some degree. The important thing is now that I can understand them and deal with them better.

It's still early days, but I am hoping counselling has changed my life for ever. I just wish I had started it thirty years ago.