



Hannah's Story

Cliché it may be, but all the progress I've made to be where I am today has allowed me to reflect back on my battle with mental health, helping me to realise all of the unpleasant experiences that I was facing at the time were as a result of my mental health and not just something that every kid experiences.

I know, that as a person I am so lucky to be surrounded by loving people, my family and friends included. This is what made it really difficult for me to accept that I was struggling with poor mental health. I felt guilty for the way I was feeling because I had it much easier than so many others.

But here I am, five years after my diagnosis, writing about it. Who would have thought?

From a relatively young age, I was presenting worrying behaviours that caused my parents to question what was happening. Though, this was not something I noticed at the time, others noticed irregularities in the way I was acting. I remember that one night, I had just finished having a major meltdown. **I remember sitting in my bedroom, trying really hard to hide the way I was feeling.** My Dad came upstairs and into my bedroom, and told me that it was okay to feel like this, but that getting help was something that we needed to think about as a family. And all of this, this huge meltdown, the heart-to-heart with my Dad, deciding to finally get help, occurred from such a minor issue surrounding food at dinnertime.

So, this led to doctor's appointments and a working diagnosis of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and Anxiety at fourteen. Both of which festered in me, presenting themselves through anxieties and intrusive thoughts, surrounding food, routines, unpleasant things happening, and obsessing over little things. I have found that it is incredibly difficult to find relatable, simple information about mental health. When this huge thing was thrown at me, I was bombarded with books and research, all medical and scientific, I was overwhelmed. **There was nothing that said to me, this is okay. It's normal. And you will get through it.** Instead, I was caught up on things like chemical imbalances and serotonin levels. Which, in my experience are confusing for all ages, even at nineteen I still feel overwhelmed by it, let alone at fourteen. **There were times that were dark and No5 brought a light into my week. Letting me know I wasn't alone.** Sitting in that waiting room and reading about the Young Ambassador scheme on my final session, I knew that when I was ready, I was going to do whatever I could to give back to No5. **One counsellor in one little room, helped me see the joy of life and get me back on my feet so I could be here today.** I am immeasurably grateful for No5.

Being a Young Ambassador for such a brilliant place is so fulfilling. **Now, reflecting on my time at No5, my experiences as a Young Ambassador and the person I am today, all of the positive changes that have occurred in my life were a sequence of events that were triggered by finding No5.** I would not have developed a passion for writing, empathy and understanding for all others, an ability to work through things I find difficult.

Not only have I developed my emotional wellbeing and understanding of myself, but I have opened up a part of me that has not been seen by anyone else. Things that I once buried and ignored are now how I help others come to terms with their own mental health, sharing my story to support other young people and to help them realise they are not alone. No5 inspired me to start my blog, Oh, to be a warrior, so **I can be that person to others, who said, this is okay. It's normal. And you will get through it.**