



SOCIAL PRESCRIBING

WILD SWIMMING FOR WELLBEING

Anne's case study

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Why were you referred into the social prescribing swim sessions?

I suffered with depression and poor mental health having experienced multiple traumas throughout my life. I had tried loads of different treatments but nothing really worked. I was desperate. I wanted to die. Then I met a woman on the bus and I was saying I was trying to get to Henleaze but I'd got on the wrong bus. And then she this woman told me about the support group that she knew of. She wasn't involved with Maggy I don't think, but she was going there once a week to a support group. And I went 'How did you find that?'. She said go to your doctor. So I went to my doctor. Talked to her about it. And then she found a link for me. She wasn't sure what it was but I emailed this link...then the next minute I ended up...well after about two or three emails... I ended up emailing Maggy.

What were your expectations of the sessions? Were there any barriers to attending them?

I had heard of people going cold water swimming. But because I didn't know anybody, I wasn't.... I was unsure about going on my own. In the cold. I don't mind swimming on my own and I have always loved being in the water but I was a bit worried about getting into the cold on my own. My friend always said that my face changed as soon as I was in the open water, swimming in waterfalls in Wales. She said she could see the joy. I had just never put it all together before. But I knew I loved the cold water. I wanted to experience it.

The biggest barrier for me has been accessibility as I don't drive.



"I wanted to die. I'd had enough. I didn't care. I wanted to go"

What did the sessions do for you? And how did they make you feel?

They stopped me feeling suicidal. I wanted to die. I'd had enough. I didn't care. I wanted to go. No one worries about me. People stopped ringing me because they knew how I felt....but I started coming to these sessions and those feelings have subsided. It's taken time....and I think that time has helped as well.... I was really really down.... Oh, but I'm quite happy now, quite happy. I wouldn't take drugs, I wouldn't take the medication.... But swimming in cold water, being part of this group....somehow it just enables me not to be so depressed. I think Kiki asked me a question at one of the sessions, when I first met her. I can't remember exactly what she said but I think my reply was something like, it's essential for my existence, something like that. I also feel like I've always felt quite isolated and self conscious but I'm aware that my inhibitions ..through coming to the group and cold water swimming, that has changed a little bit. I'm aware of a slight change. A positive change. I'm not so insecure about my body...about the way I look. I'm becoming more confident.



"I wouldn't take drugs. I wouldn't take the medication.... But swimming in cold water, being part of this group....somehow it just enables me not to be so depressed" "it's essential for my existence"



What do you think is most valuable about the sessions?

It's all of it. Its the women, the group, the support. It's the being outside in nature, being in the water, the swimming, the cold and the chats we have are so important to me too.

What advice would you give to a new person worried about starting something like this?

Do it. I love it. I just love it. I wouldn't miss it. I need the water. You'll feel a sense of achievement. I'm so glad I found it.



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