

Patient Experience

A personal account of the Yorkshire Centre for Eating Disorders, written by a former service user.



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Prior to my admission to YCED I was not living, I merely existed. I felt like my life had come to an end with no possibility of happiness, laughter or excitement. In short my admission has saved my life. Along with restoring my confidence and self-esteem, staff at YCED have worked with me to rediscover my personality.

Working alongside my primary nursing team I explored pertinent issues in further depth and dieticians were also on hand to discuss diet plans and methods of breaking unhelpful cycles. I cannot stress enough how invaluable this time has been. Without this encouragement and direction I would not have regained my confidence to socialise with friends and my life would not be moving forward.

Staff offered support with cooking, baking and eating out and I could not have broken certain destructive behaviours without this. The eating out group also helped me to reconnect with food in alternative environments. This was most helpful to me when I have met friends for lunch, dinner and drinks out.

During my admission I received cognitive behavioural therapy to help me identify triggers and alter my approach to stressful situations. In the past I felt utterly overwhelmed by life, but I am now starting to find a path for myself and cope better with life's uncertainties and challenges

There was also support following meals involving worksheets on self-esteem, anxiety management and

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problem solving. We also had discussions on these topics and had games in the evening. These activities helped us discover more about ourselves as individuals, as well as a group. It's through this that I've started to learn about who I am, develop my personality and discover my identity, without my eating disorder defining who I am.

Personally, I have experienced an overwhelming amount of positives from treatment. There were some unfavourable aspects and the treatment requires you to give up a certain amount of control, which can feel overwhelming and distressing. It also restricts your activity to more moderate levels and it does involve weight gain.

I found activity restrictions hard and I also found preparing my meals in a communal kitchen psychologically and emotionally challenging. I shouted, I cried and I blamed others. But on reflection, without these I would not have pushed myself to fight my eating disorder, because at the time it felt so right. However, I was never right when guided by my eating disorder, despite how much I protested at the time.

The ward environment can also be hard at times. With a large number of patients living almost on top of each other there is sometimes friction and the coming and going of patients can be disruptive at times but it's certainly worth seeing it through.

All of the staff at YCED treated me with absolute kindness and respect. When I was upset they would spend time working things through with me, providing clarity against a hazy blur of emotions. Without them I can honestly say I could not have got through the treatment. Even when things seemed utterly hopeless, the staff always helped me to identify the positives.

I entered hospital without a personality and I have not only discovered that I have one, but I have realised how much happier, stronger, energetic and capable I have become. These are things anorexia will never provide. So thank you YCED, there is not one day that passes in which I do not appreciate your help and reflect on how my life has changed for the better.