Personal testimonies of Paranoia from people who haven’t used psychiatric services

Jerry

Jerry had difficulty at night when he was alone when his thoughts started to comment on what he was watching, comments such as I don’t know why you are watching that, watch things about real life. He felt like he was being observed. This made him feel discontent and fearful. He felt his thoughts were passed on from Nick an old acquaintance Nick’s wife Lisa also passed them on. The whole experience lasted about two years the thoughts would come and go

Jerry feels his beliefs are linked to a sense of wanting to belong and be part of something. He was coerced into the drugs scene when he was feeling low in mood and had very few friends; this coincided with him not dealing with the bullying he had received in his earlier years. Through feeling neglected and rejected and being told that the drug scene was where he would be someone he got involved in a world where in later years he lost even more control of his life

Mike

Mike spoke about intrusive thoughts; the thoughts sometimes make him feel really negative. If he challenges them back, they get more aggressive. He discussed a visit by an associate called Ian who came to see him with his children, he felt quite anxious throughout their visit as Ian reminded him of his father. After Ian left Mike struggled to sit in the chair where Ian had been sat and he would often hop over the ground around the seat. He described feeling more safe because his mother had been with him. He also talked about developing OCD traits; he would avoid certain grates in the pavement? But when he was out in company he felt the thoughts were less intrusive. When Mike feels his thoughts are being controlled it makes him confused, his thoughts start to race more, creating him to feel paranoid, and this evokes memories from his childhood creating feelings of disempowerment. When he challenges his thoughts they get more aggressive he says this is because he still has fear of his father. Mike likes to distract himself from his thoughts by attending an art course this way he draws his anger that he has against his father

Jackie

Jackie described that she felt that she was not meant to be born and had no direction from her family, she described going to University to please her parents. Jackie had been invisible for years, her parents didn’t see her, although her partner Dave was abusive it meant that he could see her, Jackie felt that when she was seen by someone this indicated to her that if someone is interested in her they want to hurt her this made her feel really paranoid. She has a pleaser self and always does for others not herself. This has led to her being manipulated and frightened of people. She feels that she has more control in her life now by learning that not everybody will hurt her people want to know her because she is a nice person, she first realised this by attending a paranoia support group she is now able to say “NO” to people

Sam

Sam describes feeling paranoid at home, he thinks that his neighbour tells people that he killed his dog; she tells people that he put poison on its food. He describes his experiences as paranoia they involve his neighbour a woman aged 65yrs. Sam says that other people must have the same ideas as him because of the size of the planet. He can distinguish his world from another person’s reality.

Sam recognizes how his paranoia builds through the three stages, a comment from the neighbour causes the trigger, and it becomes a conspiracy when she involves other people and a conviction when she mentions his dog. He finds it really helpful to continue getting support from his parents who reassure him that his dog died of old age

Robert

Robert’s paranoia started aged 8yrs this was when he started to check the doors and windows. His parents split up when he was 6yrs and he didn’t see his dad for two years

 Later when he lived with his dad, his mum would bang on the door and threaten them both. Robert describes several incidents that have had an effect on his paranoia, moving home 15 times in six years and going to fifteen different schools, being in a house fire, death of his cat, bullied at school. He often feels that someone will break into his home and hurt him; this can make him very frightened. Robert says they way he understands his paranoia is to realise he was made to feel this way by the things that have happened in his life, he is not a flawed human being his paranoia helps him spot danger and create safety

Kim

Kim was a police officer one evening while she was doing a night shift she heard a lot of shouting coming from one of the custody cells, so she went to investigate. She saw two male police officers violently attacking a prisoner. She told them to stop but they refused. Kim said to them if you don’t stop I will report you, the officers replied if you do we will make your life hell. Kim reported them and they were suspended but other members of staff started to victimise her because of this. The bullying increased until and she couldn’t take it anymore, so she left the police force. After she left she was persecuted by the police, every time she went out in her car they would stop her and inspect her car and often tell her there was something wrong with it. Eventually she wouldn’t leave the house for fear of being stopped and became very paranoid about the police. Kim realised that she had to get out of the house or she wouldn’t have any food or couldn’t pay her bills. She decided that she would use the bus instead and that way the police can’t stop her from getting around, she says it is more inconvenient and takes longer but this way she is less frightened when she goes out and she meets more people

Graham

Graham hadn’t left his flat for five years he thought that most of society was conspiring against him because he was a bad person. He thought that people thought he was a bad person because he hadn’t visited his mother who had been in a care home for nearly six years. He would isolate himself so people couldn’t see him. Friends would leave food outside his flat for him, he would put money under the door so they could pay his bills for him but he wouldn’t let them in. One day one of his friends pushed a leaflet under his door telling him about a paranoia support group that was starting. It explained how people had different ideas and thoughts about things and how some people saw the world differently to other people and often felt victimised. Graham felt intrigued were other people conspired against like him. He thought about it a lot then made a decision to go to the group, he wanted to meet these people, he made a forty five minute journey across the city, and he was terrified as he made the journey. He entered the room and there were fourteen other people there. He sat quietly until a facilitator asked him why he had come Graham replied “I thought there was only me who had these beliefs” he explained that he hadn’t been able to visit his mother when she initially went into a care home because he had injured his back and couldn’t walk. His mother would write to him and say “When will you visit me the staff also want to know” he felt then that they thought he was a bad person and would tell others that he was bad. After the group he went straight to the care home to see his mother and explained why he hadn’t been. Graham said I had the confidence to go because people in the group believed me I wasn’t a bad person and if things had been difficult I had the support of the group to go back to

Lillian

Lillian first attended the paranoia support group with one of her friends. Lillian had long hair and would put her hair over her face so no-one could see her face, if she wanted to ask a question she would whisper to her friend and her friend would ask the question. This went on for months but no-one questioned why she did this. Eventually on of the facilitators said “Do you mind me asking why we are not allowed to see your face” Everyone was surprised when she said “If I expose my face my husband will kill me” after she attended the group more and felt more confident she told them that her husband used to beat her then he started to beat the children. She left him and he called her and said “I will find you all and I will beat and kill you all” So she was very paranoid about him finding her so if she had her hair over her face he couldn’t recognise her. One day she came into the group with her hair tied up, she was asked why she had it like this and what if her husband saw her. She explained that with the help of her friend she had reported him to he police and he had been arrested, so she knew he couldn’t hurt her anymore

Marie

Marie’s parents divorced when she was 9, her mother forced her to hate her father. When she was 21 she tried to contact him, her mother was then cruel to her and said to would cut her out of her life if she tried to contact him again. She was a victim of Identity theft but no one would believe her, she couldn’t contact police because she felt she was being followed. Her boyfriend spiked her drink with drugs and she ended up in a coma. By the age of 28 she was addicted to drugs and was convinced she was being followed by the police and drugs people. She would run to different towns and city’s but still felt that she was being followed by people who would hurt her. Eventually Marie ran out of money and was too tired to run anymore, she rented a small room lay on the bed and said to herself if they are going to hurt then lets get it over with I can’t run anymore I am exhausted. Marie slept for two days when she awoke no-one had been in her room. She stopped in her room for a week and no-one came around. Eventually she went out and no-one approached her over a period of time she started to realise that maybe they were not out to harm her. She had wanted to fix her parents’ marriage due to her feeling that it was her fault that they weren’t together. She now feels that she was just a pawn in her parent’s power game using her to score points against each. Marie now says she understands her beliefs can only have the power that she lets them have, if she understands them she has more control over them, other.