



YOGA THERAPY: RICHARD'S STORY

Richard lives with multiple, complex medical conditions, he has debilitating osteoarthritis, chronic backpain, interstitial lung disease, a heart condition and carpal tunnel syndrome. He takes 12 different medications and is now unable to work. His medical care is under several specialist GPs and consultants.

Richard was referred to Rethinking Pain through his GP, who was part of the MSK (musculoskeletal conditions) Pain Service, when he could no longer continue with a certain medication and was seeking a stronger pain relief. His GP suggested that because his pain is lifelong, gentle exercise such as Tai-Chi and strength building movements might be an additional avenue to help him manage day-to-day.

WHAT WE DID

Richard started exercise classes through Rethinking Pain. Yoga was something he'd never considered but after feeling better from moving more he decided to give yoga a try. The class could be done seated or stood up, depending on what participants could manage and Richard also signed up for extra one-to-one support for his pain with a trained Yoga Therapist. Richard was followed up with one-to-one time with the therapist to focus on his individual physical and mental health needs.

"I learnt how to breathe for the first time! My one-to-ones taught me how to breathe! I also learnt how to move and hold my back and most of all... I've found my feet! I can use my toes! I actually walk differently!"

HAS THERE BEEN ANY CHANGE?

"I'm a different person from who I was before. I had been self employed and I couldn't go out to work. I was quite often lying in bed until 2pm in the afternoon with nothing to get up for. People around me now say 'what a difference in you'.

I now come to KHL and do Yoga on Mondays, Ballet-Be-Fit Tuesdays, Positive Strength on a Thursday and Tai Chi on Fridays! Oh, and since coming here I've started cooking. I've realised what I put in my body makes a difference."

HOW HAS LINKING YOUR GP HEALTH SUPPORT TO THE COMMUNITY-HEALTH OFFER HELPED?

"It's helped me manage situations better. I have to have MRI scans and I'm a big chap so struggle inside the machine. I'd go in with dread, my eyes clenched tight shut, hated them. The last one I went to I had to have my arms, legs and chest done. I went in the scanner and they strapped me down and I could feel my heart going Boom! Boom! So I started doing my yoga breathing. I closed my eyes and did my breathing then everything just got easier and I was able to open my eyes. They had me in and out of the machine for an hour, there is no way I could have gotten through that without doing my breathing techniques."

HAS YOUR YOGA EXPERIENCE HELPED YOU TO HELP ANYONE ELSE?

"Yes, I show people how to breathe all the time. 'Knees over ankles,' I keep telling my friend that. I've also brought my daughter along to classes and another friend is hopefully going to come along soon. I think it's probably helped my partner in that I'm just a bit easier to live with!"



"MY BREATHING ALSO SEEMS TO HAVE HELPED ME WITH MY HEART. I FEEL MORE IN CONTROL. I DON'T THINK I'M IN LESS PAIN BUT I SEEM TO BE ABLE TO MANAGE EVERYTHING BETTER"

When Richard took his first call from the Rethinking Pain team he was at a low point, struggling with the fact that his pain was life-long, feeling isolated and also that he'd come to the end, in terms of how medicines could alleviate his daily aches and pains.

Richard said how vital it had been that his GP & MSK Service referred him to community-based health options, as otherwise he may not have known about the community-led support on offer, right there at his fingertips.

His Rethinking Pain journey begun with several phone calls and getting to know & trust the team. Richard decided to come into KHLs community centre and attended the Peer Support Group. Step by step Richard found exercise classes, appropriate for people like himself, helped him with his physical and mental health, but also joining in meant he had a more active social life. Richard went from 1 class to 5, and has made new friends in the groups he regularly attends.

Richard has also found for himself a meaningful role with the Rethinking Pain team. He has become a champion in awareness raising to people in a similar situation to himself locally (and nationally through sharing his story).

Richard promotes how a more holistic approach to managing MSK conditions and pain helped him. His story about how he has benefited and was supported is heard more readily by people with health conditions, because they know Richard is more likely to understand, being an expert by experience himself.