

Mindfulness and well-being

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Person with Lived Experience of probation supervision

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I made the biggest mistake of my life when I committed a criminal offence, however I took responsibility for my actions, pleaded guilty and made the decision to move on from that mistake: something I feel I have done well.

Working with probation practitioners gave me hope and allowed me to see the light at the end of the long journey I needed to make. In turn this ensured I set goals to achieve, and this is what effective relationship building is all about.

Trying to focus too much on the past and the mistakes I had made was the wrong decision for me because it did not let me concentrate on the positive aspects and changes that I wanted to make. Although I acknowledged what those mistakes were and could identify how the issues and problems I was experiencing at the time had contributed to my out of character decision making when I committed a criminal offence, I did not want to focus wholly on this because that didn't allow me to move on.

I worked with a few probation practitioners that gave me guidance and support and introduced me to mindfulness where I could think about that moment and concentrate on my thoughts and relax to allow me to see ahead and look to the future.

Achievement is a big step, and it helps that when you have achieved something, however small or big that be, you need to celebrate this and make sure you recognise this is a big step in the journey. This is what I did every time I did something new, achieved something positive and took a step towards where I wanted to get to.

I practiced breathing techniques, thinking in the moment, relaxation. Keeping a thought journal and daily meditation helped me think things through, concentrate on one thing at a time, assisted me with looking ahead and helped develop a calm approach to everything.

Beginning to incorporate mindfulness and meditation into my daily life helped me gain better control of my emotions. I noticed a marked improvement in my depression and anxiety symptoms and contributed to better physical health.

Years later I am now in a better place and have made so much progress. I have gained new skills, obtained some new qualifications, redeveloped, and formed relationships with family and friends. I am back in employment and just about to commence my undergraduate degree.

Focusing on the future, achievements and successes is a better approach than constantly focusing on the past and it is important for probation practitioners to remember this. This has been aided by mindfulness and meditation and has had a huge contributory factor to my own rehabilitation.

I am thankful to all probation practitioners that introduced this approach to me and who believed in me from the start.