



## **Diverse Perspectives on Mental Health**

*Positive Experiences of change*

**Narrator:**

*Can experiencing mental distress also have positive effects on other aspects of someone's life? The Orphans of Beulah is a theatre group consisting of mental health service users and survivors.*

**Terry:**

For me the experience of having mental distress then being in the mental health system has completely changed my life.

**Narrator:**

*Terry*

**Terry:**

I sometimes feel as if I've had two lives; one life up to being twenty-three when I was first taken into hospital, and then my life since then, trying to come to terms with that experience, and ultimately campaigning about it and getting involved and doing things like writing plays.

**Andrea:**

Mental distress in my own life has given me the gift of valuing life, other people, and the good things in my life.

**Narrator:**

*Andrea*

**Andrea:**

As well as at times being absolutely devastating, um, particularly with relationships and family and friends, but also I am fortunate to have very understanding and loving friends and relations, um, who don't think I'm the devil or um an evil person and I think um a lot of people are probably um thankfully a lot more forgiving than we may think they are.

**Chris:**

I think it can have a positive effect.

**Narrator:**

*Chris*

**Chris:**

having been through the experience of that gives you insight into different modes of behaviour I suppose and different perceptions of reality. All that kind of experience, it, it does have a positive effect because without that I would be one-dimensional, but in the same way that um, someone who has travelled round the world and experienced that side of things, and all different cultures and so on, um, obviously has a positive effect on their quality of life, my experience of mental distress, you know, I've been travelling in my mind if you like, and so from that, purely that point of view it's, it has a positive effect when I look back on it, so that, that's long term.

**Miranda:**

Yeah, I'm a lot more creative when I'm depressed or when I'm going through a period of distress.

**Narrator:**

*Miranda*

**Miranda**

To find ways out of my mental health problems I started writing a lot, diaries, poems, lyrics and painting a lot because it seemed to be able to get everything out of me and it's made me into quite a creative person. A lot of people with mental health problems I've met are quite creative people.

**Narrator:**

*The orphans believe that everyone would benefit if mental distress were to be more accepted by individuals and society.*

**Terry:**

I think in a way it's inevitable that, um, we have distress as we go through life. I, I don't think anyone gets through life without suffering in some way and it's how that's er handled that, that, that makes it either a good or a bad experience. If I look back to the first time I was in hospital I think that my life up until then, it had been very difficult really. I was living a bit of a lie in lots of ways and I could see that I was kind of playing a a role. I wasn't quite being myself really. It was like something had to happen. What did happen was quite a, a huge explosion that I then had to spend years and years recovering from, um, but I think it could have been a lot different had, had I been er helped through it.

**Chris:**

First thing is other people who've experienced mental distress, and people in the survivors' group um have given me confidence and, and self-esteem because you realised when you're amongst people who have experienced similar things, that you're not alone for starters. Um, it's a bit of a cliché but you know that boosts your confidence when you're among people who've been through a similar thing. I've had practical advice from people who, who have been through similar experiences, how to deal with some of the symptoms that are leading up to some sort of period of mental distress, um, and practical advice about your relationships; some advice of what to watch for and this may happen and that may happen; are you all right, sort of thing, and that's been really really good.

**Terry:**

I think um when I discovered the survivors' movement in the late nineteen eighties, it was like I'd found a home and, and knowing that other people felt as angry as I felt and I, I've had some really moving times, you know, being in poetry groups with people where people have said the most extraordinary things or written the most extraordinary things and er open themselves up and and disclosed things in a very moving way and the kind of intensity that, that you get and the connection between people er at those times is, is something that um it kind of lives with you for the rest of your life really and it just, it adds a kind of colour to to to my life that you know I don't think I would have had, you know, had I not been through that hospital experience and then, you know campaigned about it with other people.