

OPEN MINDS Case studies

Oscar was referred to OPEN MINDS through Pete's Dragons, a charity supporting families who have experienced suicide loss. Oscar lives with his grandma and granddad after his mother took her life early in 2016. He has never had any contact with his father. Oscar struggles with academic learning and having been excluded from several local schools due to his violent anger outbursts he now attends a special school in a nearby city. Grandma told me that the school were considering excluding him permanently due to the continuation of explosive outbursts and violent behaviour. I worked with Oscar for 6 hours in the summer holidays 2016. On return to school his behaviour was very much improved. He was able to use mindfulness practices independently to regulate his emotional state and started to teach other pupils in the class how to do this. He is no longer at threat of exclusion.

Connor is 18 years old. When he was 14 years old he was diagnosed with IBS. The profound effect of his symptoms had a knock on effect with friendships and he spent more and more time off school. When he started college in Sept 2017 he suffered from extreme social anxiety until his parents decided the best approach was to withdraw him from college and take the rest of the year off. He has had two OPEN MINDS sessions. Connor says "Before I came to the sessions I didn't feel in control or understand my anxieties. I can now control the anxiety with breathing and I understand how my mind works." His mum reports a huge improvement in his mental state after just two sessions. Sessions are due to resume after Christmas 2017.

Robert is the third child in the family and lives with his dad and three siblings. Throughout his school career Robert has shown high levels of anxiety and low tolerance. He becomes agitated very quickly and finds it difficult to self soothe.

He has experienced two terms of OPEN MINDS intervention. In these sessions he has learnt about the brain, the relationship between thoughts and emotions, personal strengths and positive communication.

He is now much more aware of how he is responding in difficult situations and is more able to control his emotional responses. He can now ask for timeout when he knows he needs it and has taken responsibility for initiating this himself. He still has emotional outbursts but these are not as explosive and he recovers more quickly.

He understands the importance of breathing in stressful situations and is able to use this technique independently.

As a child who appears hypervigilant he learnt to relax fully during the visualisation part of the session and was able to close his eyes to further develop a sense of physical and mental calm and emotional regulation.