



Healios

“It was like the biggest penny ever suddenly dropped and everything made sense” - ADHD specialist talks about her own later in life diagnosis

A Derbyshire woman whose career is dedicated to supporting young people through their Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) assessment journeys has spoken about the ‘life-changing’ moment she received her own diagnosis for the condition.

Carlie O’Hara has opened up about her experience during ADHD Awareness Month this October as she looks to raise awareness and provide inspiration for other people in a similar position to where she found herself before her diagnosis.

Carlie, from Buxton, is particularly passionate about raising awareness of the often misunderstood condition as she works day-to-day as a Neurodevelopment Practitioner specialising in ADHD at Healios, the leading digital provider of specialist autism, ADHD and mental health services for children and young people in the UK aged seven to 25.

The 43-year-old mother-of-two has worked at Healios since February 2022 after previously working in the NHS in adult mental health and then Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) before deciding she wanted to specialise in ADHD.

She said it was while working in the NHS that a colleague working in the same field opened her eyes to the fact that she herself may have ADHD.

Carlie said: “It was when I was working in the adult mental health service and worked in an office with Wendy Malik, who now also works at Healios.

“Wendy was my team leader, and specialised in both ADHD, and autism. As we worked together, each day, in the same office, she was able to observe me, and eventually asked me if I was aware that I had ADHD. After Wendy said this to me, we sat and discussed why she thought this.

“It was like the biggest penny ever suddenly dropped and everything made sense. I was eventually officially diagnosed last October.

“Looking back I had always felt different, and that I did not fit in with my peers, or adults, later in life. However, even when I was assessing others in my role as an ADHD nurse, attending medication review clinics with other members of my family, and when my son was being assessed, it never even crossed my mind.”

Before her diagnosis Carlie had always had an interest in ADHD, as other male family members had a diagnosis, so she was able to empathise with families and that's only increased now she has had her own diagnosis.

She said: "I do believe that my passion for working in ADHD had subconsciously come from the fact I had it myself, although I didn't realise. It always resonated with me and I knew where families I dealt with were coming from. Now I know why.

"My son has had a diagnosis as well, and my role as an ADHD nurse has enabled me to fight to ensure he is in the right educational provision that can meet his needs. We're very lucky, and I am passionate to support families in relation to this. My son is happy and thriving in his current provision, which is very different from my experience in education, when I was his age."

Since working at Healios Carlie says she has received great support from her colleagues and managers which have helped her to perform her job to the best of her abilities and her diagnosis has been truly 'life-changing' for her.

She said: "It's been life-changing since I had the diagnosis as I always felt like I was lazy and I had chronic imposter syndrome to the point I was going to come out of nursing.

"That's the thing with ADHD you feel like you're not good enough. There are times when I receive great feedback, but never felt that I deserved it. I was always worried that I did not really belong in nursing, and felt like a fraud who was going to get found out.

"This way of thinking has had a huge impact on my self esteem, and belief in myself. Working with Wendy Maik, and then for Healios, has been life changing, as before I would frequently change jobs due to burnout, and getting overwhelmed.

"However, due to the great support and understanding I have received from my service manager, team lead, and colleagues at Healios, I am glad to say that I plan to remain in nursing, and working on the post diagnostic pathway, supporting young people and their families. Feeling understood and that I can be my authentic self, without any repercussions, is really important to me, and I have that at Healios"

Adopting a digital-first clinical approach, Healios has redefined the way autism, ADHD and mental health services are delivered to children, young people and families in the UK since it was founded in 2013.

By teaming expert clinicians with innovative technology and a family-centred approach, Healios has enabled tens of thousands of children, young people and their families to access life-changing support from the comfort of their own homes, helping to reduce waiting times and improve outcomes.

David Mushati, Healios Chief Medical Officer, said: "We're so lucky at Healios to have such a skilled, dedicated and diverse workforce with colleagues who bring not only their clinical expertise but also great passion and quite often their own life experience to the role, which is absolutely invaluable.

“Carlie’s story is a real reflection of this and this experience can only help in delivering even better outcomes for the children, young people and families our teams interact with on a daily basis.”

ADHD is a type of neurodiversity that affects every aspect of life, and many people don’t realise they have it until they’re much older.

ADHD Awareness Month serves as a time to celebrate the difference found in neurodiversity while also advocating for new perspectives and better support systems.

ENDS

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Notes to editors

About Healios

Healios is the leading digital provider of specialist mental health, autism and ADHD services for children and young people in the UK aged seven to 25. Healios is reimagining the care experience by optimally combining an expert multidisciplinary care team with evidence-based, family-centred approaches and great technology.

Proudly working in partnership with 62% of the UK’s NHS children and adolescent mental health services, Healios is the largest private digital provider of specialist mental health and neurodevelopmental assessment, diagnosis and intervention services for children and young people, delivering almost 200,000 clinical sessions and accepting over 50,000 referrals.

For more information visit: healios.org.uk