



Healios

Teenager opens up on how receiving mental health support through Healios “changed my life” following loss of a loved one

A brave teenager from the Wirral is looking to inspire children and young people like her who have faced challenges with their mental health by telling her story of how she was given the tools to help change her life.

Natalie Ryan received support from Healios, the leading digital provider of specialist autism, ADHD and mental health services for children and young people in the UK, as she struggled with changes in her life and grief caused by the loss of her cousin.

The 17-year-old has spoken about her journey to better mental health to coincide with World Mental Health Day (10 October) and encouraged other young people suffering in silence to seek support and have those difficult conversations.

She said: “It was a massive step for me (to open up). I had to put a lot of trust into my therapist. It was a big leap for me but I think as soon as you get speaking to someone and you’re able to build up that rapport with someone it makes it so much easier to open up about your feelings and be honest, as that is the key.”

Natalie, who currently studies at College and works part-time in a bar, was referred to Healios through a partnership with her local NHS Trust, and received 16 Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) sessions on a weekly basis.

The main goal was to evaluate why her depression had spiked and why her behaviour had changed, as well as the grieving process and dealing with the loss of her cousin during the first Covid lockdown.

She said: “I started to work with Healios in 2022 and I checked in each week with my therapist who set individual but realistic goals for me which I could achieve weekly and this depended on how I felt or how I’d progressed.”

She was introduced to a technique called ‘self-soothing’ to help her understand her emotions and deal with them, enabling her to work on her own before asking for help.

“I wanted to be alone and understand how I was feeling before someone else could decide for me and say ‘you’re feeling sad’ or stuff like that,” she said.

“The self-soothing was a healthy form of expression and my therapist made sure I was doing it beneficially but safely so not being too long on my own crying but getting the help I needed straight after.”

The sessions then looked to deal with grief and loss which had a particularly detrimental effect on Natalie's mental health since her cousin passed away.

She said: "In the past I had bereavement counsellors and other counsellors who'd given me colourful worksheets or said I just need to meditate and things like that - while those techniques will be perfect for some people, my therapist at Healios knew straight away that wasn't my cup of tea and it wasn't going to benefit me in the long run.

"Instead she created this plan catered to my personal and emotional needs and it suited me absolutely brilliantly. At the end of every session we would reflect and debrief on what we'd spoken about."

Natalie said the peak of her problems had been in September last year when she said she had become "really quite low and disassociated with everything".

She said: "I'd lost a lot of confidence, I'd lost my hobbies - I'd really liked going out with my friends and going to the gym and that just stopped instantly.

"We addressed suicidal thoughts, why I was feeling the way I was feeling and the environmental changes, by which I mean I'd started a new college which had been very overwhelming for me. We identified that as a trigger, as it was a whole new situation, I had almost no friends there.

Natalie was given realistic goals such as 'where do you see yourself in four weeks' rather than 10 years' time so they didn't feel unreachable.

Natalie also spoke with her therapist about relationships and personal development, how to cope in certain situations she couldn't control and making sure she was in a "healthy relationship with her mindset" before either making new friends or finding a partner.

"She introduced me to 'fight or flight'," she said. "In this we would take a physical characteristic like holding something cold or doing a physical activity so that my body knew I was in shock or it was doing something way out of its comfort zone before it could relax and rest.

"This allowed me to embrace my body altering due to the psychological effects. This was brand new to me as I'd had no understanding that psychological effects could impact on your body so it was great to really learn that from her."

Natalie said she had nothing but praise for her therapist and the care she received at Healios which has now given her more confidence and hope for what her future holds.

"She was absolutely amazing - she's changed my life for the better and I can't thank her enough", Natalie said.

"The help I had through Healios has opened up a lot of doors for me. I'm not as scared or as timid as I used to be, about going out and also making sure my family knew that I wasn't OK.

And not being ashamed of that, letting people know it's OK not to be OK, you're allowed to feel your emotions and your feelings.

"I've now got real confidence about what's ahead for me."

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.

Sessions are delivered via Healios' secure purpose-built interactive clinical platform Panacea, connecting expert clinicians with families giving access to life-changing support from the comfort of their own homes, helping to reduce waiting times and improve outcomes.

Natalie added: "With the sessions being virtual it fitted in with me perfectly - it fitted with my schedule and on some days when I wasn't feeling good I could just sit in front of the camera and tell my therapist how I was feeling, rather than having to go out and see someone and sit in a strange room and talk about my feelings. It felt more comfortable."

David Mushati, Healios Chief Medical Officer, said Natalie's story was testament to the dedication and expertise of the clinical teams at Healios and praised her for looking to inspire other young people facing such challenges.

He said: "It's truly uplifting and satisfying to hear Natalie talk so positively about her experience receiving support from Healios and I would like to thank her for her courage and for looking to inspire her peers who may be faced with similar circumstances in their lives and in need of support.

"Healios' specialist multidisciplinary teams collaborate with NHS Health Boards in Scotland and Wales and Mental Health Trusts across England, reducing local waiting times and improving outcomes for children and young people.

"If you work for a local service and need to increase access to support, get in touch with our NHS Partnership Team at commercial@healios.org.uk"

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](https://healios.org.uk)