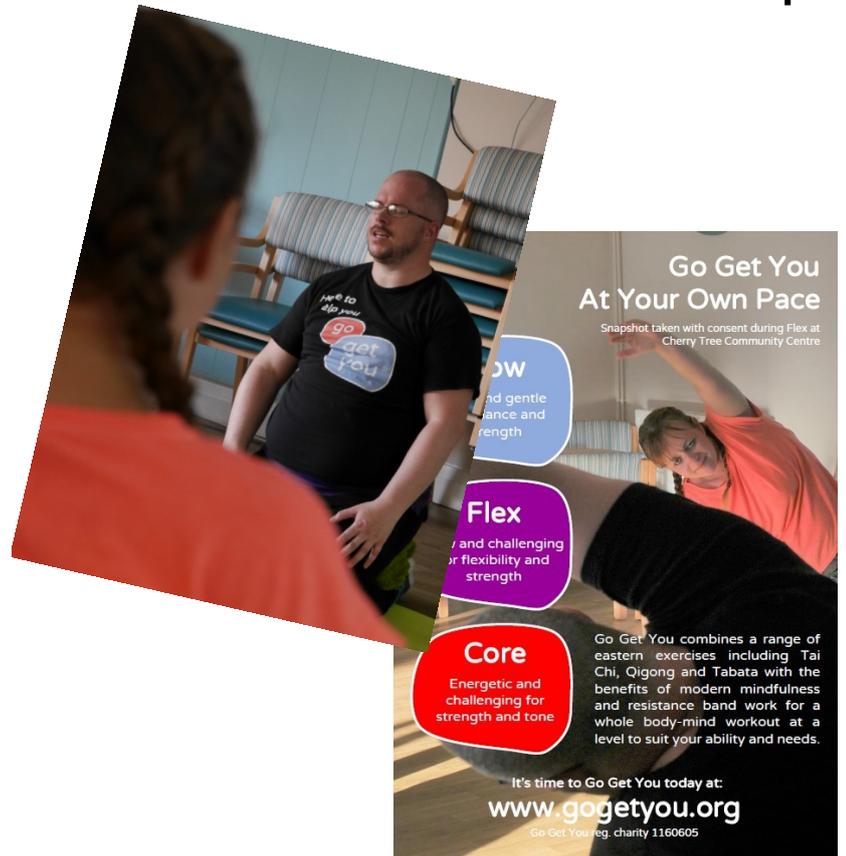


# A PATIENT STORY - PAUL

Paul tells the story of how he dealt with his own mental health problems and how he is now helping others to do the same.

It was mid-august 2008, I sat at my desk at home, slumped over with my head in my hands crying my heart out wondering what was so wrong with me, I had become a persistent self-harmer, and so socially phobic I could scarcely think about leaving the house, just the idea of it made me physically sick, I was in constant pain with my back after injuring it a matter of weeks into my first job working in a care home, and I just wanted the physical and emotional pain to end, and I was prepared to do just that, myself. Earlier that year I lost my god mother to cancer, the first time I'd experienced such a powerful bereavement, I thought about the life I had lead up to that point, how utterly and profoundly unhappy I was. I recalled how things had always felt wrong since early childhood, it killed me that one of my earliest childhood memories, a week before my 7<sup>th</sup> birthday, I had felt so completely alone and in a deep pit of despair that I, a 7 year old child decided to take my own life, then shortly before my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday I was raped by a male childhood friend. Sitting at my desk I could still remember so clearly all the physical sensations of what had happened to me. I continued to think about how my life seemed to continue to just get darker. I lifted my fists up, about to drive them through my glass desk, with my clenched fists in mid air a strange sense of clarity came over me, my mind suddenly felt full of space, and it was as if I could feel in slow motion a fire being ignited in me, I suddenly realised I really had enough of feeling like I was imploding and that fire in me brought an outward explosion of realisation that I needed to change, I needed to do something. I suddenly found myself full of an energy I'd not experienced before.

The next thing I knew I was burning my way through the vastness of Google searching for something that would resonate with me, and I found it. I came across a research paper about the use of something called Mindfulness and how it had some serious benefits for easing depression, anxiety and chronic pain. There it was again that spark in me, I knew this was what I needed.



I'd looked around for courses, sadly nothing local, and being a skint student living on student loans I couldn't venture very far. However, I didn't give up looking. In October I started my Bachelors Degree at the University of Salford, two weeks in myself and my partner were left with no choice but to move back south, it was the start of the recession and things had already started going wrong, but that did not phase me.

My first week traveling from Northampton to Salford, I arrived at campus and I remember that day we were being asked to choose the optional modules for our Degree. Now I'll be honest, I'm an atheist, I never really bought into fate and destiny, but sitting in that room, feeling exhausted from having to wake up at 4am for my train I heard the tutor utter one word... Mindfulness, immediately I sat up, ears, eyes and mind wide open, and in that moment I thought that maybe there is such thing as fate; the one thing I had been looking for had just dropped into my lap and I was in a state of shock. The rest of my year at University I was completely captivated by the subject, I practiced as often as I could, and slowly I could feel a deep and meaningful change come over me. It wasn't like I woke up one day and thought I had been cured of being a self-harmer, suicidal, depressed and anxious, it was

subtle. Certainly by the time I had completed my studies I had finally begun to experience sincere contentment, something much more meaningful than the fleeting happiness of that first sip of coffee in the morning, or that first bite into a chocolate bar. Because of my personal experience I decided that this is what I wanted to do, to teach others, and help them experience what I had done.

After 3 years of professional teacher training, and having moved back to Blackpool, I felt that for me to achieve my goal of helping others experience the positive effects of Mindfulness that setting up a non-profit was the way forward for me, I had always done volunteering in fields of interest, which for the most part was for LGBT causes after experiencing a traumatic 'coming out'. It was by no means an easy journey, but left me feeling a sense of hope that I had a future, and a sense of purpose that something good might come from my own darkness.

In 2016 I had come to a point where I had travelled as far as I could with my personal Mindfulness practice, I was experiencing a lot of stiffness in my joints, and particularly my back. I also felt an urge to keep learning, so again I searched for something which resonated with me, and came across Tai Chi and Qigong. The nearest classes I could find were in Manchester, where they also offered teacher training. After attending these classes for a few weeks, the aching and stiffness of my joints, the pain in my back eased and softened, so again I knew this was how I was going to bring a much needed spark to my own practice and my teaching. What I was already doing, and my experience of Tai Chi and Qigong fit together like pieces of a puzzle. By this time my non-profit had become a registered charity, and I had just secured over £20,000 in funding for 1 year, allowing me to teach everything I had learned.

I continue to learn personally, I continue to grow and find new ways of keeping on top of my health and fitness, and particularly after I started becoming concerned about my weight and recovering from a broken arm, I've found a passion for the simple resistance band, and having recently completed a Level 2 Fitness Instructor Diploma, I'm now bringing together everything I've learned to keep myself well, both physically and emotionally.

I do still experience some bad days where my joints ache a little, where I just want to hide under my duvet, but I've come to accept and understand those times, that sometimes it's about realising I need to take time to ease off the throttle, to practice self-care, and more importantly understand that I'm not 23 years old anymore.

But, despite that, I love running my classes in Mar- ton, they bring me a lot of joy knowing that I'm help- ing to make a difference in people's lives, and al- ways provide me an opportunity to learn from others and about myself. I currently run 3 classes out of Cherry Tree Gardens Community Centre. My class GGY Flow combines Tai Chi, Qigong and Mindful- ness, which focuses on balance and strength and GGY Flex, which is based on Qigong, with Mindful- ness and Resistance band work included for an ex- tra punch, with a focus on flexibility and strength. Either way there is something for people of all abil- ities, and there's always a warm welcome for people who haven't been before.

 **Your Local GGY Guru is:** **PAUL**

Using the Go Get You combination of eastern and modern exercises, I manage my depression, anxiety and back pain. Please join me so you can learn to manage your conditions too.



Weds 6.45pm, Cherry Tree Gardens, Mar- ton  
Thurs 6.45pm, Cherry Tree Gardens, Mar- ton

**Flow**

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Thurs 7.45pm, Cherry Tree Gardens, Mar- ton

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Weds 8.45pm, Cherry Tree Gardens, Mar- ton  
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To join you must be 18 years and over to purchase a membership. Memberships and classes must be booked online to guarantee your place and allow your Guru to help offer guidance with any health concerns. Please wear suitable clothing such as t-shirt and jogging trousers.

Website: [www.gogetyou.org](http://www.gogetyou.org)

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