

Supporting Families

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1. Supporting Families – Supporting the family of someone that has mental health issues

Kia ora, my name is Jade Caulfield, I'm the Northern Region Manager at Yellow Brick Road. Kia ora, my name is Chris Doss, I'm a Family Whānau Support Worker at Yellow Brick Road in the Canterbury branch. And we're being joined today by Kath and Matt who have some experience with seeking whānau support when they've got a loved one who's unwell so we're going to talk about that today. Hi I'm Matt and I'm Kath and we are parents of a teen who has suffered with anxiety and some mental health issues over the last few years. And Yellow Brick Road is an organisation nationally that works with families, whānau, whoever's involved in supporting someone in their family who experiences mental health challenges.

So what is different about the whānau support approach to mental health well-being? I think the first thing that's different is historically our mental health system has been a little bit different. It's been very individual focused. We're talking about one person who's unwell and what we really want to share is that people aren't alone in their own wellness. They exist in families, they exist in couples, they exist in groups of people. And if we work on making sure that everyone is surrounded by people who understand what's going on and are supported themselves, then we can make sure that people recover faster.

Definitely, I guess following on from that is when we think about the individual that's unwell, when if they're going to the mental health hospital or any other service as an inpatient or whatever that might look like, as soon as they go back into the home I mean those are

the people that are actually going to be there all of the time. Especially for you guys, that's something that you guys had to deal with was as soon as your daughter came back you were the ones supporting her.

her so having that i guess approaching that kind of wraparound is so important because suddenly it's not just in your guys case it's not just one person that's unwell suddenly it's three people being impacted by this so having a supportive environment for the individual we know is one of the most conducive things towards the person actually improving and also find a support so important as well because in a way it's a form of prevention because as soon as we can help step in to look after you guys you know you guys feel a bit better anyway you don't start to deteriorate and going down this i guess downward spiral yeah that's a really good point because obviously um we went through i think their mental health service and everything was focused on our daughter and really we didn't get any support or we didn't we struggled because we weren't we weren't getting any support and we were just we were just sort of like passengers on on our daughter's journey um and it wasn't until we got involved with you guys were we went with the other road that we actually got some some um basically some help for us you know it was one of the things that we were struggling with i personally was struggling with and everyone deserves well-being you know everyone deserves to be happy and healthy and um unable to cope with what's going on in their lives um not just people who experience mental illness but everyone who's around them as well do you think this will become more widespread more broader that these people more people see that that's a better way of looking at it looking at the whole family environment rather than just the individual focusing on the individual i'd like to really like to see that more mainstream i have a lot of hope that we're moving towards that way i've been involved in this organization um for quite some time and there's been a massive shift of an understanding of family needs and an understanding that whānau support is really integral when we're talking about um how people cope and how people recover it definitely seems to be that is becoming a bit more well-known than it used to be i mean especially you know looking at our organization as a whole you know the changes that have been made and the i think yellow brick road has been around in as many forms in about 30 years something like that so we've been around for 40.

40 yeah yeah it's been around for about 40 years and it's only kind of now that more and more people are starting to be aware of it and being aware of the impact of the whānau support and more practitioners i think are becoming more aware of that as well and actually getting whānau input on things i'm sure that makes a huge difference i know it did for us um you know just having having somebody concerned with the family members who are supporting somebody going through mental health and yet you know you sort of get forgotten about and you eat even to the point where you forget about yourself because you're all for everybody's focused on that individual with the mental health issues yeah um you know so it's easy to forget about your own well-being and about yourself and you know to look after each other as soon as you start to see you know all of the resources going towards this one individual it's like okay well that's what we should be doing as well and you know it's a bit in a way it can be easier for services because they're not really there 24 7.

they're giving them as much input as they can as much resources as they can within the allocated time but at the end of the day it's your roof that she's sleeping under yeah she's you guys are the ones that are supporting her throughout everything yeah and funnily enough we're probably the ones that had the less the least resources to do it as well because it's just yeah it often comes out it's really it's not our profession to look after somebody in that way not we're not you don't expect to have that to happen i think everybody likes to hope for the best so obviously you don't think it's going to happen it's a huge responsibility yeah especially looking after a child is like huge enough but then having all these other things can definitely take its toll yeah and then also that not only impacts your own well-being but inadvertently also impacts your child's well-being as well yeah that's the thing because as soon as you're not looking after yourselves they're going to get worse as well

2. Supporting Families - Stepping back – looking after your self

I think we suffered from that, didn't we? When our daughter was going through everything, I was really struggling with it and didn't know how to react to it. And I think I brought a lot of negative energy into the family because of that. And I think she sort of fed off that. So for a long time, me and my daughter really didn't get on well, did we? And I think it was that. And it wasn't until I sort of started taking that step back and not trying to fix things, which is sort of my natural status to try and fix things, until I sort of stopped trying to do that and let her just do what she needed to do.

I was struggling with that. And I think that's something that you guys have the yellow bit road, really. It really helped me with, you know, sort of Christophe and Mark sort of really the intimacy of all our meetings, that you've got to, you know, sort of sometimes take a step back and look after yourself. And I was, you know, up until that point, it was just like, I was just focused on our daughter and just wanted everything else sort of falling by the wayside. Yeah. I think, especially at the start, it did feel like there was a huge focus on, like, getting her better. Yeah. As soon as possible.

Yeah. I think once we changed goals and changed expectations. And that, yeah, that's it as well. The whole focus up to then is, yeah, for even from clinicians and stuff, right, how do we fix this? How do we fix this? How do we fix this? And sometimes there isn't necessarily a fix as such. And you have to, yeah, come to terms with that, which I think, you know, it always definitely helped us to

know that you're not necessarily, you're not going to get things, to normal as such. But, yeah, it's, it's living with your new normal and accepting that. And, yeah, I don't think any of the other systems are really set up to help you with that.

It's more about, yeah, just getting things back to normal and fixed. Yeah. I mean, I mean, personally, I found the whole mental health system a bit overwhelming. You initially sort of battle for, well, we, we battle for, for a long time to get any assistance. And then when we got the diagnosis, we got help from every direction. And that was actually overwhelming because everybody was trying to help us. And for a long time, we didn't have any help. And that was, but that was like a battle that we could actually focus on. Once we actually got the diagnosis and, and then we got basically offers from help from every, everywhere, every sort of, and that was actually overwhelming.

And for me, we didn't know, you know, we were constantly getting called and asked, you know, what can we do? And it was like, oh, it was quite, quite overwhelming. And I forget if I'd spoken to people before and what, what, yeah, what group I'd spoken to and who I hadn't spoken to before and who we'd put in applications to. And things sometimes took so long that you forgot that you'd done it. And, and you're just, yeah, people, for other people calling you, it's their job. For you, it's your life. And it's just trying to put that all together in your life as well. Outside work, because quite often you're trying to work at the same time, in a nine to five job or whatever, it was, yeah.

You have all this other stuff going on. Overwhelming, yeah, yeah, definitely overwhelming. So it's, it was definitely a breath of fresh air when Yale Brick Road came on the scene and started saying, what about you two, which was great. Because your wellbeing is important as well. Yeah. And I think it probably took us a little while to, to realise what you were saying then. Because you know, what about you two, what about us two, it's our daughter. Yeah. And you know, it took a little, little while for that to sink in. Mm-hmm .

3. Supporting Families - Engaging with Yellow Brick Road

and i think that kind of leads us into i guess another discussion point which is you know how did you find out about final support and kind of what drew you to it what how did you find about yellow brick road um i think i probably sort of heard it in passing over now and again maybe got a leaflet or something but again it's in the midst of everything else which is overwhelming and you put it to say because it's not directly to do with whatever's going on but um once we'd had a hospital stay basically and the social worker who was assigned to his family suggested that she could um put us in touch with yellow brick road and for our support rather than just um to give us strategies to help and things like that it was it was yeah we jumped at it didn't we really yeah i think i think for me it would be the last thing in the world that i would do it's just not sort of really my sort of why i would you know what i would do but we tried you know in our mind we tried everything and nothing did work and i was really starting to feel under a lot of pressure um you know sort of um you know sort of my my sort of reservoir was was full and it didn't take very much for it to overflow so um you know so yeah i just i think at that point it was just the case well let's just try it got absolutely nothing to lose let's just try it and it literally um turned things around for us um yeah i mean i was falling apart at that at that point um and it just it just gradually over over a couple of months um just made a huge difference to to me and then i think because my um attitude changed actually helped our daughter so we we stopped sort of putting heads um that made a massive difference to us yeah in fact yeah it's just such a shame that it's support we couldn't have got earlier on or we probably could have got some support earlier on but we didn't recognize that how important it could be and how helpful it could be and i suppose if it yeah and at that point we would have had to reach out which you just don't do as parents when you're dealing with so many other things.

That's why we really like when other providers make referrals because families often don't get in touch with us until things get really bad and if we can get in there quite early and start you know giving you guys good self-care tips and letting you know things that it's not your fault that things are going wrong and all the different ways that you can take care of yourselves it hopefully leads to less stress and less trouble so we're always excited when we get referrals really because it's a it's a point of contact where people are ready people are ready to look at getting support. I think yeah for that for parents as well there's a huge guilt behind the fact that your child's struggling so much or your family member's struggling so much and you've not been able to help them as much as you'd like to.

You feel like you're failing so yeah even part of you doesn't want to admit that but yeah it was yeah definitely great to be there. So you felt quite a bit of with that I guess stigma that you felt do you reckon that you if you're just like been given the brochure do you reckon you would have made contact or? I think I probably had a brochure before that and it was just in passing it was there but yeah I don't yeah it's kind of I don't know. And plus at that point everything's just too much it's just like it's just one more thing to do. Yeah. There's so many things that you're doing this at that point that are got more priority for you.

You feel it's more of a priority that something like that it's just like oh not what time for that yeah yeah so the fact that somebody else says I'll do that for you. Yeah it's just going back to what I said before once we got the diagnosis we were overwhelmed with the different levels of anxiety. Yeah it's just going back to what I said before once we got the diagnosis we were overwhelmed with the different levels of anxiety. Yeah it's just going back to what I said before once we got the diagnosis we were overwhelmed with the

different levels of anxiety. of support that were being offered. And you know the yellow bit road what probably was offered at that time, but at that point we were just focused on like basically.

And you know the yellow bit road what probably was offered at that time, but at that point we were just focused on like basically. So it's just a case of I didn't actually really sink into what that actually meant. You know like I'm sure someone said oh yellow bit road and what's that oh it's helpful you guys and I'm like oh. So we don't need that we need help. Wow and I think also like for quite a few families as well there's the sense of I guess ah let's kind of shut everything else down focus on this get this done as soon as we can and almost treating it like a sprint where it's like you know get this done as soon as possible and you know get it done and over with.

That's the way we work at the moment isn't it yeah if we focus on that one thing now get that cleared up and then we'll move on to something else and then we'll do that but rather than being like actually this is a bit more of a marathon I actually have to be facing myself and looking after myself you know taking a few breaks here and there. Yeah well yeah I mean that's it if you realized it was a long-term thing like you were yeah you probably would look at it a different way but yeah because you think it's a sprint and we're going to get it fixed you don't really think that I'll need to look after you know myself you know I'll look after the family yeah get that get that done but it but it is a marathon.

You can't these things sometimes to get worse before they get better and then when they do get better it's like baby steps it takes a long long time so you know sometimes you have hit roadblocks and have setbacks um which can be quite demoralizing but yeah yeah well you need to be able to sort of look after yourselves and and you know to keep look after yourselves look after each other and I guess that's kind of what we want for the families who access our services. That they can draw on those strengths the next time something happens so that if things do get bad again you know you can think about what they tell me last time what worked for me last time how can I keep myself well during this time how can I not judge myself and say no to all this guilt that's coming in.

That's it having that regular support with Christos as well was yeah reminding us that we're going through it again but we're not at the same stage because we do have extra skills now that we can.

Help us to help our daughter deal with that so yeah yeah I think like there definitely were quite a few times where you know I'd come in you guys be like you know it wasn't hasn't been a great month but then it's like hey well how does it compare to 18 months ago and it's like it's a world of difference yeah so just putting things in perspective as well I think was quite helpful for you guys definitely definitely and I think another thing is the fact that you kept coming back and kept coming back to us and whereas with other services or whatever it's for a short set time maybe five visits or something and you get information so I mean I must have piles of sheets about how to look after yourself how to do meditation how to breathe and but if somebody doesn't come and that personal touch is what helps that to stick.

Yeah. Reminding you and basically looking after us because we can't look after ourselves that in that way and it's just like that extra hand to help you remind you of all these things and slowly but surely that comes on board and you take it on board yourself and things slowly but surely you can cope with things but it doesn't mean that everything's getting better but you can cope with those things a bit better. Yeah I think that's one of the things that I got was um looking after yourself brought my anxiety levels down it made me able to cope better when things were difficult so you know were which is something that at the very start of it yeah I had a big reserve but over the multiple years that we dealt with it it just got eroded away um so yeah so that was you know something that was something very valuable that you brought back to me.

4. Supporting Families - Tailoring the package to suit the family

the question i had in terms of what other tools do you have that you can use with with uh you know with with families who are going through this mental health crisis um you know to help their mental well-being well i think that one thing that yellow brick road does very well in that we have such a diverse workforce and our staff all kind of have different strengths and different tools to be able to bring because you know whenever we get in a referral and we're discussing the staff meetings and assign us okay who's who would be the best fit for this so you know when your referral came in i was like hey i reckon i've already got some tools to be able to help this family so focusing on things like you know like meditation mindfulness cool they work great for something people we really do try to tailor things as much as we can to the family rather than making our approach like okay cool we have this set routine of things that we're going to do do these things and if they don't work then tough luck it's like no we really try to tailor it to be like okay is this working for you cool let's focus a bit more on that is this working for you it's not cool let's try something else and you know bringing in other workers if we have to i mean you know with the men's group for example you know having mark there as well rather than than just myself um being able to draw on some of his strengths is is a really useful thing having all of the you know mindfulness and the opportunity to talk we really do try our best to to meet the needs of the family and i think a lot of families come to us haven't necessarily felt heard by a lot of services you know that there hasn't been a chance for them to share their story and to talk about how things have been for them um and the experience of being able to meet with a support worker and talk through what's going on can be so valuable

you know it's like problem solving with someone who's got a few more extra tools um and you know you can check back in the next week and go oh look that didn't work but let's try this one um and just having that actual support of someone who's really there for you to help you get through it rather than just solely focused on your loved one can be really validating i think that a huge thing as well is people people realistically they know how to look after themselves but when they go through you know that kind of crisis period they forget because they do put those blinders on they go into sprint mode they try to get things done and just things go by the wayside so us coming in and being like actually no remember the things that you know the things that you used to enjoy bringing those things back and looking after yourselves a bit more it's there's a bit of a reminder there as well and if we pull on on top of that anxiety feelings of guilt all of those things you know you may know the skills like crystal says but they don't come out naturally in a time of crisis yeah that's true because i think that was something that kind of you went through as you know especially the stepping out for women program that that we offer was quite a few things that you kind of already knew but you had just forgotten and you just needed a bit of reminding yeah yeah um yeah stepping out stepping out for women yeah stepping out for women's that was a big help to me and being with some other it was generally mom was in similar situations not exactly the same but in similar and yeah just reminding us to take care of ourselves which i think for moms especially like when children come along you tend to pour your whole life into the family and um yeah having that group of moms that we were all feeling the same sort of feelings going through other situations and just help support each other as well with the support of the Elmsbury Road and again it wasn't just a one-off it was several weeks and we were encouraged to keep in contact and help each other which we still do and still meet up and talk about things which is great because it can be very isolating yeah to go through when you've got someone who you love who is unwell and possibly doing things that you know are really hard to talk to your friends and family about that's it yeah there's a lot of again it's guilt about feeling uncomfortable around other people who don't understand if you've not been through it yourself it's quite easy to be judgmental about these things and think well if I was in that situation I'd do something differently but until you're in there and other people that have been in that are the only other people that understand I think what it's like I think especially for you guys as well it was even more isolating because you know not having any family here I think made things yeah it's a bit difficult for you guys yeah I don't think we felt comfortable allowing putting our friends in the situation we're there to deal with it with with things that were happening so yeah so we did to certainly can shut ourselves off from from you know from friends um you know we haven't had anybody to the house in a long time have we you know so things like that um yeah definitely isolating and no family in New Zealand and then sort of keeping friends at arm's length because you know because our daughter couldn't cope with people coming to the house and we were worried what would what could happen if people came to the house so yeah it's always nice that you know we were able to offer but not only the Stepping Up Woman for UK but then Matt I mean the men's group yeah

5. Supporting Families - The value of the men's group

The men's group was really good for me. It's just once a month, which again is good because it's not too much. Anything more than that I think it would put a lot of guys off. But once a month is good and we get together for a couple of hours. It's over guys who are supporting family members are going through the same sort of thing. But it's all sorts of different things so everybody's coming from, has got different problems and it's just good to be able to talk about your problem in a room where people have got similar experiences and sometimes they give you advice and sometimes they tell you their stories.

And it's just sort of, makes you realise that I'm not actually alone in this. There are other people that are going through similar sort of things and, you know, like that phrase, that talk in therapy always just seems a bit woolly to me until, well I guess that's exactly what the Yellow Brick Road, the men's group is. We get together and we talk about our issues, you know, we have a coffee and we chat about our issues and occasionally we have a coffee and we chat about our issues and occasionally we have a coffee and we chat about our issues and occasionally we go off as a group and do nice things as well.

Yeah, go on like a boat ride or whatever it might be. Yeah, just put that in there. Yeah. Like some treats. Yeah. But yeah, I mean it's a shame though because I've said to some of my friends about the men's group for their husbands and said, oh we wouldn't do that, we wouldn't do something like that. And I think that's really sad because it's not what you think it would be, is it? No, it's not. Well the problem is if we, if you'd have said, that's who you'd have suggested to me. If I suggested to you, you wouldn't have done it. No, I don't think so. Yeah, no way. So yeah, it's, I don't know, and I don't know a way of approaching it that, you know, that would work.

I went along because at the time I was like holding on by my fingernails and didn't know what else to do and I just thought, I've got nothing to lose, I might as well go along. And Chris suggested it to you, not me. Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. So yeah. A good selling point. Chris is always just saying, look, just, just come to one and then, you know, if it, if it's not for you, no harm, no foul. Yeah, no, but I'm very good at being buddy-headed, so, you know, I've quite easily said no, and no amount of persuading would have worked. But I know you get me on a good day or something and I decided that I would go along and it made a massive, massive difference to me.

Yeah. And, you know, I sort of cast friends who have been having a hard time. I wish there was a way we could convince them. Yeah. That it would be a good idea. But just from being there, I know that it's something that they have to decide themselves. And trying to

push them into it is not going to work. If anything, like pushing them is going to make them pull back even more. Yeah, exactly. And really not want to engage. Yeah. It is, it is tough and, but there's things that you're going to get from, from the group that you're not going to get in the one-on-one stuff. Because, you know, with one-on-one stuff, I mean, you know, we've been through, you know, quite a few, I guess, tools and techniques with the breathing and the mindfulness and trying to do some information education, those kinds of things.

And, you know, for other families, kind of all they want is information education on what is this diagnosis? What does this mean? Yeah. So, you know, being able to help provide that as well. But then having the group stuff, again, like you guys said, it's a lot of it. A lot of it is just being in the same room as other people that get it. Like they might not be in the exact same situation, but you can bet that if it's, you know, parents, siblings, children, friends, whoever it is, there's going to be common themes. Yeah. With, with what everyone's going through. Just being in that, in that room and realizing, actually, as cliché as it sounds, I'm not alone.

And there's a real comfort in that. Yeah. I think, I think that it really was the thing that. Yeah. That got me through that, that those couple of months was, you know, the first one I went along, but then I came out and went, oh, I was actually all right. And then, you know, after subsequent meetings, just sort of built, helped build my confidence again. You know what I mean? Sort of my, my confidence as a player had taken a real hit. You know, and I, you know, in my mind, I was trying to fix things and make things better. And all it was actually doing was making things worse. Yeah. So my, my, yeah, my confidence as a parent had taken a real hit and I was thinking I was a real crappy parent.

Yeah. That was, that was a, that was a huge thing kind of at the start is that you had these huge expectations on yourself and, you know, quite, quite a few expectations on as well. And then as soon as you or her felt short of that, you know, it really triggered that, that anger response in you. Mm-hmm. And I think that was a real turning point for you. Yeah. It was a turning point for not only you, but also for, for her recovery as well. Yeah. Oh, definitely. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And yeah, like the, the, the men's group sort of was, I guess, turning point for me. Mm-hmm. Sort of going along and meeting the other guys and chatting to them and realizing, you know, I wasn't such a crappy parent as I actually thought.

You know, so it did make, it did make, make a difference to me that way. And then that was sort of helped with my, you know, I guess with my self pride and that it wasn't, it wasn't a total failure. Mm-hmm. Not failure at all. No. I don't know. It felt like that at the same time. Yeah. Yeah, it did. And I can understand how it feels like that, but it's, if anything, the level of guilt that you had was just a reflection on, on the love that you have for her. Yeah. Yeah. And I feel there still is a real love. I mean, if there wasn't, you wouldn't have engaged so, so well with me to begin with, you know, and taking kind of everything that I was saying on board.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

6. Supporting Families - Why is the organisation called Yellow Brick Rd

And one of the things we talk about in terms of whānau support is that it's not about us upskilling you or, you know, giving you your solutions. When we changed our name to Yellow Brick Road, there was a lot of questioning about why we chose Yellow Brick Road. But the imagery that I really liked was in the movie, they all journeyed along Yellow Brick Road to visit the wizard to be given what they thought they needed. And what they found was that they had it all along inside them. And that's what we really hope to be for families, is to be able to support them through that journey, because we know that families have the strengths they need. They just need someone to support them through it and remind them of the power and the strength that they have. And sometimes that comes from hearing it from other people as well. Yeah, that's true, because quite often the system takes that away from you as well, because you get put on parent courses and things like that, which make you... You think, oh, am I not a good parent after all? Have I done things wrong? And then, yeah, things like that help make you question yourself more and more. So to get that back again and realise you are the person that knows your child better and you've got it inside you, take away that worry and guilt and trust yourself a bit more, I think. Yeah, it's really helpful.

7. Supporting Families - When the young person is not ready for support

What kind of support has worked for you? I wanted to specify that there's different ones but I got something from all of them. Because I think that's important for people to think I'm just going to try that and if that doesn't work for them that's me. And I want to make it clear that you've got a number of different ways of supporting people. And that I personally got something from everything I've done. I think Christoph said it before that they try and tailor the support to the family. Which is something really different to the other support we were offering. Because in a lot of the other support we basically said we're going to have this number of sessions.

And we're going to do this and this. And each time we tried that basically because our daughter wasn't prepared to... Wasn't at a point where she... Was willing to accept help. It was like well we can't do anything now. And then they literally said right that's us done. And

we were like oh what do we do now? Because we still have to live with that. Yeah and then a month later we got more support. But we went through exactly the same scenario again. And at the end of it they went well your daughter's not willing to accept help so we can't do anything. And it was like oh. And it was like you know the day's your day.

We were like oh. Yeah. And... And it makes you cynical as well about whether there isn't help out there for you really as well. Because every time somebody says oh we can help you. And we won't give up. And then even if it's six months down the road no we can't do any more sorry. And we can't afford... We have to move on to somebody else now. And yeah you feel kind of lost after that. And that sort of happened a few times. And it sort of it dragged you down as well. Because you're desperately trying to get help for the person that needs the help. And you know that you know we knew that our daughter wasn't ready to accept the help.

But we still couldn't give up. But we still needed to do something. And it doesn't mean that you didn't need help. Exactly. Just because she wasn't ready. Yeah. And I'm happy us getting help actually helped her. Because you know sort of me being calmer about the situation I think reflected on calm down more as well. Yeah. And so at Yellow Brick Road we try and make the referral process be as simple as possible. So it's a free service. People don't have to pay for things. And we accept referrals from different agencies. Different mental health services. But we also accept walk-ins and phone calls and people who ring up for themselves.

Because we know that for families to actually make that call can often be a really big step. Absolutely. And so once a family has reached out we want to make it as simple as we can for them. So you don't have to bring NHI numbers or anything. Any clinical details. And the same is that we will be able to support people whose loved ones are not ready to accept treatment. People don't have to be, don't even necessarily have to have had the formal diagnosis yet. If you're supporting a loved one who's suffering with mental health challenges then we can support you. And I actually referred to friends with her permission obviously and her consent.

Because she was just feeling too overwhelmed at the time. She had so many other things. And yeah she couldn't do it herself. So I made the referral for her. I think that having the multiple referral pathways. Whether that is through someone else. I mean being able to refer a friend or a family member either through the phone or the website. And having that trust that actually everything is also confidential. The service is completely confidential. I think probably would have helped ease you guys in wanting to share everything that was going on as well. Because yeah. Yeah that's it. That's really reassuring.

Because yeah there's sometimes there's things you're feeling. And you feel that I shouldn't feel like this. And you don't want. You want. You need. But you still need to say it. You need to let that out. And if you can't let it out then it just stays there and stays there and gets bigger. And having somebody that you know is non-judgemental that can take that. And even explain to you why you're feeling that way. And that's okay. And we can move on from that. Then that's really really. Yeah there's so much hiding of things in our society. But it's still under there. And you need. So if.

8. Supporting Families - Tips for starting the journey

If you guys were to reflect on how this has been for you, is there anything you would want to suggest for people who are just starting out the journey? Any tips? Anything that's helpful? I would say get yourself support as quickly as possible if you can. I know you feel like you should be able to do it on your own and you have to do it on your own. You don't want to get other family members involved or friends involved, but I'd say look for professional support like yourselves as soon as possible because it is a scary journey and you do need somebody out with that to just help you with that. Don't be embarrassed to ask for help.

It's easy to say now, but I think at the time I was embarrassed. But if you can take that first step, it could really change things around. It really did for me. I know that, Matt, one of the big things that helped you along the way was getting over that barrier of, hey, at the moment, maybe you're not the right person to be face-to-face with when she's elevated and you'd be like, well, what do I do? And it's like, well, you support Kath. Kath takes whatever people are doing. She supports her. You're the new support, Kath, and that's your way of helping her out. Yeah, working to your own strength, I suppose that's it.

Yeah, definitely a big one, wasn't it? Definitely. I could stay more calm, especially after some tips from the other road. I could stay more calm in the midst of it, but I definitely needed the support afterwards, coming back down from the situation or whatever. So that really helped reminding us that we've got our own roles. And we can't, we're not all strong at the same things. We've got different things that we can do, but we still do all have strengths in one way or another, and it's finding what works so you're... And not beating yourself up if you can't beat everything to every level. Exactly.

Yeah, that too. Look after yourself. Look after yourself. I know that's easy to say, and everybody does say that to you. Even if your support says, make sure you're looking after yourself, and you say, well, how do you do that? That's impossible. But there's tiny little things. I think we started with just tiny, tiny little steps, and it gradually... It was more about our confidence building up to allow ourselves to do that. And guilt. To look after ourselves. And guilt. Yeah. I felt guilty going to the cinema. I felt guilty taking time out to look after myself when my daughter was having such a horrible...

Yeah. Time. Mm-hmm. You know, so that type of thing, but... But at the end of the day, it really does help to have that time. Yeah. And yeah, at first, I think it was even, you said, go out in the garden. If you don't feel you can go for a walk anywhere, or just go around the block, just start by walking around the block and getting out in the fresh air. Self-care's not all pedicures and bubble baths. No, it's not. Sometimes it's going to be at a reasonable time and saying no to extra stuff. Yeah. Having a good meal. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Walk in the dog three times a day.

9. Supporting Families - Yellow Brick Road is different from parenting courses

So how was your experience with parenting courses and other educational services? For us, we were offered a couple of courses that we did try. For us, the main thing we got out of them was the fact that there were other families in similar situations to us, struggling the same as us, and a bit of, you're not alone. I think the way that it was explained to us or offered to us made us feel like we were not doing a good job. So we went along already with a bit down on it, whereas I think... You were judged a bit. Yeah, we were judged. But... But yeah, the course itself, there was some practical, useful things in it that would help some people, but not so much our situation.

And I think more for us, the support that Yellowberry Road gave us was more helpful for our family. Because, yeah, following the practical, this is how to help your child, I think you feel like you're doing all that. But then, not getting anywhere, and the fact that Yellowberry Road helped us to look after ourselves, which also helped us look after our child, was more helpful. So even, although Yellowberry Road is aimed at the families, the support that then gives families to give to that person struggling in the family, the mental wellbeing issues, is really important as well, and can make a difference.

I think the fact that it's tailored as well to not just the person, the family that you're looking after, you know, just makes it more personal and more effective for that family. Because, I mean, like, Keth, for example, you know, you did the Stepping Out programme, and then you're in one of the other groups at the moment as well, aren't you? Yeah, which is, yeah, general... The Fano group? Yeah, the monthly group. Yeah. I think, I feel like now, I mean, it's great that I'm still involved in all these groups, because obviously things aren't perfect still, so sometimes I go up and sometimes I go down, and having, still having connections through Yellowberry Road is really helpful, and really helps to support me.

But I also feel like our experiences are things I can share with other families. Other parents. Because we are quite a way down the road now, where some of these parents are very, quite early on, and things are really, they're really struggling at the moment, whereas we're a bit more settled now. But I think it's worthwhile keeping people at different stages involved as well, family members, to show them that there's, there's other ways, there's so many different ways to deal with these situations, and just because one doesn't work, doesn't mean there's not another one that will work for you. And I think validating that families are going through some incredibly difficult situations.

I mean, I know that we've probably walked out of meetings with families and gone, how are these people making it through the day? Because the issue is so intense. There aren't easy answers for a lot of things. There's, we don't have a magic wand that can fix things. But what we can help to do is, is offer a bit of support, so that it can be a little bit better. Yeah, I think that's just what families want, parents need, families need, is to know that they're supported. That's the ultimate thing, I think, that you're supported. And it's all well and good, giving people instructions on how they can, how they can do things and how they can do that.

But just that feeling of knowing that they're supported, that somebody's there, isn't judging them, is just there to help them, makes a big difference. Yeah. I think that's really where, you know, when we were at our lowest point, we got a little bit of help and that just sort of started us to turn it around. And it was just, you know, me going to that men's group for the first time and Kat going to her group. And it was just like, you know, it was a baby step. But like, multiple baby steps add up to a larger, a larger sort of improvement. And that's what it was. It was, you know, we were struggling and we managed to take a small baby step and then from there, we managed to turn things around to a certain extent.

And that's what Kat's been doing. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And it's still not perfect, but we're a million miles away where we were like two years ago. And that's the exciting part for us as support workers and as Yellow Brick Road staff is to watch families making these steps and moving in from a space of discomfort and trying something new and just seeing all of the wonderful positives that can come from that that's really come from the family themselves. It's such a beautiful thing to witness. Yeah, it's quite a bittersweet thing as a support worker to be working with a family like yourselves and to be like, well, there's no more work really needed to be done, you know, on your way.

It's quite bittersweet because it's like, cool, nice that, you know, they don't need me anymore. But it's like, you know, I've really enjoyed working with these guys. Thanks.

10. Supporting Families - The role of General Practice - Health Coach and HIP

Did you find a general practice was a support to you in the journey? I did I think.

When I went to my GP she was really supportive with my mental health when I was struggling and she got me to see the health improvement practitioner at the surgery and I saw her regularly for quite a while and she was a big support as well and also put me in touch with other support for things so things like looking at somebody to help me navigate if there was any benefits and things we were entitled to and helping me with some looking after my health and well-being a bit as well just again every time I went to the HEP so you've got your score of how you're feeling at the time out of 10 and just her keeping an eye on that for me and seeing if I was going up a bit, if I was getting improvement and then looking to see if there's any options and I think they also put me in touch with some free counselling sessions through the Women's Centre as well.

So it was a yeah it was a big source of support. So it was a big source of support. Yeah I guess not so much for me although I did see that the what did you call it. The HEP, the health improvement posture. Yeah, that was good for me, that was ok for me at that time. I did come to a point where I had a mini nervous breakdown and that sort of I think that was a huge challenge for me. really my first port of call um and just again being able to talk through the issues with somebody and just help me the good thing about the hip as well was it's free and you usually get an appointment quite quickly which is really helpful yeah yeah it was because i sort of had my breakdown in the morning and i saw somebody in the afternoon uh so that was really good i've had a bunch of weights i may not have come through

11. Supporting Families - Home visits and group work

actually one question is, as we were talking I had a bit of a thought, how have you guys noticed the difference between like you know having our one-on-ones being at home and then like the groups being you know in the office or at the cafe, how did you find like the different settings, did that make any kind of difference for you guys?

I think having you straight away come into the house really helped at that time and it's what we needed straight away and that happened quite quickly which was great and then having the other groups was kind of when we're on a little step further along it was just another wee nudge along to help us keep going and having the group, the women's group that I went to, I say I've now got a group of friends that I can call on, we've got a little WhatsApp group that we have and we meet up, we're trying to meet up once a month yeah and , you guys just went away for a bit of a trip didn't you?

We did, we had a wee weekend away at the Hamner Springs which was lovely, yeah so it's that's been amazing and from that point of view so that was what I got out of the group and I'm going to the family group which again tends to be more women and it would be lovely to have more men get involved with that side of things but I understand that usually somebody's got to stay at home as well especially if it's in the evenings but I'm enjoying that as well and I just think it's really important to keep those connections going because I see things will never be the same again and we're going to have ups and downs and knowing that we've still got those connections there's really important and those connections are part of your self-care, yeah definitely and it's easier to maintain them with that part of the routine as well eh?

Yes, yeah, it just becomes what you do, which at the beginning of the week it's just the same routine as well, the tiredness, it's just what you do but it's important to keep that kind of thing going through, those are the things that are most important. !

really hard but eventually you get there emma do you find any difference between like you know the home visits versus versus like going to the cafe just the different locations uh i find it it is different but i think what i think there's um benefits in both because so you go into the house um where there's me and cath there we we talk to you as a as a couple or as a as a family so um you get into both of our perspectives but then go into the men's group it's quite good in that i'm chatting with all the men who are going through situations or different situations or similar situations and getting other people's perspectives of it as well um and it's just uh and i'll just it's difficult to say really i just find it more uh easier to do it that way um you know i really when we went when we went to the sort of educational course it was over families i found that quite difficult or other couples um i found that quite difficult to find it more easy to talk to other guys in the similar situation um yeah so i don't think you can talk about things that you can't talk to talk about in front of me or in front of you um no well we've been a different way we haven't yeah we haven't really but we could do yeah yeah i think it's just it's just different being able to get other guys perspectives on the things that we're going through and and i guess we're you know a bit more vulnerable when we're all when it's with guys together um you know and it's it's sort of guards down when whereas when you're there you still gotta your guards still up a little bit even if you don't mean it to be

12. Supporting Families - Key messages

I think the key message for me is definitely get support for yourself and don't feel like you're supposed to be able to deal with it all and have to deal with it all yourself because you're in situations that you've never expected to be. So get the support that's out there, look for support for yourself and don't be afraid to ask for it. I guess the key point for me is not to be embarrassed and give it a go because it might just work and it did. Yeah, I think that, as we've been talking, one thing that's been fairly evident is that, you know, I guess in a way like kind of taking the plunge, especially like just being able to say, OK, you know what, I need a bit of support and, you know, accepting it. And especially with, you know, a service like Calibric Road, just... Go for it. Go for one session. And if it's not for you, then it's not for you. But, you know, just give it a go because, I mean, you have everything to gain. I think the key message for me is that everyone deserves well-being. Everyone deserves to not feel like they're hanging on by their fingernails and some support to help them get through it. So if Yellow Brick Road can be part of that, we'd absolutely love to hear from.