

Different Mind, Unwavering Purpose: Breaking Through ADHD Barriers to Deliver Care as a Care Coordinator

(By Peter Stewarts)

When the Person Providing Care Became the Person Needing Care

Eight years ago, when I was beginning my career as a Care Coordinator, I believed I had to have everything together. I was qualified, passionate about my profession and committed to helping patients live safer, more meaningful and impactful lives. But just two years into my career, everything changed.

I experienced a mental breakdown that resulted in a two-month inpatient admission. For someone



whose professional role was centred around supporting others, becoming a patient myself was difficult to accept. I was suddenly on the other side of care. I had to experience vulnerability in a way I had never expected. The hardest part was recognising that I had not been following some of the very principles I encouraged my patients to follow. I was asking people to look after themselves, recognise their limitations, seek support and create structure in their lives. Yet I was struggling to do those things myself.

The Team Supporting Me, Helped Me See Things Differently

During my admission, I was fortunate to have a wonderful multidisciplinary team supporting me. The nurses, consultants, therapists and social worker, among others, played an important role in helping me understand what had happened. They helped me recognise something I had struggled to see for myself: **I was human too.**

Being a healthcare professional did not make me immune to needing support. I had spent so much time believing that my responsibility was to support other people that I had forgotten that I also needed someone to support me. As I reflected on my career, I began to recognise patterns in the way I had been working. Although I was a qualified Care Coordinator, my approach to my workload was often inconsistent. I did not always have a clear structure, schedule or pattern. My intentions were good, but good intentions alone do not always create sustainable practice.

Through conversations and professional assessment, I came to understand that ADHD was a significant part of the challenges I had been experiencing. Suddenly, some of the difficulties I had faced in organising my work, remembering appointments, managing competing demands and maintaining structure began to make more sense.

Sitting on the Other Side of the Table

There was something deeply humbling about being a Care Coordinator by profession while sitting in a patient role. I had spent my working life helping people navigate some of their most difficult moments. Now I was navigating my own. It was not an easy experience.

There were moments when I felt worse before I began to feel better. I had to confront parts of myself that I had previously avoided. I had to acknowledge that being qualified, experienced and capable did not mean that I could manage everything alone.

My experience taught me something I will never forget: **Needing support does not make a healthcare professional weak. It makes them human.**

Learning to Work with My Mind

Recovery was not about becoming a completely different person. It was about understanding myself better and finding practical ways to work with my needs. Over time, I developed strategies that helped me manage the barriers I experienced with ADHD and continue my responsibilities as a Care Coordinator.

One of the biggest changes I made was establishing clear boundaries around my working hours.

I am contracted to work from 9am to 5pm. I have trained myself to use those hours for my professional responsibilities. I do not routinely carry my Care Coordinator work beyond those hours. For me, this boundary is important. It creates a clear distinction between professional time and personal time and helps prevent work from taking over every part of my day.

Reminders Have Become My Safety Net

I also rely heavily on reminders. My phone has become one of my most useful tools. I use reminder alarms to help me remember important tasks, targets, appointments and other commitments.

I have learned that there is no shame in using technology to support my memory and organisation. Instead of relying solely on my brain to remember everything, I use systems that help me stay on track. For me, the reminder is not a sign that I am incapable. It is a strategy that helps me remain accountable.

Learning to Stop While I Eat

Another important change has been something as simple as eating. I no longer eat while working on my laptop or phone. I have trained myself that when I am eating, I dedicate that time to eating without trying to complete another task simultaneously.

Previously, I would eat in front of my laptop and find my attention quickly moving elsewhere. My thoughts would begin to race.

I would lose my appetite and sometimes stop eating before I had finished. I noticed that this could leave me hungry, irritable and unsettled. Now, eating is an opportunity to pause. It gives me a moment to step away from work, focus on myself and allow my mind to settle. And even take a quick five-minute walk before going back to continue with my work.

Finding a Documentation System That Works for Me

I have also learned that the way I document my work matters. I dislike using paper documentation whenever I can avoid it. Because I work across both the NHS and Council environments and travel regularly for meetings, including ward rounds, CPA meetings, etc, I have found it much more practical to travel light.

I do not carry a paper notebook as part of my routine. Instead, where appropriate and in accordance with information governance and organisational requirements, I use my securely protected, encrypted work laptop to document my notes.

Finding a system that works for me has reduced unnecessary clutter and helped me keep important information within the appropriate professional systems.

I Don't Do One Thing All Day

Perhaps one of the most significant changes I have made is how I structure my working day. I have learned that doing one type of task continuously throughout the day does not work well for me. Instead, I create variety. My day may include telephone calls with patients, communication with members of the multidisciplinary team, care planning, face-to-face meetings and other Care Coordinator responsibilities.

I try to create a balance rather than spending the entire day doing one activity. This variation helps refresh my mind. It also gives me something different to look forward to as the day progresses. For me, working with my ADHD does not mean lowering my standards. It means understanding what helps me meet those standards sustainably.

Six Years of Continuing the Journey

It has now been six years since my breakdown, and I continue to work as a Care Coordinator. My journey has not been about pretending that the challenges disappeared. It has been about learning how to recognise them, understand them and develop strategies that help me manage them. I have learned that exceptional care is not about being perfect. It is about being self-aware enough to recognise when something is not working and courageous enough to seek a different way.

You Are Still Capable of Making a Difference

My story is for every healthcare professional who has ever felt that their challenges make them less capable of contributing. Having ADHD does not automatically mean that you cannot have a meaningful career in healthcare. Everyone's experience is different, and the support and adjustments someone needs will also differ. I hope my journey reminds healthcare professionals that asking for help is not failure.

Sometimes, asking for help is the very thing that allows us to continue helping others.

I once found myself in a place where I was no longer able to function in the way I expected of myself. Today, I am still here, still learning, still adapting and still committed to providing care. My mind may work differently. My journey may have taken an unexpected route. But my purpose has remained.

If you are a healthcare professional living with ADHD, do not be afraid to acknowledge that you need support. Find the strategies that work for you. Use the support available to you and remember why you started. For six years, I have continued to hold on to that purpose. And if my story can encourage even one healthcare professional to believe that they can continue their journey with the right support, then every part of my story has been worth sharing.