

# Patient SUCCESS STORIES

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Mental Health Program



Kathleen Heary

## Patient Success Profile

**Name:** Kathleen Heary

**Program:** Mental Health

**Age:** 51 years

**Referred by:**

Dr. Gurdip Sidhu

**Clinical Staff:** Anne Shand

Originally from Ireland, Kathleen Heary has lived in Edmonton since 1982. She and her husband have two children, and they lead a comfortable life here. A period of severe depression brought Kathleen to the Edmonton North PCN Mental Health Program. In October 2008, one of Kathleen's friends urged her to get some help – she said that Kathleen's eyes "lacked life". She was in a severe depression and it was so bad she was having trouble walking.

### How did you learn about the Edmonton North PCN Mental Health Program?

"I've struggled with anxiety and depression most of my life; I was always a worrier as a child and teenager. Finally, I gave in and went to the Royal Alexandra Hospital." At the hospital, Kathleen had been placed in a 72-hour lock-down unit. She was clinically depressed and was thinking of suicide as a way to escape. She had also been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder and thought that medication was the only way to cope.

Kathleen's love for her family made her want to get help so she could improve her mental well-being. "I knew it wasn't going to be easy – that I had to put effort into helping myself. When I was released, my family doctor referred me to the PCN Mental Health Program."

### What has been most helpful in the Program?

"The Anxiety Information Class was the first class I took. It helped me understand that I was suffering from a medical condition. I recognized my symptoms right away. My panic attacks were described clearly and were actually given a name."

In the Anxiety and Depression Information classes, Kathleen learned that the extreme emotions she experienced were part of a condition that could be treated. She also learned the depression wasn't her fault and that she could change her thinking processes. Kathleen also participated in a CBT therapy group, as well as one-on-one individual mental health therapy sessions to develop new coping strategies.

### What are the biggest challenges you face?

"Right now, my biggest fear is falling back into another severe depression. I know I have to keep trying to stay healthy – mentally, emotionally and physically. I've learned to think differently and to live in the moment without worrying and feeling anxious."

Kathleen has learned to feel comfortable about her choices. Instead of feeling overwhelmed, she now realizes the pressure she sometimes feels is caused by her own thought patterns. She accepts that medication is a part of her life and her success. She also continues to attend the Depression Support Group to reinforce her positive changes. Although she still has good days and bad days, taking responsibility for her decisions has helped Kathleen control her anxiety levels.

### What advice would you give others in the Mental Health Program?

"The PCN Mental Health Program can help people if they have mental health problems, but they must have the courage to get help. No one needs to feel alone, and they really can learn to help themselves. The PCN Mental Health Program helped me so much – I'm just sorry I had to live with anxiety and depression for 49 years. I'm very happy and feel so much better. I don't have to be a victim to my emotions any longer."

*For more information on our Mental Health Program or other programs available, talk to your Edmonton North PCN family doctor.*