

CHESTERFIELD & NORTH DERBYSHIRE TINNITUS SUPPORT GROUP



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Newsletter

Edited by Audrey Carlin

August/September 2016

AFTERNOON TEA IMPERIAL ROOMS, MATLOCK on WEDNESDAY, 28TH SEPTEMBER 2016 FROM 1.00 PM TO 3.00 PM

Please note that the day is Wednesday as we couldn't book the room for our usual Thursday. Details of route and location enclosed along with a Booking Form. If you wish to come along and join us please let us know; we would be pleased to see you

We have invited Andrew Leigh to give us a light hearted talk called **"Laugh Away Your Inner Critic"**.

Laugh Away Your Inner Critic is a powerful, innovative approach to those damaging negative thoughts that can slow down even the most positive person. In this entertaining and informative speech, Life Coach, Andrew Leigh, shows how to quieten that negative voice by laughing at it, by taking it less seriously, deflating its power and demolishing its arguments.

Although the tone of his speech is light and humorous, the aim is to equip you with simple, effective techniques to shut up our horrible inner critic and in its place, encourage a constructive, enabling and motivational thought process. And that leads in turn to getting more done in our lives, better productivity and performance, more achievements and, of course, improved self-confidence.

Come along and join us in a relaxed atmosphere for what promises to be an interesting and informative talk.

HELEN'S INSPIRATIONAL STORY FROM OUR BREAKFAST MORNING AT CROMFORD CANAL

We were happy to greet Helen on what was a beautiful sunny morning at our lovely canal-side location – Wheatcrofts Wharf Café. Thirty people enjoyed and were inspired by Helen's talk and the encouraging feedback we received was testament to Helen's positive nature.



Helen and Audrey

Helen is a 45 year-old Mum of two who works as a trainer and facilitator, helping people to achieve qualifications for a company that do HR and Learning and Development training. She is also a Careers and Life Coach (part-time) and does this alongside looking after her children.

Helen loves the countryside, along with her husband, son and daughter. She enjoys cycling, running and walking and often throws her children off their

gadgets to go for bike rides, even in the rain!

When Helen was first diagnosed with tinnitus (around 3½ years ago) she contacted me and we used to have some positive chats. Helen said “Audrey helped me enormously and I have always been inspired by her positivity. She always knew the right things to say yet never allowed me to wallow in self-pity!”

[At this point I would add that Helen was a model of positivity herself. If her conversation went down the negative route, she would always bring herself back immediately to looking at the positive things in her life, so our conversation would always end on a positive note.] This is so important!

Although Helen is used to standing up and talking to people, she was somewhat daunted when I asked her if she would come along and tell her story to our group, mainly because she would be talking about herself and her experience of tinnitus, which is something she hadn't done before. However, on reflection, Helen said that if she could give something back even if she helped just one person, she would be happy to do so.

Helen's tinnitus journey began in December 2012 whilst staying at a friend's house. At the time, Helen was feeling really poorly with a cold virus, had blocked ears and wasn't sleeping well. She first heard a noise at her friend's house during the night and thought it was just the central heating. Gradually she realised that the noise was noticeable mainly at night-time. At this point Helen went back and forth to

her doctor to search for the answers. Eventually the third doctor she saw arranged for her to see a consultant.

Helen clearly remembered sitting with her 3 year old daughter on her knee, having an unscheduled hearing test at the hospital and feeling really anxious and apprehensive. The audiologist said her hearing was normal and the consultant said she had exceptionally good hearing but a slight dip at high frequency, probably due to African drumming (one of Helen's hobbies). “Not to worry, he said – lots of musicians have it – oh! but we do need to check you don't have a brain tumour as it is just in one ear!” Although Helen felt like crying at this news, she didn't because it would have upset her daughter.

Helen went on to have an MRI scan and everything was fine. He told her that he ran a local support group but Helen was not impressed by his lack of interpersonal skills! So she looked on the internet and there she found our support group and contacted me. Helen says “Audrey really helped me on numerous occasions; she helped me through the early days of walking round with my fingers in my ears, struggling to sleep and feeling anxious. My Mum also helped me a lot – she always had a story to tell me about someone inspirational and reminding me of all the things I have to be grateful about.” Helen said that she appreciated *empathy*, but *sympathy* never really helped her, in fact it often made her feel worse! This is why she stopped talking about it to most people.

When Helen's daughter started school, she found it hard being on her own at

home and she was also working from home a lot. At this point she hit a blip when her other ear joined in with different sounds. Each time something different happened she would start feeling anxious again.

Moving on.....

Helen gradually started to feel less anxious and was sleeping better; she bought a sound therapy system of nature sounds and a white noise maker but it took a while to work out what she liked. Quite a lot of the sounds just made her want to go to the loo or feel like she was sleeping in a pond with enormous frogs! Eventually she found a stream setting that she really liked and had this on low with a speaker. She had a ticking clock as well. Helen embraced being an “early bird” rather than fighting it. She stopped searching on the internet – words like depression, suffering, cartoons of people trying to drown out noises and comments from people which didn’t help her – were dragging her down!



(left-right) Jemma, Helen, Joanne, Shay

Crucially Helen stopped *trying to find a cure* or *what had caused it*. Thinking back she thought it could have been her illness and/or stress – her son was very ill when he was young and spent two days in intensive care as well as numerous stays in hospital.

Helen says “I stopped *beating myself up* about things I may or may not have done to cause it.”

She decided to put her *energy into setting some goals*. As Helen says, “Ironic as it may seem, although I coach people and help them set goals, I didn’t really have any of my own! But she knew she needed something to replace her African drumming. She got a large notice board and pinned onto it photos, pictures, words, phrases. These focused on:

- **Running** – she wanted to run a half marathon
- **Writing** – wanted to write a blog
- **Work** – obtain associate work as a trainer
- **Coach** – obtain her first paying clients
- **Family** – go skiing for the first time

Helen achieved all of these and really got into running and loved it. However, after two years she was diagnosed with a back problem so had to cut down on the running. Nevertheless, she still needed something to replace her African drumming. Helen had drummed for around ten years having had a lesson in The Gambia and then set up a local group with lottery funding. However, at the time her tinnitus started she was no longer running the group and only doing a bit of drumming, being busy with work and her family. Therefore, she put her drums in her office and left them there. Although she felt sad, she didn’t feel that she wanted to pick them up and start playing again.

Before Helen’s tinnitus had started, she had been given a piano. A friend of

hers left the area and didn't want to take the piano to her new home as she hadn't played it for a long time. Helen was happy to give it a home to help her out. It's a very old piano, over 100 years – complete with the moths! As a child Helen had learnt to play the piano up to around grade 4 – but that was around 30 years ago! Helen says “I couldn't read a single note now” and she was sure she would have to start from scratch and felt daunted by this.

Eventually Helen decided to take some action. She phoned a few teachers then found one she really liked the sound of – a Japanese lady called Saori. Saori played a classical piece for Helen and did it so beautifully that she felt emotional. “I was hooked” says Helen “and booked my first lesson.” Saori asked Helen to take along some old books which she still had, along with some her friend had passed on. Helen says “What amazed me is that slowly and surely, the notes and some of the notation started coming back. I have been amazed and unlike when I was a child, I love practising!” Helen has been told that she has a really good ear for music and that she sight reads and picks up a new song quickly. She is not yet back to the level she was as a child but she loves learning and enjoys just playing for fun, no exams! Also Helen's daughter has now started learning at school and so far, Helen is able to answer her questions. As Helen points out, “this could soon change though”, as her daughter is a fast learner!!

Inspired by songs she hears on the radio, Helen downloads a lot of music now and, although not a massive Coldplay fan, she does love hearing Chris Martin play the piano. He is living

proof that you don't have to stop doing things you love because of tinnitus!

As for Helen's drums, she finally took them out of their bags the other week, as part of a de-clutter in her office. She discovered that all the skins had ripped off and that she could no longer play them. She got in touch with an old friend who taught her about ten years ago and asked if he would like them as he rebuilds old drums for his business and also asked if he would just fix one for her to keep. He had a look and said it was moths that had destroyed them! Helen mused “Moths that had come out of the piano I bet!”

Helen felt a huge weight lift off her shoulders when she left him with the drums that day. She no longer feels sad and has been sorting out some of her old African music and listening to some.

Helen feels she has moved on and has a new love in her life – her piano!! She added that she may drum again one day but suspects her newly rebuilt drum may have to sit quietly next to the piano. “This time though I am using moth balls” she laughed.

I am sure you will find Helen's story not only inspirational but also refreshingly honest and heartfelt. There are tips too on how you can learn how to manage your tinnitus or to reassure you that the simple techniques that fit in with your life and lifestyle really can and do work. We are very grateful to Helen for travelling from her home in Leicestershire to speak to our group.

*Best Wishes
Audrey*