



GEORGINA'S STORY

Georgina Lloyd, 43, from Barry shares her mental illness story and how sport helped her, in her own

words ...

I have always been driven towards success, both in sport and my career. I set high standards and nothing short of perfection will do.

In 2015, myself and my partner decided to go through IVF treatment but unfortunately it was unsuccessful. We both dived into our respective careers and never dealt with the loss and grief that we felt. This led to our marriage breakup one week before Christmas.

Whilst my personal life was falling apart, I was doing well at work. I'd had a temporary promotion to Inspector in the Public Protection Department within South Wales Police. I was turning up being the 'happy smiley George' that everyone knew, but I was breaking. Behind my office door I would often sit there vacantly looking at my computer screen with tears rolling down my cheeks.

I did not want to show, what I thought at the time was, a sign of weakness. I was working hard for promotion.

During this time, I had many thoughts about ending my life. I felt that I could not carry on and I am thankful for a couple of friends who picked me up and saved me.

While all of this was going on in my head, I sat my promotion board to become a substantive Inspector. Unfortunately, I missed out on this, and for it was final straw and I hit a massive low. Standing in my office one day, staring out of the window, physically and mentally drained I picked up the phone and made an appointment with my doctor. I went with what I thought was a physical problem but shortly after I was diagnosed with depression. I did not see this coming. I was prescribed medication, which at first I reluctantly took and through work I had counselling.

With help, I have learned that I have a fear of failure. When I do fail I am unable to adjust to the consequences.

Since diagnosis I have ended up in hospital twice after wanting to end my life.





In the Summer of 2016, I saw an advert from the BBC asking for people who suffer from a mental illness and use exercise as a therapy, to take part in a TV documentary. This jumped out at me as this is exactly what I had been doing.

Admittedly, at the time I was using exercise more as a self harm, due to the hours I was training and how I was feeling. I did not care. Exercise was my only form of escape from what was going on in my head and I clung to it. I have a BSc and MSc in Sport and Exercise Science, and I am a qualified sports massage practitioner. I have played hockey for Wales and also represented GB students, so sport was always a big part of my life.

I applied to the BBC and was successful. The programme titled Mind over Marathon followed myself and 9 others as we trained and took part in the London marathon while battling our mental health illness.

This journey saved - and changed - my life.



It put me back on track with my training under the watchful eye of a coach. I began to enjoy running. After having 11 knee operations, this is something I never thought I would do.

My mental health story was made public with the support of The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, Prince Harry and Team Heads Together.

I am pleased to say that I completed the London Marathon in 2017 and 2018.

I no longer use exercise as a self-harm.

Instead, I enjoy it. I do not chase distance, time or PBs. I no longer put pressure on myself to be the best or come first. For me there is no point anymore

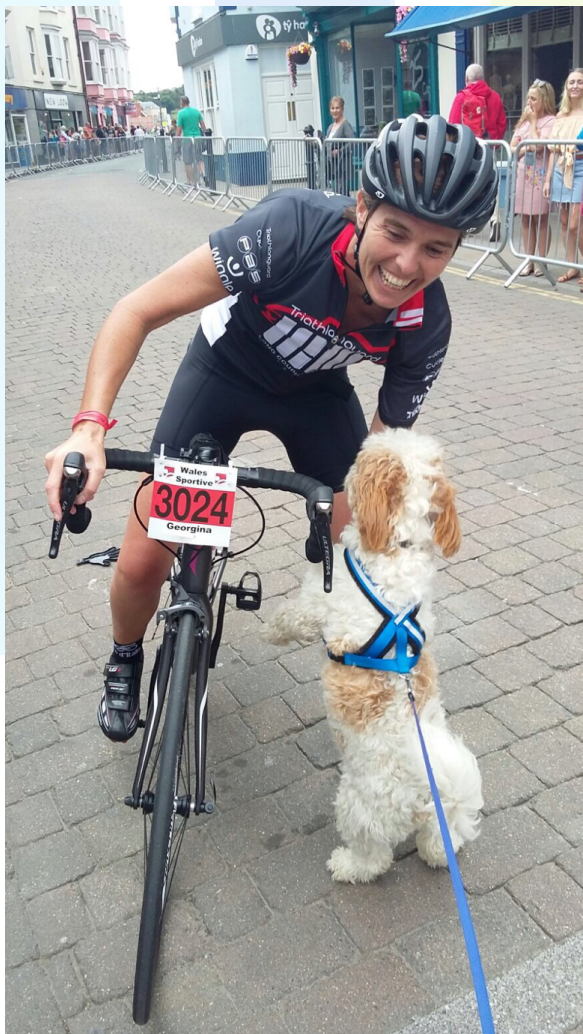
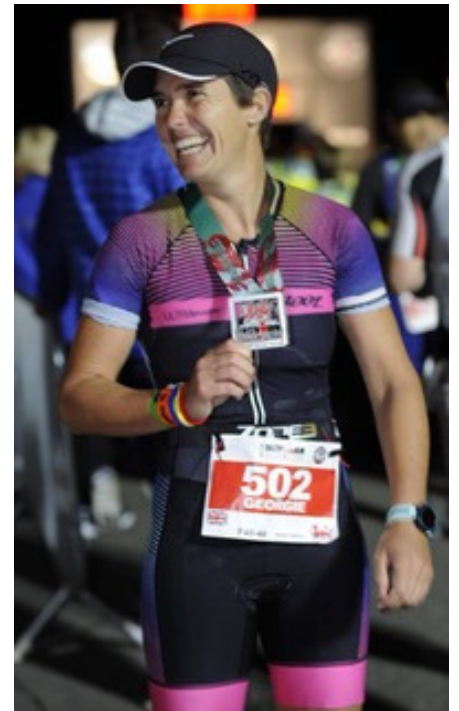


Exercise is my therapy and in 2018 I took on 12 challenges to raise money for the Cardiff and Vale NHS Charity who have over the years put my back together physically and mentally. The challenges included triathlons, marathons and swimming events. The biggest event was Ironman Wales. A gruelling 2.4 mile sea swim, followed by a 112 mile bike ride, finishing with a full marathon. I was delighted and somewhat relieved to cross the finish line in 15 hours and 19 minutes.

This year I take on my first ultra marathon and New York Marathon. Training for these events gives me purpose and direction whilst being off from the work place.

For a long time I isolated myself and did not want to speak to anyone or be involved in groups. I have since discovered Park Run and the incredible community it offers.

Family, friends and the new people who I have met over the last two years have been incredibly supportive. I would not have any of this had I not sought help for my illness.



As well as exercise, I find writing therapeutic and an excellent stress reliever. I have created an excellent online support network with my blog (depresseddetective.com) and I am in the process of writing a book.

As someone who has grown up surrounded by sport I appreciate the pressures it brings. For me it was the internal pressure I put on myself rather than from family. Training is hard, you become tired as you juggle the pressures of school or work. You become immersed in success and can often forget what is important - your own health and wellbeing.

Have your goals and aspire to be who you want to be in your sport – this is different for everyone.

Look after yourself physically and mentally, seek help if you need it. There is no shame in having a mental illness. I am proud of who I am.

Good luck and enjoy your journey.

Georgie x