

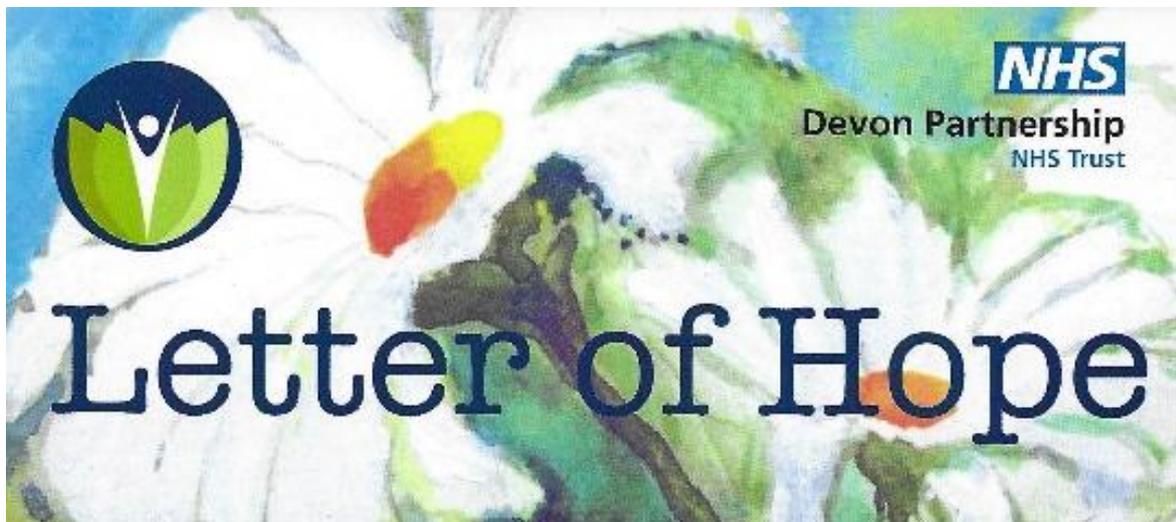


Mental Health Matters: Listening to ‘A letter of Hope’

We have recently been giving a particular emphasis to the benefits of ‘learning to listen’ and in particular of being willing to tune in, at times, to deep despair ... ‘suicide awareness’. This could seem a very difficult ask ... what if we do ... what then?

The point of becoming more aware of suicidal thoughts and feelings in others, but at times for us too, is to then reach out to hope, and there is hope, for everyone if only we can find it.

Some years ago a group of people in Devon who knew what it was like to come close to suicide but survived, came together to share their experience and write a letter of hope to others ... it carries a message of care and survival and here it is:



Dear Friend,

Letter of Hope

We are a group of people from Devon who are writing this Letter of Hope to you because we care about you and what happens in your life. We do not know you, you do not know us, but we care.

We care because, like you, we were struggling to stay alive. We attempted suicide. We went to A&E, were referred to the Crisis Team, or admitted to hospital after attempting suicide and we have survived. We have done more than survive; we have found the courage to live again. So please, if you are ever in such a dark and desolate place that you feel like taking your own life, this letter has been written to ask you to hold on. Give yourself time.

We understand pain, especially emotional pain, which often others don't.

Emotional pain hurts so much. It is that pain, along with loss, that brought us to suicide and to hospital. Later we learnt that it was not death we wanted, but to end the terrible thoughts, feelings and pain we were experiencing. Because of the experiences we have been through, we came together to write to you offering Hope.

We survived. We want you to get through this too.

We won't pretend to know exactly what you are feeling, because your feelings are uniquely your own. It is okay to feel the way you do. You are not weak, selfish, or crazy.

You are not beyond help.

Please believe in yourself, in what tomorrow might bring. Believe that you can get through this moment. Allow hope into your life. None of us claims that it is easy. It can be challenging. But however hard things get, life offers possibilities that you may have forgotten exist or have never even dreamed of.

There can be a time in the future when something makes you smile, sunshine brings you comfort, when the day ahead is so much better than today.

Please give yourself time.

We ask you to remember to seek help before life gets too painful. Ask for the help you need. You are not alone. Talk to a trusted friend, see your GP, contact a support group,

talk to the Samaritans on Freephone 116 123 or another National Helpline (many of which are listed on the BradTog website).

By talking things over a great sense of pressure is released; it becomes possible to feel better and for your problems to seem smaller and more manageable.

Please remember, if you ever feel suicidal, ask for help. Be clear to the person you speak with. Use words like: I can't cope, I feel bad, I feel out of control, or I feel crazy. Tell people it's so painful I want to die, or simply, please help me. We could write so much more to you, a long, long letter; in fact we did; we all did from our different perspectives and from our hearts, and it was those letters that led us to what is important, to the message in this letter to you.

Please keep this letter, though we hope that you will never need it again. We also hope that you can find someone or something to believe in. That can make all the difference. We have lived and we have loved again. We believe you can too.

We wish you well and we wish you a good life.

With love,

Devon 'Letter of Hope' Group

This is available as a written download and also an audio file spoken by its authors at: <https://www.dpt.nhs.uk/resources/recovery-and-wellbeing/letter-of-hope>

And let us know if you'd like a neat foldup printed copy.

Take care, and with all good wishes

Glenn, Kate and Sophie

For BradTog MHM

Ps. Do let us know what you make of this or if you have suggestions or offers to make for future postings