



Patsy Holbrook supported my 15-year-old son, Ben, after he was discharged from an adolescent mental health unit in Birmingham, where he spent the first six months of last year with severe depression.

Her expertise, unstinting care and the warmth of her humanity worked wonders. He has Asperger's as well as depression and she knew exactly how to gain his confidence and build him up.

I cannot praise her highly enough. There is no doubt in my mind that, without Patsy's support, my son would not have reintegrated into school and wider society as he has.

He would probably have ended up back in hospital. I am hugely grateful to her.



Meet

Ben

The teenage years are difficult for many young people without the right support. For one 15-year-old, they were even more challenging. When Ben's parents approached me for help, depression and anxiety had sucked the joy out of his life.

CHALLENGES

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Sensory processing difficulties
- ASD diagnosis
- Difficulties making friends

Anxious about the new norm

Following a nine-month absence from school, Ben was anxious at the thought of returning. Without friends at school to welcome him back, the prospect seemed a bleak one.

What Ben needed

It was clear that Ben needed someone on his side who'd help him access the education he deserved and give him the tools and confidence to enjoy it!

What Ben's parents needed

Ben had just finished six months of inpatient care. Although he had now stabilised, his parents felt that they'd benefit from a little support themselves, especially when it came to ensuring that Ben's transition back to school would be successful. They felt that they - and Ben - needed someone who'd be there for every step of the way, no matter how long it took!

WORKING TOGETHER

Before his return to school, I met with Ben at his house. There he felt safe.

We quickly bonded over a shared sense of humour. We were able to build on this rapport during my regular visits as I began to restore his trust in adults. He soon realised that if I promised something, I'd deliver.

He also realised that not only did he have a voice, but that I genuinely wanted to hear it. I helped him to identify his worries and made sure that I understood his difficulties. This enabled me to advocate with the school on his behalf. Between us, we were able to put in place positive actions to smooth the reintegration process, such as a part-time timetable and a quiet area in which to work in school.

Initially, I supported Ben in all his classes, but it wasn't long before he found his feet. His growing confidence meant that he was socialising more with other students.

By the time he was happy for me to start my gradual withdrawal, he was attending school in a positive mindset. Best of all, he was spending breaks and lunchtimes with his peers, making new friendships!

His newfound ability to identify rising stress and implement calming strategies was really making a difference!

Of course, as with all my students, the door will always be open for Ben and his parents if they ever need a little extra help.

Goals

- Gain an education
- Make friends
- Learn to manage emotions
- Improve confidence
- Become more independent

Approach

- We bonded through humour
- I gained his trust
- I advocated with the school
- I supported Ben AND his parents
- I helped Ben learn coping strategies

Outcomes

- Keen to attend school
- Began to make friends
- Managed sensory difficulties
- Gained the ability to recognise & manage stress
- Comfortable making his own decisions
- No longer needed 1:2:1 support
- Confidence!



*Everything just clicked!
I don't think I've ever processed this much
- thank you!*

Ben

