

My Story 001

Since March 2007, Stitchlinks have been asking people to tell us their Story, and also asking whether knitting and stitching has been helpful to them.

All Stories are voluntarily offered and anonymity is guaranteed. Only once we have been given permission do we publish so that others can appreciate, take inspiration and draw comfort from them.

This booklet is one of a series that contains a small selection taken at random from the long list of Stories we have received. Each is reproduced as it was entered on the online survey form, with the only exception of taking out any way that individuals can be identified.

Read at your leisure and be fascinated, comforted, thrilled, encouraged and inspired.

You are not alone.

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Story 19

"I don't feel afraid anymore about feeling down or unwell"

I had a car accident almost ten years ago and as a result suffered a bout of depression, I cross stitched to stop my self from thinking about everything that had happened.

The repetition was soothing and I felt like I was achieving something. The results were instant and only needed my approval. My husband bought me cross stitches during this time and I felt that it was his way of dealing with how I was feeling, it was an acknowledgment of the depression. Once I recovered the cross stitches went in the cupboard. They reappeared when I was diagnosed with Post natal depression after my First child was born and my second.

I used sewing as a way of feeling valuable. My mind needed something but nothing which required rational thinking. As I gradually recovered, I stopped doing the cross stitches and I have since taken up knitting and this has been my life saver, I think because I can wear stuff that I have made. It fills my world with colour and pleasure and sound. My children and husband think my creations are wonderful and many friends and family have accessories that I have designed and created.

I don't feel afraid anymore about feeling down or unwell I know that my knitting will keep me connected with those that love me and that I love back in return. Stitching stopped me from going over to somewhere that I may not have returned from, I don't really understand why but the focus of each cross stitch and the repetition of each stitch back and forward across the canvas rocked and soothed my soul. Knitting has given me hope and a true belief in me, even though others have always believed me to be capable of doing anything I wanted, I have always doubted that and the stitching has somehow encouraged me otherwise."

Story 32

"I ... would recommend it [cross stitch] to anyone for relaxation"

A couple of years ago I suffered with a slipped disc, and the pain caused by that. Whilst I did do cross stitch before my back problem, during the time I was in most pain it eased my pain to rest a bit. Whilst sitting with a hot water bottle on my back I enjoyed many hours of cross stitch, my back is now much better but I do still enjoy cross stitching and would recommend it to anyone for relaxation.

Story 44

“...it has helped me to focus my attention away from anything that might be stressing”

I learned to knit at crochet at the age of eight, I am now thirty three.

Knitting in particular has always been a source of meditation for me and in times of stress, pain and anxiety it has helped me to focus my attention away from anything that might be stressing me out. Since menarche I have suffered from a disorder called PCOS (Polycystic ovarian Syndrome, formerly known as Stein Leventhal syndrome). At times my PCOS has been debilitating, caused depression and has been very painful. Throughout all of this I have been a committed knitter and just the art of making something with my own hands has given me a lot of comfort.

Knitting helps me cope with anxiety too, it's hard to dwell on things that may or may not happen when I'm focused on a knitting pattern. Knitting also benefited me during pregnancy when I contracted Pre-eclampsia due to my PCOS, it made bed rest less boring and arrested any anxious thoughts that might have raised my blood pressure or effected my baby.

Story 53

“knitting opens up a secret door, and lets everything flow freely”

I knit when I need to be alone. I knit when I want to be social. I knit when I need to store my thoughts some different place than the current moment, and I knit when I need to sort out a problem - knitting opens up a secret door, and lets everything flow freely. Thoughts, emotions, everything. I knit when I'm lonely, I knit when I'm angry, I knit when I'm happy, I knit when I'm depressed.

The intricacy of the project depends on the mood - happy mood doesn't require much more than a little stockinette, while anger and sadness might need a more complicated pattern to take my mind off things. Knitting is living, for me.

There's knitting for all occasions, and even just looking at the yarn (or stroking a particular silk/cashmere blend) is almost as good as knitting, when the hands or the mind is just too tired. Every knitted garment or accessory or whatever brings back memories, both good and bad. Knitting is satisfaction - knowing that YOU created something with your own two hands, something that can be worn or played with, or even passed down through generations. Something that will be loved. Knitting is comfort, and knitting is love. Through knitting, you can meet people with the same passion (and sometimes the same problems) as yourself. You make new friends all over the world - just because of two sticks and a little yarn!

In short, knitting is life. And I deeply believe that the world would be a better place if people knit - or at least did something creative and productive with their hands, be it knitting, crochet, beading, quilting, you name it. It heals from within.

Story 90

"...it felt as though I was meditating. I could clear my mind of everything but the next few stitches..."

Unfortunately, my life in the past three years has been very dramatic with one problem after another.

In 2003, I began having partial seizures that made it very hard to function at work. I did not know what was wrong with me. I felt that whatever was wrong must have been something I was doing. I frequently told myself "I'm just not trying hard enough. If I just concentrate harder I'll do better. I won't zone out. I won't make myself look foolish in front of everyone."

No matter how hard I tried though I simply could not pull it together. I spent my days hiding from my coworkers my evenings avoiding my family and my nights crying silently into my pillow. I began to have thoughts of suicide and I was placed on antidepressants.

Shortly after I began taking my medication I bought a cross stitch kit on a whim. The picture was pretty with bright colors that I found cheerful. The act of cross stitching on 14 count aida fabric with plain cotton floss was soothing and was something I began to feel I could do well. It felt good to find something that I could do and do well.

In early 2004 I had my first grand mal seizure and my epilepsy was formally diagnosed with epilepsy. It was in some ways a relief to know that there really was a problem with me. It was not all in my head. However the medication that I was put on controlled the grand mal seizures but did nothing for the partial seizures. I had no insurance so my medical bills were skyrocketing. I still felt as though I could not function well at work and my coworkers began excluding me from projects. I was allowed to perform only the most menial and mundane tasks (for example sorting files alphabetically making copies on the copying machine and etc.).

However I could cross stitch and I could do it well. It made it easier to face a world where it seemed I could do nothing right. A friend put in a good word for me with her employer and I landed a new job one with insurance. I was placed on medication that was more effective at controlling my seizures and I continued to cross stitch. It was relaxing to come home in the evenings and create beautiful pictures. In some ways it felt as though I was meditating. I could clear my mind of everything but the next few stitches. I could relax.

In late 2004 I accidentally became pregnant. The pregnancy caused my seizure frequency to skyrocket in spite of my new medication. I was again forced to face the fact that I was likely to have a seizure at any time. Additionally each seizure caused me to worry about my unborn child. I worried that each seizure posed a risk to my child and that my medication might have serious effects.

In spite of my worries I continued to cross stitch. As I said it was almost like meditating. It seemed as though a few minutes a day helped to recharge my batteries. It helped me to disconnect if only for a few short minutes from all of my worries.

In 2005 when I was 5 months pregnant my husband underwent surgery to remove a lump that had been growing on his back. The doctors said it was a malignant sarcoma and my husband would have to undergo a year of chemotherapy. The chemotherapy wore my husband out. After a few months my husband could no longer work which cut our income in half.

In spite of this I continued to take time to cross stitch every evening. It was the most soothing activity at that time in my life.

After my daughter was born I took on 99% of the responsibility of caring for her. My husband was still exhausted from the chemotherapy treatments he underwent every third week. I felt as though I was a single mother. There was nobody who could help me care for this child and still run my household. I had no choice but to go back to work almost immediately after I gave birth since any maternity leave I took would have been unpaid.

In spite of this I tried to take 15 minutes to cross stitch every evening to soothe myself. It helped me to relax enough that I could sleep when I went to bed. My husband is still undergoing chemotherapy and I am still caring for our daughter by myself. I am still the sole breadwinner for my family and I still cross stitch."

Telling Your Story helps others to appreciate their own circumstances. Please help by completing the survey at www.Stitchlinks.com