Mastermind winner asks young men to #besmart about mental illness

Tuesday 9 September, 2014

2014 Mastermind winner, Clive Dunning, reveals for the first time his crippling struggle with mental illness and urges young men to seek help with Get Connected; the free, confidential helpline for under 25's across the UK.

Clive, from Stockton-on-Tees, won the 2014 round of Mastermind in April. He now reveals that he struggled with mental health issues from a young age, saying: *"The problems I suffered were related to OCD, something I suffered with from the age of four. It was left untended for at least twenty years. I only wish that I had been able to access help earlier – I'm sure I would have been Mastermind at a much younger age."*

Young men, reach out for the help you need

Clive is urging young men to reach out earlier than he did to get the help they need to realise their full potential. Having suffered with mental illness, Clive understands the vital importance of seeking help. He says:

"From a young age, certainly through my teenage years, my life was blighted by mental health issues. I only wish a service like Get Connected had existed; as just knowing that someone cares or will listen is a tremendous comfort."

Get Connected are the only UK providers of a free, confidential and multi-issue phone, SMS, email and web chat helpline service, specifically for children and young people under 25. Get Connected offer emotional support and signposting, empowering and supporting young people to make their own, informed decisions.

Last year they helped over 180,000 children and young people, and a fifth of service users contacted them to discuss issues relating to mental and emotional health problems, including suicide and self-harm.

Stop the stigma

Clive says: *"I believe that there's still a great stigma attached to mental health issues. I think that's across the board, but I certainly believe in the case of young men it can be very, very difficult to admit to having a problem. Personally, coming from a working class, macho background it's perhaps perceived as being soft but, believe you me, if you've got a problem you need to get help."*

Get Connected helpline volunteers hear from many young women experiencing mental health or emotional problems, but sadly when they do hear from young men they are more often in an acute position. Volunteers feel that young men often wait until they are actively thinking about suicide to reach out for help, and most wait far too long.

Clive says: "*I got to the stage with my problems where I thought 'is it worth living anymore?' It is worth living and you can fulfil your dreams - I am living proof of that. I would like to see more young men come forward and use Get Connected before the situation becomes critical."*

As Clive explains, mental health problems can be managed effectively with the right help: *"I've used the OCD to my advantage – it was the obsessive tendencies that enabled me to learn the things I needed to learn for Mastermind, so it's not all bad."*

More support needed

The amount of support available to young people is decreasing across the UK, and a recent report from Unison shows that youth services lost £60m in funding between 2012 – 2014.

Clive says: *"I don't believe there's enough support out there for young people seeking help, I would like*

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to see a tremendous amount more. This makes the role of Get Connected even more vital. Not only do they help the young person identify their need but they can support them to identify which services ***are*** *available to help."*

75% of young people find out about options they wouldn't have known about without Get Connected.

Fighting the pressure

Clive says: "*I think young people today are under tremendous pressure, there's not many jobs around, opportunities are limited and then they are under incredible pressure from social media."*

He believes there's a critical lack of understanding with regard to mental health, saying: *"I think it's a matter of education with mental health, I think there's still a lot of ignorance which prevails. It's easy to identify with somebody who has a cast on a broken a leg, but because you can't see inside somebody's mind, mental illness is difficult for people to associate with."*

Get Connected is available for any young person under 25. Clive is a passionate supporter of the charity's work and hopes that by speaking out, young men will feel more confident in seeking help.

"We all have times in our lives where we struggle and sometimes it's not easy to talk about our problems. By talking about my issues, I hope others will feel more confident talking about theirs.

Mental health problems do not discriminate; they can affect anyone, even Masterminds."

Jessica Taplin, Get Connected CEO, says: *"Many of the young people we speak to each year have issues relating to emotional and mental distress. Get Connected provides a trusted and safe harbour for children and young people who want to talk about their issues in a confidential and non-judgmental space.*

In the year ahead Get Connected will help an ever-increasing number of young people from across the UK, over the phone, by webchat, text & email, WebHelp 24/7 and our App. We need support to manage this growth in demand and ensure that no young person feels that they have nowhere to turn to seek advice, no matter what the issue."

For more information please visit www.getconnected.org.uk/besmart

NOTES TO EDITORS

Get Connected is the free, confidential national helpline service supporting vulnerable young people under 25 all over the UK, and helps with any issue they might be facing, 365 days a year. Our team of 100 expertly trained non-judgemental Helpline Volunteers provide emotional support and information. They can then connect young people to any one of 9,000 trusted organisations for further support and advice, completely free of charge. Get Connected is registered charity number 1081840 and depends entirely on voluntary donations. Get Connected is a key partner of Child Helpline International, a global network of 173 child helplines in 142 countries.

Call FREE: 0808 808 4994 (1pm-11pm daily). Text for FREE help 80849 Email: help@getconnected.org.uk Webchat: www.getconnected.org.uk (1pm-11pm daily) WebHelp 24/7: www.getconnected.org.uk

The UK's youth services: how cuts are removing opportunities for young people and damaging their lives, is based on Freedom of Information Act enquiries to 168 councils and a survey of Unison members in youth services. It finds: in excess of 2,000 youth worker posts have been cut and 350 youth centres have closed since 2012, youth services lost £60m in funding between 2012-2014, 41,000 youth service places for young people and 35,000 hours of outreach youth support work have disappeared over the last two years.

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