

MALCOLM

OCD is like being trapped in a cage.

Ten years ago, I held a high position in a busy sales company, and was involved in setting up a new company completely from scratch. I worked incredible hours and travelled long distances to maintain the life I had forged for my family and myself.

The company decided to downsize, and I was put in charge of dealing with redundancies.

I felt responsible for the families that would lose their income. The stress was intolerable - I couldn't help but try and find ways that I might be able to prevent the loss of their jobs. The staff were people to me, not numbers to be chopped and deleted. I thought that if I worked every hour I could, I might be able to save their jobs. As I drove about the country, I began to worry that I might have caused an accident, and knocked somebody down without knowing it.

So, I started to retrace my route, to make sure that I wasn't responsible for something terrible having happened. It became so bad that I couldn't travel anywhere, I had to check my journey over and over again. One day, it took me three hours to travel fourteen miles.

Seven years ago, I suffered a complete nervous breakdown, and had to retire.

Now, I am agoraphobic and cannot leave my house for fear of causing harm of some kind. I do all the cooking for my family so that I can be sure that they do not suffer any illness through contaminated food. I am their protector.

I will never give up though and although life can be hard, I do make progress. I hold on to the fact that there is always hope for me to get better. My goals may be different to that of ten years ago, but I still set out to achieve them. I keep in contact with other people who suffer from OCD and we encourage each other.

I try not to put too much pressure on myself, and I am much kinder to myself than I used to be. I know that I am not alone in my fears, there are thousands of people like me. It is important to get in touch and share what is happening to you.