

Name	Harry
Age	45-60
Degree	Archaeology
Year	3
Full-Time/Part-Time	Part-Time
Disability	Depression/Anxiety

Five years ago I was a teacher in a primary school. I had a breakdown, it was quite a bad one and I am still seeing people about it now, lots of ups and downs. I think people would define me as being clinically depressed on occasions. So, I am still taking the happy pills. It took me a long time to get over it and I got an ill-health pension. I am not allowed to teach anymore. After two or three years I was talking to a counsellor who asked me what I would like to do. I have always been fascinated by archaeology, even from the time I was teaching; it really caught my imagination. I had done well on an AS-level in Ancient History and already had a degree, and I got into University on that. It has probably been the main-stay of my life, one of the most important decisions I have ever made, a fantastic experience.

The staff have been exceptionally supportive. They know all about the medication I am taking and if I need to talk to someone I can go and see them. If there is any change in the medication or anything for special needs, I know they are always there. I am allowed to have essay extensions, but have only used this twice. Just before Christmas last year when the deadlines began to get heavy, I did ask for an extension. It is nice to know that there is a safety net like that there. The various members of staff who know about my condition ask every now and then how I am. Makes you feel that there is a degree of consideration, understanding and care and that has enabled me to give my best. I got very good marks in my second year; a very positive atmosphere. I have gone part-time this year, my nerve-endings were starting to fray a bit. I discussed it fully with the staff and we decided it would give me some breathing space.

During my first year fieldwork we went out to America. My mother had a very bad stroke one week into the fieldwork and immediately the Director said I could go home if necessary and that we could sort out my fieldwork obligations another day. There was nothing that I could do if I had gone home, so I stayed in America. The Director let me use his car at lunchtimes so I could get to a phone to ring home each day. Another project was in Sweden. I talked to the Director about my

condition, and he said that if anything happened it would be alright for me to go straight home.

My main difficulties on field work have been relating to the younger generation; I am 50 this year. At times I felt a bit on my own because I did not want to associate with the lecturers all the time, they are entitled to a bit of a break from it. In America I was sharing with a 'typical' student who did not like to wash and was addicted to TV. I stuck it out. It was just the logistics; there was not anybody my age there. That is the main problem, relating to other students. Maybe I work harder than some of them? Doing the lithics practical in the first year we were supposed to share results. The team I was with was not so conducive to hard work. So, I got my head down and did it and said, 'I'm not sharing my results with you lot' and I did not particularly want their results. I live at a distance from the University and travel in, but I do have one or two younger friends. I suppose it is difficult for them to relate to somebody my age, and vice versa.

I have found my writing has tightened up; I can communicate well in written language. I have not been able to do that for years. The only thing that has not come back is being able to speak in front of other people. That was one of my main skills as a teacher. But the confidence has never come back, I do not know why. It is probably my nerves, there is not much I can do about that.

Archaeology gives me something to think about, rather than just going round and round in circles thinking about the mess that I have made of my life. All I ever wanted to do as a teacher was see my ticket out to the end and retire when I reached 55. Archaeology provides me with a lot of stimulus, pleasure and fun and I have met a lot of pleasant people. It prevents me from nagging away at the same old thing in my head. It manages my depression to a large extent.