

“My personal account
of living with a life
changing condition”



By Para Dressage Athlete
Mari Durward-Akhurst



My journey through photos



AIMS of my session (1st)

- My story (living with a life changing condition and being a full time athlete) and riding as therapy (in my eyes)
- How my condition has affected me not just physically but emotionally and how these two aspects overlap.
- Personal experiences of challenges and how I have overcome. The methods that I have used that have worked or not.
- As a Para Dressage athlete I am not a therapist, my hope its to increase awareness of living with a physical disability so that counsellors might be able to support clients in similar circumstances.

AIMS of my session (2nd)

- Why I didn't seek counselling?
- How do I cope with a bad day? Examples of what works for me.
- If I had considered counselling what would I have talked about?
- How I think a counsellor would have been able to help?

FIRST RIDING LESSON



MOVING ON



INTERNATIONAL CHAMPION

My Story



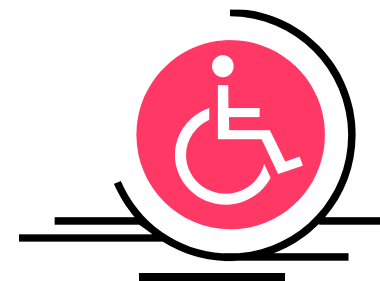
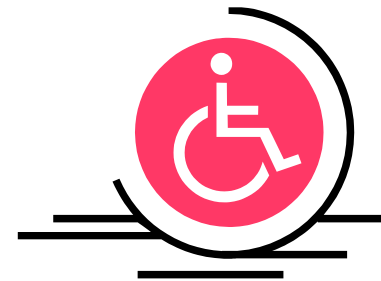




My Horse journey
really took off!!

NHNN, LONDON







MY JORNEY TO WINNING A GOLD MEDAL

- GOALS TRIANGLE





So what is my life changing condition?

CEREBRAL PALSY

DYSARTHRIA

ATAXIA

DYSTONIA



My Future and Questions?



AIM TO MOVE UP THE PODIUM TO 1ST!!

2nd set of aims

- Why I didn't seek counselling?
- How do I cope with a bad day? Examples of what works for me.
- If I had considered counselling what would I have talked about?
- How I think a counsellor would have been able to help?

My biggest struggles in life

- Not having an exact diagnosis so no idea what will happen or what to expect for the future.
- Having little to no support from the medical profession
- Not being able to work
- Being a wheelchair user
- Worries that I will not be able to ride for ever
- Working so hard but never improving almost going backwards.

My personal qualities

- Fighter
- Inspiration
- Determined
- Dedicated
- Driven
- Desire
- Good at Overcoming set backs and problem solving



I CAN DO IT AND I WILL DO IT!!



change your
whole day

I may win
and I may lose,
but I will
NEVER
be defeated.

- Emmitt Smith

Keep



SMILING!!

Why did I not seek counselling?



How do I cope with a bad day?

FOLLOWING MY
DREAMS

“EVERYTHING HAPPENS FOR A REASON”

MY FOCUS



Examples of how I cope with a bad day....



My first international win!!



““Lost for words. Over the moon. We only went and won the Individual Test with over 71%!! It's a dream come true. I cannot thank my whole team enough and my super-duper horse Sky who I love so much and am so proud off! Our first ever international win and listening to the national anthem was incredible ”

If I had considered counselling; what would I have spoken about?



How I think a counsellor would have been able to help?



“Living with a life changing condition is extremely challenging. But thanks to my horses , my supportive team and my goals I have something to fight for. I will not stop until I have a gold medal around my neck”.





Getting selected to represent GB at my
first Senior Championship.



Winning my first medal; a dream come true!!



LONGINES

FEI

**EUROPEAN
CHAMPIONSHIPS
ROTTERDAM
2019**

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All the blood, sweat and tears have
been worth it!!





I could not have achieved this without
the team around me!!



Now my attention turns to Tokyo and
going for GOLD!!!!



OXFORD



Thank you for listening. Any
Questions?

