



## Sam's story

**Life can throw curveballs at any age. Facing distressing moments can be a shock to the body, both physically and mentally. Not understanding where these feelings of overwhelming emotion are coming from can make moving on even more daunting.**

Sam is 51.

"I just went into a shell. And I was just having constant panic attacks," describes Sam.

"I was at a concert with friends and I just had to go outside. I thought I was going to have a heart attack. In that moment it just all came out. All this bottled-up pressure that I was putting myself under, bubbled to the surface.

"I'd always thought that I wasn't good enough and the bullying that I'd suffered in my previous relationship, had exacerbated this. I thought I needed to do better and kept putting myself under constant pressure to do better, be better, look better.

"Having therapy helped me get to the root cause of my anxiety and really helped me work through it. I also kept a 'worry diary', which helped me gain perspective of my feelings of not being good enough.

Reflecting on buried life experiences can be tough, but they often contribute to anxiety. Facing them is hard, but the long term benefits can be transformative.

Small changes also matter. Understanding your thoughts, emotions and physical responses, helps you care for yourself daily. For Sam, this meant setting boundaries where she felt pressure.

"I'm a lot better with my working practises now, and make sure that even if I'm working from home, I stop working at a reasonable time and that's it. Everything stops and I'll usually go to the gym, or for a walk.

"I now understand that the whole perfection thing is just an unrealistic goal, so you just have to have a go at things; and if it doesn't go 100%, that's okay," Sam explains.

Setting boundaries and giving yourself grace does not mean you are any less capable. Releasing yourself from the expectation of perfection and the pressure this creates, gives you the chance to try new things and enjoy life's cherished memories.

Sam's advice for anybody dealing with anxiety caused by internal pressure is: "Give yourself a break. Be kind to yourself."

If you're looking to take a first step, or to continue exploring ways to manage anxiety, visit [bupa.co.uk/health-information/mental-health](https://bupa.co.uk/health-information/mental-health)

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