

A6. Paul's Story Transcript

I work in marketing, but it had got a bit stressful because the company was making people redundant at the same time as they were upping the workload. And I wasn't aware of how stressed I was getting, looking back, and I had to work really hard to concentrate. And I found that things were taking me twice as long as they used to, which was...it was really worrying, actually, and quite frustrating.

So, I just tried harder and I pushed on through, but my boss called me in because they could see that things weren't getting done, 'cause I had this particular problem with this project for a very important client. I forgot to do one whole aspect of the job and it had to be pointed out to me, so I found that really hard and embarrassing and quite upsetting actually.

And I couldn't really say anything to anyone. And it was after a particularly hard meeting with them, I took a phone call at my desk. I can't remember who that was from actually. Anyway, it doesn't matter. So I heard this clicking noise on the line and I hadn't heard that before. And then it kept happening. So I realized that they were recording my conversations, and the more I thought about it, the more I realized that they were watching me on CCTV, and they were checking my emails.

And I asked others in the office if they could hear clicking on their phones, and I even asked a few of them if they could hear it on my phone, but it never happened when I handed somebody the phone. It just stopped. So, it was like they were watching me doing it.

So I started to feel really unsafe at work, and I thought, *Well, why don't I just take work home, 'cause then they couldn't record me or watch me.* And I worked evenings and weekends, and I worked really hard to catch up, but it didn't seem to make any difference.

And I was really tired as I was finding it difficult to sleep and keep up with everything. I even approached my bosses, and I told them that I knew what they were doing, but of course they denied it to my face.

And I told my fiancé, Jane, and we discussed it a lot, but in the end she just thought I was imagining it, and she got totally fed up with me going on and on and on about it. And in the end she ended up leaving me. That was really hard. I thought she understood because she knew about my difficulties years ago. We were gonna get married next year, and we were talking about starting a family, but now, well, that's all gone.

So anyway, things reached a head and my Mum took me to the GP because I wasn't eating or sleeping at that point, and she was worried about me because of what's happened in the past. And when I saw the doctor, she signed me off on sick leave, and that meant reduced pay, although it had an upside because it meant that they couldn't sack me.

So, with Jane gone, I couldn't keep up with the rent, so Mum said that I could live with them, which was really nice of them, but I'm thirty-four, and to be living back with my parents was just really hard.

I felt like a real burden. Don't get me wrong, Mum's great, but we started having a few arguments because she kept trying to make me eat 'cause I was worried about my food. Unless it was properly

packaged, how did I know that somebody hadn't tampered with it? And it's not that I didn't trust Mum, but how do I know it's not been messed with before it's reached the house?

I was okay with food in sealed packages 'cause they couldn't be messed with, but I wasn't eating brilliantly. Mum was really worried 'cause I seemed to have lost a lot of weight and I was feeling really, really anxious pretty much most of the time. I hated that feeling. I would end up avoiding all sorts of situations that made me feel that way.

I can remember thinking *I'm going crazy*, and that all my friends knew. So I stopped seeing my friends, which made me feel better for a bit because I didn't want them to see me like that, but it got really lonely. But I'm feeling a bit better now, and I'm seeing my care coordinator regularly, and although I'm still off sick from work, I'm starting to think about going back part-time.

Anyway, at the moment I'm just focusing on getting better day to day.