

## A7. George's Story Transcript

My son Paul was originally diagnosed with psychosis when he was at university. And I think the whole thing was triggered by stress and some rather misplaced cannabis use, but then he's genetically hardwired for it because my father had schizophrenia, or at least that's what we were finally told. And so, with the added pressure of university, something in his head just...went.

I still feel very terrible about that whole episode. Not only did I pass on genes, but I also had to give the doctor's permission to section him. It's an awful thing to have to do for and to your child. I hope he's forgiven me. We don't tend to talk about it. But then we didn't know what to do or how to help him. He's always been a high achiever. We encourage both our children to work hard and get somewhere in life. If you want to achieve things, then you have to work hard and put the effort in. And that's how we brought them both up.

Although I do sometimes wonder if this is all part of the picture of what caused him to get ill. But what can you do? You don't encourage your kids and people think you don't care. It's very difficult as a parent.

Anyway, Paul came home a few months ago, and he was convinced that his bosses wanted to sack him and that they were watching and monitoring his every move. He constantly talked about it. He was so worried that he'd take work home and be up all hours. He even confronted one of his bosses!

He was signed off on sick leave, but he continued to work well into the night. I just didn't know what to do. He's my son, and I love him and I want to support him. Everything started to go wrong when his fiancé upped and left, 'cause she couldn't take it anymore. Paul was on reduced pay from work and couldn't afford to keep his place, so he moved back in with his Mum and me.

I had to do lots for him at the time, but he's my son and I wanted to help him, but it was a bit like having a young child to look after. He needed me.

Jean, my wife, didn't agree. She thought I was doing way too much for him. It's one of the things we started arguing about. I didn't feel particularly supported by her at the time. She couldn't see that Paul needed the help, that he was unwell.

Lee, his brother, was no better. He could've done more for his brother, but he just buried his head in the sand. I wish he'd seen him more. They used to be really close as children.

This food and eating thing really got me down. He got it into his head that people were trying to tamper with his food, and he wouldn't eat anything fresh that had been cooked by someone else. He'd eat prepackaged meals, which I'd bought more of just to get some food down him. He was getting so thin. But it was so expensive.

I felt so guilty that I'd passed this on to him, and I started to wonder if it was my parenting that caused him to be unwell. I suppose I did more for him as a way of compensating for how bad I felt. Jean just got really angry with me. She said that I was spoiling Paul.

I found it all really hard, to be honest. I remember thinking I was a hopeless father. I sort of gave up at one point and just believed it. Felt like my life was on hold. I put everything into caring for Paul

because I'm his dad and I want him to be healthy and have a good life, but it was at the cost of mine it seemed.

I had to take quite a lot of time off work, and I felt awful that my colleagues had to pick up the slack for me. I think my boss was starting to lose patience. I used to play football once a week, and I started to miss that. I didn't see my friends 'cause I didn't like leaving Paul on his own. I also didn't really want to discuss our private business with anyone. I wouldn't want Paul's problems becoming common knowledge. I wouldn't want people judging us; life's hard enough.

But then I felt the only way I could relax was to have a whiskey, but then the one turned into two, and then several more! I found it easier to deal with things once I was a bit drunk, and it certainly helped me to get to sleep. But soon I was drinking every day; I just wanted to escape. I didn't want to have to deal with Paul, and I knew Jean would just be angry with me. I think I actually started to resent Paul a bit, but that made me feel awful and like a bad father.

But, thankfully, things have got a bit better. Paul's meeting with his care coordinator regularly, and he's starting to eat and sleep properly again. He's still living with us, but he wants to return to work, and I can see him becoming more like his old self.

I just wish I could protect him from this happening again.