I lost my Dad in October 2019 unfortunately he had been battling severe mental health for about 18 months prior his death, he was actually sectioned due to severe anxiety and paranoid thoughts and depression and spent a month in a mental health hospital. A series of life stresses and events led up to his battle with mental health and some traumas he had experienced as a young man came back to haunt him which contributed to his decline in mental health I watched this brave, funny, loving, happy go lucky man change into a person I did not recognise he was broken, fragile, anxious all the time and couldn’t even bare to hug or kiss or show love to me, my sister and my mum it was the most heart breaking time in my life he was not the man I knew before he was an inward sad person and it broke my heart we couldn’t take his pain away. I never thought I would miss his bad jokes, his obsessive nagging and silly house rules all these things I took for granted and when he was unwell, I longed for him to nag me again just so we could feel a little normal.

After he came out of hospital, he was no longer able to drive, he could no longer work, and he was on lots of medication he was stuck, and he felt alone and like everything had been taken away from him. My dad was a provider, a hardworking man he wouldn’t want anyone having to take care of him and drive him to places and give him money, my mum became his sole carer and that made him feel so deflated

My mum and my sister found it the hardest as they lived in the house with him, they saw his bad days all the time and it broke my heart to hear them sobbing down the phone feeling powerless and broken. I wanted so much for him to realise we loved him, and I remained so positive he would be ok, I knew he would be ok he had to be, didn’t he?

Back in August 2019 I went to stay with my mum and dad for a week it was like a holiday for me as I couldn’t afford to go properly away as we were saving up for a wedding. Chris was still so anxious all the time he would continuously say I’m useless charlotte, I’ve messed everything up I am no good to anyone anymore, no good, no good over and over he would say this it broke my heart I reassured him that he wasn’t useless, he was just unwell at the moment and he needed time to recover, he eventually accepted this.

One day we went out to the beach me and mum and we made my dad come with us we told him come on it will good for you his little face lit up this was the first time I had seen him smile in a long, long time and it made me feel so happy inside. We walked down the beach and we sat and had ice cream and a sandwich, my dad looked peaceful and happy by the sea throwing stones into the water I had hope he would be ok I really did, suddenly my phone rang and it was a call from my therapist who was helping me with my anxiety, I had experienced this all my life and have been able to manage it well, until my dad got unwell and I felt I needed support, she rang to reschedule my appointment.

When I got off the phone my dad said ‘who was that on the phone?” I replied “oh just rescheduling my therapy appointment.” He looked at me and said “You have therapy but why? You seem ok?” I replied “yeah I’m just struggling a little but I’m ok don’t worry I’m dealing with it” he looked lovingly at me, I never told mum or dad about my own struggles as I didn’t want to worry them and I was dealing with it on my own I was ok. My dad said to me “Charlotte. Do you think I could get more therapy like you and get better? Then maybe I can get off my medicines and I can drive again get my licence back and maybe even go back to work” he was so happy, he had hope and it was amazing to see I had to stop the tears from falling, he wanted to get better he had hope.

I said to him “of course you can get help, and of course you will get better but remember you have to give yourself time, and we will be here every step of the way if you feel you’re ready to cut down your medication we will take you to the doctors and see what they suggest?” My dad smiled at me and agreed it was the most amazing day.

Unfortunately the feelings of positivity started to fade my dad became more and more withdrawn and my mum called me and said that she had caught my dad attempting to take his own life and she had, fort with him to get in the car she took him to the hospital and told them they had to help him, they sectioned him again this time he was only in for a week they changed his medication’s around and he seemed to make progress mum was so upbeat she said he had been getting up in the morning trying to help with the garden he even told my sister to “f\*\*\*K off” when she asked him to make her a cup of tea and he was smiling more we were so happy, even when I spoke to him on the phone he was upbeat happy said he was feeling better this went on for a few weeks so mum was finally ready to go out to a friend’s wedding my dad had told her to stop worrying he would be fine he laughed and said I promise I will behave see you when you come back tomorrow I have the neighbour looking out for me and I have the girls so mum went calling him every hour as well as me and he was in good spirits, he was getting better.

How wrong could we be? The next day it was a Sunday in October it was around 9.30/10 I got a call from the police telling me that he was with my mum and that my dad was deceased, I said “deceased what do you mean? Did he have a fall In the garden or something?” the police man said “no unfortunately he took his own life.” After this I don’t remember much else all I remember is screaming, and feeling like I was having a heart attack my chest ached I couldn’t breathe and I collapsed the floor crying and crying and saying “no, no, no, no, no” I couldn’t believe it he was ok he was happy I only spoke to him yesterday this cant be true. I was shaking, my partner had to guide me to the bed to lay down I have never felt such pain in all my life. I mean I have lost family members grandparents but nothing hurt like this.

After the shock of what I had heard sunk in I began to feel anger, hatred towards my dad its horrible to say such things but I couldn’t believe he could have been so cruel and hurt us like this, left me alone like this how dare he what a selfish man! Then this was overcome by feelings of guilt for feeling this way and then heart breaking pain in my body that I would never see him again I can’t really put into words how I felt but it was something I had never experienced before.

I also began to feel like it was my fault I could of stopped this, I could have done more couldn’t I? Why didn’t I see the signs? How could I have been so foolish to think he would be ok and get better? These feelings made me feel uncomfortable.

With time I am starting to accept what has happened, I still miss him every day and I still cry most days as he is always in my mind, I am slowly trying to remember who he was before he became unwell not how he died but this is hard sometimes. There will be a hole in my life forever which cannot be healed but I know it will get easier with time, it has definitely changed me as a person and affected how I view life in a positive way it has made me understand more than I ever could about what mental health can do to a person, this was difficult for me to write as I am a private person but I hope that my story can help others. I have kept some things to myself because they are my memories and my feelings that I’m not quite ready to share but I have come this far and I am proud to be a survivor! And you should be too.

I have just finished reading a phycology book called

Dying to be free, written by Beverly Cobain and Jean Larch. It informs you the facts and figures of those who commit suicide, those who are left behinds and those experiencing suicidal helps this book has helped me so much to understand why and how these things happened and has given me the strength to share my story and inspired me to help others.