



Lily's story:

How Kooth helped me with my anxiety



Getting support for the first time through Kooth chats or messaging can be such a great experience, filled with feelings of relief and validation about the things you've been going through.

But it's also natural to have feelings of nervousness, anxiety, and fear of the unknown, too.

Here we chat to Lily*, who first used Kooth a few years ago when her feelings of anxiety left her unable to leave the house.

***Lily is a pseudonym**

Lily's Story:

When I was about 14, I had a panic attack that hit me out of nowhere. It really frightened me, and I'd say my feelings of anxiety just spiralled from there. I'd gone from being a pretty confident person to someone who was anxious and fearful. I was so afraid of having another panic attack that I became really scared of leaving the comfort of my home, which I saw as my safe space.

I had a really big group of friends, but I found myself not wanting to go out with them. I was also really academic, but the idea of going into school filled me with dread, even though I loved learning. As these feelings of panic took over, I eventually found myself not wanting to leave the house at all.



Reaching out to my GP

With support from my family, I went to my GP. They were so helpful and understanding, and while I felt a massive feeling of relief for finally reaching out for support, I found the support available to me didn't really work.

It was suggested that I went to group therapy - this filled me with dread, as having pretty severe anxiety meant that a new face-to-face setting to talk about how I felt was really intimidating and filled me with even more anxiety.

I was also referred to CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services). While it was good that I was being taken seriously, I also eventually discovered that I didn't meet their criteria for support, which was a real blow. I didn't think things could get worse, yet I was being told my issues weren't serious enough for support. I asked myself, how much worse could they get? My only other option was medication to help with my anxiety, which didn't feel right for me, either. It was like I was really running out of answers, which felt really overwhelming.

Discovering Kooth

I wanted some support that kind of came to me, rather than me having to go and get it. I needed to access something while being in my comfort zone, which at that time was my bedroom. I didn't think this existed. Until I discovered Kooth.

My GP had also suggested Kooth, which I had never heard of. I'll be honest, I felt pretty dubious, as I'd tried other services before and didn't find them helpful. My anxiety meant that talking out loud about my issues felt a little bit like being on autopilot. Like the words were coming out, but I didn't have a chance to really think about them.

Eventually, I thought I'd try Kooth, as I didn't have anything to lose. As I waited in the queue to talk to someone, I felt so nervous and genuinely didn't know what to expect.

My Kooth Chat

When I was in a chat with a Kooth worker, and I was able to write about my experience and how I'd been feeling, it just came pouring out. It felt like such a relief. I felt understood and really listened to. Also, for the first time, I was really exploring some different ways to cope - including breathing techniques, which really helped. The fact that I was writing really helped, too. Anxiety makes you feel overwhelmed, so the writing aspect gave me a chance to naturally pause, think about what I wanted to say, and edit what I wrote if it didn't sound quite right. It's actually so different from speaking, which I found increased my anxiety.

I was eventually given someone to talk to every week. This meant I didn't have to repeat myself with someone new; I could slowly build up a relationship with someone in my own time and have some control over the support I was getting.

At the time of my Kooth support, I was doing my GCSEs. At that point, I was only going into school for exams. I don't say this lightly, but I don't think I would have got through my exams without Kooth. It was a real lifeline at a time where my other options didn't work for me.



My advice to others

For anyone at all who is considering coming into chat but feels nervous, I would encourage them to take that step, as it can make a real, life-changing difference. It's natural to feel nervous, or anxious, or anything really, and talking about those initial feelings honestly with a Kooth worker might really help. It did for me. I wasn't judged or made to feel embarrassed. I was listened to and supported at my own pace. You're also in control of the support at Kooth. You choose to log on from a place you feel safe and secure. That in itself can help you feel much more in control and less overwhelmed.

My life now

Since being supported at Kooth, my life has changed so much. I remember speaking to a careers advisor at school and explaining that going to a university far away from home wouldn't work for me. Well, things are much different now, and I actually attend a university hours away from home! Feelings of anxiety don't just disappear; in fact, I'm still living with them - I'm just able to manage them differently, with ways of coping that I first learned at Kooth. There was a point when my feelings took over my whole life, and now I am able to be in control. I took a real chance coming here, but I'm so glad I did.



A Kooth counsellor's perspective

“Using Kooth for the first time can be really scary, because it is so unknown. We are all here to help and support you with any difficulties you are facing, and to help you find new ways to cope at your own pace. Kooth can be a great place to share how you're feeling without having to look at the person you are sharing with (which for some can be a real comfort, and help reduce any anxiety). It's an anonymous and confidential space, and it can allow you to have that time and space each week to explore your feelings.. Using Kooth can also be a good sounding board and place to practise sharing your thoughts and feelings with others. This can help you to build up the courage to share with others, who can also support you - when you feel ready and able to do this.”

Kooth counsellor