



Case Example of using a diary

Farid, 15, is seeing a social worker at CAMHS following a serious suicide attempt. He had been depressed and anxious for some time because he feared he would never be able to 'come out' about his sexuality as this would distress his family too much. Although he feels very loved by his family, he knows that their cultural and religious background have caused them to view homosexuality very negatively. He has not dared tell any of his friends in case they reject him too or tell his family. He had come to feel there was no way forward so had overdosed on his mother's painkillers.

Fortunately his attempt was discovered in time and Farid is now recovering. He feels some trust in the CAMHS worker and has been able to talk about the reasons for his suicide attempt. He describes how he sometimes feels he is spilling over inside with so many unexpressed thoughts and feelings.

The worker suggests to Farid that he keeps a diary where he can start to express his thoughts. She suggests that this is kept secretly somewhere safe and locked up so that he does not have to worry about his family finding it. Farid is advised to write in it every day so that he does not start to bottle things up again.

In their next session Farid reviews the use of the diary. It has become like his secret friend, he says, the person in whom he can confide every day. Putting things on to paper has enabled him to get perspective on things and enabled him to begin to think how he can survive, even move forward from this difficult situation.

Further Reading:

Bolton, G. (1999) Chapter 3, Keeping a Journal. In *The Therapeutic Potential of Creative Writing*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London.