

## Participant case study: Lyn

To wake each day with hope in your heart, rather than a burden on your chest and shoulders is a gift most of us take for granted. In 1992 my husband was made redundant from a senior position in a telecommunications project, and he became severely depressed. We made some significant changes to our life, including the purchase of a farm which was approximately a three hour drive from Sydney.

I continued to work and commute each week for approximately seven years until December 1999, when I found my 58 year old husband had a stroke. The following six months was consumed by intensive care and rehabilitation programs, after which I was allowed to take my broken husband home to our farm. He was unable to walk or talk or do even the most basic tasks.

My husband had been a physically strong man, highly motivated and a high achiever. Following his redundancy he experienced depression, high blood pressure, loss of self-esteem and then the stroke. It all had a traumatic effect on our family and friends.

Many could not manage the change and disappeared from our lives. Others rallied to support us but as we returned home from hospital, rural isolation compounded our situation. A key lesson for me has been to learn patience in the face of adversity and to accept a situation I cannot easily change. Adapting to it was my key to survival.

The next few years were marked by gradual recovery for both of us. I had to give up my job in Sydney and we faced financial losses and debt. I initially took on full responsibility for the management of our farm and growing herd of cattle, but age and physical strength were critical factors for my being able to continue in this role and I eventually had to call it a day. We sold the farm, the cattle and the lifestyle we loved to return to Sydney.

I have been a "carer" all of my life. I have looked after my children, my parents, thousands of students as a secondary English teacher and senior lecturer at University, and since 2000 my husband following his stroke. Attending the Partners in Depression group helped me to explore opportunities to resume some aspects of my former life. It has helped me regain a sense of me as more than just my caring role. The process has also helped my husband change from being very self-focused, to prompting him to do more for himself and accept my need to do things I enjoy.

Partners in Depression has opened doors in my own awareness and understanding that I am not alone on this journey. I do count my blessings. Although much has been lost, much has also been gained. I sincerely thank those who understood our journey and regret there are those who do not.



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