

## My Story

### By Emma Metcalf

In a lot of cases stories like mine are sad and people don't know how to react. However, I don't want mine to be sad. My name is Emma and I tried to take my life.

One night I let alcohol get the best of my emotions and I decided to make the worst mistake of my life. While I regret my decisions, I now love myself and it took rock bottom for me to realise how powerful I can be.

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of April I was taken into hospital after falling off a bridge. I was rushed into emergency surgery at the John Radcliffe Hospital where they had to place two metal rods and 10 pins into my back to realign my spine. When I woke up, I was in agony and shock. The surgeon began to explain what he had to do and the consequences of the fall. He wasn't sure I would be able to walk ever again. That was the moment when I decided I wanted to start fighting for my life, not just for me but for everyone who cared about me.

After five weeks of being in the JR, I finally got a bed in the spinal centre at Stoke Mandeville Hospital, where my journey really began. After a hard week of self-isolating I was let out and properly began my rehabilitation

Starting rehab was terrifying because it all depended on me and on how far I was willing to push myself. Thankfully I wasn't alone, I had the support of friends and family, but the people that really helped me were the other patients. People who were just like me fighting for their sense of normality. Every day they inspired and motivated me to become the best possible version of myself.

Week by week I started seeing progress. My feet and ankles were paralysed but I didn't let that stop me. I started standing and then I started moving my legs and taking a few steps and after four months I got myself walking on crutches. I was still using the wheelchair, but it was the first big achievement of my recovery and the moment I realised how strong I was.

When I first got into rehab, they asked me how long they thought I needed, and I said give me four months and then I'll be out ready to start my second year of university. There were moments when I didn't believe I could do it but again the support I had helped me push myself forward even when I felt like I couldn't.

I ended up walking out of Stoke Mandeville, even when the odds were against me. I still struggle daily, and my mental health still has its bad days. If I'm honest there are days where I'm just angry with myself and I hope I'm just having a nightmare. Sadly, this is my reality now and while I still believe I will be able to do amazing things it doesn't take away the fact that I am no longer the person I used to be.

For a while I debated whether I wanted to share my story and if anyone would read it. Now I don't care if people don't, I'm doing it for me. It's my way of being honest to myself that while I do still have bad days, I am incredibly proud of myself.

For anyone who has felt the way I have and even considered doing what I did, I know you hear it all the time, but life is worth living and you may feel like you have reached rock bottom, but you can come back from that, there is always someone in your corner. If you honestly feel like no one is there well then, I am.

You are stronger than you know, and I believe in you.

Thank you for reading.