

‘I Felt Fear But I Did It Anyway’

- By Donna McBain



I Felt Fear But I Did It anyway

Having been employed for 10 years, my life was set in a comfortable routine.

When Government intervention, policy and funding ended my employment I felt I had lost my purpose in life.

I had been assessed, assessed and assessed until I felt personally invaded. I realised I had a choice to make. Stay at work and not fulfil the Governments expectation of me or start at a new service within the Cerebral Palsy League of Queensland.

This time was fraught with uncertainty and a new set of challenges to overcome. New people to meet, what did they do at Moorooka Day Service, who was in control. So many questions had to get answered. How could I possibly cope with my new reality and a decision that wasn't entirely mine.

Here comes the fear again.

Hi, my name is **Donna McBain** and this is my story about

one of the biggest and scariest events in my adult life.

The fear that comes with moving from employment to another service is one that I will never forget.

I had always felt proud that I was employed and felt valued and important as an employee. I got on well with most of the other employees and staff members

Even though we worked hard we still had time for a bit of a laugh and a lot of fun and we were always there for each other. To me, you can only get this relationship happening after many years together.

And I thought it was unique only to a workplace. It really was fear of the unknown to leave work.

It sounds so simple but it was so scary for me.

I had been working for 10 years and it was all that I knew. My whole routine involved my work. I left home at 7.15am and returned home at 4pm. My staff arrived before and after these times to support me. If I was to change my routine my whole roster and staff times needed to be changed, and this was just the beginning of the challenges ahead.

I also worried about how I would spend my days at a Day Service and would I miss my friends and workmates that I would leave behind? Would I ever see them again????

The assessments had made me feel that I couldn't do anything right and that I was too slow at doing my job. After all of my assessments, I took a long hard look at myself, my work and my responsibilities.

Maybe they were right! Was I too slow ?

Would I be better off doing other things. This realisation in itself was scary. I decided then and there that I needed to move on.

Moving on, How bizarre!!!! Moving on to what.
New Staff, new clients, new everything.

Julie, the Manager of Moorooka Day Service, organised for me to come to Moorooka Day Service to have a look and see what I thought. Pedro and Julie picked me up in the commuter and off we went. I was to stay for lunch and to get to know everyone.

I was nervous and scared even though the staff and clients that were at the service seemed very nice. I stayed for lunch but made a quick get away back to my comfort zone and the people I knew well.

The time drew nearer to my finishing day at work. Finally, the day arrived. It was difficult in the afternoon saying good-bye to all of my friends. They had bought me a cake and we chatted over afternoon tea. Many tears.

All of that weekend I was nervous and panicky. This was the longest weekend of my life. I made everybody's weekend miserable (my partner, the poor old staff and anyone unfortunate enough to be around me).

Monday arrived and Jo the bus driver came to pick me up. Things really didn't improve from the weekend. I was still feeling scared and lost. Julie met me off the bus and introduced me to everyone. I had morning tea and I didn't feel too bad but then I watched as people starting different activities.

Wow! They were pretty good at this stuff and knew exactly what they wanted to do. I didn't have a clue.

I definitely didn't want to paint. I HATE PAINTING!

Some clients went out to paint the signal boxes.

Again, I HATE PAINTING! A couple of the ladies were busy doing scrap booking. It looked interesting but Gee I HATE SCRAPBOOKING!

I just like going to work!

I found myself in Julie's office that afternoon in tears, lost and confused. We had a really good chat about the service and about me making it MY service. The staff were all here for me and in time I realised that they CERTAINLY were

I spent evenings, weekends in tears and felt emotional all the time. My problem was that no-one at home understood where I was coming from or what was happening to me. I was feeling angry that I had left work, but no-one really got it.

The first Christmas I asked if I could go to my work Christmas Party. Everyone said that would be fine. I had a good time and it was great to catch up with everyone. But, this only made me miss work even more.

I spent a lot of time with Julie and Pedro just chatting and they made me feel more at home. This helped heaps. I was also seeing Heather, the Social Worker and she was great as well. Slowly but surely I was feeling ok about being at the Day Service. I must admit I went to the Day Service Christmas party the next year, drank up, danced and had a ball.

It took me a while to get used to the fact that I could choose what to do at the Service. If I didn't know what I wanted to do the staff would help me to make a choice. At work we didn't make choices, it was a job and you would have to get the job done.

I dabbled in paints. I LOVE PAINTING! It amazes me as I try new skills how much I like it and just how good I am at it. We have a couple of artist that work there and they show me different ways to paint and different tools and paints to use.



I have been incredibly busy with another client writing a 'Client Induction' book for the new Springfield Service. This has been challenging but very rewarding.

We are nearly finished. It just needs to be Quality Assured and then we are going to present the Induction to the new clients. This has been a 4-5 month project and I have thoroughly enjoyed using my surplus brain power to make this happen.

Tapestry and pottery are two of my great loves now and I try to fit it in around my busy schedule in the Centre. There is always something to do and I must admit, I spend most of my time laughing and giving the staff grief!

The clients are always coming up with new ideas so our activities are so varied and exciting. We have site meetings that I get totally involved in and I am still amazed that the clients have such an enormous say in how the Service is run.

I have now been a client of this Service for nearly 2 years and I feel comfortable and happy to be at Moorooka. I find it easier to make choices now and I have fun chatting to some new found friends and doing activities. I have given people a taste of my skills in the kitchen and some of my artwork is on display at the Service. I just love to do my needlework. When I am not busy with all of this I like to be out and about wherever the action is.

I really don't know what I was worried about because I feel I am contributing much more now than I ever did at work. I feel that my skills and opinions are heard and valued.

But, above all I now feel safe and free.

My advice to others who are going through this change or a similar change that I went through is to get ready for a huge challenge and quite a few tears, but you can do it. You will make it through the darkness of your life to a place where you will be able to smile, laugh and put it all down to an experience that will make you strong.

A big Thank You to the staff at Moorooka for your understanding and for your never ending patience.