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Mum thought she was Britney Spears and tried to kill herself five times

She is now helping the charity that offered her support

BY

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- 17:43, 21 JUN 2019

NEWS



Jane turned her life around with the right medicine, exercise and the help of the Samaritans (Image: Martin Hodgson)

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A schizophrenic mum who once believed she was 'Britney Spears' and tried to end her own life five times has credited the Samaritans for helping turn her life around.

Jane Rowe, 48, who lives in Downham Market, suffers from schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and anxiety and has had a 20-year journey to recovery.

She is now gearing up to walk a marathon through Cambridge on Saturday (June 22) to raise funds for the crisis branch of the Cambridge Samaritans, who helped her through her darkest days.

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Jane, who walks six miles a day as part of her recovery, said: "You wouldn't believe how life can turn around."

She first started developing symptoms of depression when she was a bookish 14-year-old, but for many years hid it from her friends and family.

She said: "I couldn't sleep and I just stayed up and did my studying.

"I held it in as much as I could. I had a good family so it helped but I knew something was happening that was unusual."



Jane Rowe endured 20 years of suffering before doctors found the right medication to treat her condition (Image: Martin Hodgson)

It was when Jane went on to university, where she studied IT, that she began to hallucinate and became increasingly overwhelmed.

"I had strange sensations, seeing blood everywhere," she added.

"I once saw a UFO on campus.

"When I wasn't on medicine it was like falling on concrete everyday.

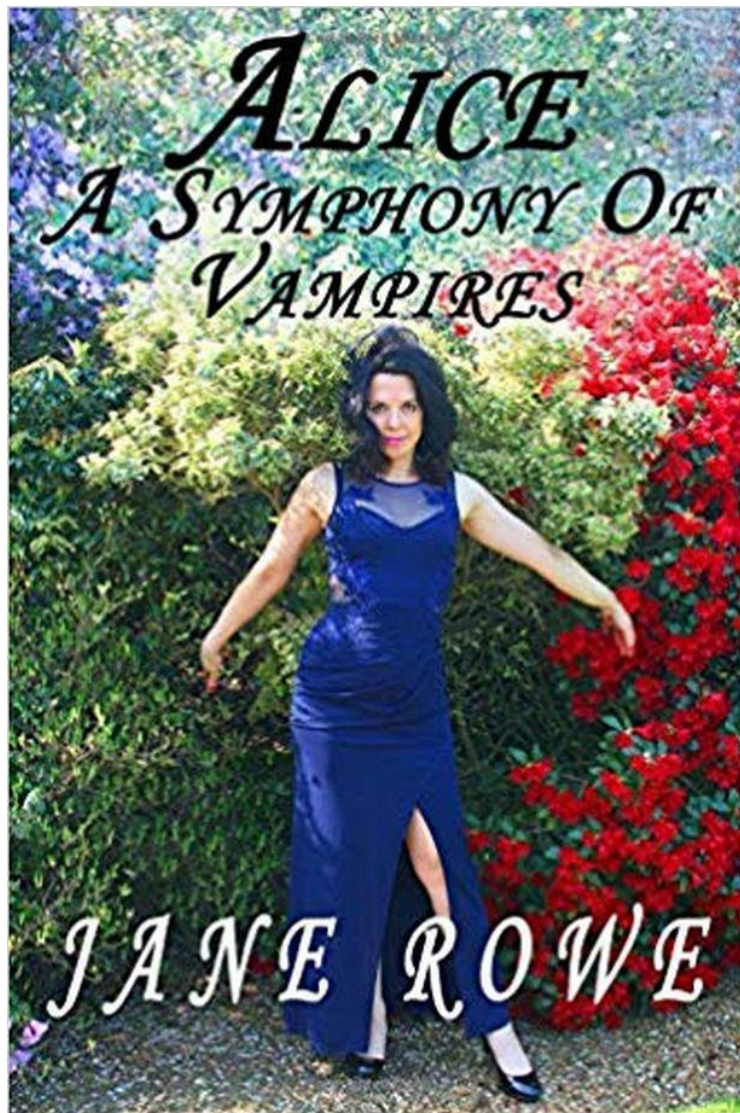
"I couldn't study. I kept trying to kill myself, because I thought 'this is it'. I didn't know I was ill, like a broken leg or diabetes, I thought it was a gift.

"If someone had told me then I was so ill I wouldn't believe it, but it's never too late."

Despite seeking help from doctors, things came to a head every few years. Jane was 24 when she made her first attempt to take her life and ended up sectioned in hospital for four months.

Then when she was 28 her mental health declined again after her mum passed away.

She said: "I thought I was Britney Spears and had all these special powers, I was so confused."



One of Jane's books: Alice, A Symphony of Vampires. (Image: Martin Hodgson)

Things hit their lowest point when she got pregnant in 2009. Jane's medication was stopped to protect the baby and after her daughter was born, she tried to take her life again and was lucky to survive.

A month later she overdosed, leaving her body covered in blisters and with facial scarring which required surgery. She was sectioned again for another four months.

It was only the love for her daughter that saw her through.

"Doctors spent a long time thinking about my medication. I wanted to be a good mum - I was lucky she was born really," said Jane.

With the correct medication to stabilise her moods, she poured herself into taking care of her physical health by taking regular exercise.

Many days she had force herself out of bed to get through the side effects of her medication, which leaves her with blurred vision.

She said: "The doctors helped me, they listened to me and I listened to them, like a team. I had to be disciplined and get to the gym and do positive things."

It was during this period to recovery that Jane called the Cambridge Samaritan's crisis team, sometimes three times a day. And when she couldn't afford to call, she'd pop in.

She said: "It was a lifeline, they offered non judgemental support I could control.

"I used to be a quiet person and, for me, it was about finding the confidence to talk to someone. You don't want Samaritans to be your friends, but to listen.

"They're not there to give a solution. I had to talk it through to find my own."

Now Jane has a new release of life as an author of [vampire fiction](#) and says the Samaritans gave her the confidence she could apply herself and pursue a new career.



The Samaritans was founded by Chad Varah in 1953

"Samaritans helped take me through to the other side of the darkness," she says. "But it's now time for me to leave my space with them for someone else."

As for advice she'd give anyone suffering from mental ill health, she added: "Go to the doctor and explain your symptoms as best you can and believe there is light at the end of the tunnel."

"Life should begin with diagnosis, not end. "

Jane's marathon walk through Cambridge

Jane will be met at the finishing line by Cambridge Samaritans' newly- appointed director and volunteer Jeff Bishop.

Jeff said: "We are really grateful to Jane."

"The money she raises will be ring-fenced for a building project which will increase capacity at our branch and enable us to take more calls and respond to more emails and texts."

"Cambridge Samaritans is a busy and well-supported branch, but we're hoping to maintain and develop our facilities to give time and space to the ever-growing number of people who need us"

If you can help Cambridge Samaritans, [you can donate through the charity's Virgin Money JustGiving page here.](#)

Support is out there

Anyone can contact Samaritans any time for free from any phone on 116 123. This number is free to call and will not show up on your phone bill. Or email jo@samaritans.org or go to www.samaritans.org to find details of your local branch where you can talk to one of our trained volunteers face-to-face.

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