

"I always feel I'm making a difference, and every day is different and interesting with new challenges and rewards."

Hear how Jonathan overcame self-doubt to pursue medicine after realizing the regret of not following a dream.

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How I got into the role

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I grew up in a rural area between Halifax, Bradford, and Keighley in a village called Denholme. It was an area of social deprivation in the 1990s where my family experienced crime in many forms as we grew up.

I have always enjoyed working with young people. I was previously a teacher and initially enjoyed teaching biology. As my experience grew, I began to be more drawn to the pastoral side of teaching. I experienced young people with conditions like anxiety and autism and gained a great deal of satisfaction if I could help these children in some way. This reached a point where I wanted to support people to be the focus of my work. I was

inspired by a particularly kind and patient teacher who took time to listen to the children rather than focus exclusively on teaching requirements.

I was in my mid-thirties and lacking confidence to apply for medicine as I questioned whether I was intelligent enough despite good exam results many years before. I heard on the radio that there were two types of regret - doing something which you regret, which typically doesn't last long, the regret of not doing something, perhaps not pursuing a dream or ambition, and this can be long lasting and haunting - on hearing this I decided to bite the bullet!

I also received some counselling for a series of miscarriages we experienced. I reflected on the benefit I received from discussing these life events with a counsellor at Medical School, and I recognised the power of talking interventions, which shaped my career choices. Previously I had been drawn to the quick and effective interventions offered by a career in surgery, but these experiences altered my perspective.

What I do

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I'm now in my second year of speciality training as a psychiatrist in Children and Adolescent Mental Health. I work in an inpatient unit in York, working with young people with a range of presentations, including [ADHD](#) ^[1], autism, depression, anxiety and eating disorders.

A typical day begins with a multidisciplinary team meeting when the views of psychologists, dietitians, pharmacists, physiotherapists and nurses are all heard and then care plans are developed together. I may then speak individually to a number of young people and listen to their stories, concerns and questions with the hope of agreeing on a plan to improve their lives. I am also working on many quality improvement projects to improve systems and structures to better serve young people with mental health problems.

The best bits and challenges

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I love my current job - sometimes it gets a bit busy, and I can get stressed. However, I always feel I'm making a difference, and every day is different and interesting with new

challenges and rewards.

There have been other challenges. I had a young family when I secured a training post in Newcastle. I had a young family at the time and didn't want to relocate. I decided to commute from York which was tiring but I stuck with it.

Managing workload can be a challenge so it's important to know when to say yes and when to say no. I also receive weekly supervision from experienced colleagues who provide pragmatic advice on managing workloads and are also checking in that I am managing my work/life balance.

Life outside work

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Cycling is my main passion. There is something about the quiet, the calming environment and the rhythmical nature of cycling that allows me to process stress and leaves me feeling calmer and more at ease with myself.

Career plans and top tips for others

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Getting through medical school is all about attitude to hard work rather than natural intelligence - life experience can also be incredibly beneficial.

As my family background is farming and building, I can relate to some groups that others can't. Shared experience is really valuable. I feel it can be validating to young people in my care if I can demonstrate an understanding of the unique stress in their lives which helps to form a therapeutic alliance.

I hope to become a consultant next year though have mixed feelings about the new responsibilities this brings. I plan to continue to teach, young people under my care about their illness alongside medical students and doctors. I also wish to continue to develop novel interventions to help prevent the development of mental illness in young people.

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Links

[1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#ADHD>