

altered lives project

Margaret's Story

Margaret works for a large retailer in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) as a customer service representative. One day, Margaret was verbally and physically assaulted while she worked at a cash register. As a result, Margaret suffered an injury to her right shoulder, arm and wrist. This injury required months of physiotherapy treatment. To this day, it still bothers her to perform certain tasks and put her arm in certain positions.

The assault turned Margaret's world upside down and took a toll on both her physical and psychological well-being. She didn't expect how much of an impact the incident would have on her. Previously, Margaret had been very active and outgoing. She enjoyed life and outdoor activities in particular. She took pride in tending to the needs of her family and spending time with them.

Things changed rapidly for Margaret as her coping skills spiralled. She developed a suspicion and mistrust of others. Her sense of security had been shattered, and she even had an alarm system installed in her home

Margaret's 'normal' state became slow-moving and absent-minded. She no longer took part in household chores such as cooking or cleaning. Her personal hygiene diminished and she became very irritable and argumentative with family members.

About three months after the assault, Margaret was able to go to a medical specialist for a psychological assessment. Margaret's symptoms included:

- Flashbacks,
- Trembling,
- Anxiety,
- Tension,
- Sleep Deprivation,
- Fatigue,
- Lack of concentration; and,
- Lack of appetite.



The doctor determined a diagnosis for Margaret's symptoms and provided her with a plan of action. For over a year, Margaret underwent extensive psychological treatment which brought her to a much better state of well-being. Her symptoms retreated to manageable levels, but Margaret still remains guarded and her family is very protective of her.

Margaret would like to think this experience has made her a stronger person. She recognizes any form of violence or harassment is unacceptable, whether in the workplace or elsewhere. She encourages people to become more in tune with their surroundings and take action instead of relying on others to take action and do the right thing.

"This type of behaviour should not be tolerated and it should be addressed immediately to help prevent an escalation that could cause harm to ones' self or others," said Margaret.

Margaret found it very difficult to deal with judgmental and disrespectful people as she went through her own ordeal following the assault. She encourages everyone to treat one another with human dignity, respect, and kindness.

"We should never judge others as we may not know what is really going on," she said.
"Be aware, take action, and be supportive."