

metamorphosis

Nelly was a self referral to Workwise.

When I first meet with Nelly, she told me she was living at home because there was no way she felt confident enough to leave. Even though she presented as a bright, bubbly young woman, Nelly was in fact low in confidence and self esteem and, by her own admission, she was not happy in herself.

Prior to becoming a client at Workwise, Nelly had tried many ventures which had ended in failure. She had been applying for a number of positions but she was not successful in gaining employment. She experienced this as rejection. She had also completed a lot of study which meant she had incurred a large student loan debt. Unfortunately none of this study had led her to a job (which Nelly really wanted).

Nelly had a diagnosis of clinical depression and had attempted suicide several times in the past. She was desperate to work either as a pharmacy assistant or in the clothing retail area. She was adamant that she would only consider these two options. As her employment consultant, my concern was that I felt that her choices might not be entirely realistic.

I began to suspect that one of Nelly's barriers to employment was that when people first saw her, they judged her on what they saw and this was the reason why she could not get past the interview stage. At 23, Nelly was extremely over weight and no matter how bright and bubbly she was at the interview, it appeared she was being judged on her size. I encouraged Nelly to keep persisting.

I provided her with employment suggestions outside the two fields she was currently pursuing but still she insisted that these were the fields for her. We emailed, hot knocked, sent CV's by the dozen. Finally, a fashion store valued what Nelly could offer! They had not judged her on appearance alone, and she was offered a part-time position.

When Nelly was offered the position, she spoke to me and told me through her tears that she couldn't believe it. This was the first time in her life that she had a real job. To say that she was ecstatic would have been an understatement. In fact, I don't know who was more ecstatic, Nelly or myself.

Metamorphosis cont...

Her determination is a lesson to all. She has taught me the importance of sticking with your dream... (it's not only clients that receive benefits in this type of work).

Nelly's position started with 15 hours per week. During those 15 hours, she worked extremely hard and achieved bonuses. The company was so impressed with her performance that they offered her further hours. Still, this was only part-time and her true desire was to work full-time, lose weight and move out of home, which could only be achieved on full-time work.

We worked on her goals and identified some issues. Nelly took my suggestions on board and started to work on herself. She looked at her budget and how she could afford to move out of home. She started exercising slowly, this started by Nelly getting off the bus a few stops early. Her fitness increased and she started to lose weight.

Regular customers began to notice the changes that were happening in her appearance, now she was an inspiration to them. Again her hours were increased - this time to full-time. Finally, she was able to cancel her benefit assistance and move into a flat which represented the achievement of independence.

Throughout this time, I was in contact with Nelly's parents. They told me that they were "blown away" with what was happening for Nelly and that they didn't believe the day would ever come when they would see their daughter achieve this level of independence and self confidence.

Nelly was asked to assist with staff training and applied for a 2IC position - which she didn't get. However, this inspired her to look further beyond the present and Nelly applied for Teachers College. Her application was accepted.

Nelly has decided to continue working part-time at the store to supplement her student allowance. She has lost a total of 40kgs and tells me that she is half the person she was when I first met her - but in reality she is double the person now.

She is a true inspiration to all.