

# A Journey of Taking Back Control

*'The programme allowed me to get back to the level I felt I ought to be, and that I absolutely needed to be.'*

## Summary

In October 2022, Dom, the Headteacher of a primary school in Essex, took part in the *Headteacher Heart Health Programme*. Overcoming his initial skepticism he ultimately experienced transformative results. This case study highlights key outcomes and the impactful stages of Dom's journey towards reclaiming control over his heart health and emotional wellbeing.

## Key Outcomes

### 1. Enhanced Understanding:

- Dom gained a greater insight into the impact of stress on his heart and emotional state.
- This newfound awareness empowered him to apply simple yet effective methods to improve his overall health and wellbeing.

### 2. Taking Control:

- Equipped with strategies learned in the programme, Dom can now quickly intervene when he senses himself spiraling into stress.
- With or without the technology, he can achieve coherence, enabling clear thinking and control over challenging situations.

### 3. Pragmatic Decision Making:

- Dom has found he is able to be less emotional and more pragmatic when making decisions.
- He can now approach things in a much more calm and considered manner.

## Struggling with the pressure

Dom had suffered with depression for over 10 years and wasn't in a great place. The last 2 years in particular had been very up and down and he'd been feeling out of control. He was finding fulfilling his duties as a Headteacher difficult and the pressure he was under from all angles was massively impacting his family life.

## Getting back on a level

Dom found the Heart Health Programme through the Essex Primary Headteachers Association (EPHA). They recognised the stressful and high pressure environment that Headteachers work in and were offering to subsidise the programme.

Dom was initially reluctant to sign up for the course, but having signed up however, he put his all into it. He wanted to get himself back on a good level so he applied the strategies, did the heart monitoring, and took on all the advice.

*'I thoroughly enjoyed something I thought I was thoroughly going to hate...It was a pleasure to be proven wrong.'*

## Taking control

Not knowing what to expect Dom said the course was a pleasant surprise! From the simplicity of the breathing to calm, reset and re engage, to the sense of achievement when hitting coherence and being able to say 'I told you I can do it'.

The programme has made Dom recognise that he can take control and if he is spiraling he can stop and do something about it. He hasn't been anywhere near the depths he's been to in the past or anywhere near the feeling of being out of control since doing the programme.

The technology used in the programme has been a massive help for Dom, in getting himself balanced. He has gotten to a point where he knows he could reach coherence anytime he wants which has really helped him to stop catastrophising and be so affected by the challenges he faced.

During the programme Dom suffered a close personal loss. And having suffered a previous loss only 18 months earlier, he noticed the difference in how he was able to deal with it. He didn't get caught out by the shock and let it tear him down. He was able to stop, think clearly and motivate himself to deal with the situation.

*'I found just the simple breathing technique, taking the moment to reset and put it straight means that every problem that I face, which are many, is surmountable.'*

## Nothing is Insurmountable

Dom is currently in the early days of running the newly formed school, which had the potential to be a very stressful time. But he has entered it in a calm and considered manner. Of course there have been difficulties, but nothing that he feels is insurmountable.

Previously where he would have been prone to making more emotional decisions he is now being more pragmatic to make things work for the school.

*"I'm not going to lie, I was reluctant to be signed up for this programme. For context, I'm a Primary Headteacher with reason to be concerned about heart health and I wasn't keen to know the worst about my heart.*

*That, however, is not what the programme has been all about. I have come away with a greater understanding of the impact of my heart health and my emotional state; a greater capacity to redress the balance when things are stressful and a new found willingness to share with my colleagues. It's been enlightening – and I find myself to be largely 'coherent'."*

**For more information on how you can take part in the Heart Health for Headteachers Programme, contact Maria Brosnan at:**

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