

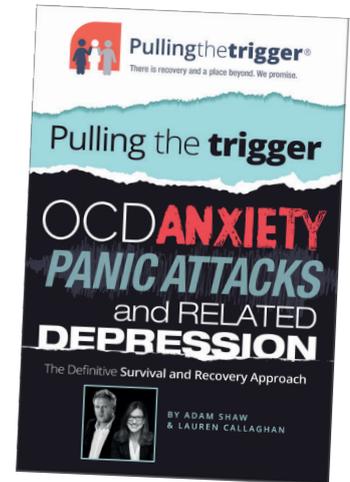
# Geek Mental Help Week

I've written this in support of Geek Mental Help Week, which begins on October 3rd 2016. Although, given I don't even have a twitter account, I wouldn't describe myself as a geek... I am however a mental health advocate, successful entrepreneur and co-author of mental health self-help recovery book, **'Pulling the Trigger'**®.

I'm sharing my experience to give hope and encouragement to anyone with mental health issues. Pain and suffering through anxiety-based mental illness has played a big part in my life, and came close to destroying me. When I found the strength to keep living, instead of taking my life, I vowed to do everything I could to help others tormented by anxiety and OCD.

My mental health story began in childhood. We were an ordinary working-class family from Sheffield and, like most kids, I was dropped off at school by my mum. Unbeknown to her, I worried that she would be knocked over and killed on her way home. I started performing little rituals, which I believed would keep her safe. I felt totally responsible for my mum's survival.

This was the beginning of my OCD journey. One that altered my career path, landed me in debt and blighted my life well into my thirties. I developed thoughts, or obsessions around disability, illness and death, believing that I was responsible for the welfare of others. I put so much effort into avoiding anything that might trigger these thoughts, but this merely strengthened them.



As I entered adulthood, my 'obsessions' became far more sinister. I developed terrifying intrusive thoughts that I was going to strangle women. I'm not a violent person and had no desire or intention to harm anyone. But these thoughts came and I was sure it meant I was a murderer. I did everything in my power to avoid situations where these thoughts would arise, and by doing so I made my problems worse. My OCD flourished and I could see no way out but to take my own life.

What I've described here is a fairly typical account of OCD. I had an **intrusive thought** or **obsession** - 'I'm going to strangle that woman' - to which I attached a catastrophic meaning - 'I'm a murderer.' This made me feel unbearably anxious, which I managed by avoiding situations where I might be around women; **avoidance** being a common **compulsion** in OCD.

Now, the fact that you're reading this means I didn't take my own life. From somewhere, that night on the railway bridge, I found the strength to carry on. With the support of my family, I began the steady journey to recovery. The brilliant charity OCD-UK put me in touch with Clinical Psychologist Lauren Callaghan, an expert in treating anxiety disorders. Her compassion-focused cognitive-behaviour therapy (CBT) helped me to understand my illness and rebuild my life.

Keeping the promise I made to myself, I want everyone in my situation to be able to access Lauren's treatment method. Hence, the book. Not only that, proceeds from book sales go directly to helping others through our charity, **The Shaw Mind Foundation**. We want to make sure treatment and support is available to everyone.

There is recovery and a place beyond. **We promise.**

Adam Shaw

