

I was 15.

I felt like this would be a good point in my life to heal and to be supported. No.

I looked at the sinister therapy building and I knew that this wouldn't get me anywhere. I walked into the tiny reception and it stank of fish. I went into the toilets and there was one cubic which was clogged with poo.

I sat down in reception. I was the only one there, nobody to sign in with, just waiting for someone to come. An old white man, about 65, tall, came. He looked like that old man from the movie UP. While also looking like Mr Mackey from South Park. He told me that he was going to be my therapist and that he would see me once a week for 50 minutes. I went into his cold room which made me shiver as I walked through the dirty door, the paint was peeling off the door frame. It made me wonder why a place which is supposed to support and make people feel safe looked so unwelcoming.

I sat down and the guy introduced himself.

This guy was talking very slowly, like I was a 3 year old who didn't understand English.

After a good 20 minutes of him introducing himself he started the session which was only talking about how my week was going and how I was feeling. After 30 minutes he told me that the session was finished and I was so surprised as he wasted the time talking about himself while treating me like a baby. The next few weeks he started giving me stupid apps for 5 year olds like a frog jumping onto a leaf and watching it flow into a river to clear my mind.

Instead, it makes me question this man's seriousness. I felt like a little joke and it was a waste of my time. He didn't try to make me open up and talk about my problems, and he showed no interest when I did, as all he ended up doing was making me learn methods on how to calm down.

When I told him something, mid-sentence he would interrupt me and ask me how I would feel. Like are you silly?

How do you think I feel when one of my best friends died from his struggles with his mental health whilst I am struggling with mine?

Since the man was old, I didn't find any comfort or connection to express my problems. When I tried, he gave me a disgusted look which made my chest tight as he looked at me like I was an animal, a criminal, lower than scum.

He ended up telling my parents about things which were not safeguarding issues. He often stopped me mid sentence to say 'how can you say that while looking like that, what's wrong with you?' This still affects me to this day because I have a hard time trusting and opening up to people because of the fear of being judged.

After that, I never went back. I always messaged him, 'My bus didn't come', to avoid seeing him as he made me feel worse about myself.

Imagine the difference if...

I walked in to see my therapist with a beam on my face, whilst an orangutan gave me a big hug. My therapist threw an ice cream at me and we started to build me a spliff (as per usual). I eat the ice cream and the spliff makes me feel calm. My therapist and me make a beat for me to start singing over to open up.

After that we both have a round trying to punch a hole through the boxing bag. We are too weak. Then we chill on the fat sofa while the sun engulfed the room and I started explaining my issues and my problems. He listens, replies and communicates with me.

—

Places to get support

Balmy Army

In the gallery at HOME, 1 July to 17 September

factoryinternational.org/whats-on/balmy-army

Campaign Against Living Miserably

thecalmzone.net

The Samaritans

samaritans.org

Nightline Association

students' mental health support line.

nightline.ac.uk