



a gateway,

an open door,

a social solution.

Shared Reading group member

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this is what's kept me alive.*

I started going to the reading groups about five years ago. I was in a bad marriage break-up - I tried to kill myself because I was in such a low state. I kept going back to the GP, asking for help, but I was just put on waiting lists and getting nowhere fast so in the end I thought 'I've got to sort this out myself', and that is where The Reader came in. A friend told me about the group at my local library and I thought I'd give it a go.

Going to the first reading group helped straight away and it just snowballed from there - it was a gateway, an open door, a social solution. The group becomes like a family to you - if you're on your own you think, 'At least they're there'. Sometimes someone will come to the group and say, 'I'm feeling really low today', but by the end of the session, they seem to have picked up.

Without even realizing and thinking about it, your brain has shifted to a more positive attitude.

I'm a lot more confident and positive about the future. Going back just a couple of years ago I thought life was over. I was getting towards 50, I couldn't find a job anywhere, but coming to The Reader helped me.

I used to keep my head down, I wouldn't look people in the face when I was talking to them but because I was able to communicate in the groups I gained the confidence to go out and do the job interviews properly.

I've been back at work, part-time, for four years now. *Shared Reading* is not like therapy, where you have to talk about your 'issues' at a set time on a set day, even if you might not want to talk about it that particular day.

In this group you can just listen to the stories if you want, there's no pressure. Sometimes you can relate to the characters - if they're having a bad psychological time, you think 'Hang

on, what's going on there?' We all start discussing the story and by the time you've finished you've ended up saying, 'This happened to me...'

It's about somebody else but you see a little bit of yourself and your traits in there, little pointers to what your life is like.

My friends have said, 'You're a lot more lively than you used to be - we never used to get more than two words out of you', and I can feel it in myself, I'm more animated. I was on anti-depressants for years but I don't need them anymore.

Coming here it was like a massive release. If I hadn't found The Reader I'd be dead. Honestly, seriously, without a word of a lie, this is what's kept me alive. It's helped me with my future and everything and has let me get where I am today.

Get in touch and be part of the story

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