



**Please, tell us about yourself, where were you born and raised? What was life like growing up in childhood? Your family?**

I was born in Laois, in the Irish midlands, and stayed there until I was 18, when I moved to Dublin to go to university. I have a younger brother who is now a musician. I remember a lot of time outside when we were younger, being active, and we always had books and music in the house. We had a very happy childhood and we remain a very close family – we're very lucky.

**What is the earliest childhood memory you can remember?**

I remember being in hospital after being diagnosed with type 1 diabetes, aged three and a half. My parents took turns sleeping on a mattress beside my bed for the weeks I had to stay there, and bought me my first bike, which was blue with stabilisers. I learned to cycle in the grounds of Portlaoise Hospital. At the time I had no idea how hard it was for my parents, and how brave they had to be.

**What education course did you follow or where did life take you after this?**

I studied pharmacology at University College Dublin, and after that I went to the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland to do a PhD in cancer research, which is where I am now. I absolutely love science, but I've always had a more creative "right-brain" side to me too, and I'm never really happy unless I can use both. I write a lot, and I directed my first play, Scabs, last summer. One of my proudest achievements is getting involved in HeadSpace and helping to bring it to life.

**What is HeadSpace all about?**

HeadSpace is a writing and art magazine based on mental health. Mental Health is something many of us still find very hard to discuss, and one of the chief motivations behind HeadSpace was that through creative writing and art we can often express thoughts and experiences we can't communicate directly.

In the last decade, awareness of mental health issues has greatly improved in Ireland, but this has not been matched by improvements in understanding what it is that people who suffer mental health issues go through. There was also no platform for people who had suffered mental health problems to communicate their experience. We set up HeadSpace to address these issues.

**HeadSpace**  
creative magazine about mental health

**CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS**

We welcome submissions on all angles of mental health, from maintaining positive mental health to dealing with illness and recovery.  
We also welcome fiction, poetry, art, photography and personal experience stories.

Send submissions to [submissions@headspace-magazine.com](mailto:submissions@headspace-magazine.com) by 30 November 2013.

full submission guidelines on [www.headspace-magazine.com](http://www.headspace-magazine.com)



Finally, as any patient (of physical or mental health care services) knows, hospitals and waiting rooms can be extremely stressful environments. Reading material could help people to mentally escape from that stress and also, reading stories and seeing art made by people who have gone through what they are now experiencing could help them to realise that they are not alone, and we hope people can draw some feeling of support and comfort from that.

### **Would you like to share how you got involved with HeadSpace?**

Unlikely as it seems, through Facebook. In early 2013 I had decided to try and publish some of my writing and I had a short story, *Insomnia*, about schizophrenia, which I thought would suit a new magazine I'd read about on Facebook. The magazine was HeadSpace, a creative magazine based around mental health which was going to be distributed for free in psychiatric wards. I thought that getting published in HeadSpace would be exciting as it gave people the chance to use their creative talents for a very important cause. After I'd submitted the story I found the project had really caught my imagination and followed it on Facebook to keep up to date. The people involved at that stage were hoping to use the all-or-nothing crowdsourcing website FundIt to pay for the first issue of the magazine. Unfortunately the FundIt campaign failed, and all I could think was that this project was too important not to go ahead. I didn't know what I could do for it, but I was determined not to let it fail. I sent a Facebook message saying as much to the founders and a few weeks later found myself accepting a role as Deputy Editor. When Orla Price, HeadSpace's founder and first editor, moved to London I became Editor.

### **What has been some of the personal highlights of your time with HeadSpace?**



I'll never forget opening the box from the printers a few minutes before the launch of our first issue was due to kick off and holding a physical copy of the magazine in my hand. It was in that moment that it really hit me that we really had done it. HeadSpace wasn't an idea anymore; it was a real thing that we had given life to. I felt like I was floating for weeks after that.

We still get feedback and thank you messages to our Facebook and e-mail accounts which, clichéd as it sounds; truly do make it all worthwhile. Last month someone left on our Facebook page "You are making this magazine with a voice that will yet save many a life."



### **What projects are you currently working on with HeadSpace?**

We're currently working on Issue 2, which will be launched in mid-January 2014. We've had hundreds of submissions in already but are keen to get as many as we can so we're busy getting the call for submissions out to as many places as we can. Submissions close on the 30<sup>th</sup> November and submissions should be sent to [submissions@headspace-magazine.com](mailto:submissions@headspace-magazine.com). We're also promoting the magazine and organising places to distribute it to, and organising the launch. With the help of Rehab Ireland's Visual Arts Fund grant, we plan to get HeadSpace into hospitals and mental health support services across Ireland. We're also helping out with a very exciting high school art project which will educate teenagers on mental health – keep an eye on our website for more details on that soon. We have also made an e-version of issue 1 available for free on our website [www.headspace-magazine.com](http://www.headspace-magazine.com).

### **Do you have any 'coping strategies' that you use?**

Music really speaks to me and gets me through a lot of difficult times. With illness and depression, I find that fatigue is the hardest thing to deal with so I try to get as much rest as I can, and swim to make sure I'm exhausted enough to get to sleep.

### **What does the future hold for you?**

Time will tell...

### **Favourite Quote?**

*"...I often wonder how those who do not write, compose or paint can manage to cope with the madness, the melancholia, the panic fear which is inherent in the human situation..."*

– Graham Greene

