



#PassOnYourPassion

CASE STUDY - christine smith

Christine is a **Leader in Running Fitness** and a trained **Walk Leader** who runs weekly sessions that start and end at the **Willowburn Sport Centre in Alnwick**. She has only been a coach for about **2 months** but she now runs a **walking group** of mixed ages, a **beginners running group** and she is also starting a very brisk walking group. These groups are **aimed at people who are just starting to get back into exercise** or for someone who has just decided to give it a go!

Christine started coaching through encouragement from her running coach, Jane Hardy. Christine found exercise was a **great help to her own mental health**. She said 'I was constantly telling myself that I couldn't do it, I was too slow, too fat, I was holding everyone back but my coach encouraged me and pushed me to fight against everything in my head and just do the running.'

Unfortunately Jane left her coaching position and Christine found it hard to continue with the new coach. She didn't feel as comfortable talking about the good and bad days and why she was being so hard on herself, and this eventually led to her leaving the club. Christine admits that she felt intimidated by the fit healthy people offering coaching running, and soon realised that if she continued to follow these people, she was going to have to draw a line under her running.

However, her previous coach Jane pushed Christine to do it herself and get qualified in Leadership in Running Fitness! Christine said '**If I can change one person from sitting and worrying that they aren't good enough, too slow, too fat then I have done something good for that person.**'

Lots of people feel and think that they are on their own when it comes to mental health, and in a sense they are, as **everyone's personal fight is different**. But somehow, when **we feel safe and trust people around us**, we start to open up and allow small little bits of information out, and then the next person does the same, and before you know it you are having a conversation about mental health and how it affects you. Then the next person suddenly realises that they are going through the same thoughts and feelings. When exercising you are **releasing all the hormones and anti-oxidants** and really breathing in healthy feelings rather than regenerating negative feelings. Anyone can suffer from mental health and it can be **anything from lack of confidence to Bipolar to loneliness**, and it can be anyone.



Christine was very nervous about getting involved in coaching, her first and second sessions no-one turned up to but she **kept going** and putting it out there and has found success and now has a walking and a running group!

Christine would absolutely encourage others to get involved in coaching. She loves it when everyone starts walking through the doors at the beginning of the session and she can see they are ready to have a natter and enjoy everyone's company. She also loves that **everyone looks after each other** in the groups and there is a lot of **great encouragement** from the very beginning. This encouragement is not just when they are out walking and running, people post on the group's facebook page about what they have done and achieved.

Christine says **'I was told once that maybe a running group wasn't for me and I should think about taking up another kind of exercise - I wanted to prove her wrong!'**

Christine's group is called **Mind and Sole Alnwick** - find them on Facebook for more information about the walks that Christine leads.



www.northumberlandsport.co.uk

If you would like more information about #PassOnYourPassion in Northumberland, please contact **Joanna Tooley, Participation Development Officer, Northumberland Sport** by email: jtooley@activenorthumberland.org.uk or telephone: **01670 624767**.