

Biography

Elaine's style of speaking has been described as moving, memorable and meaningful. Her journey into motherhood changed her life in ways she had never contemplated, as she admits she fell from her perch of perfection and spent weeks in a former Victorian asylum suffering from puerperal psychosis, the most severe form of postnatal illness. Her son was placed on the 'at risk' register by Social Services, her teaching career hung in the balance and her marriage severely shaken. Throughout her illness and subsequent recovery she faced the stigma and ignorance from many who considered that she was 'not the type' to suffer a mental illness, including herself! The lack of hope, the actions of those involved in her treatment and a spontaneous talk at her local church resulted in Elaine writing a book of her experiences, 'Eyes without Sparkle – a journey through postnatal illness' (Radcliffe, 2005).

Elaine's story has literally saved lives and has been described as essential for those who wish to put their heart back into the healing business.

Since then she has become the leading Expert by Experience in this field and represents many others who are also affected by postnatal illness, at events and in the media all around the world.

Approach

Elaine Hanzak is open, honest and informative. She adds humour to a traumatic story, whilst making her audience feel that they too can relate at different levels of her journey. Her goal is to inspire health professionals and society to realise that it is the 'little things' which make a massive difference to someone suffering from mental illness. Simple kindnesses should never be underestimated. Her listeners will be made aware of how a young woman with apparently everything to live for could have her life devastated to suicidal level in the matter of a few months. They will leave aware that everyone is potentially 'the type' to suffer from mental illness but given treatment, support and time, a full recovery is possible. Using her own and examples of those who have shared their experiences with her Elaine gives her audience a tool kit for mental health promotion and tips to help others avoid the depths of despair she once felt.

Mission

To inspire others by her journey, to offer hope to those who are affected and to campaign internationally for better facilities and recognition of maternal mental health problems.

To book Elaine to speak at your conference contact:

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Elaine Hanzak

Inspirational Speaker
Author
Expert by Experience



**But I'm not the type to
get postnatal illness!**

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KEY NOTE & WORKSHOP



KEY NOTE & WORKSHOP SPEECH: **But I'm not the type to get postnatal illness!**

(Time required between 45 and 120 minutes depending on time available)

For many people, the journey of pregnancy and motherhood is a very delightful and rewarding experience. However, the birth of Elaine's longed-for child led to a traumatic route into the mental health services, for the first time in her life. The most severe form of postnatal depression, puerperal psychosis, resulted in her being hospitalised for two months, without her son, as she had spiralled into a self-harming, threatening and fearful status. Her illusion of family life was in tatters; her teaching career in jeopardy; her marriage potentially hanging by a thread.

However, she did make a complete recovery and shares with delegates what happened to her and the highs and lows of her journey. This includes her experience and reflections upon the healthcare she received. She moves on to illustrate further why prevention, early treatment and detection are vital. The impact upon all who were involved will be commented upon and the notion of postnatal illness as something to just 'pull yourself out of' will be shattered.

Elaine also elaborates upon the aspects of care which really mattered to her as a patient and some suggestions on how health professionals can possibly help to make the journey of motherhood easier for others.

Her presentation is illustrated with family photographs to emphasise her points.

She is very grateful to all concerned in her treatment as she did finally recover and her overall message is positive and of hope for anyone facing mental ill-health. One of Elaine's strengths is her empathy with other sufferers and her ability to make them appreciate that they are not alone. She wants to inspire health professionals to make a difference with their current and future patients so that more eyes can regain their sparkle and delight in life, as she has done.

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'But I'm not the type to get postnatal illness' will:

- Challenge the stereotypical view that there is a 'type of person' who may suffer from postnatal illness – it has no boundaries
- Offer a deep insight into how postnatal illness can devastate lives far beyond just the mother
- Increase awareness of the signs and symptoms to look for in new mothers
- Outline ways in which individuals, society and health professionals can help to make the journey of motherhood easier, often by the smallest of actions.

"Elaine, I wanted to thank you for your teaching sessions and to convey to you the power and the impact your sessions have had with the students nurses here at Salford. One student commented that this was the best session she has had in the 3 years she has been at University. Others have said that they have been inspired and you have given them a different view on caring. Most of all, it seems to motivate them to really think of the person in front of them- and not just a diagnosis. To me you can't put a price on that! Thank you!"

Dr Christine Hogg, Senior Lecturer Mental Health Nursing, Salford University

"Elaine Hanzak, was in my view one of the most fascinating guests we have had on Ladies @ Lunch so far. . . Every once in a while, you meet someone who is truly inspirational – and Elaine is certainly worthy of such a tag."

Ladies @ Lunch Programme, BBC Radio Lancashire

"Elaine Hanzak presented at our Risk and Patient Safety Forum for health and social care organisations in April 2008. Our members gave her consistently high scores in their evaluations and her professionalism, passion and humour captivated the audience. I would recommend her as a contributor to any event or initiative where it is important for people to appreciate the true impact on individuals of the way we deliver healthcare."

Hilary Merrett, Associate Director, Healthcare Risk and Governance, Capita Advisory Services



Eyes Without Sparkle