

CHAPEL NOTES version

Question 1

Simon:

You're Head of Wellbeing here, but today you're speaking personally. Would you be willing to share something from your own experience that brought mental health into focus for you and your family?

Response:

Yes. I'm Head of Well-being here at Robinson, but I'm also a mum of 3 - and that matters more than any role. Parenting teaches you very quickly that you can't be everything your child needs on your own.

Intro Jack/Family

I want to tell you a little about my middle child, James. He was funny, creative, academic - a real polymath. He loved learning and was doing well at school. He and his younger brother were known in our family as "the Dangerous Brothers": climbing trees, jumping into rivers, always busy. Ours was a loud, energetic household.

After the pandemic, as life started to look more "normal" again, James was heading towards his GCSEs. At first, nothing seemed obviously wrong. But looking back now, I can see that what followed wasn't sudden. It was subtle.

Question 2

Simon:

*What did that subtle **change** look like, and how did you come to realise he was struggling?*

Response:

James started spending more time online, gaming and chatting to friends he'd met there. He drifted from his school friends, but we weren't immediately alarmed. We asked how he was - the answer was always "fine." He still went to school. He was quieter, but at the time, he didn't seem that different from many teenagers. Looking back, there were other subtle signs.

Gradually, though, it became more obvious. He stopped going to school. He didn't want to go outside. He barely left his room. While his peers were thinking about next steps, James lost interest in almost everything. Some days, he didn't want to get out of bed.

The conversation

Then one day he sat us down and told us how he'd really been feeling. And how long it had been going on. The reason he told us wasn't because of anything we'd done especially well as parents. It was because his friends encouraged him to speak.

Not school friends, but friends he'd met online. The anonymity gave him the freedom to be honest. Talking to us felt impossibly hard.

Question 3

Simon:

*Can you say something about what this experience **taught you** (both personally and in your work) about mental health and connection?*

Response:

That conversation was the start of a very difficult time for our family. As his mum, I felt strong and powerless at the same time. I kept thinking, **how did we not see this?** But the truth is, he didn't want us to see it – and he didn't know how to **begin that conversation**.

We were lucky. With support from his friends, the GP, CAMHS, and the school, we worked together to help him through a very dark period. Slowly, the light came back on.

Now, he's creative, curious, and chatty again. We don't know what comes next – we only know how easily we could have missed it. Not everyone is that lucky.

Connection

What this has taught me is that mental health isn't just individual. It's collective. The signs aren't always obvious, even when someone is right under your nose. And often, when you're struggling, the **last thing you want to do is talk**.

But that's exactly when **connection matters most**. Because the conversation in your own head can become very dark, and it can lead you to the **wrong conclusions**.

For me, it all comes back to connection: to family, to community, to knowing that you matter. We all want to enjoy mental health. And we all need each other.