

Read some of the quotes below to find out what Aware volunteers have to say about their experience supporting Aware services and ultimately people who experience depression, anxiety or related mood disorders.

“I applied to volunteer with the Email Support Service after a friend inspired me to make a difference. Even though it’s just a few hours each week, my commitment to Aware has not been taken lightly. Sometimes the emails can be hard hitting emotionally and you have to accept the limitations of what we can do as Volunteers. You never know when you might have a difficult shift, but the training and support really helps and I’m glad to be honouring my commitment.”

Email Support Service Volunteer

“Volunteering has been one of the most rewarding, educating and at times, challenging experiences. I found the training really prepared me well but I can still remember the element of fear when it came to taking my first ‘real call’. There are in-depth guidelines around communication and language but it does take a while before you become comfortable with your own style of communication.

I would say to anyone starting off, be mindful of when and why you are signing up. Apart from the obvious and necessary things such as reliability, punctuality, etc. when you start your shift it’s no longer about you or the bad day you have. It’s all about the caller. Yes, it can be upsetting, challenging, demanding and more but you get to work with a really nice bunch of caring individuals who will also have time to listen to you when you need to off load a bit after a difficult call. While it is different for everyone, you really get a lot back in return.

When you are on the line you have to give it all your time and attention but when you end your

shift, you leave it behind. When I do have a very difficult call I tell myself that I am not responsible for the upset but am trying to help them to find solutions or to just be with them (albeit it's sometimes for a very short period) to listen and show I care. It can be quite a humbling experience."

Helpline Volunteer

"I have been an Aware volunteer for nearly 3 years. From the very beginning I have been made to feel very welcomed and that my contribution is valued. The training is really a time to evaluate how you feel about helping people who live with depression and its many facets everyday of their lives. All matters of topics can come up and it can take some getting used to.

The main learning through the training and from facilitating groups is that the people who come to the Aware support groups are the ones who have all the knowledge and expertise to help and support each other and we as facilitators are only there for time keeping and ensuring each person is listened to and heard. Yes there is a skill in leading a group and holding the space for each individual - but this comes with doing and experience and support from your co - facilitators and the Aware training team."

Support Group Facilitator

"I thought about becoming a volunteer because friends and family told me I was a good listener. I didn't realise that you have to be more than a listener... after the training it struck me almost immediately that so many people had so many problems of all different kinds. Some nights after my session, I did think about the caller and often the next day I wondered how they were but I think that's only natural."

Helpline Volunteer

“Volunteering with Aware has helped me develop my own personal growth. I view the 3 hour weekly volunteering as a commitment, if I cannot do my slot then it is my responsibility to swap or find cover. I have learnt as a volunteer that I am there not to fix someone but to listen, support and look at options with the person in their time of anxiety or depression.”

Helpline Volunteer