

Beating BDD Episode 13 – Tim Branford-White

Tim spent many years feeling full of shame and hopelessness because of his BDD. But after just 20 sessions of specialist CBT, he says he's recovered. In this episode, he shares what he's learnt about getting and staying well.

"The therapy gave me a sensible viewpoint of my own body and other people's. Now, I don't really care about how I look."

How did having BDD make Tim feel?

- [00:00.46] It was like his brain had been hijacked by a virus. Therapy was the antidote.
- [00:01.48] From 15 to 25 he was too ashamed to talk about his appearance anxieties to discuss them with anyone.
- [00:02.45] His physical appearance used to take up 95% of his thoughts.
- [00:23.50] At its worst, BDD made him feel suicidal.

When did his BDD appear and how did it manifest itself?

- 0:06.23] BDD started affecting Tim's life when he began having girlfriends at 15. His anxiety about his body meant he took any comments to heart and felt inadequate and ashamed.
- [00:08.06] From the ages of 17 to 25 he had very few close interactions with people and felt hopeless.
- [00:09.11] He would look in the mirror a lot as well as look up pills and procedures online. He'd also put padding down his pants to feel more like a man.

How did Tim find out he had the condition and start getting therapy?

- [00:10:39] He went travelling at 18 but ended up sleeping rough and developing drug and alcohol problems to escape.
- [00:14:17] In December 2016 he visited his dad who made an emergency appointment for his GP. He was diagnosed by Professor Veale privately.
- [00:15:25] While waiting for CBT treatment to start, Tim worked through the exercises in Professor Veale's book (see Resources, below).

What's helped him?

- [00:04.00] Having treatment freed up Tim's brain. He realised he had choices about what to think.
- [00:16.13] Tim had 20 sessions of CBT over five months, including exposure exercises. They were scary but fun. (Like him and his therapist walking down the street with bananas down their trousers!)
- [00:22.27] Acceptance was helpful, as well as meditating, journaling and writing down the healthy way to think.
- [00:25.00] He stays well by being aware that BDD is a condition, by getting out and by looking forward.

How Tim feels today

- [00:05.30] He doesn't really look in the mirror now because he doesn't so much care how he looks.
- [00:21.40] Tim does a lot more socialising now as well as hobbies he enjoys.

[00:26.28] He still sometimes feels inadequate but he knows the thought isn't true. Overall, he feels good about himself.

[00:29.20] Dating is great now, too – he's able to have relationships since having therapy.

What he'd recommend to others

[00:27.48] You can learn something about yourself or others from every experience you have.

[00:31.03] Get help. Talk to friends and family; don't withdraw or isolate yourself. And accept it's human to be flawed.

Resources

- The BDD Foundation: bddfoundation.org
- *Overcoming Body Image Problems Including Body Dysmorphic Disorder* by David Veale, Rob Willson and Alex Clarke