

## **Beating BDD Episode 22 – Andy Hall**

Ten years ago, Andy used to spend eight hours a day in front of the mirror and couldn't imagine ever being able to function. Now, he works full time and describes himself as 90% to 95% recovered.

*"I'm no longer distracted from the things I want to do. I'm happier and healthier than ever."*

### How is Andy's life now?

[00:01.24] There's a nice calm to life now, because of the things he no longer does (mirror checking, etc).

[00:05.05] Recovery has changed what he values in himself and others.

[00:16.30] Andy can do things he was terrified to do before, like shave his head. He's content and no longer shackled by BDD behaviours.

[00:18.46] He's now happy to date without worrying about judgment. He realises his worth and wouldn't spend time with people who value the wrong things.

### When and why did the BDD appear and how did it manifest itself?

[00:02.45] Although people told Andy he was good-looking, his self-esteem was so low that he only felt shame or worry.

[00:06.30] He showed signs of OCD behaviours when he was a child. Then he became obsessed by body hair during puberty.

[00:07.30] Years of bullying led him to have his ears pinned back when was 17. But after the operation things still didn't look quite right – and his BDD escalated.

### How did Andy get diagnosed and treated?

[00:25.18] He went to the GP while at university because he was feeling suicidal.

[00:10.50] He had therapy after quitting university but still believed the problem was physical. So he had another surgery. It helped at first but then he had a big blip.

[00:12.44] What really made the difference was specialist therapy for BDD.

[00:20.39] ERP (Exposure Response Prevention) helped him enormously by forcing him to face his fears.

### What else did he find helpful?

[00:22.01] Andy makes a point of looking at people he wouldn't normally get drawn to and reminding himself they all have equal worth.

[00:23.51] The therapist took pictures of him with wet hair and asked students to comment. They all said he looked fine, which disproved all his assumptions.

[00:28.40] He tries to avoid drawing too much attention to his body image and still takes a maintenance dose of escitalopram. Routine, sleep and exercise also help as do top-ups with counsellors and talking to friends.

[00:31.40] Helping others makes him happy too, like doing this podcast!

### What would Andy say to someone who's struggling with BDD?

[00:32.17] Speak to your doctor and challenge any taboos about discussing mental health. It's your life and it can and will get better!

## **Resources**

- The BDD Foundation: [bddfoundation.org](http://bddfoundation.org)