

Beating BDD Episode 27 – Eva Fisher

Eva has been recovered from BDD for 20 years, so brings loads of wisdom and experience to this episode. (Which is number 27, not 26, as I say in the intro!) It's a little different from the others in that Eva tells us her story directly, in four parts.

“When I had BDD, 90% of my self-worth was tied up with my appearance. Now, 90% is who am I as a person and what I’m accomplishing in life.”

Part 1: How her life is now compared with when she had BDD

[00:01.00] The biggest difference is being able to look outside of herself and enjoy other people. She's also turning her PhD dissertation into a book.

[00:01.27] Eva is facilitating two virtual support groups for BDD.

[00:02.18] She's keen for people to know that treatment is available.

Part 2: Eva's experience with BDD

[00:02.55] She first started experiencing symptoms when she was 16. She became obsessed by looking in the mirror and spent less time outdoors.

[00:04.50] In the summer before college, when Eva was 18, she became obsessed with her nose. So her mum paid for her to have a rhinoplasty.

[00:07.00] Her face swelled up really badly and took a year to go down. But while her mum was happy with the result, Eva didn't like it and felt much worse.

[00:08.21] Her response gave her the first glimmer of insight into the problem – that it might be about something other than her looks.

[00:10.16] Eva moved to Colorado, where exercising a lot in nature helped her to not think about her nose, as well as to cope with the loss of her mum.

Part 3: The treatment she received

[00:14.48] Eva was diagnosed with depression because very few therapists knew about BDD. She was on Prozac and in therapy for two years.

[00:17.23] One of the reasons she's so mission-driven about helping people with BDD is that the condition stopped her from having kids.

[00:19.29] The BDD trap is always looking back and thinking you looked better before. But it's a lie.

[00:20.08] When Eva had BDD, 90% of her self-worth was tied up in her looks. Now, it's about 10%.

[00:23.37] She also worked with a holistic counsellor for four years, who helped her to get at core issues from her childhood.

[00:26.28] At 16 she started feeling her looks weren't quite meeting her mum's expectations either.

[00:28.28] For Eva, getting at that family trauma – believing she was fatally genetically flawed like her father – was how she recovered from BDD.

Part 4: What's helped Eva most, plus suggestions for sufferers

[00:29.46] Teaching communication and public speaking skills has helped her acquire useful skills.

[00:31.12] Coping mechanisms like exercising, meditation and joining a support group will help too – before, during and after therapy.

[00:33.37] For Eva, being able to forgive her parents also helped, because she could then forgive and be compassionate with herself.

[00:34.30] Having a trusting relationship with a therapist you like is really important. Don't write them off because they don't know about BDD.

[00:35.57] It's important to have as many people in your corner as you can. Don't try and go it alone.

Resources

- The BDD Foundation: bddfoundation.org
- The Broken Mirror: Understanding and Treating Body Dysmorphic Disorder by Katharine A Phillips
- Feeling Good About How You Look by Sabine Wilhelm
- Your Erroneous Zones: Escape Negative Thinking and Take Control of your Life by Dr Wayne W Dyer