

Beating BDD Episode 28 – Tilly Kaye

After suffering with BDD for many years, Tilly is now reaping the benefits of all the time and effort she put into recovering from the condition. Her story proves that if you keep putting in the work, you will get something out of it.

“I feel very comfortable in my body today. I’m inside looking out at the world, and it’s a much more stable place to be.”

How her life is now compared with when she had BDD

[00:01.04] Unrelated health issues aside, Tilly feels very at ease in her body now. The day-to-day experience of her life is completely different.

[00:02.35] Today, she’s inside looking out at the world, rather than outside looking in at herself.

[00:02.57] She’s now in a good relationship with her BDD. It’s still there, but a separate entity from her. And she feels she’s holding the reins, not the BDD.

Her BDD story

[00:04.13] Tilly’s BDD started when she was a teenager.

[00:05.06] It began as an extreme discomfort with her body and progressed into more specific thoughts and feelings. She didn’t have many safety behaviours as her focus was on appearing ‘normal’ – whatever was happening on the inside.

[00:06.50] She didn’t speak to many people about it as she didn’t know it was BDD.

[00:08.15] Tilly forced herself to keep doing ‘normal’ things however bad she felt. At times, it was unbearable.

[00:09.28] Her friendships suffered because she kept everyone at arm’s length.

How Tilly tackled her BDD

[00:10.36] She went to the doctor when her depression was impacting her ability to do her job. They gave her antidepressants and put her on a waiting list for CBT, which led to her diagnosis.

[00:12.48] Recovery has been a long, multi-dimensional process. Tilly worked very diligently at doing what the CBT therapist asked her to, along with lots of complementary activities. But it was only when she let go of the outcome that things began to change.

[00:23.39] The pandemic was a really horrible time for Tilly. She was incredibly lonely and not having enough other distractions amplified her BDD. But coming out of lockdown, plus all the work she was doing, helped her to feel better again.

[00:27.04] There were lots of little Eureka moments when she realised she was getting better – including seeing a picture of herself as a young girl and realising she was lovely.

What’s helped her most and continues to help her now

[00:16.38] Along with CBT on the NHS, Tilly took part in a structured support group through the BDD Foundation and joined the general support group, which was transformational. She also went on a self-development retreat, worked with a private therapist and got a lot of support from her therapist godmother.

[00:19.35] Tilly curated her social media to make it a healthier and more positive place. She still needs to pay attention to how it makes her feel, though.

[00:21.15] She's learned how to use 'detached observation' to keep herself well. This involves being aware of thoughts and feelings that are coming from a BDD place and having a conversation with that part of herself to see what can be done.

[00:25.20] If Tilly were to feel herself spiralling again, she'd go back to the open support groups and review the paperwork from her therapy. Being able to separate herself from her BDD also means the strong part of her can come to the rescue.

What Tilly would say to people who are suffering

[00:22.36] Attend support groups in any way you can – even if it's off-camera and off-mike for just 10 minutes. It's about taking little steps.

[00:30.18] When you're with others, try to distinguish between the mind's eye, which has a filter, and the optical eye. It takes the pressure off you and allows you to be more comfortable in the moment – while starting to become aware of the filter you may be using yourself.

[00:33.34] If you keep putting in the hard work, you will get something out.

Resources

- The BDD Foundation: bddfoundation.org
- Interview with Tilly for [BBC Sounds' Room 5 – Series 2, Episode 5](#)

Tilly's recommendations for things that might help

- Look at: @izzierodgers, @_nelly_london, @i_weigh (Instagram)
- Listen to: I Weigh with Jameela Jamil (has lived experience of BDD)
- Watch: Brené Brown: The Call to Courage (available on Netflix)
- Read: Taming your Gremlin – Rick Carson; Daring Greatly – Brené Brown; Untamed – Glennon Doyle; Bodies – Susie Orbach; One Way of Looking at Man: Three Books about Enlightenment - Martha Christine Philp
- Meditate: Tara Brach – [Calling Forth your Future Self](#)