

## Beating BDD Episode 31

Elliot Ditton is a writer and performer whose BDD came into full force following a chance sighting of himself in a mirror on the way to a Beyoncé concert. In this episode, he discusses the early signs of his condition, the triggers that exacerbated it, and his path to recovery.

*"I think [BDD is] always going to be there, but I see it for what it is now; I notice its tricks and I stop it from stopping me."*

### Life for Elliot today

[01:14] Elliot describes his life now as very creative, writing and performing in theatre. He's pursuing personal projects and life is good.

[01:38] He can do things now that he couldn't have imagined doing during his worst BDD periods, when he couldn't bear to be seen or noticed.

[02:00] He acknowledges BDD is part of him and always will be. But now he recognises it for what it is, notices its tricks, and doesn't let it stop him from living his life.

### How his BDD developed

[02:32] From childhood, Elliot was obsessed with his looks, fixating on a birthmark and later a spot under his eyebrow.

[03:23] At 19, on his way to see Beyoncé in concert, he looked in a lift mirror and became convinced he was severely balding. Even with Beyoncé performing right in front of him, all he could think about was getting back to check the mirror.

[06:10] This triggered intense mirror checking and avoidance, constant comparisons, and behaviours like not showering for fear of losing more hair and obsessively counting fallen hairs.

### The impact on his relationships and daily life

[07:50] The condition became incredibly frustrating for Elliot's parents, who were very supportive but couldn't see what he was seeing. This created a cycle of reassurance-seeking that never provided lasting relief.

[09:03] Elliot reflects on how hair loss is a particular male insecurity that society often treats as acceptable to joke about, unlike similar comments about women's appearance.

[10:36] He knew cosmetic surgery wouldn't help because he understood he would just become obsessed with the results instead.

### Reaching the darkest point

[11:28] When Elliot's condition worsened at university, affecting his ability to be around mirrors during rehearsals, he had to take time off and seek help.

[14:26] Elliot's BDD got so bad that while he still wanted to be in the arts, he ended up taking backstage roles which exposed him to mirrors, lights and beautiful people.

[15:33] He ordered some tablets to prevent hair loss, which made him feel better initially but subsequently much worse.

[17:20] Even when he didn't think about his hair, Elliot's BDD made him question other things about his life, including his childhood. This was the darkest point and made him decide he had to get better.

### Discovering BDD and finding support

[12:36] A therapist gave Elliot information about BDD, though initially he didn't believe it applied to him. He was convinced his appearance concerns were real rather than perceived flaws.

[13:36] He found the BDD Foundation and joined a free support session during lockdown, which

marked the real beginning of his recovery.

#### The power of support groups

[18:25] Being in the support group with people experiencing the same struggles gradually helped Elliot to recognize his own condition.

[20:25] The 20-week Overcoming BDD programme was difficult but amazing, involving weekly exercises and group reflection sessions.

[21:54] Recovery was gradual rather than a sudden eureka moment. Elliot found the "Theory A, Theory B" exercise was particularly helpful in challenging his thought patterns.

#### BDD as a shape shifter

[23:17] Elliot explains how BDD moves between different body parts and appearance concerns, using the same obsessive patterns but catching you off guard each time.

[24:40] We live in a very appearance-oriented world and it's hard to know how much attention on appearance is too much.

[26:27] He now recognizes triggers, like relationships ending, that make him want to "fix" his appearance, understanding that the real work needed isn't about how he looks.

#### Hope and final thoughts

[27:40] Elliot shares his belief that struggling now doesn't mean always struggling. Just because his 20-year-old self was having a hard time didn't mean his 50-year-old self couldn't thrive.

[30:17] He returned to see Beyoncé on the Renaissance tour and found it amazing. He reflects on how she's been the soundtrack to his BDD journey.

[31:07] He concludes that he wouldn't change his experience because it's made him who he is and influenced what he wants to do with his life.

#### **Resources**

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

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