

Beating BDD Episode 42

Our guest, Rachel Moore, lived with undiagnosed BDD for around 30 years before finally receiving a diagnosis in her late thirties. She talks candidly about childhood bullying, family comments, and how the disorder affected her relationships and confidence. Today, Rachel lives a full and enjoyable life, which includes performing in a band and volunteering with the BDD Foundation.

“Even when you feel at your absolute lowest, there’s always somebody to talk to.”

Decades undiagnosed

[01:39] Rachel lived with BDD for approximately 30 years before being diagnosed in her late thirties. The disorder has profoundly shaped who she is, making her deeply empathetic and drawn to helping others.

[03:38] Despite her struggles, Rachel has achieved things she never thought possible – performing in a band and training people both in-person and online.

[05:35] She now lives a full life and enjoys expressing herself through her appearance.

The roots: bullying and family narratives

[06:38] Rachel’s BDD began in primary school where she was bullied for her appearance and often told she looked tired due to hereditary dark undereye circles.

[07:40] Comments from her well-meaning parents deeply affected how she saw herself compared with her sister.

[08:10] Bullying continued into secondary school with cruel name-calling. Rachel responded by covering herself up with thick foundation and jeans even in summer heat, constantly checking her appearance.

[09:10] She spent hours looking in mirrors at certain angles to avoid being seen but never talked to anyone about how she felt.

Reaching rock bottom

[11:00] At a young age, Rachel attempted suicide and was admitted to hospital on an adult ward. She wasn’t given any follow-up support.

[12:45] Despite this, Rachel showed remarkable determination – returning to school, passing her exams and moving forward with her life.

Relationships and self-sabotage

[13:12] Rachel left school at 16 to escape her home environment and married very young, grasping at the first person who showed her affection.

[13:45] She spent years sabotaging relationships through insecurity and jealousy, convinced partners were looking at other people.

[15:10] Things were different when she met her now-husband in 2014. She instantly felt secure and trusting. And he recognised she had BDD before she did.

The path to diagnosis

[17:08] Rachel trained to become a mental health first aider at work and recognised herself in a section about OCD and BDD.

[18:00] She investigated further and was diagnosed with both OCD and BDD. The diagnosis was transformative – she realised she wasn't “just weird” or “vain”.

Recovery isn't linear

[19:11] Rachel took an unconventional path to recovery, investigating herself and trying exposure therapy.

[21:41] She started small – going to shops without makeup, taking selfies – and gradually progressed her exposures.

[22:45] She reframed how she looked at photos, focusing on the memory of the day rather than analysing her face.

[24:10] Rachel became fascinated by BDD research, particularly the link between BDD and using things like tattoos and piercings as camouflage.

Facilitating recovery for others

[27:00] Rachel signed up to facilitate the BDD Foundation's Overcoming BDD programme and hasn't looked back.

[28:45] Running the support sessions has been therapeutic for Rachel herself, helping her as much as the participants.

[29:10] Over 20 weeks, she's witnessed remarkable transformations – people gaining confidence and thinking differently about themselves.

Managing the BDD voice

[30:18] Rachel still hears the BDD voice but talks back to it – for example, telling it to “shut up tonight” before a gig with her band.

[31:35] She's learned to recognise the tipping point between normal insecurity and BDD taking hold.

[32:45] Last year, after losing her mother and breaking her arm, she felt obsessions creeping back in but recognised the tipping point and reached out for help.

A message of hope

[33:47] To her 13-year-old self, Rachel would say: “You're going to be okay. You are loved.”

[34:35] To anyone struggling now, she says to talk to someone – there's help out there, even when you feel at your absolute lowest.

Resources

- **The BDD Foundation:** bddfoundation.org
- **Overcoming Body Image Problems including Body Dysmorphic Disorder** by Alexandra Clarke, David Veale and Rob Willson, Robinson 2009

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