

Beating BDD Episode 5 – Callum Murphy

For this episode I spoke to Callum Murphy. He was very frank about how BDD has affected his life and the people around him, as well as how desperate the disorder has made him feel. He's now recently out of therapy and has some great insights into how to get the most out of it – and how he keeps himself well.

'I feel continually surprised that every day can be a different experience rather than every day just feeling so painfully the same.'

How Callum feels having gone through therapy

[00:01:35] He used to wake up feeling that his body was a 'dread space'. Now, if he wakes up like that, he knows what to do.

[00:03:23] Being able to slow down thought processes and be more still has helped him to notice the pleasant things about his experiences.

[00:31:13] He's more spontaneous in his everyday life now.

When did his BDD appear and how did it manifest itself?

[00:05:08] A "perfect storm" of OCD tendencies, perfectionism and the challenges of growing up led him to try and make himself perfect.

[00:07:10] When Callum entered adolescence, debilitating anxiety and panic about needing to be in control set in. The BDD symptoms really started after that.

[00:09:30] After he lost a lot of weight, his attention moved to parts of his face.

What strategies and behaviours did he use?

[00:08:22] At about 14, Callum lost a lot of weight very quickly.

[00:11:24] He withdrew from life after leaving school and started to try and conceal or change things he didn't like. Eventually he started self-medicating at the weekends.

[00:12:45] He'd constantly compare himself to people.

How did BDD affect his relationships?

[00:14:04] It was very worrying for Callum's parents to see him shutting down.

[00:14:20] The more self-conscious he got, the nastier he'd be to his friends.

[00:16:18] His BDD prevented him from having more relationships.

How did he find out he had BDD?

[00:14:51] Callum's friends saw the BBC documentary Ugly Me. They recognised that he had BDD and told his mum.

[00:16:08] He knew there must be something wrong because his reactions to his looks were so strong.

How did he get treatment and what did it consist of?

[00:17:10] At 22, he was in a miserable rut. Then he found out he was losing his hair.

[00:20:03] He eventually got a consultation with Professor David Veale who diagnosed BDD and recommended CBT at The Maudsley.

[00:21:32] Treatment forced him to dial down the triggers for his BDD. It was also all very structured, with homework.

What did he find most difficult or useful?

[00:24:14] Callum found Theory A and Theory B to be challenging. But eventually the tools he learned started to get engrained and he got some space from his thoughts.

[00:26:43] He viewed exposure therapy as a game of levels.

[00:27:40] He also took part in a research programme called Eat, Breathe, Thrive that he found useful.

How is Callum looking after himself now?

[00:29:16] He makes sure he gives himself space and checks in on how he's feeling.

[00:30:28] Having to view himself differently is scary but worthwhile.

What advice would he give to sufferers?

[00:32:07] The process you go through might not bring about a change in the way you feel you like, but in how you accept the way you feel you look.

Resources

- The BDD Foundation: bddfoundation.org