Participant number 18 – Male, 23, Hackney

Part 1

Interviewer: Um… okay, thanks. So, can we talk about… can we start by talking about what you’ve put first please.

Interviewee: So, I’ve got the four different parts of what I believe answers this. The first one being um, being alone in life in general, just as a person, and not being connected to others. So that’s to have no friends or family around you. That would be the first out of four types that I’ve written. [Interviewer: Mhm] So that’s just um… humans are obviously social so they really need other people. That’s like a key requirement so, to not have those around you starts to kind of set off consequences. Um… just from being alone and constantly not coming across others and not socialising or connecting and needing other people and other people needing you. So, that’s what I put as the first one… Er… is that… yeah, I think that one stands alone really. It kind of can tie into a lot of things because it eventually comes with mental health and being… mental health issues developing from that type of loneliness… um… ‘cause you start… you start being social as a child. Children are definitely around other children, being in education and so it’s always a… a kind of a downfall, associated with that first one, because you don’t start in that position, you end up in that position, as a result of something going wrong really. Yeah… yeah so that’s what I’d say that about the first one.

Interviewer: Mm. Um, so when you say… oh by the way, is that okay if I close the window for a short period because I just want to make sure that the recording is not influenced.

Interviewee: Oh yeah yeah, go ahead.

Interviewer: Thank you… So you’ve put being alone, just you in life. [Interviewee: mhm] When you say just you in llife, can you tell me more about that?

Interviewee: Um… well… it’s one of those, it’s one of those things I guess… it is… what comes to mind is the process of how things begin with the start of you not having a problem of being alone and being connected to other people through hobbies, education, work… um, all those kind of things, and how it becomes just you. Um, the process of people just developing and moving on to other things in life. People possibly dying… um, depends on who it is and how important they are to you, um, that can even effect… if you do have enough people around you, and losing one, the grieving process can also be the cause of experiencing loneliness, although there are others who are still important. Um… I think education is always a big one. ‘Cause you, you connect with people through that and then you often only realise how much you were connected through education because you’re all there at the same time in the same place, and then things start going down when you’re not always around each other through being educated in the same place. Um… yeah, um, do you, do you have any questions or I’m just meant to keep going?

Interviewer: I mean what… you can talk as long as you want, or as um… I’m trying to basically say, see what you say about that box.

Interviewee: Yeah um, the other one that comes to mind is the… being alone in life just you also comes to mind the type of person that you are. So… depending on what you do for example um… there are certain subjects like football that will always have a community of others that are together because they’re all interested in it. But there are people for example that um… er, for example… I don’t know, LGBT comes to mind for a reason. It’s a, it’s a subject and a group of people that are not gonna find it as easy as many others to instantly find the community of other people like themselves, and that can lead to loneliness. There’s always kind of a mainstream of subjects that people never really have a problem with finding each other and being connected to each other. And things apart from that, you’re interests in the rarer and more unique types of things, and not being able to find others who are part of that can lead to the loneliness of being just you in life. Um… yeah, those are the main things.

Interviewer: So it sounds like what you’re saying is, there’s that sort of mainstream majority and there’s always a community, and there’s a minority um… that basically is harder um, for them to find that community.

Interviewee: Mhm. Like for example, what people see as being a nerd has always been a big one. And it isn’t… it is a community that basically, for the most part, one major thing that brings them together is the inability to connect with those mainstream people. What people see as you not having a certain physical appearance, or you’re… you being above average intelligence, making it difficult for you to connect with others, ends up putting them together as a community. Whereas as lot of people have… tend to develop the belief that they’re a community for their love of certain childish things, like animation and comic books and superheroes and that kind of thing, when that isn’t their… that’s a factor, but not a… it’s not the most important thing. And it’s not even a guarantee among those people. So… yeah.

Interviewer: So it sounds like what you’re saying is um, sort of being different in a way, not falling into the average, is what contributes to loneliness. So for example being, you know, highly intelligent, or being LGBT or having a certain physical appearance that doesn’t necessarily conform with the average, is what contributes to feeling lonely. [Interviewee: Mhm] So let’s talk about that… sorry, did you want to…

Interviewee: Well, yeah like, a very interesting example I just thought of is erm, I… I talk to my family a lot and I like to read up on subjects and over time I came to realise that a lot of what me and a lot of others around me saw as part of black culture and being a black person actually comes from rap culture and movies and media. Um, a certain type of attitude, a certain way of dressing, a certain need to be part of the streets, street crime, street behaviour, um, and it’s … it’s more… an actual… it’s more, it’s more conforming to an actual stereotype than an actual culture… of actually being Spanish or American. It’s… it’s a lot of things that have just been curated that then people start following, and it’s not actually a real culture. So, for example, to speak properly, without the use of slang, is then seen as odd by a lot of people, where it’s just you’re improving the way you communicate with others, but it’s seen as why are you doing that? It’s… it’s odd to people, it’s… it’s different, it’s kind of a negative. Um… the dressing, the wearing of tracksuits and trainers, and if you start wearing what you want, or dress in a normal way, jeans and like that kind of formal slash causal wear that’s very common in men in general, is just seen as odd among a lot of people. Um, so… that’s another big thing that happens. So, there’s a… there’s a loneliness specifically for me and those around me that there can be a loneliness of not following that, because people have learnt that something is very important… a bunch of features that are very important to them, are just an invention. It’s not a real thing. You can’t go to somewhere and look at the history of why people are doing that, who actually invented that. Did somebody come from somewhere and they inspired others to do that and it became a thing in their society. It… it isn’t. Not really. Even things like the… I remember finding out that um, the wearing of clothes in a certain way, when people have their trousers lower than they should be, possibly, um, it’s quite believed often it came from prison culture. When you take people’s belt away, and then their trousers are bigger than they should be to a point where they just hang off of you, and people took that into a main thing in the U.K. and America. And it… it’s just an example of something that came from somewhere else and we took it on as being a great thing to do. So… yeah, there’s the… there’s the loneliness of… I think I’d define it as the loneliness of not following certain learnt behaviours that don’t have a positive origin and there’s no good reason for doing it but a large number of people have taken it on and expect others to do the same. Yeah.

Interviewer: Mhm. So it sounds like what you’re saying um is people follow um… certain things that become trendy, but those things don’t necessarily have any positive origins, and people just follow them, blindly in a way. [Interviewee: Mhm] And how does that impact their loneliness? Can you tell me more about that?

Interviewee: Well I think everybody seeks to improve themselves over time and there’s kind… there’s, there’s a natural progression of things and by that I mean people usually seek to develop a maturity to every aspect of themselves, once they go into adulthood. So things that people don’t realise… people are not gonna see the nature of what I just said as younger people, it’s only when you wanna advance yourself, people are seeking to then go into adulthood and make money and just develop in that way that you do in adulthood and you’re still being hold back… you’re still being held back by things that are quite immature and counterproductive, then that can always be a problem. It’s like um… the… it’s like when people are made to believe that… people are also… sometimes it’s not really just a specific group but there’s also things like, when you… when you’re younger, what people make other people believe is what is manly or what is masculine, before you’re a man. So, um… a certain… being in favour of a more aggressive, loud, possibly even bordering towards a… violent nature, and then you, you have that constantly shown to you, and then… when you’ve been doing that for a long time because other people make you believe that’s a big requirement of you being manly or masculine, and then you want to develop into adulthood… like you… you can’t make money, you can’t get power, status, with that kind of attitude and that kind of behaviour with other people. So, sometimes, with… with people influencing each other to take on certain things, it just stops your progression. You have to unlearn a lot of things that you were doing with other people, and that can… that’s the main thing of loneliness, that you can’t connect with others, until you stop doing things you’re so used to doing, or things that you were made to believe were the right thing for so long. So… yeah. That’s what I mean.

Interviewer: So what you’re saying is, um, because people have been sort of conditioned to act a certain way, and these conditions may not necessarily be their true self, or what they want, it is harder for them to connect with people, and that’s why they feel more lonely. [Interviewee: Mhm] So when you say for example that they can’t… they’ve been conditioned to act in a certain way and they can’t… they can’t be you know their true self, can you tell my more about that?

Interviewee: Well… um… well, I think for example, um, I have a… I have a young brother, and he’s ten years old, and I find myself often explaining to him that this… this way of being that you’ve got from the people you’re around of, when you have a problem, there are times when being loud or more aggressive, that… that… you can only do that for so long as a young person, where… people just sort it out and… people just sort it out among themselves, you responding like that, and they forgive a lot of things because you’re younger and that’s what children do, that’s what young people do and this kind of thing, and then as soon as you’re sixteen, eighteen especially, things kind of just change overnight. Like, that kind of behaviour is, um… what’s it called? There’s like a… you can be arrested for like disturbing the peace and endangering the public. And if you kick off and harm someone, that one punch is then seen as assault, you… you don’t have that long before things just transform, and that behaviour is then seen as actually very inappropriate, and often possibly illegal. And then that instantly starts separating you from people and leads to that issue of loneliness, because what you kind of saw as, yeah, this is what we do, this is how we handle things and this is the way life currently is in this setting we currently have, then becomes completely irrelevant and inappropriate, so I kind of have to explain to him that you have to start… like what I describe as basically like learning to out manoeuvre other people. So for example, no matter what it is, from education to the work place, even a friendship group, people can influence other people on your behalf to behave differently or to stop doing things. People can… you can sit down and discuss and find an even ground, you can be really honest about things, people can… you can be acting in this really loud, aggressive way, as a male, and people are just disturbed in a short-term way. People get tired, people get hungry and, if you’re gonna use this kind of aggressive not-standing-down nature to handle other people, it just… there’s a very sharp stop to it, where you can no longer behave that way, it’s just no longer appropriate. But people with that nature will still… they’ll still tell you it’s great, they’ll still congratulate you, they’ll often still encourage that… that kind of nonsense. And that can also be a problem, because you go among that kind of informal type of person who enjoys that or thinks that’s the right way to do things, and you do that somewhere else, and then people just say no, this is not how I do things, you’re banned from here, or this is not how I do things, we get security, or this is not how we do things, I’m gonna get the police, and… then you find you have people that just… have to avoid a lot of people, a lot of situations, because they’re kind of seen as kind of second class citizens for being programed to deal with things in that way and you… you kind of… there’s… there’s loneliness through what I would call exclusion, so you’re just not allowed in to certain things, because people just don’t want to deal with how you are in relation to things. So… yeah. Like, there was a… you can, you can see what I look like obviously, and I… I remember when I… that I had a very childlike mind, and people who didn’t know me saw me in a certain way, and expected a certain nature, and a certain response to problems from me. And I didn’t really… I didn’t really pay attention, I didn’t really realise it for a long time. So I um… I often find I… have kind of a responsibility to show a positive nature to people, and that I am capable of behaving in a friendly, appropriate way, because there are people like me who do the opposite. I… I even, I… I even know some of them, I see them often. They just kind of kick off for certain things, and just show, just behave really inappropriately, and every… everyday law-abiding, God-fearing people just don’t want to deal with that, it’s just not their world. So… there’s a massive… that’s a… just a major source of loneliness is people fear what… what socialising with you, dealing with you, might bring, if any negativity comes up in that situation, like um… um… if someone, if you’re doing… if you’re doing a transaction or something through somebody, are you gonna become very aggravated and aggressive, just because the person has made a mistake? ‘Cause, this is the kind of thing that is most of people’s everyday encounters and everyday situations, so that kind of… that kind of are you gonna deal with things in a… certain negative way that you’ve been taught to, or are you gonna use adult skills and an adult mature nature to go about in your day to day life, is what causes you to be able to go among more and more people and get on with life, or whether you’re excluded and lonely, because of your limited ability to go among a certain amount of people and do a certain amount of things. So… yeah, that’s what I mean.

Interviewer: And how does that make you feel?

Interviewee: Well… I think… for me, it’s not… for me it’s not too much of a big deal, because I’ve… I’ve learnt that people kind of… people are generally quite easy going. So there’s that kind of, you know when people say that kind of first impression thing, people kind of realise how negatively or positively they feel towards another person in a very short space of time, like five, ten minutes or something like that, so… it’s… it’s your opportunity to… especially if it’s new people you’re not familiar with, I’ve just learnt to register that as a opportunity to show… to, to basically make a positive impact and to have a good introduction really. Um… and… to, to recognise if some people have… a way other than the average way of dealing with things. There’s some people who, simply from their culture or from their background, they don’t come from that kind of background of being really presentable and having manners and respect and letting women go first and opening doors for people and that kind of thing, so, if that’s just not how they are, then you might have to… kind of… adjust your… not necessarily your behaviour, but how you present yourself. Because some people are just different and you don’t want to seem like an alien among certain people just because they come from something slightly different to you. So… yeah. It’s not really a source of that much trouble or problems or negative feelings for me. I think sometimes it can be… it can be a big problem if it becomes racial. So, the assumption that a certain race of people… you assume them to be a certain way and do things a certain way, or the assumption that they’re lesser than you, then that can be a problem, because you’re now… well, if these… if this bunch of people are from a certain era, from a certain set of ideas, then that instantly becomes a problem, because there’s just no point dealing with that kind of instant exclusion that you just can’t really get around, you can’t really avoid. So… yeah, if that’s the only kind of thing that might be quite major for me. So… it can… it can be… that one can be frustrating, because… I call it like an um… it’s what I call kind of a stick-to-your-own process. So it’s often people that only want to deal with their own… people form their own country or, that kind of thing, because of the assumption that others don’t have anything to offer you, or they’re more likely to do crime and fraud and… anything negative you might come across, or they might just… there’s just a general idea that there are sorts of negativity and possible harm… compared to just staying among your own. So… that one can be… quite… quite annoying, but… yeah.

Interviewer: Um… so you mentioned you sometimes have to um… just going back to something you mentioned earlier on… you basically have to um, act a certain way in front of people to show that… to compensate for people who are like you who might present themselves as behaving negatively, so you have to do… you have to behave in more positive ways for you to be presented in a positive way. Is that correct what I understood?

Interviewee: Mhm.

Interviewer: How does that make you feel? I think you mentioned that-

Interviewee: Well, I kind of… I have… I have quite a serious nature, but I can also be very friendly, very sociable, very immature… um, and I think… I mentioned that because it can be… it can be difficult being in a more positive mood and a more positive mind set, and then being around the kind of person who is the opposite of that, or follows the opposite of that. So, for example… um… for example, I remember, now I’m more allowed to be just how I am, but when I was younger, that kind of… that kind of street influenced behaviour was more of a big deal, so I found myself kind of… trying to… trying to follow that stereotype, being louder and bolder and more aggressive in order to, not just fit in, but to avoid becoming a victim, in any way, of those kinds of people around me. So, yeah. It’s kind of… it’s kind of um… it’s just, yeah, not being your normal self and just speaking how you speak and doing the kind of things you’d normally do, you kind of have to adjust to the group and type of person you’re currently around… and just going with it until you’re not around those people anymore. Then you kind of go back to yourself. Because it’s just not accepted, just to do what you’d naturally do among them. And you kind of… you don’t want to be the lonely guy just… alone… but actually being separate from them, or alone as the awkwardness that can come from, just kind of standing out, really, in like a really major way. That’s never really fun. Unless you feel like… I dunno, rebellious in some kind of way. Yeah, that’s what I mean.

Interviewer: And how would that… how does that make you feel, having to pretend or having to be something that you’re not just to fit in? How does that make you feel?

Interviewee: Well… um… it… it depends really, because… it can be… like that, that’s my background, those are my people. And no one really wants to completely abandon their… their own people, in terms of your background or who you grew up around, just because you think, oh, I see life different now, I talk different now. So I’m just a complete individual, there’s only one of me on the planet, I don’t relate to you, I’m not the same as you anymore. So I can… I can still enjoy myself and have fun with those kind of people, but I find it just… like I, I haven’t been around… like I live around them, they’re just all over the place here in London and Hackney. It tends to be a city thing in general. Um, I haven’t really dealt with them on a regular basis in a long time. But it can be… it can be fun, it can be positive, but I just… I’m quite a thoughtful person, and I’m always analysing things and over time I just see more and more negativity in that kind of thing, which can be great to them, but not so great to others, when you feel like you’re starting to see a negative truth in something. So that can be… you can, you can get really lonely and isolated when you start realising that. So, for example… one main reason why being among those type of people and conforming to that kind of way of being is because there’s… there’s a term, and it’s called… it’s… some people call it black self-hatred. So it’s basically acting in that way because deep down it’s not something you actually want to do, but you kind of act like a parody of yourself because you’re not really that happy with yourself and… you don’t really know what else to do. So people kind of, like… those… being around those people, you might have a time when you have like a colourism issue. People just start making fun of each other because someone’s darker than someone else and it’s like… you, you don’t really believe in this, this is a… this is a racial issue that’s been put on to you and you’re participating in it and bullying each other. This isn’t actually fun, this isn’t actually funny. So… it can be quite annoying, quite sad, quite… um… I don’t know if there’s a word for it, but when you see people doing something and you know that you could explain why it’s bad, why it’s counter-productive, why it’s damaging, but it’s just so deep and so serious that it just wouldn’t make any difference to those people. [Interviewer: mm] It’s like um… like what we, what I’d describe of being a certain type of man, for example um… there’s always like a, like an anti-gay nature wrapped in that as well, that type of really loud, aggressive masculine nature... and if that’s being put into someone so much, it’s hard to explain to someone… well, that isn’t a key part of you being a man, that isn’t a key part of you being really mature and really authentic… it’s just, it’s an idea that’s been given to you. Like you don’t, you’re not… you’re not actually having anything to do with those people. It’s a private issue that happens behind closed doors. Like, you’re not really against this, this is an idea that’s been given to you. It’s just nonsense, but… it just certain things just become so key to some people that… that that’s the difficult bit of having to be part of a group and conform. There’s a surface, everyday stuff, then there’s the more serious things that always end up coming up, and it’s when those more serious things start… start… when those more… when those more serious things come up, then you find you’re going against your actual conscience and actual morals, so then it becomes an issue to jump in with those people and think yeah, this’ll be fine, I can carry on with this indefinitely and then certain things come up… and then it can become, as I said, a kind of moral issue… like um… like for example, I didn’t realise that certain physical features and things are… are… they come from people that are part of the LGBT community. So you can’t just laughing at somebody in a dress… there’s a lot more to that. They’re going through a lot of personal things, it’s not just… why as he got that on? Let’s harass him, let’s laugh at him… that’s an actual person with a lot going on. So… it’s all fun and games until a more serious side of things can come up, then it becomes a problem, which can kind of lead to you participating in that for a time, and it disappearing off again, and being on your own, because you just don’t want to be around that for… beyond a certain length of time. So… yeah, that’s the main thing.

Interviewer: Thank you.

Interviewee: Yeah, that’s it.

Interviewer: Thanks. Is there anything else you wanted to say about that box?

Interviewee: Mm… no... I guess I would mention, it’s not something that I have… any knowledge or experience on, but there is the…. being alone, just on your own, physically, also something that counts in that box is being the… the loneliness of what I would describe as like… being incorrectly placed. So, for example, like, being adopted, or being… being born or living in a place where you’re… you’re not the majority so there isn’t a lot of others like you. Um… that also counts.

Interviewer: Mm. Thank you. Is there anything else you wanted to say?

Interviewee: Nope, that’s it.

Interviewer: Okay, thanks. Can we talk about what you put next please?

Interviewee: Yeah, the second one is being excluded from your community. [Interviewer: Mm] So… that would… that is… I think, I would describe that as when there isn’t necessarily… a major… a major definable… there, there’s not necessarily a major, easily definable issue that separates you from others, but there are smaller things which lead… which mean that it’s not about you connecting with others, it’s about others rejecting you, and therefore being lonely because those people are the people who are… the barrier is made by those people, by the… the majority, I guess, compared to you being just the individual. So… um… so for example… you can, you can be… you can be, so… the, the main difference being, for example, you can fit in, you can not be lonely and fit into a group because you all follow certain every broad factors, like for example, you can not be lonely and not have a problem because you’re all white and middle class, and then you can be excluded for… you can fit that criteria then be excluded from others and be lonely for a whole list of different things. Um… like anything that comes to mind really, um… it can be broke, it can be broken down into… you can be white and middle class, but then there’s a male and female divide. Then there’s a religious divide. And then different things that start to cut you off from others because you don’t apply in those categories. So the women go off and do this bunch of things, and they’re in an all-female, or mostly female group, and then the men go off somewhere else and they’re doing a certain bunch of things and living life a certain way, and it’s all or mostly men, and then there’s you… not being part of either, or wanting to be part of one that you can’t and that kind of thing. You can be… um… you can fit the… the main factors, and then religion is an issue. So you’re part… you’re part of this social group or social category up until the issue of religion, because everybody’s Christian and you’re the only Muslim, these kind of things lead to why I put being excluded from your community as one.

Interviewer: How does that make you feel?

Interviewee: Well… it’s one of those things, because… I… I can understand everybody’s… everybody has a bias, and… people are always gonna be in favour of others like them. But, it becomes a problem when… ‘cause for me, there’s nothing that really… someone can’t really be something enough for me to feel that we’re divided, because you can… you can be very devout to your religion and that’s just your thing. It isn’t a problem for me. We’re not gonna discuss it, it’s not a make or break relationship you know, just because you’re so committed to your religion and I’m committed deeply to something else. But, a lot of other people don’t see it like that... that kind of thing will become an issue, and it’s just… I’ve always… I’ve always disliked people just… being heavily in favour of people who are like them, and being heavily against people who are just not doing the same they’re doing, because really, when you get down to the core of things, people are just the same. Like, nobody… nobody’s gonna be in favour of a religion that means okay, go and be violent, then that’s instantly a problem for a whole bunch of people. It’s usually the same set of values and the same similar teachings can be found everywhere. So… that can be quite… it can be quite frustrating. I think I use the word frustrating mainly because… it’s quite a major one because it’s… it’s like having a number of doors to through, and then you only realise at a certain point you can’t get through. So you qualify and connect with people from one factor, so… all being… all following a certain religion… so okay, we’ve got common ground, we can connect on this, and then it might take you a long time to actually realise that kind of that… exclusion, that barrier, from you and those people because you’ve realised that you’re not all… you’re not all making the same amount of money… so then there’s the exclusion of this person isn’t as rich as us, and then that exclusion of not being the same as those other people in that category. [Interviewer: Mm] And then because of that, there’s just so many categories that you never know how much you connect with someone and what the possibility of you being excluded from something is.

Interviewer: Mm. I’m just a bit concerned with time. Um, is there anything else you wanted to say about box number two that you think is-

Interviewee: Nope.

Interviewer: Are you happy for us to move to number three?

Interviewee: Mhm.

Interviewer: Um… okay. Um, can we put about what you put in the third box please?

Interviewee: The third one is… um… the… it is… it has similar, similarities to the first one, so that is basically the loneliness of being with other people but not truly feeling it because… like there, there’s no barrier, so at this stage you’re among people. So you’re all in the same setting and you just don’t actually feel it. It’s kind of… it’s more of a mental kind of thing that people just kind of feel. And you might not even know why you feel it but you know you just do. Everybody’s had that experience of… you, you kind of for example have that experience of… everybody’s… everybody’s participating in the same moment, and you don’t feel that moment the same as everybody else. But, you’re already among each other because you share a lot of similarities and interests and that kind of thing. So… that’s a kind of… a more mental… kind of emotional type of loneliness… which I… I just mention it because it just came to mind and it just seemed very specific… because it is a definite thing, but it’s not as easily noticeable and not as easy to define and deal with, the same as the other major two [interviewer: mm] that came first.

Interviewer: And when you say, you know, being with people but not totally feeling it, how does that make you feel, being in that situation?

Interviewee: Er… well… I can’t really think of a word. But it’s just how totally you feel something, so… erm… so you’re connected to others by something, and you don’t feel like everyone’s at a hundred percent. So… you might be connected to others through all being in the same course, and you just don’t feel you’re enjoying and have the same level of passion and interest as other people, so you’re not all at a hundred percent in whatever it is you’re doing. And that’s why I mentioned that, because loneliness tends to be how much you’re all in something together. So that’s why that got a mention as number three, because you’re not all on the same page, is a… is a common phrase people use. So… yeah.

Interviewer: Okay, thank you. Before we move on to the next one, I’m just gonna pause, I’m gonna have to let the other person know that I’m gonna be late… um…

Recording paused

Interviewer: Okay, can you tell me more about when you say that, you know, being with people but not fully feeling it?

Interviewee: Yeah so… um, another phrase that is similar to being with people but not fully feeling it, is being around other people, but not truly being with them. And the difference is… the… the specific kind of loneliness that comes from being connected to people because of common factors, but feeling lonely because of there not being certain deeper things that you think are important. So… do you, are you in… are you just around each other, but not in actual support of each other? Or you might not truly believe in each other. There’s cert… there’s certain things like that that you might see as important to not feel lonely and feel connected to other people that are not there. Um… having… having faith in each other, um… seeing each other positively, rather than just being physically present. Those are some other things that might be needed to not have that loneliness be present. Yeah, that’s it.

Interviewer: So what you’re saying is, you could be around many people, but there are some deeper things… um… within… so you feel like, being around… you could be with so many people, yet still feel lonely, even though physically you’re not alone.

Interviewee: Yeah. So, um… faith, belief, encouragement, inspiration, there’s certain things like that that people might wanna feel to… about or towards each other, that without they might feel lonely, yeah. And it leaves then people just feeling like they’re present and something’s missing, and that something missing can make you feel lonely. Yeah, that’s it.

Interviewer: When you say um, that having a feeling that something is missing, can you tell me more about that?

Interviewee: Yeah because… something… I dunno, something being… some… before you can identify that you’re around people and maybe you don’t feel like they have faith in you, or you’re all doing something and you don’t feel like there’s like an enthusiasm in that, you can feel lonely because something’s missing, which I guess the phrase that explains the general feeling of loneliness you can have before you actually realise what it is… which is why I used that phrase I guess. So, for example um, when I… when I was younger, the… the people that behaved in a certain way that I described, when I started to not see, when I started to not see the point in certain behaviour, I just felt that something’s now missing, and I don’t connect with these people. And then you get that lonely feeling before you realise any details about why you actually feel lonely. You just feel like there’s something missing. So you feel connected, talking the same way, acting the same way and doing the same things, then you don’t connect anymore, you feel like something’s missing, then you might realise, or you may not realise, the specifics of why you actually feel lonely, disconnected, before any details such as um… not… not feeling encouraged, not feeling like other people… ‘cause like, the reason why I mentioned something specific like not having faith because you feel like you’re just there, and if you’re just suddenly not no more, you get up and leave, you really have to feel like someone’s gonna miss you, there was some reason for you actually being socially connected to people. If you’re not longer there and it doesn’t matter, that’s a big problem that can make you feel lonely. So that’s why you need some of those deeper things, such as feeling inspired, inspiring each other, having faith in each other, confidence in each other, or something more important like that. So yeah, that’s it.

Interviewer: And how does that feel to you in that situation, um, feeling that something is missing, connecting but not really deeply connecting?

Interviewee: Well… it is…. It’s a bit… it’s a, it’s… it’s a bit confusing, but it… it kind of feels more mysterious than confusing, because you get a… you get a kind of time when you… you, you’re having enough fun and you feel positive enough to actually not realise that there’s not anything going on. So, it’s so much fun, and it feels positive to the point where you don’t feel any issue at that time, and you don’t see there being any issue in the future, because you’re not at that stage where you think a certain way, or feel a certain way, or you haven’t developed in a certain way yet, so it’s kind of mysterious because it’s not something that you think about and you’re ready for when it comes. It just happens when you learn something or you start believing in something more, or someone teaches you something or you get a new perspective on something, and then that usually starts. If you ever change the way you see your people, usually something inspired it. Unless they did something negative to begin that process of… feeling like you’re just physically there but you don’t actually feel it in a deeper level. So, that might be something like… um… like for example, everybody having like a love of money… if people start developing a love of money more than anything, then that starts messing with the connection between people. ‘Cause people connect less in order to go and get money, then that can mess with things for example, and then that begins you thinking well, if money is more important than a great connection you thought everybody had, then that can start the whole process… yeah. So, yeah it’s quite, it’s quite… it’s quite mysterious, and it feels odd, ‘cause you’re quite unsure what it is… as it starts to develop and you start to understand more what’s going on. And then you might, like I learnt certain… I… I didn’t necessarily research certain things but you kind of… sometimes you can discover what’s happening to you, and certain ideas and certain words and phrases come into play. Like, um… like a, like a like the self-hate issue… people develop problems from not really liking themselves, or they don’t like the position they have in life, so then people start being negative and there might be bullying and issues among each other, and then you can go and learn about that and realise that’s what’s effecting you, then it’s not mysterious and odd anymore, then you know what it is. Then you might have some other feelings, like being annoyed or something. Yeah, that’s it.

Interviewer: Thank you. Anything else?

Interviewee: No.

Interview paused

Interviewer: Um… before we move on to box number four, you mentioned here being with people but not really feeling it, um… can you tell me more about… you said something, um, can you tell me more about that? Before we move on to box four. How does that make you feel being in that situation?

Interviewee: Um… well, I think for me it’s something that… it’s a, it’s a really unique, specific feeling… and people don’t often really talk about it. I don’t, I don’t know how many people really recognise it but… I think, over time I’ve learnt… that people kind of… there’s certain, in society there’s certain things that are promoted, but when you eventually have it, or are involved in it, there… there’s specifics that only you can really deal with. So for example… people tell you… um… that education is compulsory, ‘cause obviously it’s the law, you have to attend till a certain age, and then when you get into it, then it’s gonna be so great ‘cause, when you find people in the same subjects as you, you’ll have a big connection with them from that. And I think… it’s up to… the individual themselves to realise that being a person is incredibly complicated, and the amount of connection you might have believed you would have with others from having things in common, does not guarantee an amazing connection with others. It just, it doesn’t really work like that. You have to have a… you… you like you can’t just say we’re both, I don’t know… we’re both um… say you have two people that are retired, and they realise that they were both engineers for a long time. You can’t just assume based off of that common factor you’ve had the same experience and you’ve had the same positive feelings towards your time in that career over all those years. You need so many other things to be connected with that person, and reduce the possibility of you feeling lonely when you don’t have certain things in common and you don’t connect from certain things. So… for me, it used to… well it used to feel like a lonely… a lonely situation to be in, or a lonely moment, but it just… it, it isn’t, because like, for example, I remember being in school, and I… I had a very difficult time, and then I realised, actually not that recently, considering how long I left secondary school, which is where I had a difficult time, there… there’s a massive, massive variety of people, compared to, what do they call it? Being academic. So that’s going into education, maths, English, science, there’s people who are completely average apart from their knowledge and understanding and ability to do art. There’s people who are completely average and don’t really shine in those subjects apart form their ability to work with their hands and to make and repair things, so… you kind of… as I wrote, being with people nut not truly feeling it can sometimes be about perspective, how much you actually believe you need to be similar to other people to connect with them or not be lonely. So… yeah.

Interviewer: So it sounds like what you’re saying is um… you could be very similar to people, as in you share some things with others, but that doesn’t necessarily mean that… you get along with that person really well, or that person can prevent you from feeling lonely.

Interviewee: Mhm. Yeah… and I think I would mention as well that… sometimes… I, I don’t know if this is an assumption that people have, or an idea that has been given to them, but… the number of things that are, that make up life, change and drift around a lit. So you might connect amazingly with other people, based on the current factor right now of you all being at a party, until that shifts onto you being at a party, but the subject is romantic relationships, and some people are in one and some people are not, then it shifts from the togetherness and there being no problem that you all connect on the same thing of currently being at a social event, but then not connecting because the subject that is now the main thing, in your current situation, is changed on to something else, and then that can be… that can cause the kind of moment where you’re with other people but you’re not really feeling it, because now they’re all joined by something you’re not joined by anymore. Right then and there, it’s just changed. Right in that moment. [Interviewer: Mm] So… yeah.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you wanted to say about that box?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Can we talk about- thank you- can we talk about that you’ve put in the final box please.

Interviewee: Er… number four, the loneliness of being like a unique individual. Um… well, something that comes to mind is… I think… I remember having a kind of, not necessarily and argument but a different kind of opinion with… I think my mum, because we just kind of came to like a standstill, and I remember saying to her, and I’m saying this because this kind of defines what I mean by the loneliness of being an individual… every human being is only themselves. You can have the exact same life as somebody else, to a shocking amount of detail, and only you feel what you feel. Only you see what you see. Only you have your specific experience, and that’s lonely for everyone. You might have a twin that your lives were the same as each other up till sixteen say, and they can say my childhood was great, and you can say no, mine wasn’t great. You just have your own specific, unique point of view, your own specific feelings, your own everything as an individual. And I guess pe… people say, what’s that phrase? That’s just part of the human experience. That is what it is to be a human being. You’re just never gonna have two people that just are basically… it’s just unnatural to have two people that are a replica of each other, and then are not lonely because they’re exactly the same. You can name and experience, you can name a feeling and they’re just going through things at the same time and it was just the same for both of them. So… I guess… people kind of describe that as kind of being… I guess profound. Because… it just… it’s, it’s a specific type of loneliness of knowing that humans are social and are meant to connect with other people, but you can be a hundred percent connected, and it’s just still different, because you’re your own unique individual person. So… yeah, that’s why I mentioned that.

Interviewer: And when you say- thank you- when you say the loneliness of being a unique individual, can you tell me more about that?

Interviewee: Well, I… I, I wrote that in that way because… being an individual is… great, great. It’s great to be yourself, to have your knowledge, your… all… everything that makes you unique, most people are happy to have that, because everybody has the need for… everybody… everybody has the need to have… a value of themselves. And if you was to see four other people exactly the same as you in every way, that would be very emotionally damaging to you, to know that you’ve achieved everything that you’ve achieved and seen everything that you’ve seen and done, everything you’ve done, and there’s somebody the same as you. But, people also need each other in a social way, and the need for the deepest possible connection, whether it’s with family, your partner, is also essential. So then when you connect on more and more things, and then discover that you just can’t be the same as people beyond a certain level, then that’s when it becomes the loneliness of being an individual. Like, for example, um… all the main subjects in life, as I mentioned, um… gender is always a key one, because your experience in life based on whether you’re a man or a woman, despite what people may believe, is key… as, as it’s… I, I heard someone say this and most people can agree, if you’re a man, you don’t know what it’s like to be a woman, because there’s certain vulnerabilities to being a woman that men don’t have, being taller, heavier, you, those physical differences is just different. Like… so that even gender is an example of the loneliness of being an individual. If you’re one gender or another, there’s an instant divide of you never being able to truly understand what half of the population is experiencing in… in many different ways. So… you can connect on some things heavily, and then there’s kind of like a loneliness which I guess I’d describe as carrying that kind of weight of only… of some things being only you, I guess. Yeah. Like um… like for example, I am very close to my mum, and we agree on a lot of things, and one of the last times I felt the… the one I wrote is the loneliness of being an individual, she’s the person I connect most with… out of anybody… and as a man, having the nature of a man, and having that kind of, that more aggressive nature of being a man, her nature as a woman, when negative things come up, I’m gonna be the one who would be looking at the more, the more serious, the more harsh ways of dealing with things, as a man, because that’s just how things are made. It’s just that natural nature you have. And I could find, I could probably at some point come across females who have that nature to them, because everybody’s unique. But it’s just… it’s never gonna be the same because I can’t take my opinion and make her believe it so that we can connect on yet another thing. So it’s the loneliness of being just uniquely me, I… that only I’m the person who thinks and feels that, and that’s the difference between us that I can’t remove. It’s the uniqueness of her being her and me being me that you can’t pass, you can’t cancel it out, unless, like somebody lies, or something major happens for someone to completely change such a serious thing as to how they approach negative situations. So… yeah, that’s kind of, that’s an example of what I mean.

Interviewer: Mm. And… and how does it make you feel, sort of knowing that your loneliness is specific to you and somebody else’s loneliness is specific to them? Um… that, that uniqueness of you makes you sometimes lonely, if I’m saying that correctly.

Interviewee: Mhm. Well… I think… it can be quite distressing and kind of… I don’t know what the right word is, it can kind of stay with you and kind of stay on your mind and keep following you when you believe that someone else should be different. Like, you’re connecting them… you, you’re connecting with someone on so many things, like why can’t they just be different on this other thing, and then we can be… things can be even greater between us. But, then I kind of, I also see it in a way that… you kind of have to be grateful for the number of positives that you do have, rather than those few things that are a problem. Because a lot of people… if like, if you connect with somebody well, a lot of people who don’t have that. There’s a lot of people who… if you have a… if you have a, if you have the kind of connection with someone where your communication is good and things, a lot of people don’t have that. Some people get together based off of something very simple and lacking in substance like… we all like a sport, and it’s not true connection over that. So if you can talk to someone at a deeper level, then you just have to be happy and not be worried that you can’t bring up another subject and another subject and another thing and agree on it. Like, it kind of depends on how you look at it. So yeah. That’s it.

Interviewer: Thank you. Is there anything else you wanted to say about that box?

Interviewee: Mm… no.

Interviewer: Okay thank you.

Part 2

Interviewer: So can we talk about what you put first please?

Interviewee: So I’ve got my home. So, my home, as in my actual house and… where I, basically my house that I live in, and then home as in my local area. [Interviewer: mhm] So I guess, to be specific, like… like the mile, or the two miles surrounding my house I’d consider my local area. Yeah… because I guess I put that because… obviously the family home is the best, because it’s where I live, I’ve been there for a very long time, it’s the family, it’s where I feel safe… and… so that one’s quite obvious, I guess. Um… and I put local area because there is… that is where, I guess, it’s the safest, it’s most comfortable, [interviewer: mm] I’m familiar with the most faces and actual people within that area, um… in terms of attending events and… general positivity and doing good things with and around other people, which is why I put the local area, in that way. Um… yeah, ’cause as… as it says here social connectedness or loneliness… so my local area is where I’m most likely to find the opposite of loneliness which is connectedness, so… yeah, it, it’s quite a… it’s quite an obvious one really. Um… obviously connectedness, well maybe not so obviously but anyway, connectedness for me is the… is the ability to come across old people and new people and kind of be connected mostly by being similar as people, or like participating in something that connects you. So… like…. everything form going to the park to like community events, where you come across those other people and then positivity follows that. So… yeah, that’s why I put home and local area. Or should I say actual house and local area. Yeah.

Interviewer: So you like the idea of seeing familiar faces… um, being at events and things like that. [Interviewee: mhm] Okay… and how does it make you feel, being at home for example?

Interviewee: Um… well, home is… I, I describe my home as like, it’s kind of like sanctuary, and kind of, it’s like a headquarters, because it’s where… it’s where you’re based, it’s where… it’s where I’m most comfortable and then it’s kind of where… it’s where I’m most comfortable and then prepare myself, and it’s where I originate from to go and do anything. So I prepare myself and leave my house to go to do something, to go and be around people, to go and do anything starts with me waking up at… what I describe as a headquarters… and… when you cons, when I… when I consider not having one, then I really feel the importance of it. Because, interestingly, I had a, we had a house fire and had to leave, we were away for like close to a year, and at that point when we like officially where like homeless for a brief time, we didn’t know where we was gonna actually sleep, then you realise just how strong you’re connected to your house and the comfort and the peace that comes from being within it and among the people inside. [Interviewer: mm] So… yeah. And local area’s the same. When you’re somewhere completely new, there’s a… then you realise the unease you have… you don’t know… you don’t know the people, like you actually don’t know them, they’re strangers to you, you don’t know that nature of those people, and then you realise how similar your local area is to your actual home. Knowing the people, or what they’re like, the nature of those people, being able to access everything you need to access, the shops, the emergency services… all those kind of things, the memories you have connected to that place, so you... you’ll pass and do things at the same place as you did ten years ago, twenty years ago. So… there’s always… um, positivity. Um what’s that word? Like… nostalgia or something, when it comes to childhood memories? And that all is a good thing… so, yeah. So that’s, that’s why I put my actual house and the local area.

Interviewer: Mm, thank you. Is there anything else you wanted to say about box number one?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Okay, can we move on to box two please?

Interviewee: Yeah, um… the reason I put the wider community and area is because I… I feel like… although I’ve travelled… to a lot of different spots and stuff, my local area’s quite small, because that’s where the most certainty and the most comfort is. So, there’s a, there’s the… there’s a feeling of actual loneliness, like being alone as an actual person, in the wider community and area, and then there’s the opposite of feeling socially connected because you, I… I don’t, I don’t know those people, I’m not as comfortable with those people, they don’t know me, and you just have less certainty of… there, there’s less guarantee of a positive experience the further I am out of that small local area. So… yeah. And then, I would have to mention, generally for me, and I think most people, every time something usually quite major negative happens, it tends to involve outside of the local area, local community. So for example um… last time I… I think I, I had a brother, who had some very serious medical issues… and then we had to keep leaving the area to go to a different hospital, into a new place, so… there’s a lot of spe… special, but a negative kind of special, things that have to on outside the area. Because usually all the positivity is closer to me… so… yeah, that’s why I put the wider community and area. ‘Cause of all the more negative things, the unknowns and the uncertainty and the different people and that kind of thing. And then I’m less connected with my everyday life and routine because it takes more time and effort and everything to travel and to be present and everything in your wider area. So… yeah, so I put that.

Interviewer: When you say the wider area being different…

Interviewee: Well… um… there’s, there’s actually a lot of detail that I missed. I’ll cover it briefly and just mention… in my…. the, the comfort and all the positives that come from my actual house and local area…. like um, for example, everything from like our local town hall and being informed on what’s actually going in… what’s actually going on with the people and the community, I know and can find out. But the wider area, there’s influences and things going on that I have nothing to do with and that I can’t see and find out. Like um… for example… um… like um, like for example you know how you got here, and it’s incredibly likely that services used to travel here you used before. If I sent you, just if I sent, if I sent you twenty miles north of here, exactly twenty miles north, and you’d got to attempt to travel according to the trains and the services they have there, the local people are gonna know what’s going on, because they have a familiarity and thing that you don’t, and you’re not gonna have any idea of the differences of what’s happening there, unless you might have made some attempt to research and ask people about it before you ended up there and it, that will just always be the case, unless you try and recreate what you already have in your home area. Now I’ve been there enough to be used to the people, now I’ve been there enough to… recreate everything about my home area and what I’m used to, so that’s why I put the wider area and community, because… like um… I’m trying to think… like for example, um… gangs… and that kind of thing, exactly where I live and close by, I have a good understanding of it. I live on an estate, and I know who lives on the estate, and I know what’s close by. Me just popping up somewhere else now includes a different bunch of people who are… like that whole situation is different… so it is just not at all the complete level of safety and certainty in that specific way of gangs and groups. ‘Cause like we had a time, they don’t do it anymore, but we had young people going around asking each other where are you from, and if you gave the wrong answer that could lead to some very serious problems. So then me mentioning the wider area and community actually makes a difference in terms of personal safety… you end up in a specifically actually different place, where people are different enough to actually possibly be dangerous. Not that that’s a major concern but… humans just can be similar to animals in that territorial kind of way. People just don’t recognise you, wonder why you’re here, even if you’re just like travelling around on public transport, people will just friendly and better with those that they recognise, and you’d be the same in your core area, where you live, so… that’s why I put wider area and community in box two. ‘Cause it’s kind of like an inside circle and an outside circle that can sometimes be like two different countries almost… at, at times… so, yeah. That’s why they… that’s why they’re kind of the opposite of each other in a lot of ways. Yeah.

Interviewer: So it sounds like, what you’re saying is you like familiarity, and you don’t like uncertainty. [Interviewee: Mhm] And being in an environment where you, where you don’t feel certain… that makes you feel lonely in that environment. [Interviewee: yeah] Tell me more about that.

Interviewee: Well, I’m quite a… socially anxious, and also quite observant person. So I find… one important thing that I guess I have to mention that affects me writing what I’ve written is… for me, I get very aware at times of everything happening around me, so… for example, I find, like the one time, and this... this connects back to when we first started talking, the one time I lived somewhere else in my life, like ever, I’ve always been here in my main area, I noticed that the nature that I describe, of people kind of… especially among guys, having that second nature, didn’t exist at all, when I lived somewhere else for a really short time. People just didn’t really seem to mind each other. They went about their daily lives, and there wasn’t that kind of… there wasn’t that kind of friction that you can just feel in general. And then when I came back, just the… just the way people are with each other, and the way people kind of look at each other… like, it’s like sometimes people have this way of kind of… I didn’t notice this at all when I lived somewhere else for a short time…. like, I’d always been used to so long, that when people look at me and even at each other, they do like this full body scan look, from either their head down or their feet up, and it’s kind of like weird kind of animal way like you’ve seen a documentary of people analysing each other, and that kind of weird, standoffish intensity people have between each other just didn’t really exist when I lived somewhere else for a short time. So for me there’s just…. I don’t just go, oh well I’ve got things to do somewhere I’ll just go and it’s just great, I’m just looking at so much of people’s expressions, people’s body language, the way they move around, the way they interact with each other… um… so yeah, the… the difference between my local area and the wider community can sometimes be very different. And the… the same kind of people can be found everywhere, I’m just more used to them. So for example, we have… we have a higher rate of mental health than other places, so I’ve learnt to recognise these people and how to deal with these people. Whereas, for example… I would recognise erratic behaviour in somebody, or somebody that isn’t actually stable but appears to be… and I’d have no idea who those people are somewhere else. And that would be a big issue for me. So I guess with the kind of local area versus wider area, there’s a lot more… there’s a lot more to take note of, for me… versus maybe… if you picked another guy and asked him how much he minds, and how much difference he sees between his local area very close to his home and other places… so, yeah.

Interviewer: Okay, thank you. Um, is there anything else you wanted to say?

Interviewee: Mm… yeah, I would mention as well, with local area and wider area, it’s obviously the communities. So I know, for example, there’s a major black community, or should I say in general, I’m comfortable in my local area, because there’s more of us minorities compared to other people, so that’s a difference, because you can instantly end up very lonely when there’s no one like you in the place you are, that you’re in to be the odd one out, it’s just different. Like, I’m not gonna go… I’m not gonna go up to, for example, there’s a mosque, so therefore there’s a Muslim community in Aldgate, and they have their own culture and their own way of doing things, so for me to just pretend that I am the same as them, I am different to them and they’re aware of it, it just doesn’t have the same comfort as my local area where I live. So that… that, that comes into… that’s a factor as well. So I… I know where I am. There’s a high number of people similar to me and that also makes a difference to local area versus wider area. [Interviewer: Mm] Yeah, that’s it.

Interviewer: Thank you. Anything else?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Okay thank you, I’m gonna pause the recording.