Participant number 29 – Female, 22, Tower Hamlets - Part 1&2

Interviewer: I’ll leave that here… [interviewee: mhm] um… okay, so um can we start by talking about what you’ve put uh in first?

Interviewee: Uh okay. So the first one I put no friends or family, ‘cause loneliness normally represents not having anyone, being isolated as well. Um so it may be due to someone passed away like, usually like when a loved one like a mum or a dad passed away that you’re very close to. You tend to feel very lonely and depressed so I- I thought it was that. And you might be able to notice that from the picture there’s- a lot of people have someone close to them, like a group of friends or family, whereas when you lose that one person in the world to you, you start to… feel lonely. Yeah.

Interviewer: Mm. So it sounds like what you’re saying is… when you have no family or no friends, especially when you lose someone who’s really important to you, [interviewee: yeah] um that’s when you experience loneliness. [Interviewee: yup] How does that make you feel?

Interviewee: It’s- it’s pretty um similar to someone who’s- like one of my friends has gone through this as well, um one- one of her close parents, like the one that she really- was really close to, her mum, passed away. She did fall- fall to loneliness. And another friend who’s lost her brother, the same day as when her sister got married, you know, you do realise that they do tend to go through all of this sort of stuff which is normal in life but it’s really unexpected. But um you don’t really notice that someone’s going through loneliness unless you ha- sit down and have a conversation with them, unless they open up to you. ‘Cause it’s- it’s easier to talk to someone like you don’t know of, but when you’re talking to someone, like a close friend or family, like it’s very hard to open up honestly about what you’re going through. If that makes sense.

Interviewer: Can you repeat that last bit again?

Interviewee: So if you- if you were to talk to uh a family member or a friend about loneliness or you’re going through it, it’s- it’s kind of hard to open up to them ‘cause it’s- it’s someone you know. Whereas if it’s someone from the public like… someone who you’ve never met before, it feels like it’s much easier to talk to them about it ‘cause you feel like they would understand instead of your own friends or family. So yeah… it’s just like depression. If you were talking about depression to some random strangers, it’s much easier to talk to them about it, [interviewer: mm] whereas your own family and friends- you feel like they’re judgemental or… yeah, any other thoughts there.

Interviewer: Mm. When you say that they’re judgemental-

Interviewee: Yeah, as in they’ll straight away like assume that, you know, it’s just a silly thing, it’s just a- a little thing that comes and go. Whereas loneliness is something quite serious in this society at the moment, ‘cause there’s a lot of things like social media, people feel like they have to look like this in one way, or newspaper articles where celebrities are idolising in them sort of way. But no one actually notices that friends and family actually play a massive role in this… where you lose a close family member, you tend to fall to the trap of being alone and, you know, having mental health issues and sorts so… so yeah.

Interviewer: So um… you mentioned social media.... um can you tell me more about that?

Interviewee: Um social media usually plays a big part in this generation. I’ve noticed a lot of children and a lot of teens and stuff have like suicidal… and lots of death that lead to this sort of things. ‘Cause you’re looking into a person, due to their looks or, you know, what they have in life such as, you know, um… luxury stuff, that’s not very like pe- permanent for you. So normally people look at that, and that leads them to be lonely. You know, some people look at another person and think you don’t have all of this stuff like, you know, gadgets and gizmos and stuff like that. You- you pretty much wear cheap clothes. And that can easily put someone down and that can lead to them having trust issues and not trusting anyone and- you know, that’s just straight away when you just think well you can’t trust anyone, you can’t stay with anyone ‘cause of their- their comments they make. So you just tend to fall into being alone and lonely. Which is um a serious thing in this generation at the moment.

Interviewer: You mentioned that these things are not permanent. Can you-

Interviewee: Like luxury stuff. You know how people buy phones and stuff and cars. None of these things are permanents. Once you’re gone it’s gone. Like once you die it’s all gone. People’d only know you for what you have in this world, but not for what you have in your heart. Which is- it’s just really sad, ‘cause someone who is really- like has no family or friends or has none of this- like a roof on top of their head, they probably have like the biggest heart. And you could be quick to judge them ‘cause of their appearance, instead of what’s in their heart. Which is what the current generation is right now. Everyone looks at the way you look and what you have, what you’re dressed as, instead of what’s in you. So loneliness is pretty much related to depression ‘cause it- a lot of mental health awareness has actually focused on stuff like that. Talk to someone if you see someone’s alone. That’s how a lot of suicide rates happen in train stations as well, because people- ‘cause people just, you know, they feel like it’s just have to give up. Yeah.

Interviewer: And how does that make you feel?

Interviewee: It’s pretty sad. ‘Cause, you know, social media is one of the massive things that makes a- it’s actually the biggest impact on this generation right now. You know you- you’ve got young teenagers, children from primary school that have access to all sorts of things, like right now, you know, Facebook and Instagram. Which is not needed for them. And you don’t realise until you see someone in school- like if you actually sit there with your phone away from you, and analyse what- what a person’s doing, what one person’s doing, what a group of children are doing, you can tell that one person who is sitting there alone, they’re probably, you know, planning probably their suicide or- like suicide right now. Or they’re probably writing their last letter or that’s probably the last day you see them. Which is actually what’s happening in this current day and age. You don’t notice until you go and approach them and ask them if they’re okay. Like just a simple question of, you know, hi are you okay? It can actually open up someone’s door or can actually light up someone’s day. And change their mind of, you know, all sorts of things like depression and feel like they’re actually loved and welcomed. Yeah.

Interviewer: And how does that make you feel when you see that this generation is focused on appearance, as you said?

Interviewee: It’s pretty scary ‘cause if you were to have kids in the future and notice that, then you just realise this is pretty much of a cruel world to live in ‘cause, you know, once you- once you’re gone, your- you’re afraid that your children will have to put up with the generation where everything’s are just changing, everyone just looks into social media and the way you look, whereas, you know, when our parents were young and stuff, it was much easier ‘cause no one used to judge you because of the way you look. No one used to kind of, you know, say hurtful things to you about the way you look or the way you speak. It’s- now it’s more appearances and… you know, it’s just little things. You make one comment, people will judge you straight away for that. Whereas, you know, if you did something good, people will look at something you’ve done bad. And it’s very silly and very scary in the future as well, ‘cause you can’t tell what will come. I mean there’s a lot of deaths at the moment, so you don’t know what’s to come in the future. ‘Cause there’s people coming out of being gay and, you know, you just don’t feel like you can actually open up to anyone about anything. ‘Cause it’s just a scary world out there. Anything can happen. And you can die at a young age ‘cause of the way you look. Yeah.

Interviewer: And how do you feel about that?

Interviewee: It’s scary ‘cause, you know, a lot of people are coming out gay. You- you notice that they are the ones- like I think it’s from the LGBT community, there’s a lot of young people coming out of being gay or lesbian or all sorts of things. They feel really lonely at the moment ‘cause you can’t open up to your parents, or if you tell your friends- you know, that’s when bullying happens and that’s where it leads you to your death. So it’s- it’s actually a very scary future that we’re living in at the moment. This generation is- it’s very corrupted if I be honest with you. Like we’re all stuck on our phones, we’re all like s- checking out phones non-stop or glued to our phones. Walking in public, no one actually seems to care if you’re walking past crying. You know, if you felt like something’s happened to you or you just feel really down in your mental health or just any sorts of things. No one will seem to care ‘cause everyone’s to busy just glued on their phones. It’s just, if someone was to ask you how you’re doing for the day or, you know, just a simple hello, you don’t realise that that could actually make your day. But this generation’s just gone completely the opposite direction. [Interviewer: mm] Yeah.

Interviewer: So it sounds like what you’re saying is this generation of people, they’re much focused on their phones, [interviewee: yeah] th- they’re very much focused on appearances, um and that’s kind of the cause of loneliness in today’s culture.

Interviewee: Yeah. It’s very true because I’ve noticed- I was watching a video the other day, um- one of the person that works in the train station or something like that, she was telling her story of someone approached her- well she was having suicidal thoughts, and she was in the train station, she was very close to falling into the tracks until someone said hello to her and asked her, you know, how are you? And that little comment stopped her from, you know, jumping straight to suicide in the train tracks. And you don’t realise that simple comments like that can make someone stay but, you know, it just doesn’t happen anymore. Everyone’s afraid to talk to someone. Not even afraid. Everyone’s just too busy up to date with what’s going on on social media, what’s going on outside. Whereas when they’re outside in public they just don’t wanna make that conversation. Where everyone’s just very um glued to their phones and yeah. Just isolated to their phones instead of talking to human beings in front of them. People would rather send an email to a person who’s sitting next to them instead of talk face to face. So it’s a very sad world we live in. [Interviewer: mm] Antisocial is the word, I [unintelligible 9:53] antisocial, that’s the one.

Interviewer: Mm. And you also mentioned earlier that um you- you have these basically characters around [interviewee: yeah] this individual. I’m just trying to und- reflect back what you might mean. So correct me if I’m wrong. So are you saying that you could be around people [interviewee: yeah] and still not have close sort of- or still feel lonely?

Interviewee: You could be with close family members and stuff and actually not feel lonely. ‘Cause close family and friends are the ones that make you feel like you’re actually worth something. Whereas sometimes, you know, you have those friends where they’ll come and go and, you know, they say they’ll be there for you all the time, but then that could somehow lead to you being lonely again. Whereas- like for example, once I left university and sixth form and all sorts, you usually stay in contact with all those friends ‘cause they were the ones that made you feel special, they’re the ones that lit- you know, lit you up when you felt so down or lonely, just a phone call away. But right now it’s like, once you’re starting to work, you just feel like you have no time to communicate with those people. And, you know, everyone just goes their own way and, you know, lives their own- o- own life. You just don’t feel like- no one seems to care, which is what happens when you, you know, go straight to full time work. No one seems to care about you no more. It’s just mostly your friends- your close friends that actually bother to contact you and your own family who you come home to every day.

Interviewer: So when you say that when you go into work [interviewee: yeah] or when you get a job, you lose contact with people, can-

Interviewee: You lose contact with pretty much everyone. Like that’s what I’ve been told since a young age. And now you realise- ‘cause you could have a massive group of friends, you could have thirty friends in primary and then twenty in secondary. Once you grow older, those friends- you lose the trust, you- you don’t have them close to you anymore, they just tend to- they just tend to go their own ways. Whereas when you’re at work, I’ve realised like since I started working, you know, it’s not the same as before. You- you don’t have no one to message. Whenever you message your friends, they’re busy, they can’t reply back ‘cause, you know, they don’t have time for you right now. The time you make for the weekend, you say next week or the week after then the week after that and then it ends up being what, a year later, and then you don’t get to see them. And the next time you probably hear from them- or probably from their families is when they’ve- when they’re really ill or when they’re in hospital or when they’re close to their death. So yeah, I think that’s what you realise when you grow up. The only time you hear from someone is, you know, either when they’re doing good or when they’re really ill. Yeah.

Interviewer: And how does that make you feel?

Interviewee: It’s really sad ‘cause everyone just looks at this, you know, day and age as in working is the main thing. To have you go in, to making- to make your money and, you know, just live your life, and once you have your family obviously go back to work, live your life and just repeat. Which is the same motive everyone has. But that’s how it is. That’s how apparently life is to everyone. No one actually wants to live their life and see their friends and family. It’s just the same repetitive routine of work, go home, eat, sleep and then start again. [Interviewer: mm] That’s the only way you can put food on your table and you know, make your money and just keep going. Until you’re actually old.

Interviewer: And how does it make you feel not seeing your friends as often as you want?

Interviewee: It is quite sad. Like I’ve been trying to meet up with some of them since… probably since January. It’s really sad that you can’t see them often as you can. But once you’re married and you have kids, p- you pretty much have no one, actually. You only have the close family, friends are pretty much not there for you, only one or two. Compared to what you had in secondary. It’s like a massive group’s just gone to two. So yeah that’s just- that’s pretty much life. It- it’s really sad when you lose your friends. Not in a way like you had an argument but it’s just when you lose contact with them, you feel like, you know, you’ve done something wrong or they’ve done something wrong. But at the end of the day you’re all just- you’re both just living your life. You’re just- you’ll just continue with your life, you’ll pop up when you can, see each other when you can. But that’s very vaguely. It never happens these days. Yeah.

Interviewer: Mm. So it sounds like work has been a barrier you think-

Interviewee: I think work is a massive barrier ‘cause, you know, if you don’t have enough money to put food on your table or to pay for your rent then, you know, it causes other issues such as, you know, being evicted out of your house or who do you provide food for. Especially when you have a huge family and stuff. And if you’re like the p- main person in the house that has to provide the income, then it’s like, you know, you don’t have a life to see friends and family, it’s more just go to work, go home, go to work, go home. It’s nonstop repetitive. But I guess it’s just like, you know, the government and stuff with the- with the amount of money we make at work, it’s not enough to make you happy. And with everything going up like, you know, Brexit and all, the food and housing income is all going up, you just don’t have time to go home and rest. It’s just literally eat and then go sleep. You just don’t have time to go out on a week day to see friends. Like I don’t think I’ve ever gone out on a week day apart from Friday to see friends and family. ‘Cause you get home, you’re so exhausted with this working life. Yeah. Very sad life.

Interviewer: So it sounds like what you’re saying is you have to work because obviously you have to have food on your table, you have to-

Interviewee: Yeah. That’s the life. That’s the life after leaving university. [Interviewer: mm] Yeah.

Interviewer: So it sounds like what you’re also saying is um… not having money can be a… um-

Interviewee: Could be a big issue as well. It depends who you are actually. ‘Cause if you’re someone who doesn’t- who’s not the main income of- earner of the house, then you don’t- well, you wouldn’t have to worry about friends and family ‘cause you don’t see them. But if you’re someone who works like part time, then it’s much easier for you- ‘cause you’re more flexible. You can always go out and see friends and family. If the others are working part time as well. But when you’re a full-time person who works non-stop and you’re out from seven in the morning and you come home around six in the afternoon, then it- it makes sense when you can’t see your friends and family. ‘Casue where’s the energy to go and see them? You- you pretty much go home, you eat your own dinner, then you make lunch for the next day and then you make sure you’re in bed in time so you can start the day again. And then Saturday Sunday comes around, those time goes very quick because, you know, just a lot of… you’re either doing the washing or you just don’t have enough time. [Interviewer: mhm] Yeah.

Interviewer: So it also sounds like l- timing- time is also-

Interviewee: There’s never enough time in the day. That’s what they usually say. If you had more than twenty-four hours and you’re at work for eight hours, you sleep for about eight hours or less, that’s like sixteen hours gone there. And the rest you’re pretty much running around, making your food, making sure everything’s tidy in the house, making sure you’re ready for the next day, making sure you’re refreshed. It’s just there’s never enough time in the day. If there was more than twenty-four hours, then I would definitely pretty much see all my friends and family but that’s not possible. If a family member lives in Wales then that’s what, over six hours drive. By the time you get there it will be probably too late. They’ll probably be gone, if they’re really ill. But yeah. [Unintelligible 16:57] it’s just distance is one thing and… the timings. There’s never enough time.

Interviewer: Mm. I just wa- I wanna go back to this um- to this thing. So you have loving memory of dad-

Interviewee: They’re like gravestones.

Interviewer: Oh they’re gravestones.

Interviewee: Yeah. Usually a lot of people tend to fall into- fall into loneliness when they lose someone close to them. [Interviewer: mm] Like a friend of mine has lost his dad when a young age and he’s moved to another city where he doesn’t see his mum and his brothers and sisters are in another city as well. So the only person he has is his friends ‘cause his own family are quite busy. So when they do communicate with him once a weekend, you know, it’s not enough. So he usually- not depends but, you know, when you have that friend and y- I usually check up on him all the time as well, just to be sure he’s okay. ‘Cause you don’t know what could happen, sometimes that can actually fake it and say they’re very happy but at the end of the day they might just, you know, wear a mask and lead to something else like a suicide or something. [Interviewer: mm] Which does happen. ‘Cause a lot of people do cover up things a lot with a fake smile. Yeah.

Interviewer: When you say they cover it up with a fake smile, can you tell me more?

Interviewee: It’s more like, you know, you go to work and you show a happy face but at the end of the day you hate your job so much- when you- you show that you’re happy but you’re not. But tend to- this- these current days- days-and-age, usually a lot of people would go to school and make it seem they’re all okay about w- their home life, but when they get home it’s completely the opposite. You know, they always- they’ll show a brave face because they don’t want people talking about it or it’s just- nothing wants to be discussed in school. But once you go home, it- it’s completely different. It’s like a- it’s like a tsunami or something going off at home. And you- well you’re pretty much getting pulled left and right into arguments and all sorts. So it’s literally putting on a face just for other people. Just so they don’t make comments or ask you, you know, how’s it going, you know, what’s going on. Because a lot of people usually just put their noses in. Just to- just to be gossip- like gossip and, you know, just to be very nosy. But no one seems to care about, you know, what you want or how you’re feeling. Yeah.

Interviewer: And who are these um people? The group of people around this uh person here-

Interviewee: Well that could be anyone. That could be anyone in the public. So if you were actually walking really upsetty- like upset and sad, probably like a shopping centre or anything or in puclic, I don’t think anyone would ever approach you and ask you, you know, are you okay? It just doesn’t happen anymore. Like I remember one time I saw someone crying in the train station and you give them a tissue and you don’t realise that giving a tissue to someone, you know, it’s- actually makes them happy or it makes them feel like someone actually cares. But if you were sitting in a train station now and you were crying, you wouldn’t even have anyone approach you. They would just be stuck on their phones. It’s just, you know, it- asking someone, are you okay? Or giving someone a tissue when they’re upset, it kind of, you know, makes them feel like they’re valued or loved. But you know, it’s just- it depends on some people. Some people prefer to be on their phones, some people just don’t care or just wanna ignore the whole world and it can- can show a massive impact on someone.

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

Interviewee: No. That’s- that’s pretty much everything. Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay thank you. Um can we start by talking about what you’ve put next please?

Interviewee: Um so the next box, number two, feeling worthless, alone, no one cares about you or e- or even for you. That’s- that’s pretty much the- similar to the first box. That’s usually what’s in someone’s mind. Like if you… if you were to go shopping by yourself or go to the high street or anything, you usually have those thoughts in your head. ‘Cause you normally see people with other people. Or when you’re by yourself you tend to have really high anxiety of thinking someone else is judging you or looking at the way you speak or they’re looking at the way you look. Those sort of things just puts you down completely. And… you know, it just makes you feel completely worthless. But yeah, that’s just- that’s just one thing as well. Another thing.

Interviewer: Mm. So it sounds like what you’re saying is sometimes um when you’re walking in the shopping centre or a- in the middle of a crowd, you know, you might have thoughts coming into your head and that might make you feel sort of worthless or you might wonder what people are saying about you or think of you.

Interviewee: Yeah. That’s usually the case now ‘casue um… you do tend to have those thoughts. I usually have those thoughts when I go through a big crowd that’s- like if I don’t see anyone that’s the same as me or non-Muslim, then they usually tend to look up and down at you and you just seem to think, you know, I’m just a- definitely in the wrong place. And just all sorts of thoughts go in your mind which just doesn’t feel right but once you leave that area you just tend to think you know, maybe it was just you, maybe it was just you thinking- overthinking as always. Yeah.

Interviewer: How does that make you feel?

Interviewee: It’s daunting but there’s nothing you can do with your mind and just- just have like positive thoughts in your head. Like number two and four is almost the same, you kind of [interviewer: mhm] have the same thoughts in your head but… what I usually have to do is just block it out and just, you know, look at the floor and just keep walking and not have those thoughts. And just avoid making eye-contact with people that keep staring at you ‘cause you- you have those thoughts and that’s it, you let it defeat you. Whereas it’s best just not to.

Interviewer: When you say that you see people eye-contacting you, can you tell me more about that?

Interviewee: As in, you know when you’re usually in a shopping centre sort of stuff and people look at you up- like in a weird way? You do have those thoughts going in your head. You’re thinking, you know, something wrong with me? Is it the way I look? Or any other thoughts like that and then, you know, you just start to feel kind of worthless and other stuff. Like you usually see girls these days dressed in a way or their body figure’s so- so great. And then you just start to analyse it and then you just think you’re doing something completely wrong. And when you push yourself too far, then you start to realise- you lose the close ones that you have. Like close family members and friends. And that’s what leans- leads to loneliness. ‘Cause you’ve just blocked everyone out.

Interviewer: When you say that you kind of lose family and friends ‘cause you’ve gone afar-

Interviewee: Yeah. [Interviewer: unintelligible 23:28] It depends really ‘cause your- in your work- like whatever work sector you’re working at, if you choose, you know, your job more than your friends and family, or if you’re spending more time at work instead of your friends and family then that will make sense. That means you will just lose the ones that you love. Because you chose your ego instead of… the ones that have actually supported you since the day you were born. [Interviewer: mm] Yeah.

Interviewer: So sounds like- so are you saying basically that you choose your work- not that you choose but you…

Interviewee: Some people have the choice of choosing their work instead of their family but others have no other option. If it’s something you’ve always wanted to be, like for example a doctor, since a young age, it would make sense for you to choose, you know, work over family. ‘Cause you’re saving lives. But at the same time, it’s maintaining both the lives. But that’s very hard these days ‘cause, you know, sometimes there’s a lot of job oppor- job opportunities being cut down so what are the chances of you trying to cut down your hours so you can get home from an eight to six job to a eight to four job. It’s just- it’s not very common that, ‘cause you know, today’s generation is completely different where… there’s just lots of cuts. Money’s- obviously you’re getting payed very less [unintelligible 24:40] minimum wage. Yeah. It’s just a lot of things going on outside of the world, instead of thinking it’s just you. Yeah.

Interviewer: Mhm. And how does that make you feel?

Interviewee: There’s nothing you can do to be honest. It’s just, you know, it’s- it’s what life is. You can never please everyone. It’s what you do. I mean if someone’s not happy then you can’t please everyone, but if it’s your own family, I’ve- I’ve realised that if it’s your own family, like you own parents, like you realise that you- you’re making them upset, then you have to do what you can to change the fact that your work is not always what it’s supposed to be. You have to either change the job or cut down the hours. ‘Cause once you lose the someone you love, you regret working all those hours or overworking. ‘Cause you don’t have the time that you could have spent with them. Which usually does happen. Once you lose someone, a lot of people realise, was working, you know, nine to six worth it every single day? Or was it- would it be more worth it to spend time with the family that you- you have right now until they’re gone.

Interviewer: Mm. And how does it feel for you to go to have that kind of… um quote-un-quote battle… going back and forth… between these?

Interviewee: It’s- it’s- it is what it is ‘cause it’s- mostly some people lose their minds with just the work and others just prefer to keep going. Even after losing someone very close to them, they will still continue working full time. But not realise once they lose both their parents or someone very close, like maybe their husband or wife, it will hit- will hit them very hard to realise that you know, it’s not all about work. It’s all about family as well. But I think it’s when you lose that someone very close to you that you dearly love, that’s when it- that’s when it hits you that, you know, th- this isn’t- this isn’t worth it. Not every day- not- it’s not worth doing- working every day. It’s more spending time with your family, which is what everyone’s trying to do right now, but it’s hard to maintain working, you know, twenty-five percent in the chosen job you want and then spending seventy five percent with your family. It’s very hard ‘cause that’s not what the government wants. The government- government wants people working non-stop. And it’s just thinking, you know, who’s gonna look after your family? ‘Cause if you can’t do it then… who will?

Interviewer: So it sounds like you work a lot and you don’t have time- so it sounds like you work a lot and you feel like you don’t have as much time that you want to spend time with your family.

Interviewee: That’s what it usually is. ‘Cause I- I work as- as much as I can but in the mean time I try to run home straight when I finish work in a primary school. Like the second the children are dismissed I try to get home as quick as I can. Because, you know, if your school finished at three-thirty, and the time you get home it’s four thirty and then you’ve got what, about six hours left of the day that you can spend time with family and friends or family and just watch a movie and that sort of timing you spend with them actually makes you feel, you know, great. Whereas sitting in a classroom all day just makes you realise, you know, this is actually not the life you chose. ‘Cause you sit in a classroom all by yourself, you sit with your colleagues, it’s not the same. It’s just, you know, your colleagues are then and there. They’re not someone who understands you or your- or what’s in your mind, whereas those that are very close to you are busy at work or at home. It’s just maintaining the fact that you have to run back and forth. And making sure you’re on top of everything. It’s time management as well as… you know, [unintelligible 28:04] it’s mostly time management. Yeah.

Interviewer: And how do you feel about that?

Interviewee: Not really much you can do. It- it’s the life that, you know- it’s the life cycle. You just keep going. Until someone dies, you stop working so much and then you move on once you’re- once you’re okay with it. And it just keeps going. It’s just non-stop. ‘Cause that’s what they want. The government wants you to work non-stop. Then your family don’t want you to work all the time. They want you to spend time with them. And then you’re just thinking about financial issues, how you’re supposed to support them in the long term. Yeah, it’s just- it’s a life cycle. Just like tax, going round and round until- until the end of year comes. [Interviewer: mm] Yeah. The second- the third one, I put two paths. So there could be either a good side or a bad side of two doors. [Interviewer: mm] Um usually when you choose the good side, you tend to feel lost. And you know, you could either lose your own close family and friends and have everything you’ve ever wanted, or you can have the door where it’s the lightning and it’s completely different. It’s the opposite. And you can still have everything gone. You can have your family gone, your own friends gone. So it’s a bit of both. Y- you can’t really decide. You’re pretty much stuck in between two options the whole time. And when you do choose one, it could possibly be the wrong one. And if you even chose the right one, it will still be the wrong one. And that’s something that goes through everyone’s mind every day as well. If you were to take a job offer, it would still be one of those things where you think fifty-fifty. Like you’d write the best things about it and the bad things about it. It’s just you’re in between of it. You’re sitting on a fence pretty much. With all your thoughts gathered.

Interviewer: Um… so just… just to go through it with you, so basically here you’ve got a picture um of basically a gloomy sort of- a goo- a good weather, sort of nice, and- and- and stuff. And then you’ve got on the other a hand a picture of a bad weather and lightning and things. [Interviewee: yeah] And this is a person in the middle being lost and confused. [Interviewee: yeah] Can you- can you just let… [unintelligible 30:28] I don’t- I’m- I’m not sure if I understood why you have these two-

Interviewee: So if you have the first one, which is the good weather, [interviewer: yeah] you know, if you had a good day, it could possibly always lead to something negative coming towards you at the end. Or if you had a bad day, you could possibly have something good coming at the end of the day. But it’s not always what it is. Like having a good day, you could possibly have a good outcome, or a bad day could possibly have a bad outcome. Or you could have both. A good outcome and a bad outcome at home, and then a bad and a good. So it’s- it’s never certain. It’s like life’s not very sure with what you want. It’s what you wanna make it. And even if you try so hard, it will never work. Like you could have a good future but then you’ll still lose the- the loved ones that you always wanted and still feel lonely. And you can have a bad future and still be lonely. It’s just- it really depends on who you are and what your mind set is. So if you have positive thoughts throughout the whole time, then you’ll be fine. But if you’re someone who has no one to keep them going or to give them wisdom or any sorts of positive mind set or anything to keep- you know, to keep them… going the whole time, then you’ll pretty much just fall apart and that’s where it leads to all sorts of things.

Interviewer: And how does that make you feel?

Interviewee: It’s- it’s daunting ‘cause a lot of people don’t have the same mind set as everyone else. Like I could be- I’m one of those one’s where I feel like if something didn’t go well, then you know, you give up, you just think negative the whole way through. Whereas someone else who’s pretty much had a- a worser s- stage of life, you know, they could be fine, they could keep going, and at the end of the day, they could possibly break, and you don’t realise that. Like you think they’re okay but they’re actually not, they’re actually- they’re completely the opposite. But you don’t know that till you actually speak to them.

Interviewer: So it sounds like what you’re saying is… you’re never certain what’s gonna happen to you in the future. You might have a really good day, but then at the end, it might turn out really bad [interviewee: yeah] or vice versa.

Interviewee: You just don’t know what- what’s there to come in life. And it just depends who you are. ‘Cause if you’re someone who believes in god then you know- you know that god’s just testing you. But if you’re someone who doesn’t believe in god then you know- you pretty much don’t know what’s to expect. ‘Cause I’m someone who believes in god and, you know, you just keep praying for good things to come or you know this life is a test so you just have to keep going ‘cause, you know, this is- this is just a temporary world. Whereas here after, you know- you- you’re expected much better than this. There won’t be any trials or… anything silly. You- you know it’s just gonna be all happy and… or it could all be gloomy. Just depends who you are.

Interviewer: And how do you feel about that?

Interviewee: It’s… it’s normal. It’s like it’s life as well. It just depends on your faith. If you’re someone who thinks positive, you can keep going. But if you’re someone who’s negative, then I guess you won’t really have a life for long. It’s- it just really depends who you are. Haming- having negative thoughts could actually lead you to a ne- an early death. ‘Cause you don’t know what could happen and… yeah. You don’t know what could happen.

Interviewer: Mm. And you also mentioned earlier that it depends on who you are. So if you’re someone who thinks positively, then um the- the- the difficult things might not affect you as much.

Interviewee: Yeah. So if you’re someone who thinks positive of everything, like what- what’s to come, or someone’s death has come and you know- you know, you’re just always thinking positive about it. Like they were ready for their death, they- they did everything they could do, then it’s fine. But usually the ones that have no one with them and they’re trying to think positive, it doesn’t tend to work ‘casue you need someone to help you out there. You need someone- either a close friend or a family to always support you or to always check up on you. But when you lose that then, you know, you completely fall apart. You just think that you’re hopeless and you’re worthless and all other sorts. [Interviewer: Hmm] But I think it’s definitely key that if you- if you lose someone very close to you, that you’re always connected to someone. Or just someone does their job to check up on you. Even like once a week or something, just to make sure that you’re okay. ‘Cause that sort of bond sends- tends to kind of leave or, you know, go after a couple of weeks. Depending on what the connection is-

Interviewer: What goes, sorry?

Interviewee: That kind of bond that you have with someone. So if you were very close to someone and you lose that connection, then it could lead to someone being isolated and all sorts. [Interviewer: mm] And that can have them falling into the loneliness trap of, you know, having suicide thoughts, feeling worthless and isolated, and overthinking.

Interviewer: Mm. So it sounds like w-… um… so it sounds like you like… you like to have some close people um… and you, obviously just like anyone, doesn’t wanna lose them. [Interviewee: mm] Mm.

Interviewee: Yeah that’s very true. Definitely having close friends and family is quite important as well. ‘Cause they usually always have to check up on you. Just a simple conversation, just asking you how your day is or how you’re doing or h- how’s everything going. It just makes- makes you feel much better and makes you feel like, you know, something’s going right. Whereas, if you were to check your phone at the end of the week and see who actually called you and then you’ll realise, you know, those ones were actually there for you, you’ve just got- you just got contact numbers and stuff where people don’t seem to actually bother, unless they’re after something. Yeah.

Interviewer: Mm. Um is there anything else you wanted to say?

Interviewee: No that’s everything.

Interviewer: Okay. Um maybe we can move on to the next [unintelligible 36:41]. I- I mean, sorry, the-

Interviewee: The next box?

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. Did you talk about the fourth box?

Interviewee: The second and the fourth box [interviewer: sorry, this one I mean] kind of links together.

Interviewer: Oh, these two?

Interviewee: Yeah. They link together kind of. ‘Cause mostly the words that are in their thoughts are in their heads.

Interviewer: What does it say?

Interviewee: Um feeling scared, anxious, worried, high anxiety, confused, overthinking, worthless, alone, conscious and isolated and careless. [Interviewer: um] Usually the thoughts that go through someone’s head when they’re outside [interviewer: mm] when they have no one with them. Yeah.

Interviewer: Tell me more about that. So like what would be the situation where they would feel that way or-

Interviewee: It’s usually when they’re alone. I mean, you know, like I said earlier, it’s just when you don’t have family or friends, you have those thoughts. Wherever you go or wh- whatever you see, you always have those thoughts of just going through you mind. You can easily control it whereas some others can’t and that’s what causes them to have high anxiety. You know, some people have really bad anxiety where they point where they can’t leave the house and wanting to be alone is not- you know, they can’t do that because they’re just worried of what other’s will think. And that’s what’s going on into this generation, it’s just- it’s always thinking about what others will think… of you or you know, anything else.

Interviewer: Mm. And how does that make you feel?

Interviewee: It’s- it’s sad. ‘Cause you can’t exactly walk in the park by yourself ‘cause you have those questions or thoughts in your head and it stops you from doing anything you wanna do. That’s… yeah.

Interviewer: You mentioned worthless here, [interviewee: yeah] can you tell me more about that?

Interviewee: It’s usually what people tend to feel when they’re alone. They feel like they’ve lost everyone around them. It- they were the one to blame for it when it’s not really their fault. Usually- for example, if they was a family with their parents and two other siblings or one other siblings and they’ve lost all of those, they would, you know, continuously blame themselves for their action that wasn’t really their fault. You know, they would probably wish that it was them that was in- part of the death instead of their family members. Because they end up having a- a very lonely life without them. And the ones that are trying to support them are not usually there for them. And you- they usually wish they were because, you know, once you move on you move on. No one really cares about you. It’s just- just brush it under the carpet.

Interviewer: Mm. And how does that make you feel?

Interviewee: It’s- it’s very sad. No wonder there’s a lot of orphans out there that, you know, tend to commit suicide. ‘Cause no one seems to care. And even your own friends, you think they would care but they’re actually really busy with their own life. Like no one really tends to care about anything unless they get home and notice that it’s their own family. Whereas, you know, if you were to- were to go home and you live alone and you have no one then, you know, you don’t really realise- you- you realise what you have is not really there. You know when they usually say you don’t realise what you have until it’s gone, which is the sad truth of this reality. Because that’s what usually- a lot of people go through. They only realise something once it’s gone. [Interviewer: mm] Like losing family members like they used to speak to all the time. Or a dad that they never used to speak to when they used to come home. But once they’re gone, that’s when you realise that something’s gone.

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

Interviewee: No, that’s pretty much everything… in those four drawings.

Interviewer: Mm. Okay maybe we can move on to the next task, is that okay if I-?

Interviewee: Yeah that’s okay.

Part 2 – Participant 29, Female, 22, Tower Hamlets

Interviewer: Okay so um can we start by talking about what you’ve put in box one for task two.

Interviewee: So [interviewer: thank you] box one um it says place- a place where you feel socially connected. I put the neighbourhood ‘cause there there’s a lot of neighbours in our lot that’s Muslims and they’re always popping around and asking us how we are. We recently had um a non-Muslim neighbour move in couple of doors down um last Ramadan- I think it was the last- the Ramadan before that. And they came around to our da- doors with dates and stuff, welcoming themselves, which you normally never happens. Whenever neighbours move in, they don’t really tend to care. And since then it’s- it’s actually been really nice. We used to- we feel more connected to- to anyone else than we usually do. Um one time they had a- a fair outside our house, a little party with all- all the neighbours getting together, giving out food. And that’s made me realise, you know, people are so quick to judge these days with the way people look or the way they speak or what the media’s portraying. But they don’t tend to look at what’s in someone’s heart. Like the fact that the neighbour came around and gave dates to us and said Ramadan Mubarak, which was the most recent thing anyone else wouldn’t possibly think of, was actually really nice. Until this day, you know, whenever we walk past her or whenever we see her, we’re always exchanging everything, we’re always giving her dishes or- she realises that what they put on social media and what they put on the news and stuff is not what is actually being portrayed by Muslims in direct… [interviewer: mm] yeah. And then number two, I said place where you feel lonely-

Interviewer: Sorry, sorry. Before I move on to number two- is that okay if I ask you a couple more questions-

Interviewee: Yeah, that’s fine.

Interviewer: Um, so it sounds like what you’re saying is um you like your neighbourhood because um-

Interviewee: It’s connected.

Interviewer: It’s very connected.

Interviewee: Yeah. If you were to fall ill or something happened, like one of our neighbours um had a kidney dis- kidney failure and a lung failure or something like that. Like word spreads very fast and, you know, the community will just get together and try to figure out something that could be done, if nothing like medical assistance being done to help him. You know, everyone tries to, you know, support them. If one of the parents are not very happy with what’s going or she feels upset, you know, all the parents would- not all the parents but all the mums would get together and try sort some things out. Like uh a mothers’ meeting. You know, the men will usually go to the mo- mosque um close to our house and they usually discuss anything that’s going wrong. And things kind of spread quickly. Like when someone passes away in the neighbourhood, it’s- it’s something that word spreads very quickly and it’s- it’s not in a way that it’s a negative, it’s more of a positive. Like, you know, the person lived for this long and they did so much things with the community and for us. You know, you should always think open and you should always do what you can to support that family or- and anyone around them. Because once you leave this world, people will know you for what good you’ve done instead of what bad you’ve done. Yeah.

Interviewer: Mm. So you like the connectedness that your neighbours- everyone is connected, they know each other, [interviewee: yeah] they – they- they are aware of each other’s lives, they make the effort to do things for each other, [interviewee: definitely] support each other.

Interviewee: Yeah, like [interviewer: yeah] the other day, my brother’s car- um well someone down the road knows my brother all the time, always getting into his car, and they ask him to like, you know, turn his car on or something or, you know, connect the wires together to turn it on. ‘Cause his car wasn’t working. And just noticing that person every day, whenever they leave the house they get into their car, you know, just makes you realise that the person actually approached him and asked him, you know, can you help me start my engine ‘cause it’s not working. ‘Cause h- he even said to him I notice you every morning, you know, always cleaning your car and stuff. Would you be able to help me turn my car on? And it was just kind of a thoughtful thing where my brother noticed that someone actually stares out the window or comes outside their house and notices me every morning. You know, just that little thing of telling him to, you know, help me with his car ‘cause he’d noticed him every morning actually makes you feel like people in this community that do actually care about each other. Where if you actually dropped on the- on the road, people would approach you and, you know, think- support you or actually try call an ambulance for help. Whereas others in other communities would just walk past and think, you know, the person’s drunk or on drugs or something. Whereas this community’s very connected. They an always- they’re always helping each other. And, you know, they’re making sure that if you’re ill, they’re always there for you or have something to give you or pray- praying for you. [Interviewer: mm] Yeah.

Interviewer: And how does that make you feel?

Interviewee: It makes you feel loved and connected. It doesn’t usually happen in ever- other places or other areas where I’ve heard of, you know, family and friends living in. But it makes you, you know, wonder do yourself that you’re actually in a good environment. You know it can be quite loud and stuff but if you think of all the benefits and stuff where people are connected, that’s the main thing you need. And, you know, you just realise this community doesn’t really care about the way you look or the way you speak, it’s the way you, you know, portray yourself and the way you show yourself to others. That’s what they look at. So the media can always put you down and, you know, the news can always say negative things, but people will always look at you because of the way your heart is and, you know, the way you show yourself to everyone. [Interviewer: mm] Yeah.

Interviewer: And how does that make you feel, when people judge you by your appearance and how you [unintelligible 4:24]-

Interviewee: It’s a- it’s a very sad ‘cause it- it’s- the fact that they don’t even know what’s going on. Um, you know, you have your education in primary school and secondary school where you know more about people’s faith but currently these days and age, people are brain-washing the younger children or even adults with basic things, making it seem we’re- we’re the wrong ones. When in reality it’s just a part of the group or a part of a community that’s not really us that’s making us look wrong. So it’s- it’s uh very sad as well. Because people don’t realise that we’re not bad people. It’s just some people are bad. Yeah.

Interviewer: Mm.

Interviewee: Shall I talk about number two? Box two?

Interviewer: Yeah- yeah- if- do you have anything else to say about box one?

Interviewee: Nope that’s everything for box one. [Interviewer: okay] Box two I said that the work place normally makes you feel lonely, just like discussed from the boxes earlier. Um when working all say and not having the company of your close friends or family, and noticing something is uh missing or wrong, you don’t have time to see them often or you- or like you once did. For example when you’re a student, you have more flexibility and more time because you’re only working about two, three days in college or university. And then other days you’re pretty much taking your assignments with you to someone’s house or your friend’s or family’s house. And you’re sitting there even for two hours talking to them and then you know heading back to do your assignments, it makes you realise you- you’re with someone. You know, you may have a busy life doing your assignments but at least- the fact that you get to see someone’s face with family reunions. Whereas currently now, working, you just don’t have that time. ‘Cause you’re with so many people that are not actually there for you at the end of the day. They’re just there to do their job and leave. [Interviewer: mhm] And that can tend to lead to loneliness ‘cause… that’s what usually happens. No one really seems to care about mental health when you’re actually working. They just want you to do your job and leave. They don’t tend to ask how you are. They just tend to ask you, you know, how’s the day going with the children? Or, you know, could you manage to do this before you go? It’s just a simple question of, you know, how are you or how’s your day going? Personal- personal questions makes you realise, you know, people actually care but no one asks those personal questions at work anymore. It’s just, you know, get your job done and go. [Interviewer: mm] And it’s very sad as well ‘cause you don’t- you don’t expect that but I guess that’s what- what this- what’s this world come to. [Interviewer: mm] Yeah. That’s about it.

Interviewer: How do you- how does that make you feel?

Interviewee: It’s sad but you don’t expect this in this world. But it’s- I guess that’s what everyone’s come to do now. I mean I guess there’s a lot of pressure from management and senior leadership team and everyone else in the higher department, you know, making sure that you have to do this or else you could lose your job or, you know, you can easily replace you. ‘Cause that’s what it’s come to now. If you don’t do what you’re supposed to do, they can easily replace you and the last thing you want is that sort of stress where you have to look for a new job or, you know, it’s just job hunting as it is is just very hard. So [interviewer: mm] that’s a lot of pressure that puts on someone and that could easily lead to loneliness. Yeah.

Interviewer: So it sounds like your work o- your- your place of work is a place where um people just- people are there to get the job done, [interviewee: yeah] there’s no sort of genuine interaction or-

Interviewee: No interactions at all, no. Unless it’s like- it’s literally a five or ten minutes conversation in the day throughout the eight or nine hours that you’re there for. Which is literally how are you, how was your weekend, you know, what’s your plans for the next weekend. That’s it. And the next thing you know, everyone’s gone back to their [unintelligible 49:40] self. Like it’s usually lunch time where people tend to have a conversation with you or ask you what’s your plans for the day. But after that, after your lunch break, everyone’s back to themselves. After school, everyone’s gone back to themselves, or after their shift they’re just- they’re just rushing to get home. [Interviewer: mm] Yeah. That’s both of the boxes.

Interviewer: Mm.

Interviewee: Is there anything else on those two?

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

Interviewee: Nope, that’s all of it. Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. I’m gonna pause the- thank you very much.

Interviewee: That’s alright, thank you.

Interviewer: Thank you