Participant 44 – Male, 24, Tower Hamlets

**I: So, can we start by talking about what you’ve put in box one?**

Box one is when it comes from, well, the experience of loneliness. So, “depression” comes to mind. For me. It's uh, when I felt loneliness, the first thing that I could experience in terms of emotions on what you're going through, depression is the first thing that comes to, you know, you’re not surround, you are not surrounded by people that you know we love sometimes or you can’t really connect. So, it comes to you being alone and you feel as though there’s no, kind of support available. So that's when you know, you kinda go through that experience of depression.

**I: So, it sounds like what you're saying is, um, um, you feel that the people that would support you are not necessarily there**

Occasionally, it does feel like that. Yeah.

**I: Um, and, and, and then you associate loneliness with the experience of depression.**

Agreed. Yes, I’ve you know, I’ve been through loneliness and it can get hard. And the one thing that I’ve always learned is to kind of carry forward and move forward and try alternative things, solutions, to do better but, I've been through, you know, kind of living life by myself. I can’t focus on work, you know, my personal experience was an, I focused on the one thing that I believed, what does this mean in my life and can put one thing into perspective and kind of grow something, um, and can make myself something. So, I chose my career and I try to put that to the best of my ability of course.

**I: And when you experience loneliness yourself you said, how does that make you feel in those moments?**

Feel as in, there was times where I felt so sad, you know, and I couldn't turn to know one. There was crying, of course. So it wasn't the best experience.

**I: And what, what do you think? Sort of? What experiences for you led you to feeling lonely?**

I think, well, if we I wrote in box three, um, I’ve experienced it and my experience was when my girlfriend and I broke up. It was kind of a lot to deal with, because it was like a hole that couldn't be filled. So I tried my best. The only solution that I found was to find something that I could turn into either a hobby or find something to do, you know, that could have kind of filled my time rather than sit here and feel depressed or sorry, or you know, so I could actually do something, you know, kind of feel connected with the world rather than being alone and just by myself.

**I: So, sounds like break relationship breakups can make you feel lonely.**

Yes, yeah.

**I: And um, yeah, how did that make you feel when you had that break up with your girlfriend?**

I mean it took quite some time to actually recover and find something. And I was unemployed at first, so I didn’t have a job so I just kind of start to think about “well, how am I going to fill my time? How am I going to do something?”, you see “how I’m going to to move forward with my life and not look at the past.” So I decided to find something that was, you know, find something that I wanted to do. I was working at McDonalds so it wasn't really a career that I would say I want to make out myself so I went down the kind of apprenticeship group, I wanted to study, learn and kind of interact, get to know why I wanted to do. So, the first thing that I did was, you know, looked online, see what I could find. I went to work in finance. So that was the first thing I started to look at. I kind of built myself from then on.

**I: And then what did you actually write in box one?**

Uh, box one is I wrote “depression comes to mind”, um, where feel as though there is no support in your life to move forward with that sad, and the experience leads me to uh, pursue or slash chase happiness.

**I: Okay, let's digest them one by one. So, when he said, um, um, when you think of the depress-, loneliness, depression comes to your mind. Can you tell me more about that?**

Well, when you associate loneliness, the only kind of for my from my personal experience, you know, it is a kind of, it has several impacts and whether its loneliness, when you kind of think of it, it's uh, kind of the most, most negative impacts in your life, you know, and depression being one of them because well, when you look around you, you’re by yourself, there's no one else around you cannot do anything, you know, there is no one to give you advice. There's no one to actually help you. There’s no one to actually to sit with you and say, you know, not that you know to say that “everything's gonna be all right”. But you know, there's no actual feeling of you know, feeling either physical or, you know, emotional support, love, um, you see?

**I: When you say “emotional” and “love”? Can you tell me more about them?**

Um, love and emotions, you know, when you feel as if you’re being loved, you know, you feel happy, you feel as though you want you have something to live for but when you kind of when you're all alone in experiencing loneliness, you don't, you're all by yourself. You have no emotions. So, it's kind of you’re put into kind of, you have a void that you need to fill. You're in the abyss, and it's just sinking and you feel like you're sinking and without the kind of right level of support, I don't think, you know, you can't get out of loneliness

**I: When you say, you know “without the right level of support you can’t survive from loneliness”, can you tell me more?**

Support comes from friends, teachers, you know, it depends who is there around in your life from parents, uh, also obviously there is professional help that you can get and there is friends who can support you. But inevitably I think, you know, it starts at home, and then it kind of grows a bit bigger. You see?

**I: So, it sounds like, um, not having, you know, friends or family, that can support you, can make you feel lonely or anyone.**

Yeah, for me. Yeah, that was kind of the biggest thing that I’ve had to deal with, you see? Because you see, because when I have, at least in my personal experience, I kind of retracted myself in a way I kind of closed everyone off if that makes sense and that that's what led me to feeling lonely, you see? So, and that was, I only did that because I felt as though there was no one around me who can support me so I had to do things on my own to kind of branch out and kind of build myself on. So, that's where my kind of experience comes from.

**I: And um, when you said that you pushed everyone away or you didn’t even necessarily. yeah, is that what you said?**

Yes.

**I: When you said you pushed everyone away, can you tell me more?**

Uh, well, when I say push, I mean like close them out of my life, no social interactions, no Instagram no Snapchat, nothing, no Facebook - everything was deleted, I wasn’t really on anything. So I kind of closed all kinds of social media accounts. Yeah, I wasn't really on anything. I was just focused on myself. So I hardly had anyone in my life.

**I: And what sort of led to that?**

That was because of uh box number three. So that was the kind of main reason and that's probably, and that's kind of I was roughly around fourteen fifteen but again, even at a young age, things do have a kind of a big impact in your life.

**I: So, time plug sounds like you basically, after your break up and you closed off, you shut off from social contacts, interactions and it kind of felt…**

As though there was no support yeah. So, I didn’t feel as though I could really look around me and say “yeah, these are the people that would really help me kind of move me forward”, you know, I thought I’d rather take this challenge and kind of build something and I was quite young, by the way, I was like fourteen years old. I'm twenty three now. So, you see, nine years have gone and yeah, I've kind of build something for myself. Again, I'm, I’m still at the same place, but with like a kind of a niche circle of friends who's there, if you would.

**I: And how did that make you feel being in that situation? Like you felt like you shut off from everyone.**

There was, I think, there was years where I would go by and not really connect socially connect, it had an adverse effect on me because I couldn’t really speak to anyone. You see, you know, when you speak to friends, you have experiences where you can actually communicate. You can learn to talk and social interaction and you develop but that's where I lacked because I focused on studying, I focused on career. I didn't focus on personal skills, do you see? I didn't focus on the things that, you know, all the things that would really help me.

**I: And then yeah, so it seems like what you're saying is, um, during that time when you shut yourself away from social interactions and invested time, you know, pursuing your future and things like that.**

Um, uh, yeah, I, I closed a lot friends off. I mean, I have, and I worried more about kind of what am I going to do? you see? Because I felt as though, you know, I had something in mind at that moment in time, you know, I had a girlfriend and stuff like that but when it came to, when that experience had happened, I felt as though “oh, crap, some things have changed, plans have shifted. You know, what do I do now?” You know, I had kind of things in mind, you know, plans and stuff like that and once that happened, I kind of had to change things around and find something else to do really, you know, find alternative solutions. You know, what, what do I want to do? Kind of challenge and question my whole life really.

**I: And you also mentioned that during those periods when you kind of socially detached yourself from everybody, that had some, that basically didn't allow you to develop, uh, you know, the skills to connect with people and so on.**

Yeah, uh, so the part where I work, um, the job that I do, you need to kind of really interact with people, you know, what I do is I go through the accounts and I look at figures and I you know, I questioned them, but I’ve had to really build that by myself, because I couldn't really speak to anyone or really challenged them. You know, it really had an adverse effect upon me, um, part of it is because, you know, like I said, you know, from a young age, I didn’t really speak to anyone. So, they had the opportunity to kind of develop that. But at work, it had a negative impact. I really had to learn the hard way, kind of interact, make jokes, watch videos, we learned about it, kind of, you know, study and kind of build upon that. You know, it didn't come to me naturally. I kind of I had to and always will be kind of progressing and seeing how I can do things better in that, you know, social interaction at work.

**I: And how does that make you feel when you were in that situation where you had to, um, work extra to be able to or learn the hard way to be able to, you know, make the effort to interact with people, to the you know, social relationships at work and so on. How does that make you feel?**

Um, it did help me understand a lot about you know, communication and you know how to speak you know to managers and stuff like that. So it did, you know what I did was I looked around me at work and I saw how people really spoke and I, I kind of I rather listen, I don't really speak much, I listen and I look around listen, listen in on conversations, see how they speak and I kind of match the link, if you would. So that's the way that I tried to kind of learn and adapt myself to kind of fit in within, you know, at work.

**I: That sounds like what you're saying is, um, in order for you to like be able to fit in with the work, um, um, sort of social environment, you try to listen, you try to pay attention to conversations and topics and you might kind of, by that, by doing that, you will be able to join in and contribute.**

Yeah, that was the main thing, really. Um, I, at work, you know, I have colleagues, you know, they they're very interactive and when I look at their kind of social level skills, you can see that you know they’re surrounded by people who they love, you know, who they can interact with but, again, it's hard because the one thing that I try and maintain is you know, my level of communication within work and sometimes it is hard because you know if you don't really know something you cannot join in on the conversation. So again there's positives and there’s negatives to have to everything here.

**I: And how do you feel about that?**

Um, I take my time to kind of study about what other people's interests are. I kind of learn about people and then I try to talk about, you know what they like. I, you know, I've got colleagues who are, you know, who love their family and focused on family so I ask them, you know, “how are your children?” or “how's this going”, you know. So, I'm trying to learn as much about people as I can before I kind of conversate, get to know them on a personal level too.

**I: And um, and how is it like when you see them, for example, you know, having very high level of social skills. How does that make you feel when you see them like that?**

I mean, I don't feel, I feel as though I wish I could have that level but again, I try to develop myself. I have that mentality where I want to be better and do better. So, I try and look at it from a perspective where I you know, “what can I do? What can I say?” or what, what are the steps that I need to do to take or meet that level of, you know, social interaction, it may be of my career or whatever it may be, you know, what are the actions, what are the steps that you want to take to then build yourself up. So, I look it at from that perspective whether it’s small, little watching videos, internet research whatever it may be, I’m willing and there are some times where I’ve done that before.

**I: Is there anything else you want to say about box one?**

Uh, for box one? Not really, no.

**I: Thank you. Can we move on to box two please?**

Yeah, do you want me to read it out?

**I: Uh, sure if that’s what you prefer.**

Well, box two comes about by talking about mental health really and how, you know, psychologically, you're really affected. So I wanted to kind of elaborate on the experience that loneliness has on oneself, on one's mentality. So where we know people are really unable to socialize with others. So, in my opinion…

**I: Is it okay if I ask you to speak a little louder please, if you don't mind.**

Yeah, that's not a problem. So, when it comes to mental health, um, I believe that loneliness has a kind of a negative impact, you know, if you don't have the right level of support, you go through a lot. You know, you read stories about people coming suicide and all this, because, you know, they feel really caged in and boxed in, you know, they don't have anyone else to look out for them, you see? So, that's where the kind of the mentality kicks in, you know, all things like self-harm and all of that, you know, people look at and kind of exit, you know, like uh, external exits, you know, like drugs and all of that things like that just to kind of break out and branch out and not really feel that and kind of deal with the problem at hand rather than escape. And I think that contributes to one's mental health and in a really adverse manner.

**I: Um, when you said that “some people are caged in”, can you tell me more about that?**

I feel as though people are majority of the time, you know, you may be boxed in and you may feel as though there's no level of, I would say not support but level of contribution from the outside world, you know, you don't feel as though people out there. So what you do is you close yourself off and you retract from the world, and it’s one of the worst things you can do. But, that's how you feel, you feel as though you're alone. You can't speak, you can't branch out you can’t talk to anyone about your experiences, you can't do anything, because you know you just feel it, you just don't want to speak about it. You know, you may feel as though people might talk about it, just all these external factors.

**I: When you said that you “feel as though you're alone and you can’t talk about it”. Can you tell me more about that?**

Oh, when it comes to uh, talking about it, yeah, I would say, you know, there are people who may say you know things or spread rumors or gossip and stuff like that. So, you don't feel as though they’re the right people to support you, help you and to care for you, you know, advise you on what needs to be done. So, what you do with them is what normally people do is, well in my, anyways, what people would do is just retract themselves, you know, take a step back and not really look at, you know, not really branch out and look for help.

**I: So it sounds like what you're saying is, um, people sort of detach themselves from, from friends, from family. They don't disclose or express their feelings as it, it seems that they feel as though other people do not necessarily understand them, um, and things like that.**

Yeah. Uh, that's probably the one thing that I’ve learned, I mean, it's yeah, when um, when it comes to it, when you detach yourself, you know, you do feel as though it’s, you through a lot, you know, depending on the circumstance or experience or whatever it may be it does feel as though, you know, you can't, if there's no one to kind of put it in the first instance, you see, like spot that something is wrong with you, you know, you may not be talking, you may not be eating or kind of spot the signs at first of what you're going through that loneliness that experience and I don't think, you know, you can't really assist anyone or get a first-hand grip on, you know, problem solving, you know, solving the issue at hand.

**I: So, you mean like if you have, let's say, like you or somebody is going through loneliness experiences, then are you saying that they can't solve the problem of their own selves at hand or solving other people's problems? Sorry, I'm not sure if I understood that.**

Uh, solving their problems really, you know, the one who is dealing with that and going through whatever the situation may be, whatever the experience maybe, you know, it's you’re all by yourself, for example, you know, you know, whatever the situation or experience, I mean, I read a story where this uh, girl was, you know, suffering from loneliness, you know, her experience was that, you know, she accidentally got pregnant and had a miscarriage. And you know, life and depression just started from there. You see? So, it just depends on what circumstances you are at, you know, and well, she couldn’t branch out because again, you know, she came back from, she's from kind of a religious family you see? So, it comes back to what your situation is within household also kind of external factors also.

**I: So, it sounds like what you're saying is not being able to share or talk about your experiences to other people to make, what somebody feel lonely.**

Yeah, what I would say is uh, if you're not able to express that to other people, and if you just cage yourself in and just ah, I would say, surround yourself, just be alone, you know, you’re not gonna progress and kind of gain the help that you need to overcome and take the necessary steps to kind of resolve just, not only make yourself happy with yourself, make yourself feel as though you are loved. Do you see? So, that's one of the problems, you know? There's no social interaction. There's no kind of connection. You will always feel that experience and you’ll always kind of be going around in a circle rather than kind of moving forward.

**I: So not be able to express yourself, not be able to get that support that you need, that would then end up making, making somebody go around the circle as opposed to just going forward.**

Yeah, or chasing tails really. You know, if you're not able to sit down, resolve the issue, you know, deal with the issue at hand and talk about what are the steps that you need to really take to, you know, overcome the you know what whatever they may be. Um, if you're not able to express yourself, you know, and communicate and share your experience with someone else and say, “look, this is what happened. Now, how do I go about it?” It’s really advice, do you see? You know, getting a third opinion, for example, you just kind of resolving the matter at hand. And well, it takes time. There is a lot, but again, it’s taking the initial step really in the right direction.

**I: Um, how does that make you feel?**

Well, I think everyone needs, you know, everyone needs the right level of support in their life. Not everyone needs to be nurtured, loved for. Well, at that feeling does help and contribute to one's mental health again, you know, you feel as though you're surrounded by people who you love, and that then uh, has a positive contribution on your life, you know, instead of walking around, just looking down and just feeling depressed and sad, you will be buzzing, brimming, you know, you’ll be feeling more happy, more open, rather than being closed.

**I: Um, just going back into what you wrote in the some of the remainder of the box two, um, so “the experience of loneliness does affect a mental mentally, where I’m unable to socialize with others.” Can you tell me more about that?**

Oh, I and again, it comes back to mental health freely, whatever you're dealing with. It does. It does have an effect an adverse effect in your life, not going through loneliness. Um, mentally, you’ll will always feel dependent on where you are in your life and how you deal with it. You know, if you don't get the right level of support, it can have a serious adverse effect in your life. So you know, there are things, um, you may just feel stuck, not able to communicate, you know, if you don't deal with the issue at hand, you may be a you know a 40 year old man unable to communicate or express or you know, just interact and connect with someone. So if you don't really resolve it from a young age, what you are leaving is uh, the potential to just some of those problems later down the future. So that kind of grows, and as a consequence, you know, you're stuck with it rather than resolving what you need to do in order to kind of develop yourself.

**I: So, it sounds like what you're saying is, you know, if you don't necessarily, you know, do anything to prevent yourself from feeling lonely, you might end up that might end up having a consequence on your mental wellbeing essentially.**

Yeah, uh, if you don't take the necessary steps at kind of a young age, I believe, yeah, it can have an adverse effect in your life and you will be struggling to deal with a lot of things you know, whether it you know emotionally or kind of dealing with problems on a social level skills.

**I: Um, just going back to some of things that you mentioned earlier. Um, um, you said something about I asked you that caging and then you said something else before that, then I’m trying to remember what you said. Um, and you said that some people go and do the um, typically like escape you mentioned drinking, drugs there.**

So, kind of external factors, you know where you can temporarily escape. But again, it's not really a solution if you would, you know, you're still chasing tails, you know, you’re not dealing with what you're going through, you're more taking a side step, temporary solution to the problem where you escape. But then when reality hits, you’re back to the same place, you’re back to dealing with that because inevitably you will always feel, you know, whatever you're going through if you don't deal with that hand, you're just going to come back to it right straight away.

**I: Um, so, so just generally speaking from what you're saying, I’m trying, I’m just gonna reflect back what you're saying. So, it seems to me that what you're saying is, um, not being able to share your experiences with other people, um, not being able to express your feelings, your sense of self, um, your experiences generally, um, that can cause a sense of loneliness.**

Um, that was kind of why went through personally to say, like I didn't have anyone in my life where I could kind of open up to or connect with, you know, I had someone at first but after that had departed, I couldn't really connect emotionally with someone to talk to someone to really get to resolving the problem at hand and I decided to take it upon myself to find and resolve the issues at hand. And if I was going through something, you know, what would I do to, you know, fix myself, fix it? But it took, it took a really long time and you know, to actually deal with things, you know, because I had to learn the hard way rather than rather than, you know, if I had someone there, you know, they would kind of advise you “oh, this, this and this”, and you kind of branch out and you’d feel as though there's other solution but when you're by yourself, there's only that one concept in your mind you know, just dealing with the fact that you’re lonely and you can't really branch out when you're going through an experience when you feel as though you’re caged, you know, you can't really talk to someone because you know it feels as though you really struggle to deal with things, you know, again, we come back to social interaction and stuff like that but that was one of the main problems with me, you know, trying to kind of build myself and learning the kind of hard way in dealing with things after that. Um, and the one thing I did was kind of YouTube and kind of Internet, really helped me understand concepts and stuff like that.

**I: When said that you couldn't connect with anyone emotionally or generally. Can you tell me more about that?**

Uh, I didn’t feel as though there was the right level of support in my life back then. Uh, there wasn't anyone who I could really look towards to for that right level of support that I needed. You know, I mean, yeah, one, you know, some people that might go to their parents and look for that kind of support but in my culture, you know, my parents are not from here. They're from, you know from somehow else so they don't really, I can't accustom to you know what people here go through, you know, things are different back where they’re from and as soon as you come to a different place, you know, you have to kind of adapt and change too.

**I: And how did that make you feel?**

Um, I mean, kind of uh, it's really hard to deal with it at first. You know, you can't you can’t find or look for the support at home. And that's really the issue at, you know, yeah.

**I: So, it sounds like this cultural difference had a role in this, not, yeah, not, yeah, like this cultural barrier kind of stopped you from being able to share experiences with your family or going to them for support.**

Yeah. Uh, I couldn't really look towards upon them for that kind of support because I don't feel like they would understand, you know, so I had to, to kind of take upon myself and see what I could do to move forward or kind of build myself and built my career.

**I: And you said, it's not something that they could understand.**

Yeah, I don't think they would be the kind of, I don’t think I could get the right level of support, you know, it's not, yeah, they would understand it but at the end of the I couldn’t really connect emotionally with them, you know and I couldn’t really sit down, have a chat with them, and you know, it's really expressing your emotions and actually express yourself and really tell them what you're going through.

**I: And yeah, it seems like you wanted to express yourself but just couldn't because yeah, cultural barrier cause your family not understanding you.**

Yeah, and that was one of the reasons why I, I took, I boxed myself really, you know, I separated myself and focused on what I wanted to do rather than, you know, rather than really talk to them and see, because I didn't, I don't think they would really understand. So yeah, I took it upon myself and depending on how I see, how I can pursue or deal with these issues by myself, or the experience by myself

**I: And how did it make you feel at the time?**

Yeah, it didn’t make me feel good, I was sad, I was depressed and it wasn't the best experience of my life. You know, not being not being able to turn to or to look for moral support at home, because that's kind of the first thing or first initial instinct, you know, if you get hurt, if you get injured, injured, you know, where do you go first? You know, your natural instinct is run home, you know, a place where you're safe really, do you see.

**I: Is there anything else you want to say about box two?**

Nothing comes to mind regarding box too.

**I: Um, maybe we can start with box three.**

Yeah. So box three was personally uh, my personal experience on what we talked about previously - the girlfriend, breakup, so again, it was it was a big void in my life at that time. You know, I did feel as though because of that that had that kind of had adverse effects in my life where I thought to myself, yeah, “what do I do now?” I really questioned my, you know, I focused on trying to build something, but as soon as it collapsed, I fell back and fell into this abyss because, because I tried to build something and it didn't work out. So I questioned my life and thought “okay, at this moment in time, what do I want to do? How can I you know, how can I move forward, or how can I do something that will give me purpose, really?”, you know, um.

**I: How does that make you feel?**

Regarding what? Sorry

**I: Regarding this experience.**

Ah, regarding the experience. It's nine years later, at the time, it was a very traumatic, well, it was a very hot experience to deal with. So yeah, it was something that I took a lot away from. I mean, it's nine years later, but I've learned a lot from it. You know, I'm getting really kind of develop my, develop myself in the way I want to, you know, I’ve built something I, in my career, and you know, I’ve taken on the external things, you know, volunteering and stuff like that, um, in general, the experience has led me to not only it affected me adversely, but it's also built something for me. You know?

**I: And can you read what you wrote in box three, please?**

So, I wrote that “personally, I’ve experienced loneliness before. So my girlfriend and myself and had separated and it left a hole or slash a void in my life, which I tried to fill”, so and the tried to fill was finding something to do really, you see? It’s like taking a hobby, you know, doing something that you know, that I wanted to do. I joined a company where I started to grow really, you know, it was it was the perfect opportunity for me. It was an apprenticeship. I was able to and within apprenticeship, studying involved, so that really helped me because I could spend some time on learning about something that I wanted to do

**I: So, as it turns out as though you basically tried to cover up your break up, breaking up experiences by, doing other things like for example, taking that apprentice, apprenticeship, um, you know, focusing on your career. It sounds as though, um, you didn’t necessarily deal with that break up, you just tried to cover it by doing something else.**

Yeah, when you put it like that, yeah, I tried to fill the void in my life where the time was, you know, when you spent that time, I just try to fill it as much as possible to find something to do. Um, yeah, it was it was kind of the long way around things, you know, put in my mind and focusing on something rather than worrying about things at the past.

**I: And how do you feel about that?**

I don't think it was the right approach to take. You see, you know, I don't think it's, oh, it's helped. it's 50:50, really. I can’t say it's lead to good things, but it took a lot of time, do you see and a lot of well, it took two years or so to kind of get over things and then deal with it and then move forward with your life and kind of buildup on that. So, I’ll say it's been a, being a, there was a lot of experiences that I had to deal with.

**I: Yeah, and how do you feel about it now?**

I feel as though I’ve learnt a lot, you know, I learned a lot from my life and everything that I went through, you know, if I ever see or hear or kind of see or sense kind of people going through that kind of stuff, I try to support people because I don't really want to want others to do or feel as though that they, you know, they're alone in their lives. You know, I just want to help people. And that's kind of the mentality and approach that I’ve been trying to take with my own life, you know, and if I ever meet someone, just get to know them on a personal level, see how they are and try and you know, if they ever go through something, you know, from my assistance, and that's the mentality I’ve developed, you know, I, throughout the course of my life.

**I: Is there anything else want to say about box three?**

Box three, uh, no. Apart from that, it took a long time to, you know, uh, from, you know, to deal with everything. I don't think I have anything more to add on box three.

**I: Thank you. Can we talk about box four, please?**

Uh, what I wrote in box four was that religion has helped me to deal with loneliness. Um, I’m able to connect with my feelings and help myself not feel restricted by the experience of loneliness. So one of the, to elaborate on that, um, I, started to take religion more seriously. So, um, my background is, you know, Islam, so it really um, learning about it, reading about it kind of helped me to deal with it, you know, and we can outweigh you know the quote within the Koran and everything else. You get to kind of connect on an emotional and personal, you know, level you know, so it it it helped me deal with the problems. And you know, taking on things and stuff like that just eased my pain really, you know, there was some something or someone I could talk to just connect with, you know, share that experience and just, you know, whilst in prayer or whatever it may be.

**I: And that sounds as though focusing on a spiritual life, investing time learning about your religion provided some sense of comfort for you.**

Uh, I, it did provide a lot of comfort for me because, um, again, it was a means of uh, kind of connecting with someone. You know, there was no one else there. So it was me by myself and I had to take the necessary steps to kind of deal with that. And you know, trying to find something to kind of attach your heart to in a way.

**I: So, it sounds like you, yeah, you felt, you felt like religion helped you to deal with the problem better. Yeah, your heart...**

Yeah, I would say it has helped me a lot, because, uh, well, there was no one that I could speak to so you know, there was instances where I would just kind of take my time and pray and focus on, you know, how do I how I move forward? How do I kind of do this and that? So, I used to just make pray and just do this and that. And yeah, it was just like really really being connected to something that really helped me, you know, learning, prayer and you know stuff like that.

**I: (break) I’m not bothered by the sound, by the way.**

**I: Um, okay, how did it make you feel when you felt like your religion was providing you a sense of um, connection. You felt connected to.**

And it had had a positive contributions to my life, you know, and I took it more seriously. And I was able to, I was able to really express myself in expressing my thoughts, you know, just sitting down creating and you know, you, I, I did a lot more studying to religion and stuff like that and it provided me with a sort of kind of peace at heard if you would, you know, where you could find, just trusting someone and deal with it and, yeah, it was as though I could depend on someone or something, you know, to kind of move forward to kind of push me in the right direction if you would.

**I: So, it sounds like, your breakup, in a way, you know, was it, yeah, a big thing in your life, in your life?**

A big thing, I would say “yes”, it had a very adverse effects in that way, yeah, it was something that I dealt with through, you know, through looking at all, “oh, what is the solution or what can I do to kind of not feel as though I’m feeling right now?”. So, the first thing I did was look at, you know, let’s, you know, because you know, I was brought up in a Muslim family, so that's the first thing that I turned to really. So, I turned to that and kind of looking at a hobby too. So that was work and kind of my faith that I turned to, two things.

**I: And um, and what about in instances where, in your religion, your work slash hobbies were not available in the sense that you felt connected but then during times when you weren’t praying or during the times when you weren’t working, how did you deal with your or how did that free time impact your loneliness.**

Uh, free time wasn't necessarily a problem. I mean, I was at work most of my time. I was doing, um, nine o'clock to seven thirty. By the time I got home, it was eight o'clock. So again, it was a means of it was was normal shifted ninety five. But I was took it to when the building closed really, because I didn't want to go home and come back to a place where, you know, you feel with root off it was, you know, where I couldn't move forward or move and this is where the loneliness well, this is where I hoped where the support to be but that's why I stayed at work, you know, that's why I did like 9- 7:30pm kind of shift, because I didn't wanna come back to a place whether I couldn't really connect, you see? So I decided to stay at work and just push my, you know, push myself into or find something to do rather than come back and then, as you said, have that free time.

**I: where are you able to express your thoughts and feelings to anyone else outside of your family context?**

Uh, outside the family context, I would say a couple of people, but when I say a couple, I would say about three people at the maximum. Yeah, they were friends from college or they were people that could really talk to. One was from uh, when I met with through my time at McDonald’s so I used to work for McDees, so I met a guy, you know, you could really connect with some people. They're here. They're, you know, they've gone through some stuff. And he went through some stuff too, you know, exactly like me and I helped him by, I helped him by getting him into my workplace so he had something to do so he wasn't stuck at home dealing with that. And then, you know, just kind of moving forward in life, trying to advise him, help him deal with the issue at hand.

**I: And how did that make you feel?**

Uh, it made me feel as though I wish there was someone that could provide me with that level of support, you see? But then I was glad that I was able to help somebody, you know, advise them, you know, say, oh, look turn towards this, turn towards that, you know, focus on this, focus on that, you know, he was into science, he was into forensics and stuff like that. I told him, “look, you're really good at this and this have a look at, you know, branching out and I’m doing what you love to do. You know, take some external activities, find something to do. You know, you make find something that will give your life or you know, provide you with meaning. You know, feel as though you're not, you know, chasing for happiness, but you're, you're at peace, you’re content with life.

**I: Is there anything else you want to say about box four**?

Uh, regarding box four, uh, just one thing on box four on religion and faith, you know, it had positive contributions in my life to deal with loneliness. Yeah, it, it helped me connect. It helped me feel something, you know, you know, there are times when I was crying, pray or whatever it may be, you know, it made me express myself in a way and yeah, I was able to deal with things and you know, just really kind of deal with things at hand, you know, through religion through learning through kind of that experience and reading the kind of the scriptures and talks and all of that, so what I would normally do is just listen to speakers too, you know like Imams and stuff like that, you know, deal with them, say what they advise you to do this and that, so all of it was available on YouTube so I started utilizing that.

**I: And you mentioned that your parents are from a different country. So, and that might have been some barrier. Did you ever feel that maybe your religion might have had some impact in terms of being that barrier that you could express yourself to your family?**

Uh, that was probably one of the barriers, yeah, I didn't want to mention that situation you know, all of this, what, box three was about the girlfriend and all of that, they didn’t want to really talk about that because I don't think they would really understand in that perspective, you know, I don't think they they themselves are not, I don't think they would be able to grasp what that situation really entailed, you know, in terms of look for them, look toward them for moral support, because, you know, like, how I was brought up that’s not the kind of that's not how I thought or perceived that the level of support was there. You see, my upbringing was more, was less, you know, education driven you know, and stuff like that rather than, you know, nurture, care, love. Yeah, there was at times where I did feel as though it was there, you see? Like, yeah. Yeah, it was very dreaty but towards the end it didn't feel like it.

**I: Sounds like your family didn't provide you with the level of support you needed and yeah.**

I would agree with that. Um, now it may come down to me not being able to, you know, sit them down or me not taking the actions but I didn’t really take that approach because yeah, I think they were just barriers there that I felt, you know, they were just mental either they were mental or physical whether they maybe just there was just something there to say, oh, that's not an approach, you see? There is a barrier there, I can't go past there. So, now it may be me or it maybe them but, there was just something there that I couldn't really just push myself to go.

**I: And when you say “something”, can you tell me more about that?**

The “something” would be like the barrier, you see? Like there was just a block there, uh, preventing me from going in a way, because I didn't know I didn't take that action. I didn't go speak to them, you know, I didn’t sit them down and say, “look, this is what happened.” You know, “this is the experience, blah”, so, and me not taking that approach, may be the circumstances would have been different, maybe I would have been, you know, I would have dealt with it but again, regarding the block, it was just something there that I couldn't just go there and say, “look, this is what”, it was just pushing me back really into something, into the void, just falling down really, you know, just nothing, there was just, yeah, I couldn't move forward for some reason and say, yeah, that's an option, I saw it as a barrier rather than a solution.

**I: You say like a “block” or a “barrier”, can you tell me more?**

Well, I think it comes back to what we talked about regarding the culture, you see? Like them understanding what you know, what living in London and what their children, because their experience is different to what, to what in London, you know, what we go through, so I didn’t really think, again, that their cultural, the advice or whatever they say would have helped in a way.

**I: Is there anything else you want to say about box four?**

Um, regarding box four? No.

**I: Is there anything else want to say about any of them?**

Regarding the experience of loneliness? Nothing springs to mind. Really.

Participant 44 – Male, 24, Tower Hamlets - Part 2

**I: Thank you very much. Uh, we move onto the second part of this study. Um, can we start by talking about what you put in the first box where it’s most socially connected.**

Where I feel most socially connected was at work, so I have a lot of colleagues and friends who I can interact with. Um, it's easy for me as the individuals who share their life experiences with me so work is one place where I kind of look forward to, so when I started the apprenticeship first, you know, that was really something I wanted or, you know, looked forward to. You know, every day I got up, go back, even though it was a routine, I enjoyed following that routine for one purpose. That purpose was really just feeling socially connected up making, you know you, there was purpose in my life. And there was also kind of where I could go to, where I can feel, um, feel connected to people, you know, just talk to them, deal with things, and stuff like that. Even though it's kind of a work mentality, you know, you'd be working, there were the occasions where, you know, you could just talk with people and just connect, really, get to know them on a personal level, you know what are their interests, hobbies, families, kids, you know, just different things.

**I: Um, um, you mentioned something about, you know, having us having a sense of purpose altogether. So, it sounds like, you know, there's a common purpose among you that kind of brought you together in a way.**

Yeah. And the purpose of, what gave me purpose was the working, you know, building that, studying, learning, that's what gave me purpose. And that's how I saw it as a kind of a path to follow if you would. So that's the route I took as a solution to social, being connected and feeling because I was surrounded by accountants, you see? So, the only thing for me to do was really learn about things, you know, learn about what's the legislations or whatever they may be. And so, I could talk, broaden my horizons you see and connect with them, really. So, that's what drove me forward. So that was kind of my life experience experiencing through, uh, working if you would, you know, working on developing and maintaining my knowledge. And so I could kind of reach their level. And so I could interact and just, yeah, let's talk about things with them.

**I: Um, sounds like you feel comfortable with people at work.**

I feel comfortable with people at work. You know, I don't have issues with I feel, at place where I can be myself and just you know, just relax. Um, people are not gonna judge. Yeah, it’s one place where I look forward to going.

**I: When you say it’s a place that you can be yourself. Can you tell me more about?**

Yeah. That was the place where I can talk to them about, you know, let's say I will just be myself as in make jokes, do this, do that, whatever it may be just be who I am in a way, you know, and show them the characteristics that I have, who I am. You know, I can express that in any way, shape, or form. And you know, there are people that accepting people, you know, they don't care, do you know, it is what it is.

I: Um, um, and what did you write there if you don't mind? Did you read what you wrote in box? What does it say?

I wrote. Ah, so “I have a lot of colleagues and friends who I can interact with. And it's easy for me as the individuals who share their life experiences with me.”

**I: See, like so now. So, you feel that with your colleagues, you can share your life experiences with them. You can share your feelings and I you can be able to express yourself.**

Yeah, I can be who, you know, I can be myself. So, you know, express myself in any, you know, in any way. And yeah, there's no kind of boundaries there. You see, it’s just you you're who you are. Yeah, I don't feel as though, you know, they’re people. There's no kind of restrictions there.

**I: And when you say that people there don't judge you, can you tell me more about that?**

Oh, they’re not, they’re not people who, you know, they don’t like or they’re bad people in that way, you know, they're not gonna look at you in an unprofessional way even if you make jokes or stuff like that, you know, they're accepting people rather than, you know, look, look at it from a point of view where all, you know, your behavior comes across unprofessionally, you know, so they're accepting people, um,

**I: Yeah, it sounds like sounds like you found an environment where you can express yourself. You don't have to worry about what you say or how you behave, because no matter what you say and how you behave, they will still accept you for that, whatever those characteristics maybe, um, yeah, you can share your experiences with them that you couldn't do when you were younger with your family or other people.**

Yeah, so that's one thing that yeah, at work is a place where I can, you know, be myself and they're individuals who, you know, who shared their life experiences, who tell me, what they've been through or what they've done. And it's just an environment where you feel as though you're at peace. You know, you feel safe, you feel happy, you feel as though you can just talk to them, you know, you're not gonna get just a dead response, really, you know, they're caring people and the atmosphere is good.

**I: Is there anything else you want to say about box one?**

I: Uh, regarding box one and my workplace, uh, uh, no, I don't think so, apart from it's a really safe place. I don't think so.

**I: Thank you. Can we talk about what you put in box two, please?**

Uh, box two was the least uh, place where I feel uh, socially connected and that's at home, you know, there's just don't I feel connected in that way where I can, you know, be myself in a way or you know, really express who I am and who I am is more kind of taking adventures really, you know, just being going out, trying new things and stuff like that. It's just here, I feel as though it's more restricted, you know, I have parents who, you know, who worry a lot and they are worried at time, so that's kind of a barrier that where I can't go out and try new things.

**I: What did you write in thereif you don’t mind?**

The place where I feel most lonely is “at home”. So, I wrote my family is great, but it does come to a point where I struggle to socially connect, so, I feel things are more closed rather than an open book you want, so.

**I: When you say that things are a bit more closed at home, can you tell me more about that?**

I would say closed as in there is, I don't know, I can't really express who I am, you know, just generally people just making jokes and stuff like that, making, you can't really connect with that, you know, I feel as though it’s just, I don't know if it's culture, maybe culture but that's one of the things that's really not allow me to kind of connect with my own family. You see, yeah.

**I: So, you feel most lonely at home because even though you have your family around, because you don't necessarily feel that you can connect with them, this leads you to feel lonely.**

Yeah, uh, I agree with that. Uh, because, yeah, dealing with it here is more different, because there's no support, you know, like I said, like we talked about support and stuff like that, you know, it comes back to all of that again, you see, so it's one place where I try to avoid spending majority of my time in because It's a place where I don't associate, you know, connection with, you see, I don't associate that here. So, I try to spend more time at work doing longer shifts, because you know, I feel as though I can, I meet people over there who, you know who I can connect with. So, I’d rather spend more time out rather than, yeah, be here where, where I will spend majority of my time just studying really.

**I: um, and, um, and um, I guess, yeah, the breakup that you had some time ago, about nine years ago, is that correct? And have you ever tried, I wondered, like, um, when you say that you can't connect with them now, is it a similar kind of? Is it in a similar range? That if you were to, you know, see someone or have a partner or something, is that sort of how you, is that why you don't necessary connect with them now too or are there different factors that might play in?**

Aha. So what do you mean by that?

**I: Because I know you mentioned that, you know, about nine years ago, you broke up with your girlfriend and so on, so and now you say that you don't, you feel you feel most lonely at home, so because that event that took place nine years ago was then…**

Was that the cause of it?

**I: I’m just wondering like, yeah, like what experiences do you think are leading you to feel lonely with your parents that made you make you not feel connected with them?**

Uh, well, firstly, I think it's all the experiences that I went through, you know, dealing with that hand, it’s, yeah, going through that, you know where you know, everyone goes through tests and tribulations at life, so when you're going through that, you know, you need to turn to someone and you couldn't tend to the first place where you feel safe so I think that was the root problem, you know, not feeling as though you can, um, where we talked about the block, do you see? And that was the bit that being the root cause where I couldn't really take a leap at it and look at it as a solution rather than, you know, being a barrier where I couldn't go to them and say to them and said, you know, just express myself and just talk to them really. Um, so it felt more as a barrier, rather than, you know, being able to say, yeah, this is why, these are the problems and this is what I’m going through, you know, dealing with the problem that way.

**I: Um, is there anything else you want to say about box two?**

Uh, books two.

**I: Maybe I should ask you this, by the way, how does make you feel when you're at home?**

At home? Uh, I would say it fills me right now, well, at times it's, I try and really fill my time at home, yeah, so I don't really deal with anything, I try and go out, not really stay at home where I’m kind of doing nothing. Um, I’m taking exams too, so I’m trying to fill my time, what I’m doing when I’m at home, I’m trying to fill that time and do things that are useful. So I feel as though, yes, it's a safe place at home, yeah, I don't feel as though there is a connection to you know anyone here if you would, you know, I don't feel as though you can emotionally connect really, you know, because from a young age, if you were brought up in that instinct where you could you know where they, where they connect to you, you know, if you had the emotional connection from the beginning when they, you know, then it may be a different story and you may, may be more open, you may feel as though, oh, you know, I can go to my parents, you know, say anything, you know, just have that kind of, that kind of openness, then it would really help but me, never really had it, so I don't really see it as an option in that instance.

**I: Is there anything else you want to say about box two?**

Box two? Um, I don't have anything to add.

**I: Thank you very much.**

No problem.