Participant 32 Interview – Male, 24, Tower Hamlets

Key:

**I: Interviewer**

R: Respondent

**I:** **Let me just put this here… Is that OK?**

R: Yeah.

**I: Are you comfortable there?**

R: Yeah, that’s fine.

**I: Do you want me to move it or?**

R: No, it’s fine.

**I: Are you sure? You can move your leg if you wanted to, maybe I’ll leave it here in case you actually want to move… Actually can I use this here if you don’t mind? Maybe I’ll just put my… Don’t worry about it. We should start. Thank you. Anyways, can we start by talking about what you put in box one please?**

R: Yeah, so with the experience of loneliness, the first thing that came to my head was darkness, and I just felt like, people feel lonely, usually find like a dark place, and they feel like they’re all alone and everything around them is just negative, so that’s why I believe that… people that experience it might feel like everything around them is just pure dark. And also I’ve… I’ve also stated that they believe nothing goes their way, so everything just becomes very negative.

**I: So when you say… ‘dark hole’, or ‘dark space’, ‘dark place’, can you tell me more about that?**

R: So I just feel like with the term ‘loneliness’ itself, it just… You put yourself in a place where there’s no one around you, and when I think of that, I just feel like, if you put yourself in a space where it’s just you, everything else around you is just pure negative, and when I think of negative I think of darkness, so that’s why I was kind of… I put them together thinking that when you become negative, your mental state doesn’t… become… I would say like stable in a sense? That’s why things around you is very negative, therefore, dark.

**I: So when you say things around you are negative, can you tell me more?**

R: Like I said I just feel like when people feel… the loneliness, they tend to keep everything to themselves and when people for example try and support you or try give you advice to the individual themselves they might just feel like ‘you don’t know what I’m going through, you don’t know how to help me’, so it might just be like, what you see is… It’s not helpful and it just… Something that… Is not unneeded, so that’s why I feel like it might go into them feeling more negative and…

**I: So you’re saying that, basically, when… these things might happen when people don’t necessarily understand what you or what someone is going through, and when someone is trying to help you, then you kind of…**

R: You just push them back, because you feel like… Like I said, you don’t know what I’m going through, so what you’re advising me is something that you might think is helpful because of… your thinking from the outside, but from the inside, is, I’m going through a certain… phase that, what you’re saying is… there’s no point because I feel like, what you’re gonna tell me if I try to do it, it might not help it, if I did it and it does help me, I’d just feel a way that, ‘oh, I can do things myself, I don’t need you’, if you know what I mean. Yeah, so that’s why I was putting… I kinda linked all 4 boxes together, and, because I feel like when one or the other comes into play, for example, the mental state and darkness, they both link because… When you feel in a dark place, your mental state becomes negative, which I mentioned earlier. And I wanna keep using the word ‘negative’ because… to me loneliness emphasises the whole negativity around you. And… When you feel negative, you become more, like you self-doubt yourself? And that’s exactly what I was saying about when someone tries to help you, you feel like their help won’t support you because you’re self-doubting yourself, and that kind of links to each area of their lives. So it can be in terms of social, which I mentioned in box 3, it can…

**I: I was just gonna say, it’s good that you’ve linked them all, I was just gonna, I was just thinking we could go a bit deeper into each box-**

R: Ah, OK.

**I: Unless, you know, we… However you feel like, but generally speaking I go normally a bit deeper into each box. You’re welcome to link them together if you wanted to, but it might be best if we just go through one, examine it, and then we move on.**

R: Yeah, we can. ‘Cos remember when I just started I was just, ‘oh, I can’t really think of stuff’, and then when I thought of one, that was just like, came through it, so, I didn’t want to just write *a* thing in one box and then I have nothing else to write, I just felt like ‘oh wait, when I talk about darkness, it comes to mental state’, but yeah, in terms of darkness, I just feel like… Yeah, like, everything around them is just pure negativity. And, I can talk a little about personal experiences… Like two years ago, I went through a certain phase which, this is why I put theses together, because… I went to a dark place which affected my mental state, and I also felt a bit depressed at certain times of my life. The advice I got from very close friends and my best friend, I ignored it. And after a few weeks, once it kinda like settled in, and I realised what I’m going through, I spoke to further close friend and it kinda broke it out, but it kinda started from the issue, feeling dark, feeling like you don’t need anyone but, you just… You’re just gaining more negativity because you’re not getting the help you should get. And… Especially from your close friends, who just try to help you, you just ignore them, you push them away because you feel like, ‘this is something *I’m* going through, I will just deal with it myself’, but… It never helps and this is why I kinda linked these stuff together.

**I: Sure, sure. Thank you.**

R: No worries.

**I: So it sounds like… You felt like this is the problem you’re going through, so you… People a) don’t understand that, and then b) this is something that you have to deal with it on your own.**

R: Of course, and it’s not just that. You do want that support but you don’t know, even when they’re providing it, you don’t know how to take it in. You juts feel like ‘oh maybe this won’t help me’, you just, like I said, you just keep self-doubting yourself and, you just, put yourself in a darker hole, like a… You keep going, digging yourself a bigger grave, and al the help that’s coming, you’re just going deeper and deeper and just ignoring everything. But it’s still isn’t something you choose to do, which… from my personal experience, I didn’t choose to just ignore them, it just kept happening itself, and when they tryna call me, I never used to pick up, or when they tried to message me, I just started ignoring stuff, but that just like, naturally just happened. I feel like maybe because I put myself in a darker hole, it affected my mental state and this is why I kinda like ignored everyone. But it’s not by choice, it just built up to a state that I just felt like I didn’t wanna speak to anyone. Even though they tried to help me I just felt like, ‘let me just push you aside, let me just deal with it myself’.

**I: So it sounds like you kind of… withdrawn yourself.**

R: That’s it, yeah.

**I: You withdrew yourself.**

R: Yeah. Especially- Even with family, cos I live… as an Asian, we live with your parents and my family’s like, we’ve got 3 siblings, we’re together, 4 including me. They live with me but even then I feel like I was so far away from them. Even though I see them, probably like, 23 hours in a day, I just feel like I was so far away from everyone that I put myself in an area where I was just… There by myself. So yeah, it just… You just keep withdrawing yourself and then put… Even if you’re near people, you’re actually really far away. That’s how I felt.

**I: So you felt like you wanted to withdraw yourself, because, is it because, well I’m juts trying to reflect back what you said, did you feel that people… It sounded like you felt like they don’t understand you.**

R: Yeah. That’s pretty much it. Not them not understanding, it’s also the fact that I didn’t wanna accept the fact that I’m going through this, so it was just me being… kind of like ignorant on the sense that, ‘oh, I might actually depressed, or lonely’, lemme not think about that, lemme just ignore it, and you just keep falling back, and the way it got confirmed, it’s how I broke out of it, I don’t know if I should keep going on , but-

**I: Yeah, keep going.**

R: I was just… My… mental state, like, my emotions, were very weak, so everything would trigger my feelings, and then I put a… I would go and speak to the GP because I didn’t know what I was going through. They did like a few tests and they’re the ones who told me that: ‘You’re going through depression’. They advised me a few things, it just like hit me straight away like, I couldn’t control my emotions and it just hit me as they said it, and they said ‘do you wanna take pills?’ and I said: ‘No, because I know family members that go through that, I don’t wanna be in that state, I wanna get out of it, how do I do that?’ They tell me to go to those therapies and I’m like: ‘I don’t wanna do it, lemme get out of it myself, by not taking no medication for depression, not going to therapy, because that’s me accepting the fact that I’m going through it.’ I just thought: ‘OK yeah, I have it, lemme get out.’ So I started being social, ‘cos I used to be… People, when people notice the changes it affects me, and because…

**I: People notice what?**

R: The changes of me. So, I was very sociable. Yeah, I used to be… Like sports, and football. I love football. I used to go football 3 times a week, 3 different groups. That’s like 15 people per day, different people. All of a sudden, I’m not going to football anymore, I’m not seeing my mates I see every weekend, or seeing my best mate. I was just to myself, so I thought: ‘I need to start doing this again.’ And I slowly, like, through my best friend and football and then my mates, it all slowly came back, but it just me, doing it myself, because I put myself in that situation, I didn’t wanna get no… therapy or anything done to get out of it because… I felt like it might just… become a circle. Me being back in that same place, when I feel down, whatever, so I just… You know, got out of it by seeing close friends, slowly, slowly, going to like family events and I think, one thing that really helped was, one of my close family sister, she was getting married, so I *had* to go see everyone, so it kinda forced me to go, and that kinda broke out through the experience I was facing.

**I: And how did it make you feel when you were in that situation when everyone was trying to help you and you were pushing them away thinking that this is something you have to do on your own?**

R: It felt quite bad at the start because these are the people that cared about me through when I was young, like they’re my best friends growing up. All of a sudden I’m not… listening to them, I’m just pushing them away. But then I kind of… understood why I’m doing it, and then I managed to build up the courage to tell them that ‘I’m going through something, I just need to deal with it, I’ll be back soon.’ And they understood it and they said, ‘We’ll give you space, just let us know if you need anything.’ And I feel like, that support… I took that in, and, I feel like when I do feel like I need to speak to someone, I have people there, but I just feel like, let me, myself go through this. Whoever it is, I just wanna go through it myself, and when I do feel like I need help, I know who to go to. Yeah, so… That’s how I stayed it. It kind of… was through, my personal… experience but I was tryna do it through just generally as well, but I kind of, kept coming back to what I went through.

**I: Thank you.**

R: It’s fine.

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

R: I think that’s the main thing, it’s just… You feel in… You just feel like, huge darkness around you, where everyone else is happy, you’re just in a mood. And yeah, your mood is just very negative, that’s when you just feel dark, and everything is just very negative, that’s how I just felt, so I think that… the first box is just… Pure darkness is all I can state, yeah.

**I: And how did that make you feel, being in that dark situation?**

R: Oh, very bad because… Me being some of that was very sociable to becoming what I became… And this was like two years ago experience. I’m all out of it now, lucky for me, but… Growing up, the way I grew up, I was very sociable, I just talked to everyone, go out everywhere, to a state where… in 2017, working, and that’s it. I’m just working and to myself, when friends come to visit me they used to come to my house, they just drive up and tell me to ‘come on up’ like… ‘no’. And thinking about anything I’m like, well that was horrible, can’t believe that’s something I went through, but I’m glad it’s all over. Again, it’s a place where you don’t want your worst enemy to face because it’s… it’s horrible. You… neglect your family, your friends, people that care about you, that you didn’t even know… There’s a lot of things you just… Never wanna face basically.

**I: And when you said here, I’m just gonna read what you wrote here, ‘people who feel lonely usually fall into a dark place. They believe that everything is falling apart and nothing goes their way’. Can you tell me more about when you say that ‘everything is falling apart and nothing goes their way’?**

R: So I just feel like, because you have this… negative mindset, when, for example, if… I would say the example I… So, I used to do trading, if you know what trading’s at, so Forex trading… I was quite big in doing that, and… it was going very well for me for couple months, and then I fell into this place and every trade that I did, it just… kept going bad and I was losing money and, when you start losing money your mental state becomes all, I say fragile because you’re now in a different mode where you wanna make that back but, how? You put more money into the trades that… that were doing so good for you for so many months, and now it’s not… It’s not going that way and you just feel like, ‘oh, what did I do to deserve this? Why is everything happening to me? I made good money over like 6 months and in one month I’m losing so much.’ And then I just feel like that affected my… ‘Cos I was working in NHS as placement student, and I felt like my work ethic became really bad, and all of a sudden I had… Another colleague tell me my manager that I’m not as effective as I was before and I just felt like everything is hitting me at once, ‘cos I was very sociable at work and helping everyone I can when I had the time to. All of a sudden I would get told that I’m not… as effective as I was before, my… work productivity dropped. I’m like, but how? I’m still being me, but apparently I thought I was being me, but everyone outside felt like, oh I changed a bit. And that’s why I felt like a lot of things were just falling apart and I was meant to be getting a permanent position after uni, and… I didn’t get a call back, so I felt like wow, this just hit me hard. Because of that 1 month I went through, everything was just… falling apart for me. I was losing my best friend, I was losing… losing them because of the way I was acting, and it’s something that… I felt like they should understood but it was my fault as well, because when they did try to support, I wasn’t allowing it, and then I started doing like, I started smoking at that time, and then… that kinda pushed away a few friends as well ‘cos I was just like, not myself basically. And that’s why I feel like a lot of things that were good to me was just falling apart. And that’s how I kinda linked the darkness to what I was feeling.

**I: Everything was going against you in a way-**

R: Yeah.

**I: Like your… friendship with your friends, your situation at your NHS place, and the job offer that you were expecting and the call didn’t go through. Your performance dropping at work and, everything just… Going in a different direction that you were expecting.**

R: To… Yeah. To what I was expecting, to what I was feeling all those months before. Because everything was like, going well. Obviously it’s through hard work it goes well, and then all of a sudden, in a few weeks everything changes and you just feel like, ‘oh wow, how did this happen?’ And you start questioning, that’s when the self-doubt comes in because you’re like, oh… People can feel… like everyone’s mental state is different, and for you to feel a way you’ve never felt in your life, it just triggers everything and then everything becomes like, ‘oh, this should have happened to me by doing…’ Like I said, the job I was meant to get confirmed, I was meant to get like part time through uni, and then get the full time, but that didn’t come through. It wasn’t because they didn’t wanna give it because there was something to do with the budget, and I just felt like this all links to me, the budget wasn’t working, all these months getting confirmed and then all of a sudden the budget is not set, they can’t do it, and I just feel like everything was just like, coming, hit me hard, nothing’s going my way and, in terms of my family situation, we were meant to… Move out of this place and buy a house. All the papers were going well, everything was going… Just like one more thing to do for us to secure a new home, and then they just crashed. And then, yeah, it just, all of that just hit me straight. And that’s why I feel like everything fell apart in one… one moment, basically. And it was hard to take in.

**I: How did it make you feel?**

R: It… It put me into the… Like, the worst… It made my, like, depression and loneliness worse than it was before, because I feel like, at the time when it started, when I started to feel that certain way and things started to fall apart, I just feel like I was going deeper to this darkness, and… I started. And that’s when I started moving away from everyone because I felt like everything’s falling apart, I dunno what to do. I was in a state where, I was just confused, didn’t know what to do, um… It just affected my social life, mental state, and health, really.

**I: When you said that you started to self-doubt yourself, can you tell me more about that?**

R: With the self-doubt, it’s literally anything and everything in terms of… going to meet friends, for example, I just felt like, it might… the mood might be bad. The mood might be different because of what I went through, I don’t wanna go somewhere where… They might… Start questioning what happened to me. I didn’t wanna deal with that, I didn’t want people to start asking me what was wrong. When people offer you something for example, there’s that part time job to get, I self-doubted myself thinking ‘I wouldn’t even get it, what’s the point of bothering applying or bothering going for the interview?’ It was like a build up of those kind of things, when you self-doubt yourself you don’t try to do things. Even the simplest thing like, for example, going for an interview. I just thought… I’m not gonna get it, what’s the point? And those kind of things affected… how I was thinking at the time. Yeah, so self-doubt was… Even going out to see family, I just felt… Like I said about people questioning me, I’m just gonna stay in my room. I’ll just bring my phone, play games, you know, let the day go by, come the next day do the same thing. Because I didn’t wanna go through, me thinking of people might ask me a few things, I didn’t wanna answer so I just thought, you know, I’ll just stay home to myself. So yeah.

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

R: Em… Quite shit really. Like, depression and loneliness is something… It’s a horrible feeling, and… I just felt really bad. Not because of how (unclear 0:22:57-0:22:58), it was just how I was feeling. I just felt… Very… sad, really. Sadder than usual. Everything was just… I can’t describe it. I can just think of the word negative. Everything was negative. I have an older brother who I kind of one day just, exploded everything out to, but even then it was so difficult, it just felt like… You can’t do nothing alone. I mean you can’t do nothing with people, they just alone and, you can’t break out of it. You felt trapped, that’s the feeling. Yeah, so I just felt trapped, when I felt that way.

**I: So sounds like yeah, you couldn’t do anything, you were stuck in that situation, you didn’t want people to know. You didn’t want people to… And then you started to lose some levels of confidence.**

R: Yeah. Confidence dropped heavily, ‘cos like I said I was very sociable, I was very confident. It’s all coming back now ‘cos… I’m the type that will speak to anyone, like I said, speak to anyone, chat to them, have banter with anyone. All of a sudden that all went, and my confidence went, and I used to self-doubt when I say some things I used to say back in the days that people used to laugh, if I said it, what if someone judges me or, you know, I just felt like, ‘oh, people might judge me in certain ways.’ Before I didn’t care, and then all of a sudden I care about ‘oh, they might judge me because I’m this way’ or they might question what… They might start questioning me. And yeah it’s just… when your confidence goes low and… That kinda triggers your self-doubt, your self-doubts.

**I: Thank you. Is there anything else you wanted to say about box one?**

R: I think that’s all. I think I’ve mentioned everything.

**I: Thank you very much. Can we talk about box two please?**

R: Yeah so… Box 2 was… some mental state. And I’m just gonna read what I wrote first.

**I: Sure.**

R: So, I said that ‘with loneliness people start to self-doubt about everything in their lives’. So that’s what we were kinda talking about. ‘They question things in a negative manner’, so… Like I said. Everything… With loneliness all I can think is negative. And that’s through a personal experience, where every part of your life, you think in a negative way. Not in a… Like… In a way that, ‘oh, it can be this or it can be that’. You just think negative straight. So that’s why I said, the question, they start questioning things in a negative manner. ‘This affects their mental state and damages their likelihood to maintain a conversation.’ And, as previously mentioned, I was kind of afraid to chat to people because of the fact that I didn’t want them to start questioning what I’m going through, and that damaged my confidence and my ability to… speak to someone for more than like 5 minutes. Just in case we say ‘hi, hello, how are you blah blah blah’, and then they would be like ‘oh, what happened to you?’ So I cut it before it goes to that… that state. That’s why conversation with anyone was very short, very quick answers, even in text. ‘Yes’. ‘No’. Like snappier answers. And that’s because my mental state was in a… place where it wasn’t, it wasn’t familiar with. And I felt like with this… unfamiliarity that I was facing, that kinda also affected the way I was thinking. Because when someone does face loneliness, it’s something that you’ve never experienced before, so you don’t know how to handle it. That kind of affects the way you think of life really. Because you don’t know what’s gonna happen, you don’t know… That you… Also like, you question like… everything? I don’t really know how to expand on it, it’s just the… When you feel weak, that’s the word, so when you feel weak, it kind of like… Has like a ripple effect on what you do. And me personally, like, as an individual, when your mental state is weak, especially cos I’m Muslim, we have something called ‘iman’, which is like, your belief in your religion, and when my mental state felt weak, my ‘iman’ felt weak, and that meant that… I used to pray 5 times a day. I used to go Friday prayers which is the Muslim prayer (unclear 0:27:47-0:27:50) and fasting at the time of the month. I felt like I moved away these things. I was like, my mind felt weak, so I wasn’t praying, I wasn’t asking God for help, I wasn’t asking people for help. I just came to myself and… That’s all because how my mental state, the feeling that I’ve never felt before, at that place I was in, because it was so new, I just moved away from everyone and everything.

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

R: Um… The feeling, it was quite… It was very different. Especially when I mentioned about the religious aspect to it. It’s… When your habits change in terms of… You being a Muslim, not the best Muslim but a good Muslim in terms of prayer, fasting. When all of that disappears, you question yourself, especially within a family where religion is important and… You think, ‘OK, what’s going on? Why am I feeling this way? Why can’t I connect the way I used to connect?’ Yeah, so, all of that kind of… Came to (unclear 0:29:23). The way it made me feel was I’m not a good human or good Muslim. So I was like ‘well, OK, this is… Very strange to me.’ When it’s strange it’s… And when you feel something different, you don’t know what to do. You become lost, and that’s how I felt. So yeah, I felt lost… And… I doubted myself to be a good person, really. In general. I think that’s all I can state for mental state.

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

R: For mental state? I think that that’s all. That’s the main thing. Yeah. Feeling lost in general, kind of came because of how I was, my mental state becoming very weak.

**I: So sounds like… Your experiences, you know, the sort of negatively outcome experiences sort of led you to feeling lost in different aspects of your life. Religious aspects, your personal aspects, your friendships… You felt kind of lost and, kind of… Alone.**

R: Yeah. And like I said because it’s… a new experience that I was feeling, that’s why I felt very alone.

**I: So can you say that again?**

R: Because it’s the… it’s the new experience I was facing, that’s why I felt like I was very alone, and, that’s why that emphasis of my experience of loneliness was determined by this being a very new experience that I’ve never across my… Because I was a very happy, social person, all of a sudden it flips on me, you know, you just… You become very lost and confused, and that’s why you start doubting and putting yourself in a dark period. That’s why each of the boxes to me, it all kind of relates, it all triggers from one thing to another. So, yeah. So it came from… for mental state I think that’s all I have to say.

**I: Thank you.**

R: You’re welcome.

**I: Can we talk about box 3 please?**

R: So box 3 was to do with social life, and as I mentioned… Because it’s just coming to me while I’m speaking-

**I: Sure, sure.**

R: I mentioned the box that it says… So ‘this tends to fade away the deeper the individual feels lonely. The courage to speak to people fades away and being alone becomes their only safe space’. And when I mention safe space, I’m talking about, through experience, my safe place was my room. Because my room was the only place I can be alone as can be, I just feel like that was my safe place and that kind of prolonged the experience I was facing of my loneliness because… I trapped myself in the room and, when I talk about trapped, I mentioned earlier that the darkness felt like, I was trapped in that mental state. But I physically trapped myself in my room because I didn’t wanna communicate with people. I didn’t want people to speak to me, I didn’t wanna answer questions, I just felt like, if I stick to myself, stick to my phone, the games I have in my room, I would just be OK, you know. Let the days go past. But then… That kinda prolonged the experience I was facing. Because of the fact that I didn’t allow anything coming in and my only time to go out was literally to the kitchen to grab food, go back to my room, or order takeaway. So it was literally not spending time with my family, not spending time with my friends, not going to see anyone, my social life literally went… And that’s literally the same thing I mentioned before, it’s a new experience that I was facing. Me not being sociable was very, very weird. Especially to my friends as well that I used to see pretty much 2, 3 times a week. All of a sudden I’ll only see them for a month, and, you know, you know like, individually that, oh they’re gonna ask me the questions, so I don’t wanna see them now. When I’m ready. But when I ever ready? Cos you keep saying that, you keep saying that ‘oh when I’m ready, when I’m ready’, but then, all of a sudden, a week goes, two week goes, so… You put yourself, when you trap yourself, you just feel like ‘when I’m ready’ but you’re never ready unless you break for it. And to me it felt like, I let myself be trapped for a while. Until… somehow managed to break out of it. But yeah, my social life was literally, was gone.

**I: Sounds like you were feeling quite overwhelmed with a lot of things, and you didn’t wanna face… having to…**

R: Explain.

**I: Explain.**

R: I think that was exactly… I was very overwhelmed with what I was going through and, the fact that… To speak to whoever it may be, I didn’t even feel confident, and that, because of my confidence was very low, I didn’t even really wanna share anything or explain anything, I just felt like, it’s all the time. I never knew when the time was right, and that’s why it prolonged for a while. And especially me allowing myself to be trapped… Especially when I felt trapped in my room, and trapped mentally, both of them together didn’t help at all and, that’s why I feel like my experience was longer than it should have been. Yeah, so… That’s what I can say for my social life.

**I: So, it sounds… as though you… you felt like if you express yourself, people might judge you or see you differently.**

R: Yeah. Or they might… It wasn’t just the judging or thing, I didn’t want them to… Come to me and be like ‘oh, you’ll be alright’. I didn’t want that. I didn’t want their sympathy, I think, that’s the word. I didn’t want them to be like ‘oh you’ll be fine. Oh, you’ll come out of this blah blah blah’. Because that’s not something you wanna hear when you’re feeling that way, you just wanna get out of it and you know you can or you know it will happen, you don’t want people to be like ‘oh it’s ok, you’ll be fine’. Because no, I won’t be fine, because I’m not fine right now. But… To hear that, I didn’t wanna go through it basically, and that’s why I kind of just kept to myself for a very long time.

**I: And how did it make you feel, you know, not being able to express your feelings and your emotions and your experiences?**

R: You felt… What I felt… The way I want to describe it but I put this, it might not be the best way, but I felt like, I felt like, mute, in terms of, I felt like I couldn’t speak, and you know how some people… Don’t have a voice, I felt like that. And I felt like all those years, I was very vocal on how I felt, when I felt like something wasn’t right I used to be vocal, then all of a sudden I’m feeling a certain way, I can’t even speak. And I feel like when someone questioned, like, when someone generally asks me how I am, I say I’m OK, and they go ‘are you sure?’ And then all of a sudden I can’t say anything, and I felt like… I just felt very mute when people ask what I’m going through, and… Even if I wanted to express it, I just felt like I couldn’t, because, my mouth didn’t open. I don’t know how to explain it but, that’s how I felt really. So it was like, I feel like I was, started to stutter when I used to speak, because I feel like all was coming out but maybe not saying… Or I might accidentally slip something out, so I was very reserved on… the answers I used to give to people, and it was very basic, basic answers I used to give.

**I: Sounds like… You didn’t want your reputation to be…**

R: To be influenced by that one month, two months, yeah. I think that’s what it was. I didn’t want people to feel like, ‘oh, he’s changed, the (name) we knew was very sociable, very laughing, very outgoing, all of a sudden… He’s here, quiet, not talking, you know, what’s wrong with him?’ I feel like I didn’t want them to allow that one, two months I was going through to… determine who I am as a person. And that was with like everyone, even at work, at home… At home it was different because they could see what I was going through, even though they won’t speak to me because they knew I wasn’t feeling great, they can see everything but my friends obviously, they can’t come to my house every day, they didn’t know what I was physically, mentally going through, so… To me I didn’t want to show them anything. And that’s why I was very reserved, and I think that’s how I can stay here, I was very trapped and reserved to everyone and anything.

**I: So it sounds like your experiences made you… reserved and quiet.**

R: Definitely.

**I: And… And also sounds like you didn’t wanna be seen as weak.**

R: Yeah.

**I:** (unclear 0:40:29-0:40:30)

R: I think that’s true. But no weak… It was weak more of my mental state. I didn’t want them to feel like ‘oh… Someone that was very outgoing, and very vocal’… I was very vocal, and I used to banter with everyone. All of a sudden his mental state is very weak, and… In a, like I say, they say a certain thing, my emotion was like, all over the place. I couldn’t control my emotions and, that’s one thing that made me very reserved ‘cos I didn’t want people to see, if they say something I might get angry, or I might get teary or something, because they’ve never seen that before and I didn’t wanna show that to people. Only my best friend knew that side of me, so I didn’t really wanna express that, and like I said ‘cos my emotions were also like in a tornado, one… It would just flip, and that was very weird because someone can say one thing and then, I’d be angry. Or they would say something I’d be upset. But I was never the type that would get upset from someone saying something. It never used to hit me like that, and then all of a sudden, I’m getting triggered very quick, and that made me very reserved and very… Pushed myself back from everyone. So like, yeah, that’s how I felt.

**I: Thank you.**

R: No.

**I: And can you tell me a little more about this safe place that you said?**

R: So the safe place was initially… I made a safe place myself thinking my room was my safe place. Because that’s the place where no one will question me, no one will ask anything, no one will make me feel a certain way. But… That safe place was very negative. Because… I trapped myself in my safe place, thinking I was OK, but… actually, my mental state, my health, my mental health was… very poor because I allowed myself to be in one area majority of the time. Majority of the time I was feeling this way, I was in that place, thinking ‘I’m OK, I’m safe.’ But… That was very unhealthy of me because… It didn’t allow me to… come out of what I was going through. I was meant to… when I had that GP appointment the first time, I was going to have a follow up, I didn’t go to it because I thought, ‘I’m in a safe place, I’m feeling better’, but in reality I wasn’t. I… I kinda persuaded myself that, ‘oh, I’m OK’, but, actually I was… No better than when it first started, so that’s why I used to say my room was my safe place, but, in reality that wasn’t, that was a very bad place to be in at the time where… My mental state, everything of me was very… vulnerable and very weak, so yeah, that’s what I mean by my safe place.

**I: And how did it make you feel when you’re in your room?**

R: I felt like… Like I said, I felt like I was OK. Nothing was wrong. But… everything else, everything was wrong, because I wasn’t myself, I wasn’t… Feeling great, I was avoiding my family. Like, my older brother and me, we have good banter, and I have good banter with my Mum, but all of us, I didn’t speak to them… I’m awake ‘til late because I can’t sleep, but I’m in my room, so I’m OK. So yeah, it just… It just made me feel… Like, if I could change something, when I was feeling this way, it would be that safe place. I would change my safe place to be, either my home with all my family members, or with my best friends, because I feel like, if you’re with people who bring positive vibes and positive feelings to you, you would get out of a negative situation more quicker than you being there alone. So… That’s how I felt from that whole… safe place.

**I: Thank you. Is there anything else you want to say about box 3?**

R: I think that’s all. (unclear 0:44:54-0:44:56)

**I: Thank you. Can we move on to the final box, which is box 4?**

R: So, box 4, this one kind of affected my… everything of my confidence, my self belief… The way I do things, I just, my self-doubt-ness came because of box number 4, which is unhealthy, or unhealthy living. So what I wrote down was ‘when experiencing loneliness, people’s habit tend to change for the worst. This can lead to unhealthy diet and a lack of exercise’. And that was very true in my case because, so I’ll tell you all the things I used to do, and then when this happened how everything stopped. So my diet was pretty good. I used to cook my own food in terms of like, chicken breast and rice, so I had a good diet. I used to gym about 3 or 4 times a week. I had football… so Monday, Wednesday, Friday, I had football. Tuesday I had badminton. In between those sporting days I used to do gym in the morning and… Saturday to Sunday was like, the social times with my friends. When I felt this way, this loneliness, I stopped every exercise activity I was doing. I cancelled my gym membership, I cancelled my… membership which I had for badminton. I stopped paying for football to go to football, because we used to book the football pitches, so I stopped going to every sporting thing I used to do, and I used to just keep myself into my… in my safe place, which I mentioned before. That was very bad for me because… I was… Very slim when I was doing my own thing, I was very healthy, very fit. And… when I kept myself into the room, I used to… just… order like takeaway. I mentioned I started smoking which I’d never done before, and the worst thing, the worst thing was… I have asthma, so… Having asthma and smoking is not a good combination because… You know, it can trigger your… your lungs to close, and have an asthma attack, which I did have during that time. It was the first time in my life I had an asthma attack, but I think that was because I started smoking quite a lot. When I started smoking quite a lot, I started eating more junk, and I put on a tonne of weight, and then I was afraid to see my friends because now they might judge me. Oh, like, slim fit R became fat R, because we had in our friend group, there’s two R, one called Big R, who’s my mate who’s like a bigger version of me, and then there was me. And I felt like, oh, I’ve gone fat, I’ve gone unhealthy, I’ve gone, you know, my features changed, my face gone bigger, I just felt like, all of that affected me and… I doubted myself. I felt like that’s what they’re gonna say, even if they didn’t, I still felt like they were gonna say, so I kept to myself and I allowed this unhealthy lifestyle to continue because I didn’t go see anyone, let people actually tell me how I am, how I’m looking. Because I have friends that would tell me straight up, if I looked good or if I don’t look good. If I look fit, if I don’t look fit. So… I needed their straight up, so I didn’t wanna speak to them, I didn’t wanna see them because I was afraid of how I am, how I’m looking, because I know that I put on a LOT of weight at that time, and… That made me question… myself through, you know, oh, should I actually go see them and look how I am? Look how I look, you know. My mental state is not great. My physical appearance is not great. I don’t wanna see anyone. And that kinda like, it all triggered with everything that I felt, and I… literally locked myself into my safe place. So yeah, the unhealthy living is… was something that… I… did not have had experience with before, and it was very… very bad for my confidence, really. My confidence really got affected because of the way I was, my unhealthy living. So yeah, I think, that was the biggest… confidence breaker, really.

**I: So sounds like you became concerned about your lifestyle. And it sounds also like that you were worried how other people would, especially your friends, how they would see you.**

R: Yeah. And, I think it was more to, like, my appearance, than anything else at that time. Because of my healthy living, unhealthy living, sorry, my appearance affected me, and how others might think of me. And… When your confidence becomes so low you don’t wanna… You know. Give them the chance to say something. That’s why, it kind of, like, impacted the whole depression, loneliness, that I was facing.

**I: So it sounds like your body image… became…**

R: More important.

**I: Yeah.**

R: More important to me. Yeah. It was… Mainly because… This is like my backstory of… Growing up, I became, I was quite chubby, then I lost a lot of weight and I was very fit for a few years. So when you’re… And that was the prime year of college and like, end of secondary college and uni life. So… You know, that’s when you meet a lot of people and you feel good because people would tell you: ‘You look good’ and whatnot. All of a sudden it shifts back to: ‘Oh, you’re putting on a lot of weight. Oh, this, that.’ You know, and that kind of… Affected me a lot. So I kinda like, tried to avoid people, and it happened during the time when I was in placement. So… They didn’t really know me like my college friends, my uni friends, my school friends, so I wasn’t really concerned about work, but it’s the fact that I wanna go back to uni soon, what would they think? What would people say? I don’t wanna hear it, I don’t wanna see it, so… My first month of uni, I barely went in. That affected my… My education because… You know, you’re paying 9 grand a year, it’s not a joke for you to miss a whole month of uni, just because you’re scared of what… Just because of what people may think of you, and I allowed that to affect me, I allowed that to get to me, and that’s why I just… Kept myself to my room, and I used to, I had this… This… Lying aspect of my life where, when my parents used to ask (unclear 0:52:14-0:52:16) I used to lie, and I used to, with that lie, I used to add it on with another lie. And then, you know, I just keep lying about things which were not needed, but I just feel like, me doing that, I can… Keep to myself. And… Yeah, so. Being… Being that sort of person or something was very hard for me to take in, especially when my best friend, she kind of found out I was lying about a few things, she was like, ‘What’s the point of you lying about these little, minor, minor things?’ And I couldn’t explain it, and… You know, when your best friend thinks you’re lying it just, it affects you quite a lot. And… That kinda triggers my unhealthy living, my lifestyle, really. I think that’s all I’ve got to say about healthy, my unhealthy lifestyle.

**I: Sure. Thank you very much.**

R: No worries.