Participant 38 – Part 1 – Female, 22, Tower Hamlets

**Letter

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**I:** (Interviewer)

**R:** (Respondent)

**I:** Can we start by talking about what you put in the first box please?

**R:** The first box, I talked about when you have everyone around you, all your friends, all your family, but you still feel lonely. There’s times when I’ve actually felt like that, where just certain things, sometimes I have everyone talking, everyone just mingling, but I feel as though I can’t socially connect with them. Sometimes maybe, because of age or just different things in common. Sometimes, I do struggle to socially connect with people who, for example, I have friends and family who just constantly talk about football. I don’t connect with that, I don’t enjoy that, so everyone is around me, but I’m just doing my own thing, because I don’t know what they’re talking about and that sometimes makes me feel lonely, because then do I need to start watching football in order for me to start talking to them about certain things. So, I just tend to go on my phone until that conversation is up.

**I:** So it sounds like what you’re saying is, you could be around people, but still feel lonely?

**R:** Yes… In terms of Box 2?

**I:** Before we go into Box 2, I’m going to go a bit deeper into Box 1. So, it seems like what you’re saying is, people around you might be doing different things and because you don’t necessarily associate with that or you don’t necessarily find that interesting, whatever they’re doing, you ask yourself ‘should I start watching football so I can engage in conversation with them’ so it sounds like the idea of trying to fit in?

**R:** Yes, I agree, exactly what you just said. It’s not just football, it’s just other topics in general. And this isn’t just with family, this is just with friends or even in social media, I feel as though you see all these things and sometimes, I just feel lonely because I see all these people going out doing things and then there’s me stuck at home in my bedroom. There’s days, I do go out, it’s not like I don’t go out, but there’s days when you are literally just sitting at home and it’s such a nice day outside, and you see everybody is out, but I feel lonely, because I feel as though sometimes everyone is busy with their lives and I have no one to go out with. And if I do go out with myself sometimes, I do enjoy my own company, but it gets a bit boring on your own enjoying your own company, going for a walk and everything. So, although you have so many people around you, I still feel lonely, because everyone is busy doing their own thing and everyone has other things in common.

**I:** So it sounds like what you’re saying is, you see people doing so many things and going out and enjoying things and then you feel like you don’t necessarily have that in the same way?

**R:** I do, I know I do have this. There are days where I’m probably out and someone else is looking at my social media, thinking ‘look at her, she’s gone out to eat’, but then there’s some days when I’m at home and I’ve seen someone else’s social media and I’m like ‘she’s gone out to eat’. So, I just feel like it’s a back and forth constant battle. I feel as though all we do is judge people on what social media says and we are constantly looking at them. I can’t word it, I can’t put the pin on the right word. Yeah, don’t know what the right word to say is.

**I:** It’s okay. So it sounds like what you’re saying is social media makes you and others judgemental and all that.

**R:** Yes, I agree. I feel as though sometimes, it can make people feel envious and feel sad, like a jealousy. Like this person has so many bags and so many designer handbags etc, what did they do that’s so different to me, like I’m a twenty-two year old person, but just because for example, she’s nineteen and she has so much more of a luxury life more than me. And obviously, sometimes people take pictures for instagram, just to show off etc but then we don’t…it’s just all a show. Because you don’t really know what’s behind that screen. I do have times when I feel like, ‘oh I’m just going to go out and buy a bag it doesn’t matter’ forget my responsibility, it doesn’t matter, I can afford that bag, it’s fine but then I actually think of the consequences, and I think to myself it’s not fair, how do people actually have no responsibilities, but how do I know that they don’t have responsibilities, it’s just my judgement.

**I:** So it sounds like seeing other people doing things or having things on social media that they portray, can make you feel lonely or others.

**R:** Yeah, others lonely, I agree. And I feel as though this isn’t just me. I do feel as though this happens to other people as well. For example, I’ve seen so many of my friends constantly saying ‘oh look at this girl, she has such nice shoes’ or ‘i wish I had that’ but you do have this, it’s not like you don’t have it. You do have really nice bags and shoes all the time, it’s just that it’s not that one. But you do have designer shoes. So I just feel as though it makes people feel a certain way and makes them feel like an outcast and makes people judge each other quite quickly.

**I:** When you say an outcast, can you tell me more about that?

**R:** So for example, on instagram it’s all about followers and likes etc. There’s me with just my two hundred followers and then you’ve got someone who’s got over fifty thousand followers, it does make you feel as though, oh you know, how do these people get so many followers and how do they become that, how do they live that lifestyle, how do they just become an instagram fashion model etc, starting off with nothing and having so many big things, so it just makes you feel as though what are you doing wrong in order for you to become like that. So, I just sometimes feel like maybe it does separate people sometimes. It makes people more…it’s not envious or jealousy, but it just separates people a lot more, because how do people portray, for example ‘Oh I’ve got fifty million followers, what do you have’. It’s like saying you’ve got nothing compared to me, so you’re not my friend type of thing. So, something like that. That’s what I mean, you have some people around you, but you still feel lonely.

**I:** And how does that make you feel, being in that situation and seeing other people having so many followers and having things that you do not necessarily have?

**R:** I feel as though, when I was a lot younger, it did affect me quite a bit. Obviously, I was young, I wasn’t working. I relied on pocket money to get certain things and I see all these massive influencing bloggers with so much money and so many things and what not, I feel as though as I’ve gotten older and I’m working and I’m earning, my responsibilities are a lot more. I realised these are not the things I actually need in life. I’m content and I feel happier knowing the fact that I do have my stuff, I’ve got all my shoes that I want, I’ve got all my designer bags, I don’t need to show it off to everyone, I don’t need to show it off to the world. That’s just between me and myself. I have enough money for me to go out and buy a bag if I want to or Swarovski bracelets and all of these fashion stuff. At first, I feel as though when I was a lot younger it used to affect me, like ‘Oh, I want this’ and ‘I want that’. Like now as I got older, it honestly doesn’t bother me, it doesn’t affect me in any way. I don’t let it get to me. I just feel as though, what’s the point in showing the world that you’ve got this, what satisfaction do you get out of it, and me knowing the fact that I’ve only got that bag or only I know i’ve seen this, that satisfies me more than showing someone else I’ve got this bag and I’m showing off.

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

**R:** No.

**I:** Thank you. Can we talk about what you’ve put in the second box please?

**R:** The second box is about starting a new job and struggling to fit in, for example, I think when I finished university, it’s a completely different environment to working. So, when I was starting my first ever graduate job, I felt a bit lonely, because I saw everyone there at the work place, they know what they’re doing, everyone has already made their friendship groups and everyone knows what they’re doing. When you’re fitting into a new job and you’ve come from a completely different background, for example, at university it’s all about just going to lectures, making friends and going out and what not, but at work, it gets serious and you have to actually work and do a nine to five job and this means that you are seeing the same people for forty hours a week and it’s difficult to try to fitting into that. You have to make sure you build a good rapport with your colleagues, your manager, external companies and there’s so much to manage and so much to maintain. So, when I first had my first…

**I:** This is from Box 2 with you. So, can we start by talking about what you’ve put in Box 2 please?

**R:** Okay so in Box 2, I’ve written down one of the reasons where I experience loneliness is when I start a new job, I struggle to fit in, for example, going into a completely different environment and that whole transition of going from university life to going to a full-time work, I really struggled. I felt I did feel lonely, because everyone who was already at work, they’re at completely different levels to me, I felt as though they knew their role, they knew their job and I was struggling to settle in in terms of getting to know everyone again and then you have people from different age groups and different backgrounds, it was just really difficult. For example, I spent my lunchtime, sometimes, sitting on my own and I missed my social life. I missed the fact that I was able to act, just the freedom, I missed the freedom of just going out whenever I wanted to and having the ability to not be on a strict deadline, oh my lunch break is only half an hour and I can’t take an hour. I just struggled with that whole transition phase. Also, in terms of when I mean struggling, I did… I was able to… the problem with me is, I managed to grab a graduate job maybe like eight, nine months after I graduated, whereas my friends from university, they managed to get a job straight away after university, so they were very comfortable within their position where they are, I was only 8 hours in my career and they were 8 months in their career, so I struggled with all of that, I used to see on their social media they were having a laugh, they used to get pizzas for lunchtime, and just little stuff like that, I felt as if why couldn’t I fit in like that, why do I feel like an outsider, what’s different between me and them. I think it’s because I was still learning, I was still adapting to that whole change. I did miss the fact that I was in… had random days off and it’s just struggling in general just to fit in, it was very difficult to communicate with certain members of staff, because they have been there for a very long time and because they have already been there for a long time, they’ve already become comfortable in their positions, so communicating with them was difficult, you feel like an outsider, they just see you as ‘oh you just graduated’ and you’re gonna come and go, the fact that they have been there for a very long time, they have become comfortable, they are aware of the policies and procedures and sometimes they bend the rules and it’s so clear for them to bend the rules because they have been there for a long time, whereas me, I’m completely somebody new and if I was to bend the rule, I would get in trouble and it’s just that constant fear and just trying to please people, making them feel like okay I’m good at my job and this is why, I have to keep showing I’ve done this, I’ve done that and constantly trying to be in everybody’s good books, so I think that was a huge jump and I feel as if nobody really talks about that massive jump from university to going to work life and I really feel as though I struggled in fitting in and struggled to just communicate sometimes with people especially all the duration who have been there a long time, just bear with me Sam, two seconds.

**I:** Sure.

**R:** Sorry about that.

**I:** No problem.

**R:** So, I struggled with all of that and it was very difficult for me to settle in because of the working culture and just there has been a lot of people who have been there for a very long time.

**I:** Mmh.

**R:** I’m not sure what else… in terms of how this made me feel, I felt very… I did feel a bit distressed and a bit of anxiety, I felt as though a lot of people, I thought is this just me or does everybody go through this. It made me wonder a little bit and I just gave myself like a period of time where ok I’m just going to be here for another few months, let me see how this goes, as time went on, I slowly adapted and managed that transition phase and I was able to actually fit in well. I just feel as though you just need a bit of time to adapt to change, that’s what I needed and I wasn’t used to that, but at the very beginning I genuinely felt very lonely and I felt as though I was gonna struggle with my career, I wanted to just go back into studying, something I was comfortable with, to do something completely different and not want to work but I gave myself the benefit of the doubt and said I wanna try because then at least I know I’ve tried and as I’ve worked along in my career, I feel as though I’m able to fit in well now when I go to a new job, I do tend to keep myself… I feel as if when you get older you realise the more you experience, you realise making friends at work, colleagues and all of that, it’s not really important. Your main aim is literally just to go in there and get your work done, come back out, yes you need a social life at work in order for time to go etc, for you to enjoy your work and increase the moral, but I don’t mind if I don’t if I don’t sit with anyone on my lunch break anymore, I don’t mind if I don’t have anyone to talk to, because I know I have a busy day ahead of me and I’ve got a full schedule, so I think in the beginning it’s hard, because you’re still learning the new role, you have very little amount of work, but as you’ve gone into your position within the weeks, you get really busy and these little things… become the little things and your work has become the bigger thing.

**I:** Mmh…so to reflect back on some of the things you’ve said, it sounds like it was a big jump from uni to work life?

**R:** Yeah, it was a massive jump, I missed the whole freedom, I felt as though I was so robotic when I went to work, everything was just so time-table, I feel like there was no flexibility, yes I had a flexibility of, you know, I’ve got a hospital appointment I need to leave early etc, but there was no actual flexibility of can I take a longer lunch break, but why do you need a longer lunch break, ok I will have to make up the time then after work, it’s just little things like that, whereas university wasn’t like this. I didn’t have to attend lectures, it’s fine I didn’t have to make up for it, I’ll do it in my own time if that makes sense. It’s just that whole feeling of freedom and I feel as though I think that’s what I miss the most, I feel as though… I know they treat you like adults at work, but I genuinely felt like I was back at school.

**I:** Mmh…and how did it make you feel when you were going though those experiences of a big jump of not having the same freedom or social life?

**R:** At first, I did feel a bit frustrated, not necessarily frustrated, I feel as though… I was like, I don’t want to phrase it ‘It is what it is’ but it was what it is and I had to accept it and I hated the fact that I accepted it. It was more like, I just felt more like, ugh I’m just so fed up with this nonsense, and I just felt like just get on with it, that’s how I felt. I didn’t really feel… I feel like you just to accept it and I just had to make sure that I had a lot of acceptance in me and I just accepted it really and it is what it was and in order for me to technically survive. I have to do what everybody says, I’m different… different, but that is what it was. It was just my career and I had to, sometimes you have to work hard in order to get what you want, to be another…

**I:** Ok and can you tell me more about when you said, you know, you saw your friends all getting a job and you didn’t get a job around the same time or as early as them and them seeing them all have jobs and you started later. Can you tell me more please?

**R:** So, in that time obviously we all graduated and they somehow, all my friends yeah, seemed to be getting a graduate job in their chosen sector and I was really struggling, it was really difficult, I studied HR and it’s really difficult to get into HR, especially when you are a new graduate, so I struggled with that, and it really made me question my career path, it made me question what I could do different, should I change my career path. I did feel a sense of loneliness in terms of, I felt not dumb…I felt as though I wasn’t capable, I was incompetent, I felt as though maybe I am not good enough and should have done something different, maybe my degree isn’t worthy enough, but it was actually because I wasn’t looking in the right places and I soon came to realise that I was looking at the wrong jobs, at the wrong scale, at the wrong position. I was trying to apply for jobs way above my head, like you have to learn to walk before you can run, and I realised I need to start off somewhere slow and low in order for me to gradually increase and that’s what I did and although my first job was a very low scale, I did feel a bit upset, that my friends managed to get a job where they were earning up to 30,000 and I was still on the 20s when I started work and we studied a similar things and it’s just because they been working longer than me. At that time, it just makes you question yourself really, I did feel a bit disappointed within myself, like maybe I am not good enough etc but you just have to slowly come to the realisation, you have to kind of tell yourself, you have to learn to walk before you can run, and my friends have been working a lot longer than me and I just thought in my career, and they are … so that’s just the difference.

**I:** And how did it make you feel when you were kind of questioning yourself, doubting yourself in those periods?

**R:** I did feel slightly upset and just, it just wasn’t…I don’t know how I felt at that moment. I think I just, I’m not sure how I felt, there is no real feeling to it, it’s just something you accept and you just have to accept that, I don’t know how I felt at that moment.

**I:** No problem. You know when you said you remember seeing your friends on social media posting pictures of their work and someone and you were sort of looking at them and saying ‘oh, how come I don’t’ can you tell me a little more about that?

**R:** Yes, When my friends used to post pictures of them going out for lunch etc after work and I felt as though they managed to create a social life after work and I didn’t get to do that, and I feel like social media has a really big influence in this because I didn’t…it had a big influence because, how can I say it, it’s just what they’re showing me, really because at one point, you know, my friends they say oh yeah, they show off they’re really happy at work but actually when I used to talk to them ‘how’s work going etc’ they struggle, oh yeah, same old, nothing, boring, I’m bored here or like, I’m not enjoying it, everyone is really, you know, really backwards etc. I used to see what they wanted to show me, but the time, it made me feel really bad and I’m glad I spoke to my friends and I just, how can I explain, it just shows you the real picture behind things, they just showed you what they want you to see, in fact, I was probably more happier at my job than they were happier at their job and going out for lunch and all of that, at first it used to bother me but like I said, as I fitted in, as I have gotten older, I’ve realised it doesn’t really bother me anymore because I can do these things, but just not with that, with my team, it can be completely other different people etc.

**I:** So it sounds like what you’re saying is, social media can, people post things on social media that doesn’t necessarily represent their actual life?

**R:** What they actually feel, or what they are actually trying to show off, they just pick and choose right now what I want to show but deep down inside, I probably won’t be happy in my position, in my career, but I can show the world look I’m really successful, maybe I’m not. So that’s what I was trying to explain, like when my friends used to … that, and I used to ask them ‘how’s your team working? They were like ‘oh it’s just a boring team, we just had to go for this’. Why? But they didn’t enjoy their lunch so they shouldn’t give off completely image and I used to feel a bit, not envious, slightly envious and jealous like at the fact that how have they fitted in so well and they managed to make a whole bunch of friends when I have been here a couple of months and I don’t even have anyone to have lunch with. It’s just constantly… you know like looking at someone’s life and just trying to be like ‘why can’t this be mine’.

**I:** And how does this make you feel?

**R:** Like I said, I feel as though, it did make me feel a bit, not, I did feel a bit upset by why do they have it all and I have nothing. Like I said, it just made me feel a bit incompetent, but I just feel like it just needs time. Over time, things get better and like I said, you need to settle in, fit in to your position and get to know the other people. Then, you will see it goes better.

**I:** And also, how do you feel about social media sort of being used as a platform to portray something that it’s not, that people don’t necessarily, like what people…

**R:** At first, like I used to see all of this instagram, see everyone happy, they used to always portray themselves as so rich and famous, and handbags, it’s all about showing off and as I was younger, when I was in university, I used to envy that, I used to be like ‘how did they get all these followers, how do they have such a fun life, and I’ve got such a boring life going to university and back’ but it is, it’s just what they’re trying to show, as I’ve noticed that as I’ve gotten older, it’s just what they want you to see, and the thing is, I can afford these handbags, I don’t need to show it off, it’s just something that I don’t need to show off to people like look I’m really happy in my career position, I know this within myself and I am content within myself, and I feel like as you get older, you realise what’s better for you I feel as though what’s right for me, it just takes time to just completely different environment.

**I:** Thank you. Is there anything else you want to say about Box 2?

**R:** No, not at the moment, thank you Sam.

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

**R:** Yes, Box 3 is as I mentioned, not having anyone to talk to about your personal issues. This is something that I faced quite a bit when I was currently now and sometimes when I was a lot younger. As personal issues, meaning it can be anything from you feel like something dramatic happened in your life to just about little things, I struggled, I sometimes, although when everyone was around me, I struggled to open up about me, I feel as though they would judge me and judge me in the way, what I said, is it socially acceptable, how can I do this, so sometimes I bottle things up and keep things to myself and that can really … the effect mentally and I feel as though, for example, as a anxiety, I struggle from anxiety in the mornings I have a routine and that needs to be done and if I don’t do it and I am running it, I will go through that whole day thinking back ‘oh gosh, I need to actually come back and do this, before I do the rest of my evening. And that’s something, every time I mention this, certain people, like my friends would laugh at me, like ‘don’t be silly, you can always go home and do it’ I just felt as it’s something that though that like I said, little things is the big things, and people see this as the little things and that’s why I tend not to open or talk to people about these things or don’t say anything about my anxiety, or maybe a decision I made in my life, and I feel as though people are going to judge me over little things. It’s just certain things I want to keep to myself but my personal issues and just my personal life things, it’s all about people judging you and it’s just something that I can’t, I just feel like if once people started judging you, they start stereotyping you into certain things and I know I’m not that person so why am I going to portray myself to be that person to someone in their eyes when I am not that person.

**I:** So it sounds like what you’re saying is that sometimes there are certain things that you don’t necessarily share with someone, like personal things, because you feel like some people might judge you for these?

**R:** Yeah. Yes, correct. I feel like that all of the time. Because from past experience when I have mentioned things to people about my anxiety, they just say to me ‘oh, maybe it’s because you’re overthinking, or maybe it’s because you’re being silly etc’ but I’m not being silly, this is what I feel right now and sometimes… But sometimes, I haven’t said that I have spoken to a few people about this type of thing, anxiety, and they have explained to me, like it’s okay to do this, but I have to sometimes let go in terms of if I haven’t done my bed in the morning, if I haven’t tidied or cleaned the bathroom in the morning, it’s okay. You can still go out after work and come back and do it. It’s just, I just need to be able to tell myself that rather than hear it from someone else. And the person that I spoke to and told me it’s okay, I felt comfortable talking to them because I felt like they understood me rather than just laughing at me. Because this person said to me, I’ve taken a different angle and looked at me differently, all I need is a bit of push, let’s just say it’s okay because it let’s you see things at a different perspective, when people laugh at you, you just look at a vision, like ok these people are laughing at me, maybe do you know just leave them to it, but when someone explains it to you and says it’s okay to do this etc, and what not, I look at things differently, ok maybe it is okay to come back home later and do it and over the years, I’ve actually told myself not to go home, I’m trying to put myself out there, trying to move away from that feeling, that anxiety, constant thinking, I need to go home and do that, because by the end of it, life is too short, that’s how I see it right now. There are bigger things to worry about little things, like making my bed or doing my dishes in the sink. I can always come back to do it, it’s not going anywhere.

**I:** So it sounds like what you’re saying is, some people, you don’t necessarily feel comfortable sharing your personal information or personal issues with them and because you don’t have anyone to talk to about these personal issues, that in a way can make you feel?

**R:** Correct. It depends how someone approachable is. The person who I spoke to previously, I spoke to them randomly about this, they were very understanding, it’s ok, these are things everybody goes through etc. That’s all I just need from somebody to agree with me, I say maybe this is normal but there is a solution for it and look at it a different way. But, all these people laughing at you, you just feel like ok they’re just judging you, and you shouldn’t really talk to them about certain things anymore because this is how they are going to react.

**I:** Sounds like what you’re saying is, someone you just need someone to listen to you or tell you that it’s okay?

**R:** Yeah, just accept what you’re saying and maybe look at things at a different light with you rather than sit back and be no help at all.

**I:** And how does it make you feel when you talk about your personal issues with some of your friends and they laugh about it?

**R:** Sometimes, it does make me feel a bit, it makes me feel slightly, how do I say this, it just makes me feel a bit low, like okay they’re just laughing at me and I just feel like an odd black sheep in the group, it makes you just feel like okay I just said something dumb, they’re my friends and they’re just judging me and sometimes, it makes me feel like they’re just joking around with me, its not that deep but it does get to me a little bit sometimes. I feel like so why are they laughing at me, have I said something wrong, just makes you question yourself and your worth and your actual mental status sometimes, like the last thing or I’m not right in the head, like why am I stressing over this and etc. How can I not come back because I haven’t done my bed, like that’s such a silly excuse, and they just make a joke about it, these things are something that you go through and I just need people to accept it.

**I:** And when you say, you think you might not be right in the head, can you tell me more about that?

**R:** I think it’s all about be being socially accepted. So, she doesn’t come out because she hasn’t made her bed, that’s such a silly reason socially, so I think it’s more about being socially accepted, like sometimes you have to change your ways just to be socially accepted. I’m muslim, so I don’t drink so I don’t go out at a certain time so I feel like, I pray so I say my prayer before I leave, in order to fit, I tell them at first it was really difficult because my friends are non-muslim, they were like ‘why don’t you come out at this time’ like I can’t come out later because I have got my prayers, it was very difficult for them to understand and I felt as though they still look at me weirdly, like socially, she’s such a weirdo, she can’t come out because she has to pray. But I feel as though, as time has gone on, they slightly have gotten used to that and they respect my religion, they just have educated themselves, and noticed that maybe this is her religion, we have to respect that. For me, socially it maybe has slightly been accepted in terms of my friends now understand and they will support me regardless, they would rearrange a time or I will tell them to meet me at a certain time. I won’t go out at a certain time to do my prayers etc.

**I:** Is there anything you want to say about Box 3?

**R:** No, thank you.