

Voices of North Yorkshire – Alex podcast transcript

Colleen – I'm here today with Alex, to talk about his experiences of loneliness and how it affects him. So Alex, could you tell me a little bit about yourself, perhaps your age and a rough idea of where you live.

Alex – I'm twenty seven years old. I live, roughly, just by Valley Bridge, not far from the art gallery, in Scarborough.

Colleen – So what, so what is your background? Have you lived in North Yorkshire long? Or?

Alex – I grew up in North Yorkshire until I was about 21. No, a bit younger than that. Then I moved to Huddersfield to go to University. Then I worked in Halifax for about six months and moved there. Then, about two years ago, I moved back here.

Colleen – To be with your family?

Alex – Yeah, to be with family.

Colleen – Okay, and are your friends in Scarborough or, do they, are they still in Huddersfield?

Alex – No, the ones from Huddersfield have all gone their separate ways cos they were University friends. Which, and lot of them were actually not from this country. But yeah, I moved back to be closer to family. I've got a couple of friends in Scarborough but not many. I've never had many friends.

Colleen – Okay, what did you study at university?

Alex – Animation and Motion Graphics. Right now I'm working on trying to set up my own business with it.

Colleen – Okay

Alex - I haven't really done anything with it since I left university until this year. I've mostly been working in retail. To be honest, working. I got the job. The job in Halifax is actually what set me off quite badly with my mental health.

Colleen – So, you mentioned earlier that you've never really had many friends but was there any time when you specifically felt isolated or lonely?

Alex – When I was in Halifax, definitely. I literally had no friends in Halifax at all, apart from one and she was working all the time so I literally spent weeks and days just on my own. And it didn't go well cos I just had no one to relate to. And I mean I was working on me own a lot of the time as well, for the job. So, there was no one at work, no one at home, no good time for going out and making friends because work took over my life at that point cos of some stupid overtime stuff. And yeah, I got very depressed, very anxious and yeah I didn't.

What actually got me to coming back to Scarborough was, it was. I think the day before my sister's wedding, I'd come back to Scarborough for helping her set up and I was standing on Valley Bridge thinking I can tell why people want to jump off here, it's a lovely place to come and end it all. And obviously at that point I thought to myself, I need to go get some help. Which I did, thankfully.

Colleen – Okay, did that make a difference?

Alex – Yeah, it did

Colleen – Yeah? Was there anything else that you did to reduce the feelings of loneliness?

Alex – I started going to this club, in Scarborough, for nature war gaming, so war hammering and stuff. Obviously, I've not done that for the last six months because of COVID19. To be honest, I've probably felt more isolated in the last six months than I have in a long, long, time. Cos of COVID19, cos I am genuinely scared to go out at the moment. A lot of my friends are around this club activity or work, so if I can't do either of them, I can't really see any of my friends. And talking on Facebook's just not the same is it?

Colleen – No it isn't. Do you fall into that shielding category as well?

Alex – I did at one point but there's no one actually shielding right now cos they're not doing shielding categories anymore.

Colleen – No

Alex – I only just found that out. Uh, yeah cos I've got cerebral palsy you see. So that's why I had the shielding category at one point. Don't know when it came off the cerebral palsy, I don't know when it stopped because I honestly lost track of what you're meant to be doing and that's kind of one of the reasons I've gone a bit, isolate, isolate, got to isolate yourself if you can because it's the one way to make sure you are following the rules properly.

Colleen – The gaming that you're involved in, is all face to face, it's not uh, its not an online one?

Alex – Not really, you'd have to, it face to face

Colleen – No, It's the models isn't it?

Alex – It's kind of like chess, for anyone who doesn't know about it. A more complicated, and much more expensive version of chess.

Colleen – So, we've touched on, on how the virus has affected your isolations and loneliness and your mental health. Is there anything you want to add to that?

Alex – The main way I'd say the disease can affect you is, you also lose track of time. Cos one thing I realised at the very start of this, is because you lost track of time, I lost track of my medication.

Colleen – Okay

Alex – Which, went badly wrong because, um, I, one point did so badly lost track of when I was taking my meds, I hadn't taken it for God knows how long. And I wound up so anxious, I thought my bedsheets were trying to attack me. That's the theory is, I actually at one point thought my duvet was trying to kill me. So yeah. I've sorted that out now. I'm on a different kind of medication and I've got some tubs, some pill tubs to keep track of when I'm taking it.

Colleen – How has the place where you live affected your loneliness, has it, has it helped or has it been a problem?

Alex – It's helped in the sense that I'm closer to some old friends and I'm able to go out more and see my mum. My mum used to live round the corner, so that was good and I could just go and see her when I needed to. Um, the only problem with it, is that it's a basement flat so getting people up the steps and getting people to come round sometimes can be a bit awkward. Cos there's about five or six flights of stairs to get down here. Especially at the moment cos the outdoor steps are the not the easiest to get down so, we can't really meet in the back yard.

Colleen – So it's stopped you from meeting some of your friends?

Alex – Yep

Colleen – Anything else you want to add?

Alex – COVID19 has opened my eyes a bit actually, because um when I lived in Huddersfield, I was ready to isolate myself but be happy to isolate myself. You understand what I mean?

Colleen – Yes, yeah.

Alex – Cos I would actually go and shut myself in my little house I had there for a week on end, watching TV, playing video games and not seeing anybody during like the holiday periods and stuff. I'd honestly be quite happy doing it but, um, it's a weird one cos these last few years. These last six months have made me realise, I really don't like being isolated anymore. But even when things are starting to go back to quote-on-quote, normal, and actually re-open, I'm not one of the ones rushing out to go do everything because. I mean I went in to town last Saturday, or was it the Saturday before? To get some stuff sorted out and I literally ended up getting so freaked out, I nearly ran back home.

Colleen – So is it that, has it pushed your anxiety up considerably?

Alex – Yep. Look, the way I'd put it would be, this whole covid situation has been like petrol on the fire.

Colleen – Anything else Alex?

Alex – No, I think that’s about everything.

Colleen – Well okay, that’s been really, really good and really useful, thank you. That’s...

Alex – No problem.

Colleen – That’s great.