

## Voices of North Yorkshire – Miranda podcast transcript

**Laura** – I'm here today, talking to Miranda about her experience with loneliness and how it has impacted her in the past and now with the COVID19 lockdown. Hi Miranda, so tell me what brought you to North Yorkshire

**Miranda** – Hi Laura. I was posted into Yorkshire in 2014 with my husband, he's in the British Army and we came over from Germany, although I've been in the UK for a few years before then.

**Laura** – Can you say a little bit more about your background and what led you to feeling lonely?

**Miranda** – Yeah, so I'm American. The accent tells! And I came to the UK for university, met my husband, got married, he joined the army, we got posted around. Um, so straight away I'm at a disadvantage because I obviously don't have any family here. All of my family's in another country, and quite a faraway one, so that makes things difficult. And you try to make friendships, obviously. I had friends from university and friends from different postings that we've been to but part of that military life is your friends scatter just to the four corners of the wind, so that makes things difficult as well. And, them um, when we moved to Catterick, I did everything I thought I was supposed to do. I got a job, joined the wives choir, did everything I could to put myself out there and make connections with people to not be lonely. Um, and then I fell pregnant and then, it was twins! And that was what really kicked it all off.

**Laura** – So tell me a little bit more about how having twins impacted upon your feelings

**Miranda** – Yeah, so I had to leave work. There was no way of making my salary stretch to childcare for two infants. Um, so the first thing I had to do was to give up my work, which took away all of my sense of, sort of, independence and identity and self-worth and I was now just a wife and a mum, which was difficult. But also you also forget, you don't really realise at the time how much you connect on interacting with other human beings at work. Like your colleagues or, you know, working in the castle the people who popped into the shop or the people who, you know, whatever it may be you know, you just speak to people all day when you work and suddenly, I wasn't. And my husband was away with work quite a bit, they kept him away. The first few years of our kids' life, he was away more than 50% of the time, including one stretch for a year. Yeah, there wasn't anybody to speak to at home so I'd go, you know, day and night it was me and two babies so there was just nobody to speak to. And usually if you have a young family you know, you, you rely on your family and my family wasn't an option and my husband is British but his family wasn't an option either. His two sisters had both emigrated and his parents lived too far from the posting to come for visits. So, it was just me on my own.

**Laura** – Yeah, and I mean, did you, were you doing anything to sort of help yourself or was it very difficult kind of mentally to get on with that?

**Miranda** – I, both of those things are true. I, um, I tried to put myself out there. Um, the great thing about Catterick Garrison is because it is a garrison town, there's a lot of facilities and structure for spouses there and for families. So, um, I tried to carry on with the choir after the kids were born but that did not work out because I couldn't look after both babies and be a member of the choir so, I, I, had to give that up. Um, and then I took myself to coffee mornings and I took myself to, um, you know mummy and me groups. Because it's a big garrison area there was one sort of every day of the week. And I did do that so, and they were usually from about 10-12, so every morning I was out with the kids and the pram, getting that walk, getting that fresh air, trying to make friends. But for whatever reason I wasn't connecting with the other mums. I think it, probably cos I was a bit older.

I had my kids at 31, which is older than the average military mum. And, um, and also not being British myself there was a, a bit of a cultural gap I think between me and some of the other young mums. So as much as I thought I was putting myself out there, I just wasn't succeeding. And then the other things is, frankly, that's two hours a day and, that leaves 22 hours of the day for you to be completely and utterly alone in a closed house.

**Laura** – Um, so obviously, recently we've had COVID19 lockdown so how has that changed your experience and your feelings?

**Miranda** – Um, when the first one happened back in the spring, I was terrified because I had seen how, um, negatively my mental health was affected by isolation. And I was just absolutely terrified it was going to happen again. I didn't want to let my kids down, I didn't want to be, um, stuck in my own head. I didn't want to be unhappy, frankly. Um, and so the first lockdown came from me with a lot of fear. Um, but I was very lucky that I was able to be in touch with the Minds Matter charity and they did an evaluation for me on low mood and anxiety and they were able to get me some therapy and that was incredibly helpful. So now I have more tools to combat the difficulties of lockdown. Um, this new one though is, it's a lot isn't it because, on the one hand you think with the lockdown, I've been lonely before, it's going to be terrible and the first time it felt almost like a bit of that blitz spirit. Like we're all in this together. Um, and it felt like, I'm lonely but everyone else is lonely and we're all afraid and it's all new for everybody. Um, but now in this new one, it's much more like, it feels like half the people don't care anymore and people aren't taking it seriously and so when you do adhere to the strict guidelines of a lockdown, it is again very, very isolating. Um, and that's difficult.

**Laura** – Yeah I can totally empathise with that, that does sound very challenging. Um, sort of as the last point, do you have anything, any sort of tips, any pointers that you'd give to anyone who is maybe feeling the same way you're feeling, any advice to sort of support them?

**Miranda** – Um, I would say that, probably you'd want to stay in touch with people in the ways that you still can. Um, so obviously the internet has become a big help. Um, things like Zoom and, and Facetime and all the other ways we can message each other and be in each other's pockets in that way. Actually reach out and use those because it's all well and good to say, oh we can, but you have to actually do it to make it help. Um, and the other thing that's really helpful is just getting out into the fresh air. And it's really hard I know at this time of year, the weather isn't great, um, there's not a lot of daylight but try and get the daylight and the fresh air because it really is. A walk in fresh air does so much for your overall wellbeing and mental health that it can help with the loneliness. So, uh, those are probably my two main hits. Reach out using every media that is available to you and remember to go outside.

**Laura** – Thank you so much Miranda, I really appreciate your time.

**Miranda** – You're very welcome Laura, nice to speak to you.