

Beating BDD Episode 2 – Minnie Iris

For the second episode of Beating BDD, I spoke to Minnie Iris. Minnie suffered from BDD from the age of 11 to when she was diagnosed at 38. Now 51, she describes herself as 80- 90% recovered and does great work to raise awareness of the disorder.

‘So many years were spent under the rule of BDD... I’m now being really kind to myself, and doing the things that make me feel good. Life feels like an exciting adventure!’

How did Minnie’s BDD arise?

[00:04:05] BDD first reared its head when she was about 11 and became obsessed by lines around her neck.

[00:04:33] Bullying at school compounded the problem.

[00:07:00] Minnie had inherited a hooked nose, which gave the bullies something else to pick on.

How did BDD manifest itself?

[00:07:56] At around 13 she started using make-up to make her nose look smaller.

[00:09:54] On her 18th birthday she had a nose job, but the BDD soon switched to other parts of her body.

How did it affect her life?

[00:11:14] Minnie’s low self-esteem affected the kind of job she went for when she left school.

[00:13:32] At 29, she did an art degree, which she loved. But she was still obsessed with her appearance.

[00:16:00] She didn’t have a baby because she thought it would be a monster.

How did she find out she had BDD and seek help?

[00:15:52] Stress over her mother dying and separating from her husband made Minnie’s hair start to thin and her skin to change. Obsession over these changes eventually led her to feel suicidal.

[00:16:28] She researched BDD online and realised she had a mental illness. The GP sent her for CBT specifically for the condition.

What treatment was the most useful or difficult?

[00:19:42] As time went on Minnie recognised that her mind was the problem and she could start to separate her thoughts from reality.

[00:21:30] She applied mindfulness techniques to label her thoughts.

[00:24:10] Exposure techniques helped her to see herself more realistically in the mirror.

[00:25:45] Going on medication also really helped.

What happened after treatment ended?

[00:27:20] Minnie relapsed about six months after treatment, because she felt well enough to use a product to stop her hair thinning. But it brought her mind back to her appearance.

[00:29:10] Relapses are a normal part of recovery and each one is a learning experience.

What's life like for Minnie now?

[00:02:00] Recovery from BDD is like being let out of prison.

[00:30:30] Minnie can now take pleasure in really small things that she would otherwise have overlooked.

[00:33:00] She feels hugely positive about the future.

[00:33:58] Her message to sufferers is that you can recover from BDD and have a rewarding life.

Resources

- The BDD Foundation: bddfoundation.org