

Beating BDD Episode 20 – Elias Marchetti

Elias Marchetti provided the story and voice for the brilliant “Because I’m ugly” animation on the homepage of the BDD Foundation’s website. In this interview, recorded at the 2021 OCD Action and the BDD Foundation’s Joint Virtual Conference, Elias tells us how exposures helped him to do things he couldn’t have done even before he had BDD.

“The bravest thing you can do is reach out and get help.”

How is his life now?

[00:01.25] Elias feels he no longer has BDD.

[00:02.00] He’s more confident in how he looks now than before he had BDD.

[00:18.48] Now he’s had treatment, he has the tools to be his own therapist. If he’s uncomfortable doing something, he’ll deliberately make himself do it as an exposure.

When and how did the disorder emerge and manifest itself?

[00:03.10] Elias’s BDD developed gradually in lower sixth. It got to the point he couldn’t even eat dinner with his family.

[00:06.25] It was triggered by being bullied at school.

[00:07.17] Elias also has autism which makes him focus a lot on faces to try and read expressions. He assumed others would concentrate that much on his face too.

What help and treatment did Elias receive?

[00:08.51] His mum figured out what he was suffering from and took him to the GP.

[00:04.15] He attended the Priory North London as an inpatient.

[00:12.20] You have to be willing to try and get better. It’s tough, but it gets easier.

How did therapy help?

[00:04.22] Elias removed his scarf and hat for the first time in months and everyone was very supportive. No one judged him.

[00:15:17] He would build up exposures gradually, walk around the park and make eye contact with people then build up to talking to a stranger in town.

[00:16:38] Exposures have allowed him to go beyond his comfort level to do things other people without BDD or OCD wouldn’t be able to.

[00:19.27] He lets intrusive thoughts pass by imagining them flowing down a river.

What would he say to someone struggling with BDD?

[00:05.44] It’s not you that’s having the intrusive thoughts, it’s the illness – so it’s not your fault. Believe in yourself.

[00:13.38] Don’t despair if CBT doesn’t work for you. There are lots of different ways.

[00:14.04] If you have a bump, that’s fine. It doesn’t mean you completely regress.

[00:21.23] You might think you’ll never get better, but you will. There are people who care and 99% of them aren’t judging you. And if anyone does, it’s their problem!

[00:23.20] The first step is to accept you have an illness and ask for help. Once you do that, you’re on your way to getting better.

Resources

- The BDD Foundation: bddfoundation.org