

## Elmore Community Services:

### Flipping the Narrative Podcast: Abuse and Addiction

**Podcast duration:** 44 minutes

**Co-Hosts:** Liz Jones and Luke Jerdy

**In conversation with:** Delroy Taylor

**Producer:** Ben Anderson, Sound Rebel

### Podcast Episode Transcript

**Liz:** Hello, welcome to Flipping the Narrative Podcast. This is a series of podcasts to look at men and what problems that they have and how they talk to each other in response to the violence against women and girls' agenda.

My name is Liz Jones and I have worked in the violence against women and girls' sector for many years now, but I've also worked with perpetrators of domestic abuse and sexual offenders. I'll pass you to my co-host, Luke.

**Luke:** Thanks Liz. Hi everyone, I'm Luke Jerdy, I'm a professional actor, writer, and director, and this is the kind of work that I want to be involved in, creative work that makes an impact, so I'm so excited to be involved in this project.

And it's primarily making an impact into other men's lives and how they can improve their own situation, which then leads to an improvement in their relationships with others. Do you

want to introduce our guest Liz, and then I'll talk a bit more about the conversation that we had?

Liz: Absolutely. Our guest today is Del, he has come on to talk about his problematic drinking and the trauma in his childhood that caused him to start drinking more and more.

Luke: This has been my favourite episode of the podcast so far. Del is a fantastic human being who talks so openly and honestly about his past and how that led to his drinking, which then led on to him stopping drinking. I think he's 20 months alcohol and drug free, and, of course, long may that continue for him.

It was a wonderful, wonderful conversation, him, and I both connected through our relationships with the men that came into our lives at an early age, and he offers some brilliant advice to men that are going through the same thing. Some brilliant advice on how to be in general and we spoke about multiple things to do with how we should behave as men and in life as humans, so I hope you enjoy it.

(Music)

Del, thank you so much for joining us today, we really, really appreciate your time and your openness. I guess just to kick us off, would you be able to just give us a bit of background on yourself and, kind of, give a bit of context as to what led you to your dependency on alcohol?

Del: Yes, thank you very much for inviting me on today, I really appreciate it. I'm Del, I'm 44 from Warwickshire. I have

currently just gone 20 months alcohol free, 17 months ago I appeared on another podcast that changed my life forever, I think.

Since the age of 6 up until 16, me and my mum and brother lived with an abusive male in our house, and 17 months ago I suddenly just... it just all came out on a podcast, and I didn't mean for it all to come out, I was talking about alcohol, and, yes, it just all came out and that's when my whole life changed since that day.

I talk about it freely now, you know, and bear with me, I'm not going to say I'm not going to get upset because every time I do talk about it, it seems to just choke me up, but I'm a great believer that's what I'm here to do now and that's my purpose in life now is to share my story and hopefully help one or two people if I possibly can.

Luke: I think that's incredibly brave and you're absolutely okay to get upset. I think it's really, really important, especially with the work we're doing on this podcast. And a lot of the work I do is certainly all geared towards men talking more, opening up more, and I think the more that we do that the better we are as people, I think. I'm sure you would agree with that considering how your life turned around from being open and speaking about things.

Del: The more I talk about it, the more people contact me, males as well, it's just amazing. When it happens to you, you think you're the only person in the world that it's happening to. And because we're brought up in a society that you're meant to be

masculine and strong, we can't tell anybody, and that's what I did from a young age.

I never spoke about it because living in the '80s, you know, there was no way that I was going to tell anybody that this strong lad from a council estate was getting abused by a male, it just wasn't going to happen.

So, what I did over the years was just hide it and hide it. I thought that it didn't affect me, I honestly thought that. And I sit down now and look when I'm not going out drinking, I sit on my own and think gosh that whole situation that happened to me from an early age actually dictated my whole life up until now of course.

And people say, "Oh, you've done so well not to drink anymore." But the people that contacted me originally as well are not just people that have given up alcohol, but they're actually the abusers, which, you know, I'm a great believer that everything happens for a reason.

And before I was just like, "How can this person do this? How can these people do this to children, to women?" But when you look at the big picture, you know, and some people might say I'm wrong for thinking like this, but there has to be a reason why people end up that way, you know, there is a reason why, and this cycle just keeps repeating and repeating and repeating for some people, not everybody, but for some people.

Liz:

I completely agree with you Del. I think that's one of the reasons we're doing these podcasts is because we don't think

that people are born abusive, they become abusive through different ways and socialisation and their view of masculinity.

So, this is about starting that conversation so that we do get people to start thinking about how they bring up their sons and their daughters. What are their expectations of relationships and maybe prevent further abuse in the future.

Del: Yes, totally.

Liz: Was it a stepfather then that came into the home?

Del: Yes, it was a stepfather that I loved and trusted because that's what we do. And you look back at it and you think that, you know, you tell a child to go and climb a tree, you show them from an early age this is the way you climb a tree to be safe.

We just look up to these male figures, these adult figures, and think that's the right way of life, and as a child to watch your parent go through all of this abuse, you know, it's so confusing because I didn't care what happened to me, I was bothered about my mum and my brothers.

But then in the back of your head you're thinking hold on a second, my mum is not leaving this person, she's taking the abuse but she's not leaving, so that must be right. And it's so confusing as a child growing up, like, you don't know what's right or wrong, so you have to work that out as you go along, which is-

I think that is one of the things that just stays with us as adults, and this is why we probably turn to drink or to drugs

because we still- I know what's right or wrong now, of course, but trying to go to school, grow up, become a teenager, it's a lot to take.

Luke:

That's the difficult thing isn't it Del, I think I had, you know, I wasn't abused by my- I mean I don't even like him to call him my stepdad, I mean that's, kind of, how, as you can imagine what my relationship was like with him and it's only 18 years down the line that they were together that they're finally splitting up.

And I felt that my mum was choosing him all the time over us, over me and my sisters, because he was mentally abusive, you know, he was manipulative, just a really, really difficult environment to grow up in which led to a lot of my issues with anger.

So, I think, coming from I certainly haven't gone through what you've gone through thankfully, but I get where you're coming from in terms of having a man come into a house. And at first, I don't know if it was the same for you, but at first everything seemingly being okay, you know, he was buying us things and taking us on holidays and all of this kind of stuff and then slowly but surely his true personality came out.

And what I'm struggling with, which it sounds like you're almost at a better place than I am with it, is trying to see it from his point of view and trying to see well that's probably all come from somewhere and I'm still at the point where I'm, like, "No, the guy is just a dickhead." I can't bring myself to forgive or accept. I mean I don't know where you're at with that.

Del:

As you say before it's about being honest and I'm not going to sugar coat anything, and everybody that knows me before when I used to drink I had a little bit of a short temper, meaning when I drank, if I went out and somebody stood on my foot or something I would be snapping.

And people look at me now and I'm just so relaxed, but if I were to go back drinking again I know the thoughts I had for so many years, hate, anger, would just fill my head again and that's one of the reasons why I needed to stop drinking because I don't want to be that person, to live the rest of my life.

I'm 45 soon and I don't want to get to 65 still thinking about this, and I must say I've only called him stepdad today because I've just been asked that, but I call it it. I don't want it to just get to 65 and I'm taking that to my grave thinking this person actually came to this world, did what he had to do to us, mess my whole childhood and my adulthood and I'm going to my grave stilling thinking about it, no chance.

What I've learnt to do now is stop the drinking, and some days, like everybody, you know, some days things start to go over my head, but I'm in a better place where now I can just smile and think everything happened for a reason.

Yes, what happened to me, and my family was disgusting and to every child and every adult that it happens to now, it is wrong, but everything happened for a reason. Now it's my job now to sit with somebody else like yourself and talk about it. Things that we would never talk about before, and to say you know what you're not alone Luke because I understand where you're coming from, or I understand where you're coming from, or I understand what you're coming from.

And to me that's more than anything because it, them, they haven't won, they haven't won then, and that is our purpose in life, Luke, we're here to make a difference to people, to not make the same mistakes that they did, or our parents did.

And I said this before on the podcast, it's not our fault Luke, it wasn't our fault, we didn't ask for any of this, we were just there as children.

Luke: Yes, thank you mate. I mean that's phenomenally inspiring and I'm getting emotional myself because just to hear you say that and, you know, to say look it's not our fault mate, you know, that's so nice to hear somebody else that.

I've spoken a lot about my own issues and things like that, but actually I think you're one of the first people to say look we're in similar boats and, again, I certainly didn't go through what you went through, and I don't know how I would have coped with that, so I just think it's phenomenally inspiring what you're saying, and I completely agree with you.

I've written a stage show about anger and there is a part in my show where my fiancé says to me, "If you don't sort this out, you're just going to become this angry old man who has never found himself." And I think what you're saying there is absolutely spot on, it's, like, am I going to get to 65 or however old and still be angry and still be upset at these things.

And there is such power in going, "No, I'm not going to do that." So, thank you, thank you for that, I completely... it's just so inspiring to me and we're always learning, aren't we? I always think I've got to the point where I'm like, "No, I'm at a great place now," and then somebody like yourself will say



something else, and I'll go, "Wow, no, you're right, I'm inspired again now so that's fantastic." It feels like we've come to the end of the podcast already and we're only just starting.

Del: That's good.

Luke: That's how good this is it.

(Music)

Liz: The Domestic Abuse Act that came out last year has now recognised children as victims, which I think is really important because before they were just seen as witnesses or not even considered, and actually the impact on our children is huge.

Irrespective of what type of abuse there is at home, that impact is pretty much the same unless they've got something resilient to build on that, and that's really hard. But it does take until out coming out to your teenager years or adulthood where you start realising, or as you say, Del, using drugs or alcohol as a form of coping mechanism around that. Is that how you saw it?

Del: Yes, but because I was a father in my teens as well and I just wanted the best for everybody, the best for my mum and the best for my children. And by me having children young with my older wife, she's my ex-wife now, but she was eight years older than me, I just wanted that perfect family. I wanted to give my

children the things that I didn't have, but I had so much love for my mum that was enough, but it still wasn't, I still wanted to feel like I had parents.

So, over the years I just drank like normal. I would go to the pub with friends and drank in the week, but then I look back now, and I think I've always said I've never had a problem with drink because I haven't because I'm a man's man, I go to the rugby, I drink, but when I look back I think what do we class as a problem because we drink to socialise we say to everybody, but are we hiding things? Yes, sometimes we are because we lack confidence, you know, but there is a reason why.

But if I didn't have any issues than why am I still drinking? This is what I ask myself, because I love to socialise and I love to talk, but when I drink alcohol the thoughts that go through my head regarding it are just... they're horrible, and, you know, as Luke will understand, some of the thoughts that go through my head I shouldn't be sitting here today.

I should be probably sitting in a cell thinking what have I done, I'm so stupid, I shouldn't have done that, you know, but I'm grateful that I didn't do that, and I just want to live a normal life as a normal person and not to have these crazy thoughts about what happened to me as a child because it's in the past and I can't change that.

So, the easiest thing for me to do was to give it up, but through the pandemic that was it for me. I knew by sitting at home every day furloughed that if I didn't stop drinking, I knew that I was going to end up having a bit of a problem with it because I was just drinking every day at home, going to the gym, doing my runs, but one bottle of wine, two bottles of wine, I'm thinking "Oh," but then the thoughts kept coming through my

head, and I was thinking, “No, this has got to end because if it doesn’t end and this pandemic goes on for a long time I’m going to have a problem.” Thankfully, touch wood, I did, and as I said I’ve just gone 20 months alcohol free.

Luke: Yes, that’s fantastic, absolutely brilliant work. Do you think the pandemic was the catalyst, like was there a moment where you just said to yourself I need to sort this out or were there other people involved in that?

Del: No, there was nobody else involved because I’ve always been a private person and I hide things, and everybody who knows me thinks he’s always bubbly, he’s always funny, but inside I’m- You understand Luke, still in here at 45 nearly, there is still a part of me who is still 6. There is still that little boy inside me that still, I don’t know, just, you know, some things-

Forgiveness is one of my hardest things. If somebody hurts me, I just can’t give forgive, it takes me such a... I can’t forgive them, but if I’ve hurt somebody over the years it breaks my heart to know that somebody won’t forgive me. And that stems from when I was younger from that person, that it hurting me, yes, it just drives me mad some days.

And the drinking was just my own... I would sit on my own after work, you know, I work hard and I work for a good company and I’ve got a good job, but it didn’t matter how happy I was, I could sit on my own and just have these crazy thoughts, but I didn’t tell anybody.

And I’ve lived with it since I was young, so how am I expected to tell anybody because how can somebody... obviously, you

know, the listeners can't see me, but, you know, to stereotype, you know, I'm a mixed race guy with shaved head with tattoos on my head who has never had a criminal record, who is not into trouble, who has got a good job, but how could I tell people that I'm still suffering in my own head from when I was a little lad, you know.

Some of the friends that I've got since a young age would have just laughed and gone, "What you on about?" But that's what I assumed until I obviously spoke about it on the podcast. And I always thought that drinking helped, you know, if I drank everything went away and nobody could take away that bottle of wine.

And then obviously drugs came into it, and it was just that's not me, that's not me as a person. I don't want to live like that, and, yes, drinking was just- It's horrible because something that has happened to me at a young age which was not my fault, I've had to give up something that I actually, I did enjoy because everybody does it, I like to socialise.

But if you go and sit in a pub now with loads of people and with strangers who don't know you they automatically go, "Are you not drinking? Oh, did you want a drink?" "No, I don't drink." "Why don't you drink?" And that's it then, so I have to sit there, and think am I going to be the man that I want to be and be strong and tell people, "I was the subject of domestic violence as a child, that's why I don't drink," or do I just go, "Oh I'm not drinking today." But, no, I tell people now because if I don't tell people how are we going to change things.

Liz: How do people react when you say that?

Del: People look at me and go, “You what, that can’t happen to you.” “Yes, it has happened to me, and it has affected me for years but I’m here to tell you the story.” And then as soon as you tell people, like strangers, they become all warm to you already and they start to listen, and then suddenly someone always says to me, “I know somebody who has gone through that. I know somebody who would like to listen to that podcast.”

And that’s the scariest thing to me, you know, I’m not ashamed about it anymore, I’m not ashamed, but there are people out there who are suffering a lot worse than I am and did.

Luke: How did what happened to you and your subsequent drinking impact on your relationship with other people, specifically other women?

Del: My first wife, obviously I was in my teens, my children’s mum. I look back now, and we get on so well. I am ashamed what I did when I was younger because I was young and I was confused, and, you know, I had this older partner who loved me, had our children, and wanted everything, the house, everything, and there was just me drinking, drinking all the time, and going out partying.

And to be honest I didn’t care, I honestly didn’t care, and I always said this, that nobody in this world could hurt me, only my mum. That’s what I used to say all the time in the back of my head, that’s all I used to say, no one else can hurt me apart

from my mum. I didn't care, as long as my mum was safe and happy, I honestly didn't care.

I couldn't understand why people wanted to be nice to me, and I didn't understand why my children's mum wanted to be that nice. I never had it before because I was so young. I went from being 6 to 16 with just this abusive house to then leaving school and college and then having this relationship, and I just couldn't... no, I just couldn't work it out why, and I just ended up going out all the time drinking, coming in at 4:00am, you know how it is, you know, and I look back now.

I've said sorry to her a million times now for what I did and now she understands my story I can't say sorry anymore, but it has affected through the whole way of my life because drinking means not coming in, it means doing things I regret. I don't even want to talk about it to be honest, Luke, that part of it because it's... you can work it out yourself, you know, I was young and wow, attention.

But people giving me attention means they're going to give me attention and then I'm just going to throw it away anyway because I just didn't care. I was so numb inside, I would say I was quite dead inside because feeling wise I didn't have any because I didn't understand what feelings I was meant to have because I know how to love but when I was younger, the person in the family I loved just broke me.

So, what is love, I didn't understand what it actually was until I had my children obviously, and I love them more than the world, but, yes, sometimes I just get so annoyed. I have thrown so much away in my life, but I can't blame anybody else apart from myself, that's how I have to... he didn't make me do all of it, so I can only move on.

Luke: Yes, absolutely, but I think you have to forgive yourself for those time as well because you understand where it all came from. And, like you say, it was a lack of care, and it was just not knowing, it was not knowing how to behave, so I do think particularly with where you're at now, I think it's important that you forgive yourself for those things.

And, I guess, what I would ask is if a young man is in your situation, and I'm sure there are young men out there that are in the same situation that you were in, what would you suggest to them to do now? Because I'm guessing you wish you had caught this earlier, like I wish I had caught my anger problems earlier and found that self-awareness a lot earlier. So, what would you say to those young men?

Del: It would have to be, you know, you have to take that strength from inside and say you know what it's not about being a young lad, to be this masculine figure at school. They need to speak up because by speaking up not only are they going to save themselves, but it's going to save somebody else.

And to change that cycle, when adults say to you when you get older, "You're going to regret this," we always go, "No we're not, no we're not." But at such a young age, as a young male, if you don't do something about it now it's going to control you for the rest of your life and haunt you or it's going to have the opposite effect of you, and you could become that person that was doing the harm to you and that is the scariest thing.

Some people might laugh at you. Some people might laugh at you, but them couple of laughs at you are going to save you,

they're going to make a difference. I think we're in a society now where talking up is becoming more freely and more open, so, you know, at schools now they have people that they can go and talk to, so we can't keep it inside, but as children they need that person to come into schools.

You need someone stand up and say, you know, it happened to me, it's okay, it's okay. Not to point out into the crowd of the children and ask them questions, "Has this every happened to anybody?" Of course not, we wouldn't do that to anybody, but it's to stand there and say, "Do you know what, this happened to me and I'm not afraid to stand here in front of all of you children and say, you know, it has happened to me, but I want to make a difference."

You know somebody sitting in this hall. You know somebody sitting in here now who is either missing PE, somebody who is quiet at school, somebody who cries a lot, somebody who is withdrawn, you know, you know somebody either in this hall or at home or in your social club and that's where it starts and that's what we've got to do, and that's my aim to do that now as well, to try and get into schools now and talk about it because it does start from-

We need to start from a young age, you know, we talk about everything else, and at schools now we talk about, you know, girls' cycles and periods, so why aren't we talking about domestic abuse with males because it's happening. These males from a young age are growing up through school, 11, 12, 13, 14, these young boys who are going to turn into, getting to that age now where it's going to start getting difficult, they need to know what happens and be educated around this to say, "You know what, this isn't right, we don't want you young guys to go down this path."



Luke: Yes, would you agree with that Liz? I mean is there anything like that going on in schools at the moment Liz?

Liz: There is, there has been a long battle actually to get it as part of the school curriculum because you're absolutely right, it's very piecemeal where it's talked about or if it's brought up etc. So, from now from the age of five upwards they're doing, sort of, healthy relationships, I'm going to call it that, but basically it's about learning to respect each other, talking about some of these issues, making an environment where children feel safer to talk because school is often the most safest place for children when they're living with abuse, and putting that out there. So, the teachers, you know, it's a whole school approach doing it.

But I agree with you Del, I think we need to have people like yourself, people who go in, and we do have, but, again, it's not that easy to get into schools because their curriculum is so intense. But if you can get in and start these conversations and, as you know, we released some other podcasts already in this series, and pretty much straight away after I sent them out we had a college contact us to talk to a class about this because they had identified some issues.

So, we've set that up for them, for somebody to go in and speak on the kids' level, not as a teacher saying, you know, it's a bit like sex education isn't it? This is a penis, this is a vagina, this is what you do. You need to be talking on their level, like you say Del, about emotions, looking out for those kids that don't seem to fit in for some reason and probably because

there is something going on at home, or overly confident and overly friendly, really people pleasers, again, there are those. What's happening in their lives? Let's make it easier to talk.

The difficulty we have is once they start talking is what support do we give them, and I think as a society we're not particularly good at that. And we need to get better because that's when you can help, is when you're talking about it and going through, so they don't grow up feeling angry and feeling misplaced. Turning to crime, drugs, alcohol, whatever it might be, promiscuity, you know, there are so many different ways which they can turn.

Luke:

Yes, which can lead to them going home and talking about it to their parents, you know, if they've got a good relationship with their parents, because that's what their parents are going to be able to... most of them, you know, maybe not most of them, but some of them will be able to relate to that and speak to them about those feelings, and go, "Well I learnt this today at school."

Instead of going I learnt about the Battle of Hastings in 1066, it's like well take that hour out of the school and have an hour on feelings, which would then lead to, you know, something like what we're trying to get across with this podcast is get the young men in the room and go, "Right, okay, so this hour is going to be on how we treat other women or what do we in our relationships with women? How do we make women feel safer? It would be much better, wouldn't it, it would only take an hour a week or something like that even. And I know it's difficult, but that's what's going to change things ultimately, isn't it?"

Del:

Exactly. It was only about a week ago I popped to my old school because I wanted to speak to the last teacher that was still teaching there who taught me. And, unfortunately, he's retired they told me, so I was in reception talking to the lady and then behind there were three teachers, and they asked me why I wanted to speak to him.

So, to cut the story short, so I explained, I explained my story within three minutes, this is what I want to do, this is what I'm trying to do. And before I know it, I had six teachers there in tears, and I was just, like, "I'm sorry." And they were like, "We didn't expect this to happen on a Tuesday morning at 9:20am for someone to walk in," bear in mind I was in my gym clothes as well.

And I said, as soon as I went in there, I said to them, "Please excuse me, I've just come from the gym, this is not how I normally dress." Because I don't want people to think that I'm walking in with a hoody and a tracksuit. They said, "No, it's not a problem." But they were in tears, and they said, "I can't believe this has just happened, that somebody has just walked in here, explained what's happened to them as a child, what they want to do moving forward within schools."

And they said, "Right, we'll take your details now." And they said, "If you're trying to get into schools, why don't you just try, and if we can help you, this can be your first school." And I was just, like, "Yes, that would be amazing." So, fingers crossed, I'm just waiting to hear back now from that, but if that can happen we've started it Luke.

Luke: No, that's fantastic.

Liz: And if that could be replicated, like you say, you know, there are so many people who have grown up with this form of abuse, and people did start talking, talking to schools in their local areas, talking to people, being open. Because I think you're absolutely right about that stigma attached to talking about these things.

And, actually, if we do talk- I mean obviously it's my job, so people don't want to talk to me about it, but when it's a personal experience, actually that's a way of spreading the message and telling people, and so it gives people confidence to speak about their own experiences or somebody in their family etc that they know something is happening to. We just need to stop this silence around this whole subject matter I think.

Luke: Yes, and young people are open. They are open and willing to talk about things. I've just come off a week of community engagement with my show where we did workshops. I worked with a company that did workshops with young men mainly and some young women as well, and it was all around the issues of my show, anger and masculinity and the pressures that people feel.

And they were all very open and honest with their feelings and wanting to talk about things, and these aren't kids that, you know, these aren't middle class kids that have been brought up in a way that they're able to just very easily be open. These

are working class kids that haven't been taught about how to be emotional.

They haven't been taught about how to deal with things, and some working class kids absolutely are taught those things. It's not a class thing, but I'm just saying the people that we spoke to hadn't been, they were, you know, kids that had been excluded from schools, from pupil referral units and homeless young people.

And they were all willing to engage and talk, so I think it's just finding the right questions and introducing them to the right people, people like you Del, you know, and introducing things that can have an impact like creative projects or things that they can watch and engage with, things that they can take part in, which will all lead to better lives, better behaviour, better treating of other people right?

Del: Yes, of course. I just think that the more we talk about it, the more that the younger generation are going to feel better, they're going to- It's going to give them more confidence, and I remember not long ago I was talking to someone about what happened.

When you hear now, when you hear children go I've got an imaginary friend or, you know, I used to think years ago, "Why have people got imaginary friends for?" But I look back now, and I had a little thing on my wall, it was nothing, it was probably where there was a little crack in the wall, but, you now, these cracks made a pattern I thought.

And I remember it used to look like a little tiny house with a little gate, and any time when something bad happened, I used

to go to my room, sit there and then I used to, sort of... my little imaginary thing would be walking up to the garden up to this pretty little house, and that's the way I used to cope. Somebody contacted me and said to me, "When I was younger, I used to have this imaginary thing on my wall." And I was like, "No, you didn't." And I was thinking, "This can't happen to another male." And then he started to explain to me, "I used to have these little cracks on the wall, and I had this little house and this garden."

And then when I started talking, I thought, "Do you know what if we didn't talk about things like this I would have felt like I was the only person, the only male that used to have this imaginary little house on my wall."

And the point I'm making is we're so closed in as young children that we think that we're the only one this is happening to. We're the only imaginary friend that we've got, you know, we're not mentally right because we've got an imaginary friend or we've got a house on the wall, but all these little things that we always thought that its only us, there is not, there is loads of people have got-

And the more we keep talking, we find out loads of different things and more things, and that's what gives me peace now knowing that the more I talk about it, the more I know that I wasn't alone and it's easier for me, and the more that I'll stay away from alcohol, the more I talk about it.

Luke:

And do you think that's the same Del with dependency on alcohol? There may not be answer to this, but what's the key to catching it and going I've got a problem, I need to sort this out because obviously there are so many people out there that

maybe don't recognise that they've got the problem until it's too late.

Del: Yes, I mean luckily for me it was because obviously the pandemic, and then it just hit home, you know, and touch wood we're never going to have another pandemic again that bad. And some people you're right, yes, would probably be just stuck doing the same thing, drinking and drugs.

I can't answer for everybody else. I honestly don't know, you know, I'm 44, I didn't know the answers until now and was it me having to hit rock bottom? What is rock bottom for me? I've got a good job. I had a good home. There was nothing that I was missing in life, it was just inside mentally as well.

I just kept drinking and drinking and drinking. Having these thoughts which weren't going away, and don't get me wrong, I could have gone and seen someone and sat down and spoke about it, but because the way I was when I was younger and how I've been brought up, I didn't want to sit down.

I think if I were to sit down with someone and speak about it, I don't think it would come out properly. For me, it came out on the podcast naturally, it just came out naturally, but I just knew then. I just knew myself in my heart if I don't stop drinking I'm going to have a problem.

And I don't want to end up doing something or mentally feeling trapped in my own brain anymore because of it and I would love to give you the answers so the listeners would know, but I honestly don't know, this is something you have to find out yourself.

Liz: I think you have given some answers here. I think one is that catalyst of when you start talking, that's the start isn't it? It's to actually start being open about some of the things that's underneath. And finding the right thing for you because not everybody, you're right, not everybody is going to want to go and talk to a drug and alcohol service or go and talk to a therapist, it's about how you do that.

(Music)

Liz: Were you supported by friends and family through this or did you just, sort of, do it cold turkey, just did it on your own or were you supported?

Del: I just did it on my own. I don't want to plug the podcast, but the friends on over the influence podcast, if it wasn't for them, they were the people that I reached out to and said, "Look, you know, I think I've got a little bit of a problem here and I need someone to talk to."

And that's how it started, and they became my good friends, and I will never forget them until the day I die. But regarding the other side of the drinking part of it, it's, like, my friends are still my friends who I go to the rugby, who still drink, and they still continue to drink weekends, but the only person that could help me was myself.

I'm not saying it has been easy, because it hasn't, and I've gone through some parts of it where I've had bad news as we always do in life, you know, and I've just thought, "I'm going to drink. I'm going to drink." And some of the news that I've had has been horrid, but I still haven't. I still haven't, I've got through it because in the back of my head I just kept telling



myself if I drink I've fallen back into that same trap again, and it has won.

And I'm not going to let it win, so I'm not going to, no matter what I'm just going to get through it. And cold turkey wise, yes, but I've had to stop doing the things that I do, you know, I don't go out now. I don't go out at all, but it's my own choice, it's nobody else's. I will go out again eventually, but when I'm ready to do it. I don't need to be out in pubs drinking. I don't see the point anymore. I don't need to be out. It doesn't excite me; it just makes me think about bad things, and I'm happy.

Luke: If you were out Del in the future, and obviously you're not drinking but you're in a pub, and you saw or heard one of your friends either say something misogynistic towards a woman or cat call a woman or behaved inappropriately with a woman, do you think you would be able to step up and challenge them to not do that?

Del: Yes. And I was actually thinking about this yesterday, and that's really weird you've asked me this question. I would probably say it was about a year ago, I was just waiting for a taxi in town, just minding my own business, just ready to go home because obviously I wasn't drinking. And there was a man and a woman having a bit of an argument, and I must have just quickly turned around, and the next thing I know I've seen this man punch this woman and I've just seen red straight away.

Without even thinking, I've just ran straight over there and I put my hands in the air because you can't have that. I've hit

this bloke because I've just seen red. And what happened next I couldn't believe it; I couldn't believe that this woman started laying the booting on me.

And I was thinking, "What has just happened?" The police came, I explained what happened, then they said, "Okay, you can go." I just thought, "What has just happened there?" And then it just hit me and thought, "Do you know what that lady is exactly the same as my mum." She knew what was right or wrong. She knew it was wrong for what he did to her, but she couldn't get out of it, and that was it then.

And that's one of the reasons as well why I don't want to be around pubs to be honest as well, that's because it happens. Even though I've not forgiven, I've moved on, in the back of my head it's still there, it's still there, and I don't like it, I'm never going to like it.

Liz: Can I just say about that lady because that's quite a traditional reaction is because she's safer being on his side, and actually probably deep down felt so grateful to you for doing something but had to show him that she was on his side or she would get worst when she got home, because if you can do it in public, goodness knows what you'll do at home.

Del: Yes, exactly, and that's what I thought as well, you know, but I wasn't going to get involved in people's home life problems there because I knew that they had been drinking and there is no way that she was going to talk to me, so I was just, like, "Okay, bye, I've got to go." It's just sad, so sad.

Luke: I guess maybe calling the police could have perhaps been the option there, but I mean what an incredibly brave thing to do Del, and I completely get why you did it and I completely get what you're saying as well.

Liz: I do think though whatever it is, is that if we do start standing up and calling out, when we see something that we know is wrong then more of us as a society did it, then maybe we can start, sort of, making the world for perpetrators, which at the moment is quite big, smaller, and smaller, and they're not going to get away with it.

Luke: Yes, there is that advert isn't there out at the moment which a lot of young people, a lot of people that I follow are posting on Instagram and social media at the moment of young lads. I haven't actually watched the full advert, but my fiancé was explaining it to me yesterday.

It sounds like it has been really impactful about a group of lads that start saying something to a girl who is on her own, I think she's waiting for a taxi or something like that, and there is one that ends up speaking up and telling his mates to stop and then they stop.

So, I think particularly if you're in a group of mates and a few of them are saying to a woman or speaking about a woman, I think if you've got that courage to stand up to your mates, and they're supposed to be your mates, right, and if they react badly they're not good friends.

I think we've got to do more of that, and that advert is a great start isn't it, everyone is sharing it, so I think that's really, really

good. Del, we've ran out of time, I wish I could talk to you for much, much, much longer and I hope that we can continue this conversation.

And I've got a few things that I would like to talk to you about as well just with the opportunities for young people if that's what you're interested in, so let's talk after we've finished the recording, but mate I appreciate you so much. I think you're a phenomenal person and we need more men like you speaking out. It has been an absolute honour and pleasure to talk to you.

Del: Thank you very much for inviting me again, and it has been great speaking to you. And just keep doing what you're doing, and you know what just remember what I said, it wasn't our fault, Luke.

Luke: Thank you mate, I appreciate that.

Del: Take care, keep smiling.

Luke: We hope you enjoyed this episode of the podcast. Please subscribe so that you don't miss an episode and that they download automatically to your phone, and please open up the conversation by passing this podcast on to your friends and family.