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 - Use this to help you learn vocabulary which came up during my conversation with Emma
2. A full episode transcript
 - Every word of the episode, transcribed for your reference.

1. FULL VOCABULARY LIST WITH DEFINITIONS AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Counselling

Example: “You decided to move into counselling after years of teaching.”

Definition: A professional form of talking therapy where a trained person helps someone explore emotions, thoughts, and behaviours.

Other examples:

“She’s having counselling to help her cope with stress.”

“He trained as a counsellor after a career in education.”

Comment: Uncountable in most cases (in counselling), but a counselling session is countable.

Spelling: BrE: counselling; AmE: counseling.

Discussion question: *In what situations do you think counselling can be most beneficial?*

2. Therapist / Counsellor

Example: “A therapist creates a safe space for clients to explore what’s going on.”

Definition: A professional trained to help people with emotional or psychological difficulties through conversation and reflection.

Other examples:

“Her therapist helped her manage anxiety.”

“The counsellor was calm, patient, and non-judgemental.”

Comment: Therapist is more general (includes physical therapy, speech therapy). Counsellor implies emotional/psychological work. Pronunciation: /'kaʊn.sə.lə/ (BrE).

Discussion question: *What qualities or skills do you think make someone a good therapist?*

3. Talking therapy

Example: “It’s talking therapy, not medication — the idea is to explore through dialogue.”

Definition: Any therapy based on conversation rather than drugs or medical treatment.

Other examples:

“CBT is one of the best-known talking therapies.”

“She prefers talking therapy to antidepressants.”

Comment: Synonym: talk therapy (AmE).

Discussion question: *Why do you think talking itself can have such a healing effect?*

4. A safe space

Example: “Counselling offers a safe space to talk about difficult feelings.”

Definition: An environment where someone feels free from judgment, criticism, or harm.

Other examples:

“The classroom should be a safe space for discussion.”

“Support groups provide a safe space for survivors.”

Comment: Collocates with create, offer, provide.

Discussion question: *What elements make a conversation or room feel like a safe space to you?*

5. Confidentiality / Confidential

Example: “Everything you say is treated with confidentiality.”

Definition: The rule that information shared in sessions must

remain private.

Other examples:

“Confidentiality is essential in therapy.”

“All records are kept confidential.”

Comment: Noun = confidentiality /ˌkɒn.fɪ.denʃiˈæ.lə.ti/; adjective = confidential.

Discussion question: *How would you feel if confidentiality were not guaranteed in therapy?*

6. Rapport

Example: “You need to build rapport and trust quickly.”

Definition: A harmonious relationship in which people understand each other well.

Other examples:

“The therapist established rapport in the first session.”

“Good teachers build rapport with their students.”

Comment: Silent *t*.

Collocates: build, develop, establish.

Discussion question: *What helps you build rapport with strangers?*

7. Empathy

Example: “A counsellor must show genuine empathy.”

Definition: The ability to understand and share another person’s feelings.

Other examples:

“Listening with empathy can change the whole conversation.”

“He spoke with real empathy for her situation.”

Comment: Not the same as sympathy.

Discussion question: *Can empathy be learned, or is it something you're born with?*

8. Boundaries

Example: “Therapists need clear boundaries with their clients.”

Definition: Limits that protect your time, energy, and emotional wellbeing.

Other examples:

“She struggles to set boundaries with her family.”

“Good boundaries prevent burnout.”

Comment: Collocates: set, maintain, respect, cross.

Discussion question: *Which boundaries are hardest for you to set in daily life?*

9. Burnout

Example: “Without boundaries, you can get completely burnt out.”

Definition: Extreme exhaustion caused by long-term stress or overwork.

Other examples:

“Many teachers experience burnout.”

“He took time off to recover from burnout.”

Comment: Verb: to burn out.

Discussion question: *What are some early signs that someone is burning out?*

10. People-pleasing

Example: “People-pleasing can make you live a life that isn’t really yours.”

Definition: The tendency to say yes just to keep others happy.

Other examples:

“She’s a chronic people-pleaser.”

“Stop people-pleasing and start setting limits.”

Comment: Related to fear of rejection and poor boundaries.

Discussion question: *Why do you think so many people fall into people-pleasing behaviours?*

11. Critical inner voice / Inner critic

Example: “We all have that critical inner voice that says we’re not good enough.”

Definition: The part of your thinking that criticises you.

Other examples:

“Therapy helped her silence her inner critic.”

“Are your thoughts kind or critical?”

Comment: Collocates: harsh, challenge, quiet.

Discussion question: *What kinds of messages does your inner critic say, and how do you respond?*

12. Self-awareness

Example: “Self-awareness is everything — once you see the pattern, you can change it.”

Definition: Understanding your own thoughts, emotions, and behaviours.

Other examples:

“Mindfulness builds self-awareness.”

“He lacked self-awareness about his tone.”

Comment: Uncountable.

Discussion question: *How does increasing self-awareness improve relationships?*

13. Shame

Example: “Talking openly can really reduce shame.”

Definition: A painful feeling of being unworthy or bad.

Other examples:

“She felt deep shame after the breakup.”

“Therapy transforms shame into self-acceptance.”

Comment: Differs from guilt. Guilt suggests a feeling that you have done something wrong, but shame is a sense of very low self-worth.

Discussion question: *Why is shame so difficult to talk about openly?*

14. Self-acceptance

Example: “Compassionate listening promotes self-acceptance.”

Definition: Being comfortable with who you are, flaws included.

Other examples:

“True healing requires self-acceptance.”

“She learned to treat herself with kindness.”

Comment: Pairs with self-compassion.

Discussion question: *What helps you feel more accepting of yourself?*

15. Compassion

Example: “Being in the compassionate presence of someone can calm shame.”

Definition: Caring for someone’s suffering and wanting to help.

Other examples:

“He listened with genuine compassion.”

“Show yourself compassion when you make mistakes.”

Comment: Collocates: show, express, feel.

Discussion question: *Is it easier to show compassion to others or to yourself? Why?*

16. Regulation / Emotional regulation

Example: “Counselling teaches people about safety, trust, and regulation.”

Definition: The ability to manage emotions and stay balanced.

Other examples:

“Breathing exercises improve emotional regulation.”

“Children develop self-regulation through play.”

Comment: Key in trauma therapy.

Discussion question: *What strategies help you regulate your emotions?*

17. To process (feelings or experiences)

Example: “Talking helps you process what’s happened.”

Definition: To understand or work through emotions or events.

Other examples:

“She’s still processing her grief.”

“Journalling helps me process my day.”

Comment: Emotional sense.

Discussion question: *Do you prefer to process emotions alone or by talking to others?*

18. Trauma / Traumatic

Example: “Many people have experienced trauma in childhood.”

Definition: Deep psychological damage from extremely distressing events.

Other examples:

“War leaves lasting trauma.”

“That accident was traumatic for everyone.”

Comment: Use sensitively.

Discussion question: *Why is it important to understand trauma when working with people?*

19. Depression / Depressed

Example: “Some clients come to see me because they’re depressed.”

Definition: A mental health condition involving persistent sadness and low energy.

Other examples:

“She’s been diagnosed with clinical depression.”

“He became depressed after losing his job.”

Comment: Not the same as temporary sadness.

Discussion question: *How can we reduce stigma around depression?*

20. Anxiety / Anxious

Example: “A lot of people struggle with anxiety.”

Definition: Persistent worry or fear with physical symptoms.

Other examples:

“He feels anxious in crowds.”

“Breathing helps control anxiety.”

Comment: Informal synonyms: stress, nerves.

Discussion question: *What situations typically make people anxious, and why?*

21. Overwhelmed / Overwhelm

Example: “I was feeling completely overwhelmed by life.”

Definition: Feeling unable to cope.

Other examples:

“He was overwhelmed with sadness.”

“Students feel overwhelmed by deadlines.”

Comment: Useful everyday word.

Discussion question: *What helps you when you’re feeling overwhelmed?*

22. Withdraw / Withdrawal (emotional)

Example: “When people feel low, they often withdraw from others.”

Definition: To pull back from social contact, and cut yourself off.

Other examples:

“She withdrew after her divorce.”

“Social withdrawal is a sign of depression.”

Comment: Also a medical term referring to negative symptoms of stopping the use of a medication.

Discussion question: *Why do some people withdraw socially when struggling emotionally?*

23. Self-care

Example: “Setting boundaries is a form of self-care.”

Definition: Actions that protect your wellbeing.

Other examples:

“Resting and eating well are basic self-care.”

“He turns off his phone at night as self-care.”

Comment: Not selfish.

Discussion question: *What is your favourite form of self-care, and why?*

24. Coping mechanisms / Strategies

Example: “Counselling gives people coping mechanisms for stress.”

Definition: Habits or behaviours that help manage difficult emotions.

Other examples:

“Exercise is one of her coping strategies.”

“Some rely on unhealthy coping mechanisms.”

Discussion question: *What coping strategies do you find most helpful?*

25. Self-compassion

Example: “We practise self-compassion instead of harsh self-criticism.”

Definition: Treating yourself kindly when struggling.

Other examples:

“Self-compassion reduces anxiety.”

“Talk to yourself like a friend.”

Comment: Very common in therapy.

Discussion question: *Why do you think self-compassion feels difficult for many people?*

26. Validation / To validate

Example: “It helps when someone validates your feelings.”

Definition: To recognise and accept someone’s feelings as real.

Other examples:

“She needed her feelings validated.”

“Parents can validate a child’s fear.”

Discussion question: *How does feeling validated change a conversation or relationship?*

27. Mindfulness

Example: “That’s basically mindfulness — being present and aware.”

Definition: Focused awareness of the present moment without judgment.

Other examples:

“Mindfulness meditation calms the mind.”

“Try mindfulness before bed.”

Comment: Collocates: practise mindfulness.

Discussion question: *Do you think mindfulness is easy or difficult? Why?*

28. Grounding

Example: “Use a grounding exercise to connect to the present.”

Definition: Techniques that anchor attention to the here-and-now.

Other examples:

“Touch something cold to ground yourself.”

“Count five things you see.”

Comment: Used in trauma therapy.

Discussion question: *Which grounding techniques do you find effective?*

29. Trigger / Triggering

Example: “That memory was quite triggering for her.”

Definition: To cause someone to re-experience distress.

Other examples:

“The smell of smoke triggered panic.”

“Some film scenes are triggering.”

Discussion question: *What things trigger anxiety in you? What about anger or even shame?*

30. Resilience

Example: “Exercise and connection help build resilience.”

Definition: The ability to recover from difficulties.

Other examples:

“Children are resilient.”

“Resilience grows with practice.”

Comment: Very positive concept.

Discussion question: *What experiences in life help people develop resilience?*

31. Wellbeing

Example: “Sleep underpins every aspect of mental wellbeing.”

Definition: A state of mental and physical balance.

Other examples:

“Workplaces should support wellbeing.”

“Meditation boosts wellbeing.”

Comment: well-being / wellbeing both correct.

Discussion question: *What daily habits have the biggest impact on your wellbeing?*

32. The amygdala

Example: “Naming feelings calms the amygdala.”

Definition: The part of the brain responsible for fear and stress responses.

Other examples:

“An overactive amygdala causes hyper-alertness.”

“Breathing soothes the amygdala.”

Comment: /ə'mɪɡ.də.lə/.

Discussion question: *How does knowing about brain science help people understand emotions?*

33. “Name it to tame it”

Example: “Name it to tame it — naming emotions calms the brain.”

Definition: Identifying a feeling helps you manage it.

Other examples:

“Say ‘I’m angry’, ‘I’m scared’, etc.”

Comment: Memorable phrase.

Discussion question: *Does naming your emotions help you? Why or why not?*

34. Overthinking

Example: “She couldn’t sleep because of overthinking.”

Definition: Thinking too much about problems in a repetitive way.

Other examples:

“Don’t overthink decisions.”

“Mindfulness reduces overthinking.”

Comment: Very modern word.

Discussion question: *What kinds of situations tend to make you overthink?*

35. Self-esteem

Example: “Counselling helps people build self-esteem.”

Definition: How positively you view yourself.

Other examples:

“Her self-esteem improved after therapy.”

“Criticism harms a child’s self-esteem.”

Comment: Often with high/low.

Discussion question: *What helps people build healthy self-esteem?*

36. Trust

Example: “You have to build trust before you can do the work.”

Definition: Belief in someone’s reliability or honesty.

Other examples:

“The client must trust the therapist.”

“It takes time to rebuild trust.”

Comment: Key emotional word.

Discussion question: *How do you decide whether someone is trustworthy?*

37. Vulnerability / Vulnerable

Example: “Therapy involves vulnerability — allowing yourself to be seen.”

Definition: Openness to emotional risk.

Other examples:

“Being vulnerable creates connection.”

“He felt too vulnerable to talk.”

Comment: Strength, not weakness.

Discussion question: *Why do you think vulnerability can deepen relationships?*

38. Healing

Example: “Healing takes time — it’s not a straight line.”

Definition: Gradual emotional recovery.

Other examples:

“She’s on a healing journey.”

“Writing helped his healing process.”

Comment: Often metaphorical.

Discussion question: *What activities or moments have felt healing for you?*

39. Breakthrough

Example: “Sometimes a breakthrough happens after weeks of reflection.”

Definition: A sudden realisation or improvement.

Other examples:

“She had a breakthrough in therapy.”

“He finally had a breakthrough moment.”

Discussion question: *Have you ever had a breakthrough about yourself or your behaviour?*

40. Setback

Example: “Recovery isn't linear — you'll have setbacks.”

Definition: A temporary step backwards.

Other examples:

“Relapse is a common setback.”

“Recover from a setback.”

Comment: Collocates with minor/major.

Discussion question: *How do you stay motivated when you experience a setback?*

41. Journalling

Example: “Some people find journalling helpful for processing emotions.”

Definition: Writing regularly about thoughts and feelings.

Other examples:

“Journalling clears her mind.”

“He kept a gratitude journal.”

Comment: Popular self-care tool.

Discussion question: *Do you think journalling would help you? Why or why not?*

42. Mind–body connection

Example: “Sleep and exercise show how strong the mind–body connection is.”

Definition: The relationship between mental and physical health.

Other examples:

“Stress affects the body.”

“Yoga supports the mind–body link.”

Comment: Holistic health concept.

Discussion question: *How do you notice your emotions affecting your body?*

43. Sleep hygiene

Example: “Good sleep hygiene is vital for mental health.”

Definition: Habits that promote good sleep.

Other examples:

“Avoid screens before bed.”

“Caffeine harms sleep hygiene.”

Comment: Technical but useful.

Discussion question: *Which sleep hygiene habits work best for you?*

44. Circadian rhythms

Example: “Sunlight helps regulate our circadian rhythms.”

Definition: Natural 24-hour cycles controlling sleep and energy.

Other examples:

“Jet lag disrupts your circadian rhythm.”

“Morning light resets your body clock.”

Comment: /s3:'keɪ.di.ən/.

Discussion question: *How does modern life interfere with circadian rhythms?*

45. Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

Example: “I use a SAD lamp in winter.”

Definition: Depression that occurs seasonally, usually in winter.

Other examples:

“Light therapy helps with SAD.”

“Winter blues can be mild SAD.”

Comment: Pronounced /sæd/.

Discussion question: *Do seasons affect your mood? How?*

46. Doomscrolling

Example: “Doomscrolling makes me anxious.”

Definition: Constantly scrolling through negative online news.

Other examples:

“Stop doomscrolling before bed.”

“It increases stress hormones.”

Comment: Very modern digital term.

Discussion question: *Why is doomscrolling so addictive?*

47. Overstimulated / Overstimulation

Example: “Phones keep our brains overstimulated.”

Definition: Too much sensory input causing stress or fatigue.

Other examples:

“He felt overstimulated by notifications.”

“Children get overstimulated at parties.”

Comment: Great for tech discussions.

Discussion question: *What environments or activities overstimulate you most?*

48. Attention span

Example: “My attention span has shrunk because of my phone.”

Definition: How long you can focus before getting distracted.

Other examples:

“Smartphones reduce attention span.”

“Meditation improves attention.”

Comment: Common in education.

Discussion question: *Do you think your attention span is getting shorter? Why/why not?*

49. Mindfulness practice

Example: “Notice the feathers on the swan — that’s a mindfulness practice.”

Definition: Any activity that brings awareness to the present moment.

Other examples:

“Walking can be a mindfulness practice.”

“Washing dishes mindfully helps.”

Discussion question: *Which everyday activities could you turn into a mindfulness practice?*

50. Healing journey

Example: “Everyone’s healing journey is unique.”

Definition: The overall process of emotional recovery and growth.

Other examples:

“She’s on a long healing journey.”

“Art became part of his healing journey.”

Comment: Gentle, metaphorical phrase.

Discussion question: *What does the phrase ‘healing journey’ mean to you?*

2. Full Episode Transcript

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Introduction

Hello listeners, welcome back to Luke's English Podcast and welcome to this brand new episode of my podcast for learners of English all around the world. How are you doing today?

I hope you're doing fine and that you've been enjoying my recent podcast episodes. Let me tell you about this one. This is a brand new one.

And this is a conversation episode. And I'm talking today with Emma Camara Ortega, who is a former colleague of mine. I've known Emma for many years.

We used to work together as English teachers in the same school. And so I've been meaning to talk to Emma for ages on this podcast. I've always wanted to get her on the show to talk about the topic of this episode, which as you can see from the title is all about therapy, mental health and counselling.

So Emma and I used to work together at the London School of English. As I said, she used to be an English teacher. We would hang out a lot in the teacher's room between classes.

We'd go to the pub and stuff at the end of the week together. So we spent a lot of time working together. And I've had lots of my former colleagues on this podcast over the years.

Long term listeners might remember, you know, the various guests that I've had on the show, people I used to work with. And so the thing is about Emma is that she no longer works as an English teacher. In fact, I remember when we were working together, she made the step to move into a different career path.

And she became a therapist and licenced counsellor, which was actually quite a long and complicated process because she had to do various different qualifications. She did lots of different types of professional training. She was studying a lot, I remember, as well as working full time as a teacher.

She was doing all her studies. And nowadays she is a fully licenced therapist and counsellor. Just a few of those different qualifications she took.

Her certificate in counselling skills, diploma in counselling skills, diploma in psychodynamic counselling, a certificate in cognitive

behavioural therapy skills, a certificate in working with couples and other relationships, psychosexual studies, trauma therapy, all sorts of things. There's a long list of her different professional training and qualifications. And so, yes, now she works as a fully licenced therapist and counsellor, helping people with their mental health issues.

And that is the theme of this episode, therapy, counselling and mental health. So the main themes of our conversation include, first of all, our background, how we know each other and stuff, but also what counselling actually is, what happens in a counselling session, who it's for and what it's for, how talking therapy helps. And it's commonly called talking therapy.

This is a form of therapy that involves talking about the issues that you're experiencing in order to name it, to tame it, which basically is a phrase that's used to explain how naming your troubles, talking about them, describing them, helps you to deal with them, helps you to get more perspective and control in relation to the things that you're dealing with. I talked to Emma about what is involved in being a counsellor, about creating a safe, non-judgemental space, the importance of building rapport and trust and confidentiality with the people that you're working with, compassion, empathy, encouraging self-acceptance, developing an awareness of boundaries, managing relationships with others and self-care. And also just everyday mental health, because obviously, you know, mental health is something that we all have to take care of, that we all have to deal with.

Of course, we all look after our physical health or we should do, you know, we do exercise and we stay healthy. We do sport or we

go to the gym and things like that to keep ourselves in physical shape. We look after our diet and stuff like that.

But of course, our minds and our mental health are also something that we all should take care of on a daily basis. And that's another thing that we talk about in this conversation. Practical habits like the importance of sleep, exercise, getting regular sunlight, access to nature and personal connections, the importance of setting boundaries in your life in order to avoid a sort of emotional burnout that so many people experience.

The relationships we have with our phones these days, the way we use our phones, the way we spend a lot of time scrolling or what is known as doom scrolling, scrolling through social media, looking at the kind of often quite negative stuff that you see in terms of news stories from around the world, how this affects our attention, how this affects our mood and also seasonal things. Something known as seasonal affective disorder, SAD, it's often called sad. And this is a kind of seasonal thing that can affect our mood and our emotional regulation with the changing of the seasons.

And for example, I've got a lot of listeners in the United Kingdom, in England, a lot of people, a lot of you listening to this might be in the UK studying from other parts of the world. You might have come from a place where the weather is really quite different. And this is something that affects a lot of students and lots of learners of English studying in the UK, how to deal with the fact that during the winter, we do have quite short days, long nights, a lot of darkness, not so much sunshine.

The weather can get on top of you. You can end up under the weather both physically and also in terms of your emotional state. So how do we deal with this?

What tips do we have for managing the kind of difficult winter months in England and indeed in plenty of other places? You know, you might have similar weather where you live. So I hope this is going to be an interesting conversation and an insightful conversation.

Also, I encourage you to reflect, of course, on your own mental health, but also relate this to the importance of maintaining good mental health for your learning of English, right? Because obviously, we've got to keep ourselves in good shape and keeping our minds in good condition. This is a really important sort of baseline foundation, foundational thing that we have to maintain in order to make sure we are in tip-top condition in order to learn English as well as possible.

I want you to try to notice plenty of useful vocabulary and phrases relating to mental health and well-being throughout this conversation. As you would expect, touching on all these things, you will find, you will hear all sorts of common and useful phrases for talking about this subject. So watch out for those things.

Now, there is a PDF for this episode. It's a full transcript of the conversation, but also a vocabulary list. And I've picked out lots of different words and phrases relating to all the things that I think are relevant in this conversation.

And you'll find a full vocab list with definitions, example sentences, and some questions that you can use to practise actually activating

this vocabulary for yourself. So check out the PDF. You'll find loads of stuff there, which will definitely help you to learn English from this episode.

Thank you to Emma for being a guest on the show. It was very interesting to talk to her. I really hope you enjoy this conversation, that you find it insightful, helpful, and also good for your English.

So without any further ado, I'll talk to you again at the end of the conversation for a little bit. But now let's get straight into it. Let's meet Emma and talk about mental health, talking therapy, and counselling.

And here we go.

Conversation

So how do we actually know each other? My audience might enjoy knowing how we first met and stuff.

So how do we know each other?

[Emma]

So I think I have a memory of meeting you in Westcroft Square in 2006. And you were stressing, prepping a lesson. It was, you know, 10 minutes before lesson time, and everybody was stressing, and you were cutting stuff out, and I don't know, like prepping something.

And it was my first day. And yeah, I think that's, and I don't think we spoke on that day, but you were there. And yeah, I think we

started work essentially at the same time at LSE, at the London School of English.

I was 26, I think, on early 27. And, and the whole bunch of us started around the same time. A great bunch of us, wasn't it?

[Luke]

Yeah.

[Emma]

Yeah. And you left before me. I left in 2016.

And you left in 2014, was it?

[Luke]

2012.

[Emma]

Oh, 2012. Wow.

[Luke]

I spent six years teaching at that school. But you put in, I guess, a decade of teaching there.

[Emma]

Yeah, yeah. And I promised myself, I wasn't going to stay there more than a decade. I thought a decade is, you know, a long time, isn't it?

My goodness, a decade of my life. And it was a wonderful time, but I knew that I didn't want to stay there for, you know, much longer. And I did all my counselling training whilst there.

I think I probably started soon after I met you. I did a really short intro course, and then I did a certificate, and then I did a diploma, then I did another diploma, then I did my clinical placement, and I volunteered in various charities. And I did all that whilst doing one-to-one at LSE.

Yeah. So over about six years, I did that.

[Luke]

Well, that's a long process, isn't it? That's a lot. So just to be clear, right, so you started teaching English in Spain, because you are like, your dad is Spanish, you speak Spanish, you lived in Spain for a long time.

[Emma]

Yeah.

[Luke]

So you spent sort of like quite a long time teaching English in Spain, then came to London. And eventually you found a job at the London School, like me. But then after quite a few years of teaching English, you decided, yeah, that you would move into being a counsellor, so counselling and therapy.

So why did you make that change then from English teaching to counselling?

[Emma]

So I became an English teacher, because as you said, my dad's Spanish, I wanted to live in Spain, I thought, okay, I need to earn a

living whilst I'm out there. I really enjoyed it. But I knew that I didn't want to do it forever.

So I came to London specifically to study and to find out what I wanted to do. And whilst I was doing that, I also needed to earn a living. So that's why I worked in the school.

And I guess I was looking for more fulfilment. I didn't feel very fulfilled. I loved parts of the job.

I loved the, you know, the getting to know people and the supporting them and the kind of counselling type bits of the job are the bits that I really enjoyed. But I wanted something more fulfilling.

[Luke]

Because you were teaching one-to-one. Yeah, you were teaching one-to-one mainly, because I did a mix. I was doing a lot of group courses and, but there were some teachers who sort of did mostly one-to-one.

So you're doing mostly one-to-one, so that's sitting down with one person in the sessions. Is it quite similar to counselling?

[Emma]

Yeah, it can be. Yeah, very much so. You know, you've got the kind of the nervous, you know, people are often nervous on day one and you've got to build rapport and build trust and kind of get to know them and work out how to help them and collaborate and support them on their learning journey.

So there are lots of crossovers. And as you said, I did mainly one-to-one. And sometimes I would teach one-to-one for weeks or months.

So you get to know the person very well. And yeah, it's very much about, I think, counselling and teaching. You know, you kind of want to create a safe environment so that they can learn and trust you and, yeah, thrive, I guess.

[Luke]

Yeah. And sometimes with teaching one-to-one or teaching English in general, you find that with your students, you're not just teaching them English, but you're also kind of helping them with their motivation or helping them with the way they feel about themselves. It's like a very personal thing.

And there is a certain amount of kind of, what's the word for it? Guidance and coaching with the mental side of it as well, I suppose.

[Emma]

Yeah. Massively confidence building and, you know, kind of exploring what issues they have and kind of practising, you know, working on whatever they want to work on really. And I suppose with counselling, it's the same.

You know, they come in, sometimes people come in and they don't know what they want to work on and that's fine. Other times people are very specific, but with counselling, again, it's very much about having that safe space where people can explore and creating that trusting relationship. Without that, you can't do the work really, without that trust and without that rapport.

[Luke]

Yeah. So that seemed to be the thing that you were enjoying or the thing that you kind of moved towards. So just tell me about counselling.

What is counselling? What does it look like? What do you do?

[Emma]

So that's a good question. So it's essentially, as I said, a safe space, you know, a confidential space where you can explore whatever you want with someone who's trained to listen and trained to unpack what's going on for you. Essentially, that's what it is, you know, a place to explore thoughts and feelings and experiences, to be witnessed, to work alongside somebody trying to, I've got very interested in neuroscience recently and essentially counselling is about creating a safe place where you can rewire the brain in healthier ways, where you can learn about safety and trust and regulation and processing and connection so that you can, you know, make real changes for yourself going forward.

[Luke]

It's talking therapy, right? That's how it's often described. Is that right?

[Emma]

Yeah.

[Luke]

So you're there to listen to the person. I mean, so you're encouraging them to talk about things that are bothering them and in the process of talking about it, that's a sort of therapeutic thing,

right? I'm sure there's a lot more to it than that, but that's just like a basic definition.

[Emma]

Yeah. And can I just say as well that, you know, some people don't feel ready to talk and that's fine. You know, sometimes silence has its place.

Sometimes people want to draw and then, you know, something will come up from that. But yeah, so we say name it to tame it. So by talking about something, by actually putting a name to your feelings, you can actually calm that alarm system of the brain, the amygdala, um, which makes feelings seem much less overwhelming and, you know, it can really help process, help organise thoughts and feelings.

It can help regulation, it can help reduce distress and it can really bring about a lot of clarity. You know, as I'm sure you know, you know, when you talk to somebody about what's going on for you, sometimes it can feel a whole lot clearer getting it out. And, you know, especially if somebody is, um, you know, is validating and a good listener and is up for just exploring it with you, you know, to get it out of your head and to kind of get it in the room and you can kind of, kind of examine it and look at it, look at different perspectives.

And, um, yeah, compassion is, is very important with what I do as well, because if, if you're, um, you know, in the compassionate presence of somebody, then it can really reduce that really harsh, uh, self-critical voice that some people have and that shame, um, you know, I think we all carry around a lot of shame and it can really help self-acceptance, um, you know, by, by, you know,

saying stuff that you're really, you're really ashamed of or really distressed by and have somebody just listen compassionately can really help you process that and feel less shame about it.

[Luke]

What sort of things do people talk about? What are the problems that people have when they come to you? I mean, um, you know, there's different, different sort of sizes of problem, I guess.

Some people probably have really major issues that they need to deal with, but then, you know, counselling is for everyone, right? So, um, what are the sort of typical things that people will talk to you about?

[Emma]

So, um, people often talk about relationship stuff. Um, it's either, you know, um, simply put, I suppose it's about the relationship with ourselves, you know, um, how we, how we feel about ourselves, you know, maybe, um, like we were saying before, you know, critical inner voice, um, lack of confidence, uh, you know, negative thinking, or, and, or, and so often it's overlapping problems. Um, most of the time it's overlapping problems, relationship with others.

So, um, relationships, romantic relationships, relationships with friends, with family members, um, people come to see me because they're feeling depressed or anxious about things. Maybe they're grieving, maybe they're experiencing work problems. Maybe they've experienced trauma growing up or, you know, very unhappy or distressing family life.

Um, trauma as a child, uh, maybe it's problem coping with everyday life. Maybe they have autism or ADHD, maybe they've

been diagnosed with a personality disorder of some sort. So, you know, it can be lots of different types of things, but often they're all overlapping.

[Luke]

Right.

[Emma]

So, yeah.

[Luke]

Must be difficult to, um, sort of deal with that. I mean, uh, I mean, you're trained, but, uh, that must be, that must be quite overwhelming for you. I would imagine someone's coming in and you're kind of unpacking all of the issues they're dealing with.

I would feel like, um, pretty sort of overwhelmed by the responsibility. Me.

[Emma]

Yeah. Well, I, I have to remember that, you know, I can't fix it. You know, counselling doesn't fix it.

It's just about creating the right conditions to be able to, um, to explore and, and help the person help themselves, I guess, you know, help to find, yeah. Yeah. And help them to understand.

[Luke]

Yeah. To help them get a sense of what it is they're dealing with, which will help them to carry on. Cause I suppose if you don't talk to anyone and these problems build up and up and you lose all perspective of them, uh, then yeah, you can end up in a very

vicious cycle where that becomes, that leads to very damaging behaviour, but talking to someone else.

Yeah. I can help you get perspective and, and help you find ways to deal with it. But yeah, you'd not necessarily there to fix things.

[Emma]

And I can't, I can't fix things. You know, I can, I can be there. I can support, I can explore, I can be curious.

I can be interested. I can care, you know, so I can, um, create all these conditions and together we create all these conditions. So it's not just me, you know, it's me and my client.

Um, and self-awareness is everything. Once you can understand something better, like you say, then you know what you're dealing with. Then all of a sudden, um, maybe you can feel a bit more empowered to say, okay, this is what I'm dealing with.

These are my options. What, what do I want to do about it? You know?

[Luke]

Um, so it's a very important role. Um, right. So, um, um, um, you know, why do, why is it important for counsellors to exist?

You know? And, and, uh, why do people need counsellors in their lives? You know?

[Emma]

Why do people need counsellors in their lives?

[Luke]

I mean, I suppose what I mean is, um, um, why, why is it hard for people, not for people to do the same thing or deal with the same thing in their own personal lives that, that, um, your role is to provide them with something that perhaps they don't have in their, in their other. Yeah.

[Emma]

Yeah. You mean why, why can't we just speak to friends or is that what you mean? Well, you know, yeah, I mean, you know, before who did people speak to before their priest, their vicar, I don't know, you know, their teacher, um, their friends.

So these people can still be incredibly supportive and some people find that that's enough. You know, if you have very good friends who are good at listening and really supportive, then that's, that's maybe enough for some people. But of course, counsellors are trained and they're impartial and, um, you know, they focus entirely on you.

There's no agenda, you know, with friends, even the loveliest friends, sometimes, sometimes they can, they can be a bit dismissive. So, you know, don't be silly. You don't have to worry about that.

Um, or, or they can say, Oh, I know exactly what you mean. I had that problem. And then they start talking about themselves, you know, and then it takes away from you.

[Luke]

Yeah. Even your closest friends and, you know, people in your family that you love and you're very close to, they're still a kind of

dynamic there, you know, in your relationship, which is perhaps not the appropriate space for unloading all of your, all of your issues. And also maybe you want to be able to talk to someone impartial so that you can then be a stronger person for your friends and family.

So you're not sort of burdening them with the responsibility of, of, you know, listening to you and all that stuff. And sometimes we just don't have time, you know, there's no, there's no way of breaking the normal kind of, uh, rhythms of friendship and family, you know, to, to, to find a space for that.

[Emma]

And, and often, you know, if you speak to your mom or your wife or your best friend or whatever, the, the relationship, like you say, you're too kind of emotionally close to be able to, to be objective, you know, whereas because I'm separate, you know, I don't know them and I'm separate from the situation. I can kind of see things more clearly in, in some ways, you know, and of course, sometimes I get it wrong and, you know, we kind of explore that, but I can kind of, you know, I'm, I'm impartial and I've done a lot of training to, to, um, to work on my stuff, which hopefully means that I'm, I'm kind of aware of, you know, my stuff. So I keep my stuff out of the room and I'm able to have that separation.

Um, or, you know, I'm aware of stuff coming up for me possibly in the room, which can be really useful as well. Um, so, so I think just the fact that there is that impartiality and, um, that, that space, I guess you're, you're creating that space for somebody, um, so that they can, they can figure stuff out and I'm on that journey with them.

[Luke]

These days, it's, um, it's like a lot more acceptable to talk about your mental health and stuff like that than it used to be, isn't it? Um, um, uh, but people talk about a mental health crisis as well. Um, certainly in the UK, probably it's the same in lots of places.

We talk about a mental health crisis. What's going on there? Do you think, what, why do you think there's a, people are struggling with mental health or is it that we just talk about it more?

So we're more aware of it now than we were before when people used to hide it. What do you think?

[Emma]

I think a bit of both really. I think there are more stresses and less support. Um, I think the pandemic left a huge mental health, um, you know, footprint on people, especially young people, because you know, we're in our forties, but you know, people in their twenties who were in their teens during the pandemic, you know, that must have been very difficult for them.

Um, so I think that that has, you know, has left that trauma has had a lasting effect on people and, you know, people are struggling. Let's face it. The world's, you know, watch the news, the world's in a bit of a mess, isn't it?

[Luke]

Yeah.

[Emma]

Um, difficult to get a stable job. Um, there's the cost of living crisis. Um, yeah.

Support systems maybe aren't as strong as they once were.
Communities maybe aren't as strong as they once were. The NHS is struggling.

Lots of stuff going on.

[Luke]

Yeah. So how does, I mean, how will someone know if they should probably go to counselling or therapy? I mean, how, what are the signs that someone should listen to or notice?

Do you think?

[Emma]

Yeah. So everyone can benefit. I, you definitely don't need to be in crisis.

You know, the sooner you seek help, the better. Um, but some signs could be, um, you know, feeling, feeling stressed, feeling overwhelmed, having suicidal thoughts, thinking of harming yourself, um, withdrawing.

[Luke]

Withdrawing.

[Emma]

Yeah. Withdrawing from, from people, you know, when people are depressed, when people get very depressed or suicidal, they often withdraw, you know, they go into themselves. They don't, you know, it's more difficult to reach out.

Um, so when you feel yourself doing that, it's very important to do the opposite of what you feel. You feel like withdrawing and just staying at home and not talking to people. It's very important to do the opposite, to reach out, phone someone, seek professional support, um, talk to a friend, um, you know, problem sleeping, feeling completely overwhelmed with life.

So, you know, those are some good reasons to speak to somebody like me. But as I said, everyone can benefit and you don't have to wait until you're in a crisis.

[Luke]

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Um, what do you think are ways to kind of look after your mental health, uh, you know, as well as going and seeking help? What are some of the other kind of crucial things do you think that can help someone stay mentally healthy in their day-to-day life?

[Emma]

I think sleep, maybe we don't talk about it enough, but sleep is really, really important to get good quality sleep to sleep enough. You know, it underpins everything else. We process a lot of trauma during sleep.

Our brains have a chance to process and organise stuff during sleep. So that's really important. And poor sleep is linked to, um, higher risk of mental health problems, a higher risk of anxiety, stress, low resilience.

Um, so sleep's a big one. So I try get about eight hours. Don't always manage it, but I, I try, um, connection, of course, you know,

what we're talking about, really, um, talking to people, um, feeling connected and supported by friends, by family, having supportive relationships in our life.

Um, exercise, very important. It boosts those mood, mood regulating chemicals, you know, serotonin and dopamine and all that, that good stuff.

[Luke]

Um, so that's, that's really, really important.

[Emma]

I never feel like going to the gym, but after coming out of the gym, I always feel great. Um, and of course, you know, some people hate exercise. So, you know, maybe some people hate the gym and that's fine, but, you know, try and go for a walk or, you know, find what works for you, find something that you enjoy.

[Luke]

Apparently it doesn't have to be a huge step either. You know, sometimes just walking around the block or just going out for a half an hour walk can make a huge difference.

[Emma]

Yeah.

[Luke]

You get some exercise, but also getting some sunlight is actually really important.

[Emma]

Yeah. Sunlight and green spaces, they can regulate our circadian rhythms. So, um, you know, very important for regulating when we feel sleepy or when we feel alert and regulates mood as well.

So, you know, getting out in nature, really important. Um, like you say, sunlight really important and it doesn't have to be, as I said, it doesn't have to be a kind of a gym session. Like you said, it can just be a gentle walk and, you know, in a green space, it can be stretching.

It can be just movement of some sort. It's really important. And of course, fun.

It's important to have fun and to rest and have boundaries, you know, to, do you know what I mean by boundaries?

[Luke]

Oh yeah, I do. Yeah. But I mean, you mean boundaries in, in sort of in your personal life or what?

Well, no, I'm not sure I know exactly what do you mean by that?

[Emma]

So, so therapists, we talk about boundaries a lot. So basically we're talking about, um, you know, limits, you know, we can't be there for everybody. We can't do everything.

We can't, you know, um, work all the hours under the sun, you know, we need to have boundaries in order to look after ourselves. Um, you know, think of it like, I don't know if this is a good analogy, but think of it like a garden and you've got your fence around your garden, you know, that's your boundary. And I was

just going to say everything in your, your garden is your responsibility, you know, all the weeds and the grass and the flowers and all of that you have to look after and that's your responsibility.

But you know, everything else of that isn't your responsibility. So it's, it's good to think of it like that. Cause I have a lot of people coming to see me and they have, they struggle with boundaries.

You know, you know what you were saying about responsibility? People feel that they've got to become, they feel responsible for everybody. They've got to save or help everybody.

And they forget about themselves.

[Luke]

You know, I think that's probably, I mean, I don't know, but I'm guessing that it's probably quite common that people feel this sense of first of all, having an impact on everyone else. Like they're concerned that they're going to, um, if they, if they share their problems, that they're going to, uh, transfer their problems to other people. They don't want to make life difficult for anyone else.

Um, and yet at the same time, they also feel sort of a responsibility for everyone in their lives, especially like parents, you know, especially like, you know, parents who've got children or just when you think of family connections, you feel responsible for everybody else. And that you feel that sense of burden, um, and a sense of kind of control of you want to make sure everyone else is all right. And that, that sense of responsibility can really be quite heavy.

Um, so is that, maybe that's what you're talking about when you talk about boundaries, you're saying that this is, this is where you are, this is what you're responsible for. And to a certain extent, anything that's beyond this boundary, you know, you can just sort of like not worry about it so much, I guess.

[Emma]

Yeah. Or, you know, it's very human to, to care about people you love and to want to be able to help them. And, you know, so I think it's really natural to feel that sense of responsibility and that burden, like you say.

But at the same time, I think it's important to think about, you know, the boundary, what is your responsibility? You know, what can you realistically do? You need to protect your, your time, your energy.

Um, you know, you need to have personal limitations. Otherwise, um, otherwise you're going to get burnt out. Otherwise you're going to suffer and then you can't help the people you love.

So in my job, you know, one of the things they teach us when we do our training is, you know, we have to have really strong boundaries, you know, so my, when I see somebody, you know, we have, uh, we see each other for about an hour, you know, if I didn't have that boundary, you know, that could go on for an hour and a half or two hours. And, you know, a boundary protects everybody, you know, it's, um, people know, people can feel safe when they know what the boundary is.

[Luke]

Yeah. And talking about you and your boundaries in your job, I mean, do you not ever get clients where it sort of starts to affect the rest of your life? So do you ever find yourself being bothered by, uh, or I mean, worrying about and thinking about clients and their problems outside of your sort of working day?

[Emma]

Yes, sometimes. Um, but again, that's where the training comes in and the, you know, the boundaries, um, I, you know, I'm human and I care for all my clients and, you know, I know them really well. So yeah, I, I can think about them and often do and worry about them.

Um, but at the end of the day, um, you know, I know that we have, you know, our work is done in the therapeutic hour and I can't, you know, I can't help them outside of that hour, you know, hopefully that hour provides them with the skills and the coping mechanisms they need, um, so that they can, as I said, feel empowered to help themselves. You know, it's quite disempowering trying to help people when, you know, actually they, they need to, to help themselves. Maybe they, they don't want to be saved.

You know, often people want to help themselves or some people do want to be saved, you know, it depends on the person. And we, we would talk about that, you know, what does that feel like? Where does that come from?

[Luke]

That's fascinating.

[Emma]

Yeah.

[Luke]

It is fascinating though, isn't it? God, we're such complicated creatures, aren't we?

[Emma]

Yeah. And I've always found it fascinating, you know, people and behaviours and our motivations. And so I've always been interested, which is, I guess why I chose this profession.

It is fascinating because it's, it's endless. Right.

[Luke]

Yeah. I mean, what are some of the most common things that you'd notice in people? Like what, what are the, what are the things that mess with our heads?

Is it, do you find it's often the same kind of thing?

[Emma]

Yeah. Well, we're all very similar in some ways. Um, so, um, you know, anxiety and depression are very common.

Um, a lot of us, um, you know, we can have a very critical inner voice. We're often a lot kinder to other people than we are ourselves. We often have, you know, very high standards for ourselves, but we're a lot kinder to our loved ones.

So I say to people sometimes, you know, would you, the way you talk to yourself, would you speak to your best friend like that, or would you treat them like that? Would you have those standards for them? And they say no.

And I say, so why is it okay for you to speak to yourself like that? So, you know, so that's a common one and boundaries, as we said, and that sense of responsibility for everybody, you know, that kind of, um, that need to, to fix people or save people, which can sometimes, which can sometimes mean that people really deplete themselves. Um, yeah.

So, so that's a big one, you know, people pleasing. Um, you know, what's that? Um, I think many people of us, many, many of us have been brought up to, to kind of, to be polite and to say yes, please.

And so, you know, to not be difficult and to, to please other people basically. And, um, and often it can cause lots of problems because you're afraid of hurting the other person. You're afraid of disappointing them.

You're afraid of letting them down. You're afraid of being disliked. So you can find yourself living a life that's not yours, you know, saying yes to everything and then going home and thinking, Oh God, why did I say yes to that?

And now I've got to do that. And, you know, and some people even end up in careers that they don't like just because 20 years down the line, you know, their parents told them they had to be there. So they had to be that and you see what I mean?

So I think it can be really hard to, um, to sit with that discomfort of, of disappointing people or displeasing people in some way, because we've, a lot of us have been brought up to be so, so polite.

[Luke]

Yeah. But at the same time, yeah, you, it becomes damaging when you, uh, you start bending over backwards to try and, you know, make everyone else happy around you and, uh, and you suffer as a result. Yes.

[Emma]

It's very common, isn't it? Yeah, we all do it, you know, I do it, I'm sure you do it. But I guess it's the degree to which we do it, you know, sometimes it can be quite extreme.

[Luke]

Yeah. And so to the extent that you're aware of it as well, right, because you might be aware of it and you might think, you know, well, this, this is, this is the extent to which I'm going to, people please. And then I won't people please any more than that.

But, you know, you don't want to cut it out completely sometimes because you don't want to be completely self-interested person, you know, it's like the bat that you've got to get the balance right. Being aware of it can mean that it doesn't get to a point where, yeah, you're suffering as a result of it.

[Emma]

Exactly. So it's all about awareness. So, you know, in, in the counselling session, you can talk about that and become more aware of it when you do it.

Why do you do it? Do you want to do it? Do you want to do it a little bit less?

You know, is it helpful? Is it not helpful? How does it affect your life?

You know, you can explore all of that. Yeah. So, so yeah, it's, it's really, really interesting.

[Luke]

What do you think about, we were talking about our lifestyles, getting exercise, getting sleep and stuff like that. These lifestyle things, I guess, I mean, I, I, I'm no expert. I'm just coming to this as a sort of lay person, I suppose.

I did an A level in psychology a long time ago, but that's far from, far from the actual practise of doing counselling. But so we talked about lifestyle stuff, and I guess this is important for not exacerbating things that if you, if you're not getting enough sleep, if you're not getting enough sunlight and doing exercise, then your general baseline level of mental health is going to be pretty poor. You're going to be much more at risk of, you know, having perhaps more severe anxiety, depression and things like that.

So talking about lifestyle, what about what about phones? How do you think phones affect people's mental health?

[Emma]

I think that doom scrolling is, you know, can be very problematic and yeah, they're incredibly addictive, aren't they? So I, you know, I think that they're definitely a coping mechanism for, you know, if we're feeling stressed or if we're feeling overwhelmed, I can find myself in the evening, for example, just, you know, on my phone for hours reading. They're just so useful as well, aren't they?

There's everything, everything on the phone. I think it's really important to be aware of how it's affecting you. And for example, sometimes I can pick up my phone, open my, you know, Guardian app, start reading about world events and immediately I can start feeling anxious.

I, you know, I'm really, really aware of that sense of, oh God, you know, what's happened now? So I think it's really important to be aware of how it's affecting you and to put some limitations again, boundaries, some limitations on it. You know, do you really want to be on your phone for several hours a day?

I know I don't. You know, I do allow myself a few hours in the evening, as I said, to, you know, mindlessly scroll on Facebook or read the news, probably more than I should. I don't have a teenager, so, you know, I'm not really sure about this, but my impression is that teenagers have quite, you know, a problematic relationship with phones because it's just, they're just so addictive.

So I think important to put limits on it.

[Luke]

Yeah. Yeah, that's right. For younger people who have come into the world after phones arrived, you know, where that's just totally normal, like people who don't know what life is like without these devices.

I can imagine how difficult it is to try and live a life without, you know, live a life offline or live your life without constantly being hooked up to a phone in some way. That must be really hard. I mean, like to an extent, like phones are quite, what's the word?

Evil is not the word, but the way they creep into your life, they're very cleverly designed, obviously, to always maintain your attention at all times. So that's kind of what they do. They sort of manipulate our attention, force us to always be on whatever platform it is.

And that might not be very good for us. But yeah, it's important to recognise that and keep it in check.

[Emma]

Yeah, it's also important to recognise or to think about, you know, do they help young people in some ways? And I'm sure in many ways they do. You know, some people have, you know, maybe for us old people, it's hard to understand.

But, you know, I think a lot of young people, they have a lot of all their social connections online. You know, there's a whole world online that's keeping them connected, which is a great source of support for them, perhaps. It's important to recognise that.

[Luke]

Support and joy as well, right?

[Emma]

Yeah, fun, joy. Yeah. So I think it's easy to, you know, bad mouth phones or social media.

And I think maybe, I'm not sure if it's more negative than positive, but I definitely think that it's very important for some people and offers some people a lot.

[Luke]

But if boundaries is the key word for this episode, then I guess it is about boundaries with the phone as well. Because where was I reading? I was probably scrolling on my phone and I read this, ironically enough, but I read that things like certain habits with your phone are worse than others.

And one of the things that we apparently shouldn't do is when we wake up in the morning, the first thing is to look at your phone, which is what of course, everybody does, which is quite sad. I think that often the first thing we do is, you know, just reach for our phones and start looking at the screen. Apparently, this is really bad for you, because if you talked about circadian rhythms, that being exposed to the light from the phone is not the best way to start the day that you should avoid the phone, drink water, have a decent breakfast and try and get sun on your face before you go into your phone.

[Emma]

Yeah. And, you know, I'm guilty of it myself. You know, I know that when I wake up, I know what I should do.

I know that I should stretch. I should listen to birdsong. I should, you know, I don't know, be aware of what's coming up for me in my body, you know, but my alarm goes off, you know, which is on my phone.

I pick up my phone and then to stop myself from falling back to sleep, I start reading something, you know, so yeah, they're just incredibly convenient, aren't they? Incredibly convenient and addictive.

[Luke]

Yeah.

[Emma]

So it's about finding, finding healthier, I suppose, healthier habits and experimenting, you know, don't be afraid to experiment with different things. Like a friend of mine recently, she, she had, you know, a whole weekend where she didn't use any technology, you know, no phone all weekend. And, you know, she said it was wonderful.

So I think, you know, it's good to try these things so that we can compare, you know, what does that feel like?

[Luke]

I love it actually. I mean, it's really hard for me not to be on my phone all the time because obviously a lot of my work is online stuff. So I'll just in the evening, once the kids are finally asleep, I'll get, I'll just instantly go to my laptop and do something.

But I'm really trying to, you know, just like read books or just do something else where I'm not on my device. And it's, it is much nicer. I do feel better when I do that.

[Emma]

Do you think that our attention spans have been affected by the phones? Because I think mine has definitely. It's hard, hard to sit down and get into a book, for example, because, you know, you get the instant gratification from the phone, don't you?

Yeah.

[Luke]

It's like a challenge for me to just sit and just read without, it's almost automatic. Your arm goes down to your phone and you're looking at, and I've talked about this on the podcast before where you think, Oh, I just going to check the weather for tomorrow, which is like a good thing to check. You know, you planning for the next day, I'll just check the weather and you go on your phone.

Oh, there's a notification from this thing. And then you look at the notification and then you're into that particular social media platform. And then you're scrolling through and then you're on one thing and then you're in a rabbit hole and then you've got, Oh, I've got to put my phone away for goodness sake.

And you put it, you close it and put it away. And then you're like, Oh, I forgot to check the weather. You go back in again, and then you're off again on some other trip, you know, somewhere else.

[Emma]

That happens to me all the time. Yeah. I think that's a very common thing with phones.

[Luke]

Yeah. It's a, it's a funny thing, but yeah. Setting boundaries and stuff like my wife and I, we went through a period where we decided no phones in the bedroom.

That was good. That was a good thing. We had a specific shelf in the living room where we would put our phones and we had, we bought old fashioned alarm clocks.

And when I say old fashioned alarm clocks, I don't mean wind up TikTok, TikTok ones, but just, you know, like digital alarm clocks.

Those are old fashioned alarm clocks now. Um, and, uh, that was, that was good.

That was a good time. We should go back to doing that.

[Emma]

Why did you stop?

[Luke]

I don't know. I think the phones crept their way back in somehow, I guess maybe one of us started using the phone once and then the other one was like, well, all right then. And then, you know, then the next thing, you know, well, maybe you get ill one, you know, one week.

And so you end up with your phone in the bed and then, you know, you just sort of like get out of the habit, I suppose. Habits.

[Emma]

Yeah. They are. I always have my, my phone on silent always because I can't stand, I can't stand the constant pings, you know, it's, um, feels very intrusive.

Um, yeah. And I try to, yeah, I try to limit the, the use, um, because I want to be living life. You know, I want to be experiencing life in the moment.

I was watching, I was, I was standing by a river I think yesterday and, you know, it was very beautiful and the sun was sparkling on the water and there were swans and, you know, somebody had their phone out and they were filming it. And I thought, no, I just want to, you know, be in the moment. Like when you see lots of

people at Glastonbury, for example, and they're all on the, you know, they're all filming everything.

I think, do you really watch this back afterwards? You know, I'm not sure, but it's, it's like, like you say, it's a habit, isn't it? We've all, we've all got into the habit of filming everything.

[Luke]

It's funny that though, isn't it? You film the moment that you're experiencing, like there's this beautiful river with the swan on it. You're filming the swan.

You're not actually looking at the swan. You're actually looking at your phone while it's filming the swan. And then later you're watching it again.

So you never, at any point, did you actually genuinely experience the swan on the river? Instead you, you, it was mediated through your phone the entire time. So it's probably better.

I mean, I don't know. It's probably, I'll tell you what the best thing is, is if you, if you look at the swan and enjoy actually seeing it with your own eyes while your friend films it and then they send you the video later. Yeah.

But no, it's true. Yeah. You've got to try and just enjoy things in the moment, I guess, if possible.

Yeah.

[Emma]

Yeah. I think that's really important. Put our phones away and yeah, just be, be in the moment and see what comes up for us.

[Luke]

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, definitely.

Okay. All right. Well, that's nice.

You're in Aberystwyth, are you? Are you still in Aberystwyth at the moment? In Wales?

[Emma]

Can you say it? Aberystwyth.

[Luke]

Aberystwyth.

[Emma]

Yeah. That's right. Yeah.

[Luke]

Okay. It's not one of the, it's not the most difficult Welsh place name.

[Emma]

No, no. Yeah. I'm in Aberystwyth.

So yeah, it's a lovely seaside university town. My mum is from a village nearby called Devilsbridge. And when I was about eight, we moved from Hampshire to here when I was eight.

And then when I was, when I was 18, that's when I moved to Spain. So, you know, I've got a lot of roots here and my mum lives here and, you know, we've got a lovely house here and I've got other family here. And after finishing in LSE and doing all my training in London, I went travelling for a bit.

I had a baby and then I moved back here. So yeah, I've been here for about eight years now. Yeah.

Eight or nine years. Yeah. Back.

Yeah.

[Luke]

Nice part of the world.

[Emma]

Yeah. It's lovely. It rains a lot.

At the moment, we've had a lovely week of sunshine, which is beautiful. Really. It's the most beautiful place in the world when the sun's shining.

But the winters can be quite, you know, quite long and wet. And I'm not sure what Paris is like, but maybe quite cold and wet as well.

[Luke]

Cold emotionally. It can be. Yeah, no, no.

Paris is, despite the stereotype where people imagine it's all flowers blooming and fresh air and stuff. The weather is almost

exactly the same as it is in England. But England has got the reputation, England, Britain, you know, England slash Wales.

The weather's pretty similar across those two countries. But yeah, so Paris gets the, it's got the reputation of having lovely springtime weather, but it's just as grey and rainy as it is in London or something like that. And yeah, Paris doesn't have that many green spaces, which is a pity.

I mean, it's got wonderful things. Of course, it's Paris. It's amazing.

And it does have nice parks and there are great sort of museums and other cultural things to enjoy. But yeah, one thing I do miss is certainly the green spaces and being surrounded by nature.

Whenever I go back to England and go and stay at my parents' place, they live in Warwick in the Midlands.

And it's wonderfully green, even though it's a town, you know, quite a busy town, it's still very green. So that's a lovely thing to have.

[Emma]

Yeah. And I am affected by the winters and the weather. And as are a lot of people, I get a lot of clients coming to me and, you know, from September onwards, they find that their mood can really dip at these times.

So I think it's especially important to look after your mental health in the winter, during the winter months and to do more stuff to protect yourself from those winter blues, which are so common.

[Luke]

Yeah, people coming from abroad and going to live in the UK, this is definitely going to be one of the things they have to deal with. I mean, like when you'd lived in Spain, so you lived in the south of Spain, where it's very sunny and hot.

[Emma]

Yeah, like all the time.

[Luke]

Just constantly.

[Emma]

Constant sunshine.

[Luke]

Yeah, how boring.

[Emma]

I know, it was. It did get boring after a while.

[Luke]

I'm sort of joking because I've got Spanish listeners. I'm sure it's fantastic. But coming, so you lived in Spain there for how long?

About 10 years or something?

[Emma]

Yeah, about 10 years. Yeah.

[Luke]

And then you moved back to London. So what was that like then? Was it a shock to kind of experience your first London winter?

[Emma]

Yeah, it was a bit depressing. It was a shock. I'd forgotten.

I'd been in Spain for so long. I had got to a point where I just took it for granted. Yeah, I knew the weather was great, obviously, but I think I'd forgotten how bad the weather in the UK was.

And so, yeah, it was a bit of a shock. Yeah. And the weather where I live in West Wales is even worse than it is in London.

So it's a shock again.

[Luke]

Yeah. So we're talking about, yes, as you said, a long winter where it's from, you know, October time when the clocks change, right? So the clocks go back.

And so you end up with the sun going down quite early in the evening, you know, about 4.30 in the winter, the sun can sort of go down. So you end up with these long nights, even the days can be quite dark if it's grey overhead and it can be, yeah, dark and wet. So how do you deal with that?

Do you have any ways of like dealing with those cold, dark winters that we get?

[Emma]

So last year I cheated and I went to my friend's wedding in Thailand for two weeks, which was amazing because it really broke up the winter. But, you know, obviously I can't afford to do that all the time. So I have a sad lamp, which I use sometimes.

[Luke]

Wait, you have a sad lamp?

[Emma]

Do you know what a sad lamp is? Seasonal Affective Disorder.

[Luke]

Oh, right. I thought you meant a lamp that was sad, but maybe it should talk to you.

[Emma]

No.

[Luke]

Right. Sad Seasonal Affective Disorder. Yes.

[Emma]

So I don't have it with me to show you, but it's a lamp, which, you know, is very bright and it kind of imitates sunlight and it can lift moods. So I've got one of them. I don't use it a lot, but it's kind of there if I need it.

I try and embrace the good stuff about winter. I try and do lots of saunas. I'm not great at cold water immersion.

I'm not sure if you are, but I am.

[Luke]

That's cold water immersion. That's where you dive into a freezing pool of water, or you sit in an ice bath.

[Emma]

But it's getting quite popular here and it has real mental health benefits. You do the sauna and then you jump in the sea or you get a bucket of cold water tipped over you. And it's, you know, it's supposed to really have a lot of mental health benefits.

[Luke]

Not in the short term, because in the short term it's like, ah, this is horrible. I suppose. Yeah.

I'm joking, but yeah, I understand that. Yeah. It does have benefits.

And it's like a Scandi thing, isn't it as well? You look at the Scandinavians and all the things you're describing are things that are quite typical there, jumping into cold water after being in a sauna and stuff.

[Emma]

It's become really, I don't know about in England, but in Wales or around where I live, it's becoming really popular. You know, the whole sauna, cold water immersion thing. I try and go to the gym more.

And I suppose, you know, maybe somebody, there's a book called Wintering. Somebody told me about it, Wintering, which I haven't read, but I think it's talking about kind of embracing the changes of the season, you know, that it's okay to kind of hibernate and take things slowly and, you know, snuggle up by a warm fire and, you know, it's okay. It's, you know, a different pace of life than the spring or the summer.

And just to kind of embrace it.

[Luke]

Yeah. It can be nice. It can be nice.

You wrap up warm, put a nice pair of lovely, warm socks on, a pair of slippers and yeah, snuggle up with a blanket, a nice cup of tea or something, and just enjoy the nice things about the winter. Yes. And, you know, for visitors, because I've got, I've got people, quite a lot of people in the UK who listen to this podcast.

And I don't think they are, you know, native English speakers who already from the, maybe I've got a few, but I think most of them are students who've travelled to the UK, right from around the world. And they must be, they must experience all this stuff, living on their university campuses or whatever, or their halls of residence or whatever. They must have these experiences where it's the first winter, you know, they arrive in September or August or something.

And quite quickly, the weather goes downhill, like really fast. And then they're plunged into their first year of studying where they're doing a lot of work and it seems to be dark all the time. But I guess, yeah, you have to try and enjoy the cosy side of things.

But also, yeah, make an effort to get out when the sun, if the sun comes out, you go outside, you know, make the most of it and get exercise. And also remember that it's not going to last forever. That, you know, January, February can feel kind of bleak because you think this is a never ending winter, but then you get those days in March or April where the sun comes out and it's just a little bit of warmth and there are daffodils growing, you know, beautiful flowers start to emerge, the blossom comes out.

And that's when you've really got to kind of go outside, get a good, good, take a good breath of fresh air and get some sunlight on your skin and and enjoy those moments. Maybe that's why British people, when the sun shines, we go out and we kind of take our top off. And we kind of, you know, people in flip flops in March when it's still you got to try and get as much sunlight on your skin as you can with that little amount of sunlight that's given.

Yeah. Hmm. Okay.

This is really nice. Emma, very nice to talk to you again.

[Emma]

Yeah, it's really nice to talk to you too, Luke. It's been a long time and it's just crazy how quickly time goes, isn't it?

[Luke]

Yeah, yeah, it is. Yeah.

[Emma]

How the years pass and life is busy, work is busy and family's busy and the years just, just pass by. So enjoy them.

[Luke]

Yeah. So when you see a swan on a nice river with the sun shining off the surface of the water, just have a good look at it and go, that swan is very beautiful. Look at the lovely feathers.

Yeah.

[Emma]

And that's, you know, mind, have you heard of mindfulness?

[Luke]

The practise.

[Emma]

So that's basically doing that, being in the moment and acknowledging, noticing, you know, the beautiful feathers on the swan, the sun glistening on the water, notice how the breeze feels on your face, you know, being in the moment, which you need, you need to have your phone in your pocket to do that, to really appreciate those things.

[Luke]

And, you know, obviously, of course, some people have got their phone out because they're, they're enjoying this episode of the podcast. So we're not suggesting that you just shut it off, but, you know, you can always listen to the audio version. This is the wonderful thing about the audio version of this podcast listeners, that you can be looking at a beautiful swan while also listening to the latest episode of the podcast.

You don't have to be, you know, stuck to YouTube. You can always listen to the audio version. Yeah, there's an idea.

All right, Emma. Well, if you've got a busy day lined up, I'm going to let you go. You've probably got stuff to do.

[Emma]

Today, I am going for a walk on the prom because as I said, it's a lovely sunny day, the sky is blue, and we're going swimming and sauna later.

[Luke]

Oh, are you?

[Emma]

Yeah, with my little boy and with my husband in the pool. I'm not brave enough to go in the, in the sea, even though we do have the sea here. Yeah, we're going swimming.

He's got, my little boy's got a swimming lesson. So when he's having a swimming lesson, mummy's in the sauna.

[Luke]

Great.

[Emma]

Yeah, what about you?

[Luke]

Um, well, I'm gonna have my lunch. And I don't know, this afternoon, I should be doing, I should do some work, but I'm, I'm considering taking the afternoon off because I feel like I need it. I feel like I need a little, little break before a busy weekend of, you know, doing things with the kids.

So maybe I'll take an afternoon off. I don't know, maybe I'll edit this episode. I haven't decided.

The afternoon is open.

[Emma]

How long? Can I ask you about that? You might want to edit this out.

But how long does it take you to edit?

[Luke]

Well, it depends. It depends. I don't know, really, honestly, I don't know.

But I'll, I'll do a number of editing sessions. So I tend to kind of when I'm working on something like an episode, normally, I don't just work on one thing at a time. So I'll do a bit of editing of an episode, then I'll switch and do some preparation with something else, and then switch.

So I'm always jumping around between doing, working on different things. So I sometimes don't really count how much time it takes to edit something. But it'll, it's probably about double the length of the episode itself.

But it depends. Some, some require a bit more work. So some of the episodes I'll do have to, they require tonnes of work, and I'll spend days on them.

But some episodes, I think this one won't require so much work, I'll just maybe clean up a few little bits and pieces, so that won't be too long. So maybe double the amount of time that the actual episode takes. If I'm, if that's quick, that's if I'm being quick.

[Emma]

And when, when will it be, when will it be out?

[Luke]

This will probably go up late October, beginning of November time.

[Emma]

Okay.

[Luke]

I reckon. Yeah.

[Emma]

You've got, you've got a number of them in the pipeline, have you?

[Luke]

I've got loads in the pipeline. Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

[Emma]

Yes. God, you sound so busy. You must, you must spend a lot of time in front of a laptop.

[Luke]

I do. Yeah, I do. Like, like I said, I sit here right in this room, I've got the laptop here, and then there's a window right in front of me, which is mostly the sky that I can see the roof of the building here, and then the sky.

So I do sometimes sit back and I'll just look up at the sky. Look, if it's a nice blue sky, that's lovely. Today, it's grey with clouds moving across, but I'll just kind of stare out the window for a while, you know, take a break.

But you know, I can just also go out, go out for lunch. And sometimes I'll just go for a walk after lunch. You know, just to kind of take a break from from doing this.

I also teach twice a week where I'm in a classroom with a bunch of students.

[Emma]

That's nice. You have that people, people to interact with instead of just a laptop.

[Luke]

Yeah, yeah.

[Emma]

Because some people struggle with that. Lots of people that work from home can get quite depressed because they just don't see people, you know, they don't have that personal interaction. It's really important to have a bit of variation.

[Luke]

It's sort of like a bit of both for me. On one hand, I love working on my own. I like having this my own space, and also having the freedom to make content in any way I want.

So literally, every week, I can upload whatever I want. Obviously, I have to try and make content, which I think is going to appeal to my audience. I have to try and make the right kind of content.

But also, I do have the option to just do any old funny, stupid thing I feel like doing. And sometimes I'll do that. Sometimes I'll work on an episode that is mainly just kind of a bit of a comedy episode, maybe, you know.

And that's really fun, a really fun thing to do. So the fact that I work on my own is kind of balanced out by the fact that I've got so

much freedom to not just teach, but express myself, you know, through episodes. So that's good.

But then sometimes, yeah, I just get fed up being on my own. If I'm tired, I don't have any inspiration. Then that's all right.

I go out twice a week and teach.

[Emma]

But there are so many things you can do a podcast on, aren't there? Like even, you know, obviously, I don't do a podcast, but even I think, oh, that would be great. Or that, you know, a film I've seen, or music that I like, or a place I've been, or something in the news, or, you know, it's just endless.

It's really, really interesting.

[Luke]

Yeah, it's really stimulating. It's really, really, really nice for me. It's a really great channel for me to do all sorts of things.

So, yeah, it's great. It's like a dream job in a way.

[Emma]

And, yes, what you wanted to do, wasn't it? You've worked really hard for, what, 10 years now, is it?

[Luke]

Oh, no, I've been doing this, doing the podcast for 16 and a half years.

[Emma]

What? 16 and a half years? Oh, my goodness.

[Luke]

Yeah, yeah, yeah. I kind of always wanted to do something like that, right? Something like making things, like making some content, some sort of radio thing, or making films, or something.

But a podcast just continues to be the best thing to do. Because, you know, to work, to do radio, it's so complicated. You've got to work your way up in a radio station, and then no one really listens to radio anymore.

Working in television, it's the same kind of thing. The industry's not doing very well. But even then, you've got to deal with so many other people to get to do the job that you actually want to do.

And you've got to do it on other people's terms, and stuff like that. With this, I can do whatever I want. And I have a very direct connection with the audience, the end user of what I'm doing.

And so it's obviously, you know, a great option, you know?

[Emma]

Yeah, you work for yourself like me, it would be really difficult for me to work for someone else again. Yeah. That's why I liked being freelance in the school.

I liked being freelance, because I felt that I was still, you know, my own boss, really, you know, that I could, even though obviously, the school gave me work. Sorry, I just knocked the table. I hope that's not a “boom”.

[Luke]

It was a bit of a boom, but it's okay. You said "sorry, I just knocked the table", kind of, somehow makes it alright.

Ending

So that is the end of that conversation.

Thank you again to Emma for taking the time to record this for the podcast. It was great to finally talk to Emma. And as I said, I've been meaning to talk about this subject with her for a long time.

So it was really good to actually get it done, and make this episode for you. I should say, if you feel that you've been affected by any of the things that came up during this conversation, and if you feel like you need help, then I recommend that you search for it, go out and try and find some counselling or therapy to help you. And this is not just for people who are in a state of crisis.

But obviously, if that is you, then do seek help. It's vital that you do that. But even if you're not in a state of crisis, it's wise to, you know, to seek counselling and therapy just to maintain your mental health in general.

But anyway, if you feel like you've been affected by the things that came up, some of the things that came up in this conversation, then do go ahead and seek help. And I encourage you to do that. If you're based in the UK, you could find a counsellor using the counselling directory, which is available at counselling-directory.org.uk. I'll put a link for that in the description. Emma is listed there. She works as a psychodynamic counsellor in

private practise in Aberystwyth and Wales. You will find her in the counselling directory.

And you might be able to look her up. You could possibly look for sessions with her, specifically, if that's what you're interested in. Although I know that she's in very high demand, so she might not be able to fulfil all the different requests that might come to her from people.

But you could check her out. But indeed, there are lots of counsellors available in the counselling directory, counselling-directory.org.uk. Otherwise, if you are elsewhere, then I would just encourage you to search for counsellors or therapists near you. And I suppose the best thing I can say is I encourage you to go out and actively search for someone.

I guess there will be counselling services that you can find and that you can use to find someone. That, I think, would be a very good idea. Let me just remind you about the PDF for this episode, which is available in the episode show notes in the description.

You'll see a script of the episode and also a big vocabulary list, including loads of words that came up. Obviously, we have, you know, just things like counselling, therapist, talking therapy, a safe space. Counselling offers a safe space to talk about difficult feelings.

We talked about confidentiality. Everything you say is treated with confidentiality. So whatever you say in your session is considered to be private and confidential.

It's kind of secret. It's not going to be publicly shared with anybody. Emma talked about the importance of building rapport and trust with the people you're working with.

Rapport is a really useful word, and it just basically refers to a good, harmonious working relationship with other people. And it's not just used in the context of therapy and counselling. We talk about rapport in terms of between the members of a team.

You build rapport with your colleagues. As a teacher, I build rapport with my learners. So you establish a good rapport.

That's a good working relationship. It is a French word, and we sort of, we pronounce it like a French word without the T. So it's not rapport, but rapport.

R-A-P-P-O-R-T, but it's pronounced rapport. Good teachers build rapport with their students. Therapists establish rapport with their clients.

Other words, we talked about boundaries. We talked about avoiding burnout. We talked about people pleasing.

Are you a people pleaser? The sort of person who often goes out of their way to make other people around them happy. People pleasing can make you live a life that isn't really yours.

You end up bending over backwards to make the people around you happy. You end up saying yes to things or agreeing to things or sort of going out of your way to try and please other people, which sometimes isn't necessarily the best thing for you. We talked about having an inner voice, a critical inner voice.

Think about the way that you talk to yourself, the kind of judgemental part of your thinking. A lot of the time we all have very critical inner voices, which can be very damaging. Where does that come from?

Potentially that comes from our parents when we were growing up. If our parents were very critical, very harsh with us, if they didn't give us a lot of praise, that's reflected in the way that we talk to ourselves. It's very common for people to be very harsh with themselves, which can lead to a lot of painful feelings and a lack of self-esteem, feelings of shame.

All of these words are in my list, so check out the PDF to find them. And it includes, you know, all these words like depression, anxiety, feeling overwhelmed, withdrawing emotionally. So that's where you cut yourself off from the rest of the world.

You withdraw and live in your own little bubble. We talk about self-care, coping mechanisms or coping strategies, ways that we cope with difficult situations. And counsellors or therapists often work on providing coping mechanisms or coping strategies, ways to deal with difficult situations, ways to manage them.

And the list goes on, right? Mindfulness, grounding, things can trigger you or be triggering. The list goes on.

I will let you check out the list for yourself. The link is in the description for the PDF. But that's it, listeners.

Thank you very much for listening. Thank you for watching if you've been watching this on YouTube. And yeah, have a lovely afternoon, evening, morning or night.

I look forward to reading any comments that you have, if you've got anything that you can relate to this episode. And generally, look after yourselves, okay? Be nice to each other.

I always say that. Be excellent to each other. But don't forget to be excellent to yourself as well.

And if you got to the end of this episode, it's a fairly long episode, like many of my episodes are. If you made it and you survived all the way through to the end here without turning into a skeleton with headphones on, then well done you. Give yourself a good pat on the back.

Congratulations to you for being such a brilliant listener and listening all the way through to the end. Have a lovely morning, afternoon, evening or night. Be excellent to each other and to yourselves.

And I will speak to you next time. But for now, it's time to say goodbye. Bye, bye, bye, bye.

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