



Trans Day of Visibility Podcast Transcript

Hello, everyone. I'm Michelle Savage, LGBTQ+ Project Manager at Norfolk and Waveney Mind. Today is Transgender Day of Visibility and normally I'd have got us all together for an event. But we're in the middle of the corona virus pandemic and we're all at home. So instead I called up some trans friends and we had a chat about mental health. Here are some of the things they said...

Katy Jon

You can look at umpteen different stats from around the world and they all come out the same. It's huge – in other words anything between 70% and 80% plus of trans people contemplate suicide and anything between 34% and 50% of trans people attempt suicide; different surveys, different countries. Whether it's 34% or 50% it's still six to eight times more than the next nearest group that tries it. So it's a horrendous thing.

Donna

I think that when it comes to being trans there's a lot of medical intervention. There's also mental intervention that is needed. And I think that when you're waiting on somebody else to be able to, to help you figure out your journey and what it is that you need, like when it comes to operations and things, and hormones. There is a waiting list for that, so I think it's easier to find peace of mind when you're not having to wait for other people.

Jen

I think a lot of mental health issues arise in trans people as a result of a very rational of rejection, rejection from society and those close to us, and also a fear of transphobia and violence which is sadly very real and very present in the world today.

Charlie

You grow up knowing you're different and either getting no messages about yourself from society at all, or the messages are that you are wrong, you are somehow 'less than' and those come from all sorts of sources.

Andrew

Me, personally, I didn't have the development I should have had when I was a teenager and I developed psychosis, which is manageable but is now irreparable and that certainly has impounded on my mental health and has caused me to be extremely suicidal at times. So when you combine that with the abuse that you get everywhere, from work, from friends, from strangers – it just, it does feel insurmountable sometimes and it can really degrade your mental health.

Katy Jon

If society doesn't tolerate you, doesn't accept you and doesn't include you, then of course your mental health's going to be worse. And it's also going to be worse socio-economically because trans people struggle to get jobs. I think they did a survey of employers only one or two years ago and something like 40% to 45% of employers said they would knowingly not employ a trans person.

Donna

And I feel when it comes to trans people a lot of us are burdened with an internalised transphobia where we are told every day that we're different. We already know that but that feeds into a not feeling good enough internal monologue.

Charlie

My parents were both supportive of me but, it was a journey and I think if you say to any supportive parent of a trans person who comes out early they will almost all, to a person, say we took a journey to get there. And I think of those kids and teenagers whose parents didn't take that journey and who are stuck at home with them now and in isolation now. I think those kinds of things really add to these feelings – to mental health issues, which are really prevalent. I don't know a trans person without an anxiety issue...

Andrew

No I don't, not a single one.

Jen

We know that so many young people are living with families, living with other people who do not accept them in their true gender, and this is going to be a very, very trying time for those people. You've got to keep yourself safe and you can still be true to yourself whilst looking after yourself in those circumstances.

Charlie

We're all getting used to isolation at the moment and we're all getting that in different ways. Some of us have got more comradeship than others but we can all see, and over the coming weeks we're all going to see, how that affects us. And there are lots of young LGBT people who are just growing up with that isolation all the time.

Katy Jon

If you're getting rejected by your family, if you're getting divorced by your partner, if you're getting rejected by your faith community, you're getting every single tick box of double whammies from mental health and its intersections with all the other ways of who we are in life. So I think that's why it's fivefold worse than many other groups. Every aspect of our life is covered by it. You can't hide it because the very nature of transition is that it's visible.

Jen

I feel the need to mention that we know that suicide statistics are extremely high in the trans community, more so in young trans people. But we also know that acts such as using correct names and correct gender pronouns have a huge positive impact on levels of depression. So there are relatively simple things we can do to support the wellbeing of trans people that don't actually require a medical or therapeutic intervention. It comes back to respect, understanding, acceptance.

Katy Jon

Treat me as a human being first. Transgender is a part of who I am but it's not all of who I am. At the end of the day, most trans people want their trans-ness to disappear. Most of them simply want to be treated as male or female or non-binary (and that's how I identify). To see the gender aspect of their living in life to be secondary to their simply getting on with life.

Donna

I'll say something that made me realise that my Dad was on my side. I already knew my Mum wasn't. I always had this thing where I feel it's more difficult for men; I don't know why, but my Dad once said to me, it was very early in my transition and he said, 'I don't really understand transgender. I don't really understand why a man would want to be a woman or a woman would want to be a man.' And it's clear from the statement that he didn't get it. And he said, 'The one thing I do know is that I love you' and that's all he can say. He was like 'You're my daughter. If that's who you are then that's who you are.' And I think it's that, in a nutshell, that makes a good ally, somebody who even if they don't understand, because how can they if they're not going through it, but to go 'it doesn't matter where you're going, because I'll still be there because I care.'

Katy Jon

To be a good ally is to not be afraid to ask questions – respectful questions. The disrespectful kind would be like 'have you had surgery yet?' or 'what do you do in bed?'. But respectful ones, like 'what's it like being trans?' 'what kind of issues do you face?' Get to know trans people. Get to know the joys and the problems they face.

Andrew

People who want to be supportive and helpful, they show that they're open-minded and non-judgemental and they just generally have empathy for you, and they want to help you build something better in the world.

Charlie

Allies are people who will actively get involved but will also allow you to lead. They'll understand that it's important that in this issue that trans voices are raised up, that they are given a platform. For example, what you are doing today. You're not doing a podcast where you talk about your thoughts on trans rights and trans day of visibility, you're raising up the voices of trans people, so that's exactly the sort of thing an ally should be doing.

Jen

I guess my message out to everyone right now is to keep believing in yourself. Consider what you've come through already in life. You have been so strong and you can do this. Stay safe and stay proud. Happy Trans Day of Visibility to you all.