#2 – Reece & Kayleigh

**Empathy Museum presents A Mile in My Shoes.**

**Reece: You're listening to *Our Justice*, a series of true stories and conversations, co-produced by three young people with experience of the Scottish Justice System.**

I'm Reece.

So, hey Kelly, thanks for joining me. We have really similar backgrounds in a lot of different ways. Could you talk a bit about what it was like growing up for you?

**Kayleigh:** Well we had quite a similar upbringing and I think that has a lot to do with the areas that we grew up in and the council estate. But aye growing up, like, it was mostly worrying about money a lot.

Like where is the next paycheck coming for you? Where is the next meal coming from. Like, well, that's my personal experience. I dunno about you, but I'm pretty sure it was kind of the same thing. And dealing with mums that also had like really bad mental health issues themselves.

**Reece:** I'd say my mum had money at a lot of points, but also didn't at points. [00:01:00] But a lot of the money it was through, like, not legal avenues. I guess she would do whatever she needed to do to live the lifestyle that she wanted to live. Like, that's actually the kinda opposite of what I want to do now, in a sense, do you get what I mean?

**Kayleigh:** Oh, a hundred percent. Like, cause for me it was like a pure money struggle, but it wasn't even *my* money struggle, it was my mum's money struggle, but it made me so much more aware as a younger person. Like being in school with my peers and stuff like that, realising that, like, oh, wait a minute, youse live kinda differently than what I live. And then I think that caused a lot of self hate, a lot of embarrassment. And I didn't even really realize that until I grew up and I did meet people like you and we had conversations where people were on the same exact situation.

**Reece:** Yeah. Like in different ways, but still kinda the same kinda situations, the

same themes.

**Kayleigh:** It was like: the struggle for money, there was all the violence, like violence was so predominant and it was normal. A lot of anger as well.

**Reece:** Aye, and it's [00:02:00] like, as you grew up, you didn't really see how un-normal it was, I guess, until you kinda come out of it and you kinda reflect back on it.

So, you're one of my longest friends, and I'd say you've seen me through some of my probably hardest moments, as well as some of my best moments, like in recovering stuff. So could you speak a bit about, I guess, your experience of being a friend of someone with a borderline personality disorder diagnosis?

**Kayleigh:** Well, as I say, like at the beginning, we all had the same kinda upbringing. We all had the same kind of reactions to things. It was then violent, really bad behaviour, like not even caring that the law exists, like to us the law was just something that we had to stay away from, like trying to hide from. So to me it wasn't so un-normal.

I just assumed that you were a wee bit more reactive than us, or you were overreacting about stuff. [00:03:00] For you, that's just your world, like, you don't know any different. But aye it wasn't until, like, I remember you saying you were on a bus and the bus driver, I don't know, said something to you. You told me that in that moment you genuinely wanted to hurt him.

You wanted to see him be hurt for how he made you feel. And then that's when I realized that's not right. And then that's obviously when you went to get your diagnosis and you were finally diagnosed. Didn't it make you feel, oh, wait a minute, it's not that I'm not normal, there's something wrong here.

**Reece:** It made me feel relieved. Because up until that point from probably about age 10, my anger really like blew up. And I knew that at my age, even, the way that I was reacting was so extreme, but I didn't know why. So I just felt very confused about, I guess, who I was as a person as well. I do not remember [00:04:00] meeting anyone with borderline before my diagnosis.

So, like before, when I would see my behavior, I could see my behavior in a lot of different people, but I still felt different. So when I got the diagnosis and I kind of self-

taught and I read into it and was doing therapy... and I see all this behavior that I displayed that I really, really, really resonated with. So it made me go, oh, like, wow, like, so there is something that like explains why I've this way for so long, whereas before I didn't have that so I think it made me worse, do you know what I mean, I just didn't have any explanation. So it really helped me feel a lot more sure, a lot more of myself.

**Kayleigh:** I'm not gonna lie, like obviously your diagnosis does get in the way of certain parts of our friendship. But then when we have that cool-off period, like, where we've had a big fall-out, but aye with us it's not that deep, so I go away for a couple of days and then that gives you a time to sort your brain, gives me time to sort out what I could have done [00:05:00] better because things that I'll be saying will be triggering you as well. So it takes me my time to realize, right, what have I done here? How could I have handled this better? And I know that you're doing the same. And then that's why we always come back. Like I could be that person that doesn't understand you and walks away.
And obviously that's where BPD comes from, like, a fear of abandonment. And obviously you do have things that are going to trigger other people to leave. That's what's a shame about it because there'll be people in your relationship that haven't given you a chance because they don't understand.

**Reece:** Yeah. I'm a really, really, really protective person like one of my biggest, I guess, things that I've started to realize is that the most time I'm likely to probably fight has been in situations where somebody has came for somebody I care about, and I've tried to warn them or tried to diffuse it and tried to like split up the situation. And then, like, that, that, that for me is a trigger. I think that that comes from kind of my upbringing and how much, I guess, my mother probably relied on [00:06:00] me from such a young age and how much, I guess she was kind of going through different abuse situations with different men, because of her self- esteem, mental health issues.

I grew up knowing that she was getting, I guess, gaslilt a lot and all these different things were happening. And I would be like arguing and fighting all these kinda men. So I think like probably that part of me having to be so protective from such a young age for such a long time is probably stuck with me now, it's such a trigger when somebody I really deeply care about, somebody's like, would I hurt them? It's like, I just can't help it. I've got better at it. There's some weeks where I feel I can handle everything and I handle things so well, and there are some weeks where I just feel

that I go back five steps.

**Kayleigh:** I was gonna say, because you brought up your mum there, lets see, how when she had a lawyer in mental health issues and obviously the system failed her. See how, when her anniversary comes up, like how do you feel? Do you feel. Let down by the system. [00:07:00]

**Reece:** Yeah. My mom was kinda let down by the system, but I'm not gonna lie and say she didn't bring some of it on herself. Although she was mentally ill. There's also a part where I have an understanding for everything that she went through and all the things that happened to her, which was much, much worse than what happened to me or what I'd been through.

So I understand how much I can feel off the scale at times. And I've been through no where near what she has. So I can't even imagine what it would be like to be in her head every day. At an anniversary that's what I think about a lot.

**Kayleigh:** Me and you, like, we could have went the exact same way as what our mums did, because the reason that they are, or were, of the way that they are is because of their mental health issues that weren't dealt with, that people wouldn't listen to you.

We could have totally went the exact same route, not getting diagnosed, like not understanding what mental health is. And then [00:08:00] eventually our children ending up the same. That's probably my goal in life, is to completely not be that and make sure that my kids are all right.

**Reece:** Yeah. A hundred percent I agree. What's your opinion on the relationship between mental health conditions and the criminal justice system?

**Kayleigh:** If you think about it, like the biggest trending thing on YouTube right now is modern mystery in true crime. Like where is the, oh, this guy saved a random baby from the building. Like they are stories that I want to hear, I want hear like triumphs in humanity being better, but we're constantly glamorizing serial killers.

Like, see, you had done a TED talk, like we grew up in a council estate and you are one of my best pals. Like, seeing you do that, to me, that was absolutely amazing. But people always bring up the things that you've done that are wrong. And I think

that's why you constantly do tell people your story, because you're wanting to be seen as that bad person but you're trying [00:09:00] your hardest to get the help and go to therapy.

**Reece:** I do think I do sometimes bring it on myself a bit, not gonna lie, but I also do agree with your point that sometimes people just want to jump in that kinda past or jump at that kinda bad behavior. But I do think I buy into it sometimes with my reactions.

**Kayleigh:** That's because obviously we've been trained to be like, people want to get the gossipy part. They want to get *why* you like that.

**Reece:** Do you think the prison system, um, do you think it doesn't help people? And what changes would you like to see? I guess in the criminal justice system?

**Kayleigh:** I one hundred percent believe in rehabilitation. I've actually known people that have been in prison.
These people constantly reoffend for a reason. Like, like if they will just go through somebody's past, give them the diagnosis that they need, give them the help that they need...

**Reece:** ...and give them the opportunities to find out what their skills are and give them the opportunities to thrive.

**Kayleigh:** Hundred percent they'll send that they don't have the money to rehabilitate people, but they have money to buy a new yacht, they [00:10:00] have money to go and have parties behind the public's back when we were all stuck indoors, like there is funding there.

**Reece:** What I like about Scotland and our criminal justice system, the changes that they brought in, like, if your conviction leads to a 12-month or less sentence, then you can't be put in prison.

But I think of that as well. You put someone in prison for say two months or three months, and they've had a really good life and a really good job. You have them in prison for three months and they've lost their job and everything, and then they come out three months later and they go out to try and get a job and they've been in prison so therefore everybody shuts the door on them., they're in a position where they

have no option, but what is a person gonna do?
They're going to do whatever they need to do in order to survive. But I do think, something from doing criminal justice as part of my social work degree and those discussions, what I really love talking about is restorative justice.

I don't get why the UK doesn't really [00:11:00] widely use it that much. So restorative justice is where basically say I committed a crime and I caused that person like some sort of, I guess, trauma in some way. And they would get an opportunity if they wanted to face me and asked me whatever questions they needed to ask.

So the reason they do it is they say that it actually helps take the power back to the victim. The way we deal with it with the court system, we kind of take everything away from the victim and the court deals with it, which keeps the fear in it. So there's sort of justice.

It's so effective. Like it really helps with like PTSD symptoms and also helps the perpetrator then to face what they've done, which then also helps them to not want to do that again.

I think what they should be doing is like restorative justice type things. And then also putting in the support like therapy or medication, or whatever support it is they need in order to not make those decisions and go down that kind of route.

**Kayleigh:** But I think it does just start with a conversation. Like [00:12:00] it starts with: why have you committed this crime? Like, what was your upbringing? Like? Everybody has the same type of story. It's not the same very specifically, but it all comes through trauma. And if that inner child trauma is dealt with, in some level, it's easier for adults to be able to have the tools to deal with everyday life.

**Reece:** So, and that's another thing, like say somebody's committed a few different crimes, like fights here and there, or drug dealer or something, but like very low level. And they're in a situation where their home life's all over the place, I guess, and their school life. And everything's kind of the way that I was brought up, or you, or other people, like, what I think is the police should be able to try and offer them ways out, like, okay, you've done this. They still kinda get held accountable, but they complete six months therapy, then they won't be charged for that crime. D'you get what I mean? Like, I think there's ways like that.

I just think they should be able to give opportunities to like, maybe not prosecute if you complete this kind of program. [00:13:00] And although they do have those kind of powers, I do not hear of it being used that much.

**Kayleigh:** Aye, I know it's mostly just kinda deal with a problem while it's here. And then if they reoffend we'll deal with that when it comes. And it's like, no, I think the whole point is trying to get this person to go back into society and make sure that not only everybody around them feels safe, but they feel safe to go ahead and live their life.

**Reece:** In governments as well, like they're all meant to share information with each other so that therefore they can all work as a multidisciplinary team, but that never really happens either. And so much gets missed. And I think they should design a system where courts and social workers and police and all that are all working really collaboratively to then work out the best support, if they can all put different bits of information about one person together, then they're gonna get a good enough picture to go: right, what can we do here? And they've all got different kind of positions and powers to then help this person.

**Kayleigh:** I remember when you were going to get charged, you had to ask your [00:14:00] lawyer to bring up your social work files. That actually sparked something in my brain. I was like, why is that not just an automatic thing? Why is it not before these charges get read out, you get to hear that person's background story? Cause otherwise you're gonna just have a lot of bias against that person. Like, oh wait a minute, that person does bad things, they're a bad person. It's like, no, people have stories. People are going through some shit.

**Reece:** It always seems very: Right, get charged, end of.

**Kayleigh:** Cause that's the easiest way to deal with people, but see how, when you are getting dealt with like that, you feel like shit they're doing this because it's the easiest way to do it, they don't actually care. Cause a lot of people they're causing these crimes to survive. Like, but it's just that understanding behind that. And I feel like it makes that person feel like nobody cares about them, not even their own justice system.

**Reece:** So thank you, Kayleigh, for joining me on this podcast. Thank you for being a

part of it.

**Kayleigh:** Thank you for inviting me, you know that would never not take up the chance to have a good conversation with you. We have [00:15:00] these conversations all the time. It's just now that other people are hearing.

**Thank you for listening to *Our Justice*. This is a Boldface production in partnership with Community Justice Scotland, and Empathy Museum.**