

# Reece, Our Justice podcast

## **SPEAKERS**

Introduction, Speaker 1, Speaker 2, Speaker 3, Reece

### **Introduction** 00:00

[Mix of voices with music in the background.]

The Empathy Museum presents, A Mile In My Shoes

### **Speaker 1** 00:16

Our justice.

### **Speaker 2** 00:17

Our justice.

### **Speaker 3** 00:17

Our justice.

### **Reece** 00:18

Our justice. 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.

### 00:39

I love working in a nightclub. Gay rights now are just that much better. In a gay club you can just be freer, and I just love that feeling.

### 00:53

The job as well, because the job is fun, because I do PR so I get to do a lot of chatting and bantering, which is quite fun. When you're on the scene, there's a lot of pressure to either be skinny or be muscley; there's a lot of pressure to look as best as you can. That causes a lot of insecurity, which is a kind of downside, I'd say, to the scene.

### 01:16

Hi, my name is Reece and I'm 25 years old, and I live in Glasgow. I grew up in Glasgow in a kind of housing estate. And my mum was a very, kind of, harsh person in the sense of, because of the area we grew up in, I think she was maybe scared because I was quite a sensitive child as well, I was very emotional. And the area that I grew up in, that wasn't a, kind of, a good thing. And I think she tried to push that out of me. My mum, I guess, tried to create this kind of person that was going to defend themselves and all this, but I think that she done it in such a extreme way that it caused a lot of problems. On top of that I seen a lot of stuff growing up, like, I've watched her in countless fights with her boyfriends, I've had to get involved, and I would be, like, trying to take on this grown man. It was

just filled with a lot of violence from my mum towards, like, neighbours or police, or many times she'd been arrested over Christmas.

02:08

Even though there was a lot of things in her parenting that I would say was questionable, probably not right, there was also a lot of parts that were good, and that she was very protective and that she was very caring and that she would have put her life on the line for me and my sister. She was also sexually, mentally and physically abused, and I always admired, growing up, that how strong she was and how much she was putting up with.

2:30

When I was about 10 years old, my mother was driving home from work and she stopped at a set of traffic lights. Her doors were locked and a guy ran up to her passenger side and tried to get in her car. And then a car pulled up on her side, rolled down the window, pulled a gun out and shot him. And then my mum became the main witness to a murder investigation. So one day I came home, on a Sunday, I remember it so clear, that I had just been out with my friends, and I remember walking into my house. And there was, like, these two guys in suits. And they were standing in our living room and there was all these bags packed. And it was like, what, it must have been like seven, eight o'clock at night. I just remember going in and them telling me, 'Oh we're going on a little trip'. I must have sensed something was going on, because the first question I had was, 'Are we coming back here?' and they kind of just glossed over the answer. They took us away to this, like, middle of nowhere hotel. They just kept moving us about under witness protection. And at this point I was missing out on, like, lots of school and I was just all over the place and my mum was all over the place and her mental health just started to really deteriorate. I just remember her getting really delusional and having, kind of, frantic behaviour, and it was just so confusing, and not knowing what was going on, and not knowing why she was acting so different and so strange all the time. Every day, like, before I would walk in, like, open the door, I would always think either she's going to be really ecstatic and happy and everything's going to be great; or she's going to be a raging bull, screaming the place down; or she's going to be having a delusion; or she's going to be in her bed for two weeks, crying. She was eventually diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and post traumatic stress disorder. And it just got worse and worse and worse. And then she started becoming quite into alcohol and stuff, and she started to just look really ill. Every year it just felt like you know, she's given up more on herself.

04:24

A lot of the responsibility fell on me to kind of help my mum, protect her, to keep on top of bills, to keep on top of the house, to try and encourage her, to try and get her to clean, to try and do school. So it was just all that going on. I had a very, very chaotic home-life all the time, and I was very angry. In high school, I started to get really aggressive, that's when I'd say my temper started to really break off the chain. People in high school a lot as well, like, other students would go out of their way to try and make me snap, and I would get, obviously the blame. And no matter how many times I tried to tell the teachers, 'Listen, they've been trying to wind me up this whole class'. Yeah, they just never believed me because I was kinda like the boy who cried wolf, in a sense. Most teachers hated me, 'cos I'd walk out the class, I would go to the toilet when I wanted, I'd talk when I wanted, I'd go on my phone when I wanted, I wouldn't do work if I didn't want to. And they would try and argue with me about it; I'd throw

textbooks at them, and there was points where I had to be moved English classes and all that because teachers couldn't handle me. I had to be moved Maths classes, I was barred from Geography entirely. I had so much built up, like from what was going on at home, that when I went to school, I just unleashed kind of hell, I guess. And I was suspended, near enough every week. Then at the time as well I was kind of dealing with, coming to terms that I could be gay, you know, but I kept convincing myself that I wasn't. And then when I was, like 18, I went onto the gay scene for like, the first time. And I was going out at this point, maybe four or five nights a week.

05:47

I thought I was having a great time, because I was gay, and it was all new, and everything was fresh, it was exciting. And I was like, getting all this, like a good amount of attention and stuff. I was drinking excessively, took a lot of drugs, I probably didn't realise how damaging it was, like how much that was probably having a big play as well on my kind of emotions and stuff at the time. When I was eighteen, I got arrested, because I got in this altercation with a police officer. And then after that, the next couple of times I got arrested was with my ex. I got in a relationship when I was 20, we ended up going out for like three and a half years, and that relationship was, very [long pause]. There was a lot of stuff that happened. He had some addiction challenges. And he had also some challenges around being faithful, and some challenges around lying. From day one, it was just chaos. My mum had died as well, by this point. So I also think that that relationship that I was kind of maybe attached to him because I just felt so vulnerable. And that's probably why I accepted a lot of the cheating and all that. I kept trying to like, be like, 'Right, I can deal with it', and I basically forgave him and said that I was over it, because I thought at the time that I would be able to get over it. And about, I think it was maybe a few days later, we were out. And, I don't know what happened, I just got drunk, and I just remember it playing round my head. Then the next bit I just snapped, screaming at him about all the cheating and all that. And then next minute, we ended up fighting for ages until we got arrested. So we got bail conditions. So we were put in a [?] and then we got bail conditions that meant we weren't meant to see each other until obviously, the court case was done with. We secretly got back together, obviously, without the policeman and stuff. And then by that weekend, we were arrested again. And then that was my kind of rock bottom. That was at the point that I was like, I don't want this anymore. This has been my whole life for twenty year, I don't want this for me, I want something different. And then I ended up breaking up with him. When I seen the judge, she was going to remand me in custody until my court date. And that would have been my first, like, prison sentence and I burst into tears in the courtroom. And I stared into the judge just hoping that she would change her mind. And luckily she did, because of my upbringing, and because of everything I had been through she said that she really felt for me, and she felt that I've just not been given enough help and stuff and that I could still do it, but that I needed to go get the help. So from that point on, I've not been in trouble with the police.

08:30

A friend actually brought up to me, one of my closest friend at the time said to me, I think you have borderline personality disorder. I'd actually been to my doctor a couple of times, and he kinda was very, like, shut-downy about it. He basically kind of said to me that as I get older, that my anger would reduce, and kind of sent me on my way. And then I remember the third time I went back, which was after court and after everything, I was about 20 and I just walked into his office. And I just remember

snapping at him. I completely snapped and I just started crying and I was screaming and I was shouting his office down, I was like I can't control it, I don't know what to do, I'm scared. I'm either going to do something really drastic to myself or that I'm going to end in a fight and it is going to go wrong, and something drastic's really going to happen to someone. But I don't want that to happen, you need to help me please. So he referred me and I got assessed and then we were doing therapy. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and DBT therapy is specifically designed for people with borderline personality disorder. I did those two for a year. At the beginning of therapy, I remember thinking that this wasn't gonna work. Like, I didn't believe it at all. I was like, how is me sitting down and talking going to change anything? And then about the 10th month, I just remember looking back at all my old behaviour and who I was at that point, and that was like, my whole mindset was very positive. And I was a lot more happier through the day. And I was a lot more nicer and I was a lot more empathetic towards people and I think that was who I was always. And then everything that happened obviously built up all these kinds of aggressive defences. And therapy obviously helped bring that down, then the kind of real me started to show. Obviously I still have moments and stuff. But majority of the week I'm a lot happier than what I was for most of the first 20 years of my life. So I'd say therapy was the best decision, the best thing that ever happened to me.

10:15

I currently study social work at university, and I work in a nightclub, and do a lot of work with government and charities, usually around mental health, community justice, and poverty. And, like, teacher conferences where I have to train them; I've done police training. I've met with MSPs and government officials and help them with budgets. I worked in prisons for a year, support work for people coming out of prison, and we'd take them to doctor's appointments, help them with housing benefits, help them sort out their debts, try and find them jobs or clubs or things that can try and get them out of that life of crime and get them to reintegrate back into society and stuff. I've done a lot.

**Speaker 1** 11:05

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