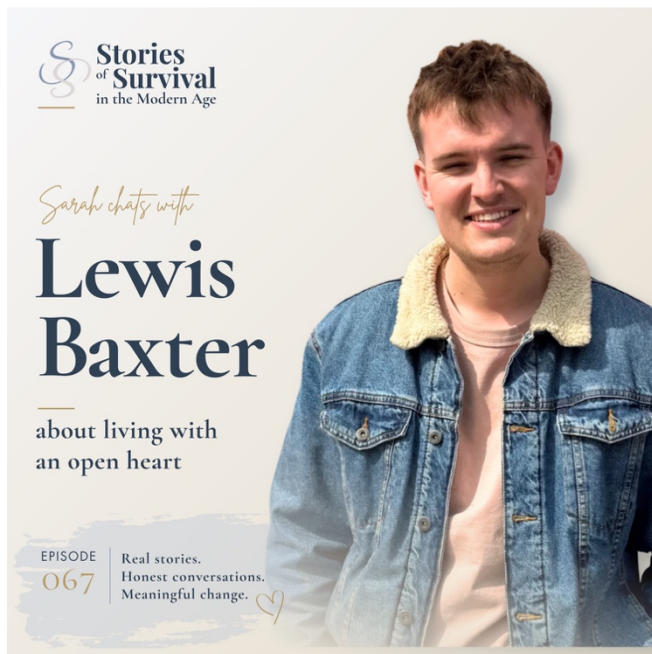




0:00: Hey, it's your friend Sarah, and welcome, welcome to Stories of Survival in the Modern Age.

0:14: Today I'm chatting with Lewis Baxter.

0:17: Lewis holds a bachelor's degree in law from Durham University and has spent the past 5 years working in marketing and communications.

0:25: He's an experienced agency operator, co-founder of a marketing agency in the sports industry, and also runs an e-commerce business.

0:34: That's only part of the story though.

0:37: At 17, Lewis battled with depression.

0:40: And during his year out of sixth form, thanks in

large part to Child Action Northwest, he received counseling and CBT support that would go on to shape not only his own recovery, but his commitment to helping others.

0:55: Since the age of 18, he's been actively involved in the charity sector as both a volunteer and a trustee.

1:02: Today, Lewis serves as vice chair and a non-executive director of Child Action Northwest, a leading charity supporting children, young people, and families.

1:13: In July 2020, when he was 21, Lewis lost his mum to cancer.

1:18: Since then, he's spoken openly about grief, mental health, and what it really means to keep going when life changes shape.

1:27: So let's dive in, go back and learn more.

1:31: Lewis, welcome.

1:32: Welcome to Stories of Survival in the Modern Age.

1:36: Thank you Sarah, it's a pleasure to be chatting with you.

1:38: I'm very excited to talk to you about today, and I'm excited that you're willing to talk about these things and to be quite so open.

1:47: So when people hear a timeline like that Lewis, degrees, businesses, trustees.

1:54: It can look incredibly composed from the outside, can't it, and yet survival when you're in it, hardly feels like that.

2:03: So, so let's go back, if you don't mind, to those teen years, and what was it like for you, what was going on, and how did you get through it?

2:15: It's a great question and.

2:17: To be honest with you, up until being 16/17, I'd had a fantastic life and I had done well with my school, my GCSEs, I played football, loved football, loved sports, enjoyed music, had a great group of, of friends around me, and I had a solid family upbringing as well, lived in a nice area, went on holiday once or twice a year, it was.

2:44: Pretty perfect from the outside.

2:46: I was an only child that brought its, its pros and its cons for sure, and, and really after my GCSEs, so this was kind of 2015 going into, into 2016, I really struggled to adapt to the, the new pace of A Levels, and that was 11 thing that I was kind of noticing quite quickly, I think a range of different factors.

3:11: It was a new environment, it was a bigger sixth form, college with, not 100 people in a year, but you know, maybe 300, 350 people in a year, so that was a challenging to, to overcome.

3:22: the intensity of A Levels I certainly noticed were greater than the GCSEs, and I was just having a bit of a, an identity crisis and I thought, to be honest with you, just because of.

3:36: I'm struggling with my, my, my, my studies, but I think it was much, much deeper than that as well.

3:43: I started to feel quite ostracized from sixth form.

3:48: I started to, shut down from friends.

3:52: This was a gradual process.

3:53: It wasn't overnight this happened.

3:56: It was a gradual process from maybe September, October 2015.

4:01: Through to kind of Feb, March 2016 where this happened and slowly but surely I felt my personality, my love for life was being slowly taken away from me and at the time when you're in that you're really, really battling, you don't know what it is, you don't know whether it's just you or whether it's a mental health condition, and I didn't know much about mental health at the.

4:26: I, if, if anything, to be honest with you, because I'd had such a great childhood, so I didn't know what it was, I didn't know what help was out there.

4:36: I didn't know how I could get out of that rut that I was certainly stuck in.

4:41: that's interesting, isn't it, because, you know, mental health is quite buzzy at the minute and so we can, we can just pick up on that, but you're right, back then, it was less spoken about, and I think as well, Lewis, certainly from a male perspective, it was probably even more less spoke about.

5:01: And, and did, did you find that you were, you were questioning that or questioning yourself, or were you just like trying to get by on a day to day basis?

5:12: Exactly it, you know, I mentioned about the change of pace of availables compared to, to, to GCSEs and that was really noticeable, as I say, distancing from certain friends, struggling to fit in in, in that new, new setting, and I think for, for young males in particular, it is, still not talking about talked about enough, and, at the time I certainly felt I was putting my, Head above the water and, and saying things that a lot of my peers, particularly males, wanted to say, had gone through similar experiences of struggling to adapt to A Levels, for example, the academic pressures, and also a time, let's not forget where, you know, people in age 17 are applying for universities and thinking about what's next.

6:00: It's making some massive life choices, which I was doing when I'd just entered 6th form.

6:05: There's a lot going on, At that time for, for young people, so I think it was about surviving on a, on a day to day basis.

6:15: It, it really got bad in sort of February, March of, of 2016.

6:22: I was missing days of school every single week.

6:27: and my attendance was poor.

6:29: I wasn't eating, it wasn't, wasn't enjoying food, I'd lost my app.

6:33: Appetite, wasn't sleeping, I had a really irregular sleeping patterns.

6:36: I was not meeting up with friends, I was shutting myself off from friends and family, and I became very, very insular, very, very isolated, and I, I, as I say, I didn't know what was happening to me, right?

6:52: I just kept saying what, what, what's wrong with me was something I kept asking myself why, why am I feeling like this?

6:58: And in, in March of, of, of 2016, I took a, a long walk from where I lived and I stood on a bridge and below that cars were going 60, 70 miles an hour, it was a key A road in, in Lancashire, and I stood there for probably 10 to 15 minutes, what felt like a lifetime.

7:24: Strongly considered jumping off that bridge.

7:26: I make no bones about it, it was the lowest point that I've ever been in, in my entire life, and, I, I got back over the barrier, I walked back home, and I think it was the day or very, very soon after that.

7:43: This is obviously 10 years ago now, but I, I, I, I wrote a letter to my mum and dad which was essentially a, A suicide note, never shared that with anybody else, never shared that with family, never shared that with friends, what was on that letter, but that was read by my family and I just really had an open conversation about where I was at and went to the doctor's that next day, and, and that was that first little step forward on the road to recovery.

8:10: So, so really I mean I, I was gonna ask, what was that catalyst for change or did somebody approach you, but clearly not, it was you actually having that walk and standing there.

8:22: And then going home and writing that letter, did, did you say you shared that letter with your family or your parents?

8:29: Shared it with my mum and dad at the time, yes, and my mum kept that letter on her.

8:35: Until the day she died.

8:38: And I think that that she was always a fantastic mum to me and a fantastic role model throughout my life across everything that I did.

8:48: But I think that will have undoubtedly impacted and hurt her and hurt my dad and I don't know, I, I did not know, sorry, when I, when I saw it in her purse after she had died, I had no idea she'd kept that note.

9:03: But the impact of mental health, the impact of suicide, and I got so close to taking my own life because I absolutely saw no other way out.

9:15: I saw no other option at that time.

9:17: It was.

9:17: Literally the brink, and I've not uttered a word to anybody about some of the challenges that I were going through, and I said, I said it was a gradual thing, it just compounded over 5 or 6 months, so it is no surprise that after that time you are at the lowest of the low with no enjoyment for life whatsoever, and it, it took me to the very edge, to the very, very brink, to speak up.

9:47: And to then get the help and support that I need and in a world of sadly 10 to 15 minutes GP appointments at that time I managed to have about 45 minutes with a GP, an NHS GP nearby who had sons of my age, and.

10:07: Fully related, he just got it and he talked that through, and he then referred me to the jigsaw Project at the time, which was run, commissioned by Child Action Northwest and I then started that first counseling session, probably, probably in April of, of, of 2016.

10:26: And so as you are now, Lewis, at your age now and you think back to that, do you recognize the bravery and the vulnerability that that took?

10:36: To A, show your parents that letter, B, have a conversation with a stranger, and, and C, be open enough to start that dialogue.

10:49: I do, I absolutely do, recognize that because, I, I, I, I forget the exact number, but I was reading the, the study, from Papyrus, a, a leading, children's charity, and, and around 2000, just under 2000 young people under the age of, of.

11:10: 35 die by suicide in the UK, every single year, and that's roughly 5 young people, taking their lives every day and the impacts, that that would have had on my.

11:26: Family, my friends and the communities around me would have been so far reaching.

11:32: I have been touched, you know, friends, friends of friends, contacts of, of my family have been touched by, suicide who have lost loved ones, to suicide, and it is still not talked about enough.

11:47: I think this awareness culture we now have as a country is, is, is really positive.

11:52: We took great strides over the last few decades in terms of awareness.

11:58: What we have to start looking at now is action, support, prevention, overcure, being that early intervention piece is critical.

12:07: More funding and investment at an earlier stage with.

12:11: Our children and our young people, and also I think development of core skills like resilience, and being help and encouraging young people to be very open about their feelings because I was very closed off, maybe it was a 17 year old male thing, but I was very, very closed off, so I realized it was a, it was a brave thing to do and I, I, I played football.

12:35: I, I wouldn't say I was a, a macho guy whatsoever.

12:39: What, what I would say is that I, I definitely kept my feelings to myself.

12:43: That was the norm, it felt the norm.

12:46: And I'm so glad that I did speak up.

12:49: Of course the circumstances were very, very, alarming for my family and for me at the time because it, it, it took me to the very brink to, to talk, but I'm so glad that I did.

12:59: And we're all glad as well because, you know, you are a very articulate young man, you're very passionate about the work and the volunteering that you do.

13:08: So, you know, we're all glad as well that you took those brave steps.

13:13: And so, and so obviously let's, let's fast forward a few years if we may, and, you know, you, you've recovered if one can even use that term from that period.

13:26: And then you find out your your mum has got cancer, that must have been.

13:32: A double whammy to have just come through that period.

13:37: And then to be faced with this news as well.

13:40: So at 17, we've just talked about my kind of battle with, with, with depression.

13:46: I had about 10 CBT and counseling sessions with a fantastic lady, from Child Action Northwest, and I was in a fantastic, fantastic few times there, but I was in a, a great place, in sort of summer of, of 2017, and I then, sorry, 2016, and, I then started.

14:11: Life in a new sixth form and I drove to Skipton from where I lived in Blackburn every single day.

14:19: A completely new environment, an old, an all boys school actually in, in the center of, of Skipton in North Yorkshire.

14:27: And, it was the best decision I made.

14:29: It was smaller class sizes, it was smaller year groups, and it felt a really tight knitted community and some of the friends.

14:37: That I have now will be friends for life that have come from that school.

14:40: It was absolutely the best decision, and it got me on the road to recovery, and, and I still probably wasn't 100% when I started life at that sixth form in September of 2016.

14:52: I'd only finished counseling a couple of months before, and I actually spoke really openly in maybe only a few months after joining that sixth form.

15:00: I spoke in front of about 400 young.

15:03: Children, men, young adults, you know, people from year 7 to to year 13 spoke about my journey with mental health, and that really opened a lot of young people's eyes to mental health and the importance of talking about it.

15:15: But in my first year in May, just before my AS levels, or my mock exams at the end of the first year, my mum was diagnosed with, with, breast cancer for the first time, and, that hit me really, really hard.

15:28: My mum had been my rock.

15:30: During my mental health struggles and to see the person that had been your rock then face such a grueling fight with cancer for the first time.

15:39: So she got over that, she got through that and she went into remission I think is the correct term in, in when we're talking about breast cancer.

15:47: And, I got my A Levels, I did really, really well, and I got a place at Durham University to do my, to do my law degree, which, I started in 2018.

15:58: and then she was diagnosed again in May of 2019 with breast cancer and looking back now with the, triple negative breast cancer that she was diagnosed with, which is a more rare form of, of, breast cancer, the prognosis wasn't good.

16:17: I think to get that for a second time and for that to metastasize and fundamentally spread to, to other parts and.

16:24: that was a, and we can probably explore this now, but that was a really, really, that was one of the biggest, biggest fights of my mum's life that sadly.

16:34: She didn't win and it was very, very difficult for myself and my family during that time from 2019 May to July 2020 when she, she passed away and of course in the context of a global pandemic as well, certainly exacerbated that for, for us all, but certainly those that were caring for, for someone with cancer.

16:55: And that, that they were really really tough times I can definitely attest to that, and you know when when my mum got cancer also Lewis and I remember that from the time, She got sick to the time she passed was literally 4 weeks, and and it was in hospital the entire time, and I remember clear as day to the day I went to see her and she, she literally just put her head in her hands because I was the one that had taken her because there was nothing at that point I could do.

17:28: She clear as day, she said, what have you done to me Sarah, why have you brought me here, and it took me a long time to get over her saying those words, So, so it is, it is a hard thing to deal with, and you know, for you on the back of this depression, it must have put you back into that vulnerable, really, Hard state that you were in for, for because you cared for her as well, didn't you, for a short time.

17:59: Yeah, so in, in 2017 when she was diagnosed for the first time, she had chemotherapy and, and radiotherapy and rounds of that, and that was absolutely a, a challenging time for us.

18:13: but she, she went into remission and, and then, you know, it, it sort of, we didn't talk about it in in all honesty.

18:21: For, for maybe 16 months, 18 months, I got my first year of, of of university out the way, that was 2018 to 2019 and really enjoyed, you know, life, settling into university, making friends, from around the world that traveled to, to Durham and started their, their degrees there, really enjoying the course, so many.

18:43: Positives, I was a really good place and compared to where I'd been just a couple of years before, to be even thinking about studying a law degree, which was what I wanted to do at one of the best universities in the, in the country for that, I was really proud of myself, but I also was absolutely, Taken aback when mum told me at the end of my first year kind of in the summer of well yeah, before the end of my first year that she'd been diagnosed again, that was a big, big, knockback for for us all, and critically here.

19:24: in November of, of, of 2019, my mum was helping me out with a few things, a few admin jobs.

19:31: I was, I was volun building a, a not for profit at the time, and she'd, she'd, was working through what to do.

19:37: I never, I never heard from her, and it got to 6, it got to 7, it got to 8, and I thought this is very, very out of character.

19:44: And my dad rang me, my auntie rang me later that night and said, your mum's been taken to hospital, she's in a really, really bad place.

19:53: And then I got another call about half an hour later where my dad said in no uncertain terms, you have to get to Blackburn Hospital as soon as possible.

20:02: I, without any hesitation, I packed a few clothes.

20:05: I jumped into my car and I drove from Durham to Blackburn at about 10 o'clock at night.

20:10: It was cold, it was raining, it was November of 2019, and I remember pulling over the service stations, a service station, and, and crying.

20:18: About half an hour, the most that I've ever cried in my entire life.

20:24: And I thought I was driving and would never be able to speak to my mum again.

20:29: Would never have an opportunity to laugh, to smile, to explore new things, to have a coffee with her, which we would do so much.

20:37: She was my best friend as well as my mum and such a role model.

20:40: Got there, she was in a very, very critical condition, but she turned.

20:44: Corner, she had some surgery, it, the, the cancer had spread to her esophagus and kind of windpipe, and that was making her in a really critical position, but they debulked, I think is the, the medical term, and, and cleared the airways a little bit.

20:58: And what that allowed her to do is get a, a, a, a second chance.

21:02: And I made the decision to leave my, pause my degree at that time in this would have been about January of 2020.

21:10: And I thought, do you know what, I'm, I'm going to put you first, You put me first when I was struggling with my mental health and you did so much for me in my 21 years that I'm gonna be your carer.

21:21: I'm going to look after you, and I'm gonna spend as much time as I can with you.

21:26: At that point, my mum, honestly, until even the day she died, was absolutely positive.

21:32: She was always going to beat cancer and she never once wallowed in.

21:36: Self-pity and never once regressed into a a a state of like poor me, the world's against me, and do you know what, if she had have regressed into that state, no one could have blamed her cos she went through a lot.

21:49: But she was so positive and optimistic, and we had some great times together.

21:55: COVID hit of March 2020, from March until the day she died on the 30th of July 2020.

22:01: That was incredibly difficult.

22:03: Period, working, sorry not working but caring full time for someone with cancer who was terminally ill at that point in the midst of the global pandemic and my dad was, was a critical worker and was was really working, you know, 9 till 8 every single day.

22:19: So I had a lot of weight on my shoulders at that point, but, the, the best decision I've ever made in my life, pausing that degree and putting family first because you know what, a career.

22:30: Can wait, but that time with your loved ones, I may never have got back.



22:35: I know, absolutely, and all credit to you for doing that, because you're right, that is so incredibly important.

22:44: Lewis, you're very active and expressive and detailed on LinkedIn.

22:49: And You wrote something recently, or maybe not so recently, I was just going back, reading some of your old, old posts, and you talked about grief and joy coexisting and being able to coexist, and you wrote, they're not in conflict, they're part of what it means to live with an open heart.

23:12: The goal isn't to feel one or the other, it's to make room for both.

23:18: I get goosebumps, Lewis, when I read that.

23:22: We're forced into that grief, and we have to learn from that grief, but for you, what does living with an open heart look like now?

23:34: What a great question.

23:37: I, when, when my mum had, had died, I, I honestly didn't study the, the model of grief at all.

23:44: I've only look at that month on because when you, sorry, years on, years after about the cycle, the waves, the, the patterns that you, you can spot when you look back retrospectively at going through grief, really my grief started when I was driving in November 2019 to Blackburn thinking that I would never.

24:04: Speak to my mum again, to get that second chance and to then have, you know, maybe 67 months of OK, she was in a very, very ill state, but to be able to have that second chance to speak to her, was, was fantastic, and I think I've, I've embodied, I try to embody this kind of open heart mentality.

24:23: I think it means compassion.

24:25: It is, you never know what people are facing, whether that's colleagues, whether that's friends, whether that's people you bump into on the bus, it's trustees.

24:33: And volunteers, who, whoever you you meet in your life, you never know what they're facing beneath the surface.

24:40: We are all facing our own battles and our own, old, our own demons to, to some degree.

24:47: I think compassion is really, really important, understanding and, and, and empathy.

24:51: And whilst I can never put myself in the exact shoes of the other person that I'm speaking to, I can absolutely relate, to a lot of it, the challenges, the.

25:04: The highs going in remission and, and 16 months later the lows of being told that the cancer's pretty much terminal and there's nothing that the, the doctors can do, what a rollercoaster, I mean, and then even when someone does die, the journey of grief after that, the denial, the anger, the, the, the, the depression, and then, you know, the somewhat acceptance.

25:30: At the end, and I'm still on that journey.

25:34: Oh yeah, 5.5 years on, I'm absolutely on that grief journey.

25:38: It is not a linear path in, in, it is absolutely, it's a cycle and sometimes we miss parts of it, and one minute I'm thinking about her and I am a little bit angry, the next minute I am accepting and I'm like, do you know what, I'm making you proud, you'd, you'd love what I'm doing and what I'm up to at the moment, so.

25:57: in, in short, it's still very much a journey.

26:00: I'm on that journey.

26:01: I will never be over grief.

26:04: I'm going to have this grief for the rest of my life, and I've accepted that.

26:08: And I've also accepted to that piece about open heart.

26:11: Having an open heart for myself.

26:14: Being kind to myself.

26:16: Yes, to others and being compassionate, but being kind to myself and letting myself embrace those emotions and listening to my body.

26:23: I think that's really, really important is being kind to yourself.

26:29: All too often we think about other people and that's great, however, you know, there's something to be said when you're on an airplane and they said put your own oxygen mask on first because we cannot operate on empty, we have to take care of ourselves first, don't we, and all too often we just don't.

26:49: Absolutely, yeah, absolutely, I agree, and, and I think that that's what I'm always really conscious of, that I never give advice.

26:57: I'm not prescribing things to other people, when I'm talking about mental health, I'm talking about grief because we all, we all have our own unique circumstances and you can never fully understand what the other person.

27:12: is, is, is going through for sure, but it's, it's just, you know, being, being someone that you, that can listen, I think that's really important as well.

27:21: I think listening is the best, best, best, best skill I was trying to say, that, that I, that I, that I have.

27:28: I, I really, really try and be a good listener to people.

27:32: Hence I always say that's why God gave us two ears and one mouth, so we can listen twice as much as we talk.

27:40: Very much so, yeah.

27:41: Lewis, if there's anybody listening now or people know someone that's going through something, what's the best piece of advice you would offer them?

27:54: Knowing that they are loved and telling them that they are loved by you and by others, I think is a really good starting point.

28:04: Secondly, that active listening piece that I mentioned there, you don't have to have solutions.

28:10: Very, very, very rarely would we have solutions to that that person's unique challenges and situation.

28:17: But what we do have is an ability to listen, to take on board, to be a sounding board to another person's challenges that they're facing, and we all know the weight that's lifted off our shoulders when we talk to.

28:32: Others about our issues and and challenges in your field to better for yourself after doing that and, and trying to encourage others to open up and and and share and talk, but it's also very easier said than than done, and I think telling people or or encouraging people more, more so to speak to those that they feel comfortable in chatting to.

28:56: It's, oh why don't you just speak to your parents, why don't you just speak to your brother, well because they might not.

29:01: Be the best people that that person should speak to.

29:04: But there might be a school teacher that is, is, is really compassionate and that you have a lot of time for, that might be a suitable route.

29:11: Or there are fantastic charities out there that are independent, that are objective, that are non-judgmental, we are both trustees of, of a charity that do that.

29:19: There are professionals out there that will listen and will give, people of all ages the support that they, that they need, so I think that's that's.

29:29: Really, really important and, and signposting where possible as well, there are a lot of amazing organizations out there, but sometimes it's hard to know where to turn because there's so many choices.

29:42: So if you do and are privy to information of particular charities that might be able to help that person, share those details and, and let them get in touch with them.

29:52: Absolutely, and, and on the show notes page I will put some resources for people if anybody does know of anybody.

29:59: Lewis, before we go, I want to ask you my quickfire 5 if you're up for the challenge.

30:05: Absolutely, let's let's do it.

30:08: What's your go to comfort food or your best or your drink?

30:13: Comfort food, do you know what I really like a a kebab, I love like Lebanese food, I like Turkish food, I think kebab would have to be my my guilty pleasure, my, my go to comfort food.

30:24: There you go, and in terms of a book or maybe an audio or a podcast that you're listening to, what are you enjoying right now?

30:33: Fantastic question.

30:35: Right now I'm very interested in business of sport, it's a, it's a podcast all about, surprisingly, the business of sport.

30:42: I have always loved sport and watched it, but actually the business behind that, the commercials, the marketing, the people behind professional sport is really, really interesting to me, so that's.

30:55: What I'm listening to, but to be honest, you find, finding the time to sit and listen, I really just enjoy listening to music with no vocals on instrumental jazz or, or a little bit of a little bit of techno without lyrics is, is, is my go to as well.

31:12: I have to admit, without lyrics is often sometimes the just the thing that you need, isn't it?

31:17: Absolutely, yeah.

31:18: Lewis, in this moment, what are you most grateful for?

31:23: The ability to design work around my life and not the other way around.

31:29: I had a fantastic job, but it was the job that took priority from 9 till 5, as many of us have.

31:35: We're actually in a position now where I'm building things of my own, which is fantastic, and I'm able to, to fit that work around things that I want to do.

31:44: Excellent, and.

31:47: We've talked about the fact that you are a male, very, very clearly to most people.

31:51: Do you have a go to self-care practice, I know a lot of chaps don't, but do you have a self-care practice?

31:58: So I've tried a lot of different things, and I think what I'm finding really helpful at the moment is to just get outside, right?

32:07: And sometimes we, we have these big goals of we have to go to the gym for like 4 times a week and we have to do this and we have to do that, and we get very, very regimented and very, very prescriptive.

32:16: But I think the best form of exercise, not only for our body but also for our mind, is just stepping outside, going for a little walk, sitting on a bench, grabbing a coffee and walking back.

32:25: So I'm really trying to embed that into my structure now and that is a win for me if I've done that, even if I don't get to the gym.

32:34: Good for you.

32:34: And my last question, and you're not that old, I'm not gonna say how old you are, but I always ask, what's the one thing you would tell a 21 year old version of yourself?

32:48: Be immensely curious, hm, ask questions, go down rabbit holes with research, with reading, with studying, explore your passions, be curious about things that you, Have never thought about, you don't know what you don't know, that sort of idea, and I think we are, we sometimes as a nation, as individuals shut off paths that we think are not possible to ourselves, but that curiosity is really important.

33:16: Say yes to things that might feel like not something you're interested in doing, but doing it.

33:21: I said yes to going surfing whilst in Australia.

33:25: I couldn't think of anything worse than being on the.

33:28: Beach with one of those wetsuits on, with a surfboarding arm and doing surfing, but do you know what, I had a fantastic 2 or 3 hours, and I'm so glad I just said yes to that, so curiosity and say yes more.

33:41: Marvelous, I love that.

33:42: Lewis, thank you so much for chatting with me today, it's, it's really been a pleasure and I know we could chat for longer, so I appreciate you giving up your time and I appreciate, thank you so much.

33:55: Thank you Sarah.

33:57: Chatting with Lewis, what stood out for me wasn't the polished version of a life, but a real one.

34:04: The moments where things felt unbearable, where depression closed in, and where grief changed the shape of everything.

34:13: I was particularly moved when when Louis spoke about standing on that bridge before making the decision to climb back over the barrier, not just the pain that got him there.

34:25: But actually the courage it took to turn back toward life and caring for and being with his mum right up until the end, the love that sat alongside the heartbreak and about what it means now to live with an open heart in spite of loss.

34:41: I think there's something deeply, deeply human in that idea, as the writer Kh Khalil Gibran once wrote, the deeper that sorrow carves into your being, the more joy you can contain.

34:54: And perhaps that's part of what we've heard today, not a story about having it all figured out, no, rather one about staying open, about learning that strength isn't silence, and that speaking about our struggles can create a space for others to do the same.

35:13: If something in this conversation resonated with you, if you're quietly carrying more than people realize, or perhaps you know someone who is, please, please remember that support does exist and that speaking about what you're going through can be the first step toward finding it.

35:31: Thank you for trusting me and thank you for sharing this with the people that you care about.

35:36: And when you come back, I'll be right here, ready to meet you where you are.

35:42: So until next time, stay safe, be well, and as always, be your own definition of amazing.

END