

Hear Myself Think
Get outside with Ali
Transcript

Announcer Hi. Welcome to Hear Myself Think, in this episode you're going to be getting out of the house with Ali, so if you're outside ready to go, great. If not, just pause here, and start again when you are.

(Sound of a door closing. Birdsong, traffic, street noise etc.)

Ali Hi. Thanks for coming with me, I wasn't that keen on the idea of getting out, but - I didn't know what else to do, so I'm glad you're here.

Let's go, shall we?

I've got a job interview in about ten minutes, on the phone, and I was there in my room waiting, with my flatmate going off next door -

Flatmate *(On the phone)* No? He didn't?! He didn't?! He did?! No, he didn't?!

And the sound of the neighbour's kids running up and down with the TV on, the clock ticking, those four walls looming, my mind racing, and I'm in there feeling like I'm only just on the edge of holding things together, just about worth something and maybe this job will be the one, and then *(Ping!)* an email, from an interview last week - that went well, it went well - saying I'm "not quite what they're looking for...", "not a good fit..." Corporate speak for saying someone like me isn't worthy of working in a place like that...

And I - I had to get out. Get away.

Escape, I guess. Who knows if I'll actually go back? Right now I don't have what it takes to keep proving myself, prove what I deserve, because right now I don't know what that is.

(Inhale and exhale.)

So here I am. Here we are. On the street. For some air. Because I didn't know what else to do.

People are always telling me what good some exercise does, you know? And I've seen the research. I've read the articles. Little pumps of endorphins, plugging away (*drop, drop, drop*) into the system while you go, they don't even realise they're doing it - and that's great.

But, me on the other hand, I can't just forget what I'm coming back to, I've got bills piling up, and emails, and reminders, lists, calls from mum about my younger cousin's wedding, their new house, their kids. Not to mention - I have a job interview in ten minutes! - which I probably won't get, so more applications after that, and after that.

So what am I doing outside on a walk? This is not the most productive use of my time. I just can't go back to that room right now, can't face all that responsibility...

What should I do? My friends always say -

Well-meaning friend (*Over the phone*) Take a moment for yourself, forget everything, get outside and clear your head.

Ali - as if my head is just the attic at the top of my body, and everything can be boxed up, swept up, locked up inside -

I know they're trying to help, I know they care about me, I do, but can you ever truly shut those thoughts off? I feel like if I don't constantly keep an eye on some of them they might drop out of my head, and I won't remember those really important ones, or they'll drop out my mouth...

(*Supermarket sounds.*)

Ali ...and, what if it's true? How can I ever be sure I am actually good enough?

Cashier I don't know dear, but do you need a bag?

And getting outside is meant to help? Apart from the *(drop, drop, drop)* where's the excitement? Where's the distraction? I know this place too well. If it's worth seeing, I promise you I've seen it already.

That's the broken lamp post. A tree. That's another lamp post. There's a fence. There's a car. There's a car. Some double-yellow lines. There's another lamp post. A car. A tree.

(As if moving past someone) Excuse me. Thanks. *(The sound of someone taking pictures on their phone.)* Why's he taking pictures of a tree? *(As if looking back.)* Oh... actually that's a good tree. I took a picture of it too when I first saw it, it's one of the few trees round here that actually looks at home, comfortable - like it wasn't just squeezed in, but chose this place, made space for itself.

Do you think it's too late to feel curious like that again? See a tree and want to take a picture of it? Because I used to be a curious kid, I did, it rooted me right in the world, and not in my head. Is it too late to feel interested? Feel present? Feel like the world around you is special?

Nature documentary voice In this small, seemingly unremarkable corner of the world, there is...

Not that special, but can you ever see this place again like you did the first time?

(Pause.)

All the time my mind keeps tugging at me, trying to pull me home, it's got ahead, like an impatient kid - but not right now - Hey, mind? Stop. We're meant to be working together, so look at what's around you. Pay attention. What you can see? What can you smell?

(Pause. Inhale and exhale, calmer than before.)

It's birdsong, traffic noise, playing that note, hooting that horn, trees being that colour just for me right now.

Now there's another part of this world that I know a little better, that I've discovered, that I've reclaimed, and not only does it belong to me, but I belong in it.

I belong here. I'm part of this world, and it's always here to explore. It can't stop how I feel, I know, but I might be able to claim back just ten minutes - and come back here and do it again, and again.

Let all those other thoughts bouncing round my head off the leash just for just a few minutes. Get a sense of where I am. Let them go scooting off, sniffing round - shake them out. I know they'll come back, but let them ask to come in, let them wait their turn.

I've got to the end of the street now, and I could keep going. I really could. Keep walking and not come back, go and make a new life somewhere else, anywhere else, but...

Gradually, that worrying, that doubt, that knot in my stomach is starting to ease, just a bit - just a tiny bit, and - maybe it's my imagination, but as it does, I can feel it giving out a sort of bright, warm radiation, glowing gold under my skin like a cartoon stomach on a yoghurt advert.

And as I walk, and breathe, the glow is starting to grow and spread from my belly, down my legs, across my chest, down my arms to my fingers until all of me is glowing bright gold from my toes to my forehead, and it beams out of me, through my clothes...

And if I pass people it washes over them (*Whoosh!*) and their eyes flash bright and wide, and they turn, like they just smelt the perfume of that one great love they never forgot -

And maybe, I'm smiling.

I don't *want* to feel worthless, I want to feel 100 feet tall, turning the world under me as I go - feeling it rumble round beneath me.

And as I bring that front door closer and closer, I know what's behind it, but... it's just one small thing, right? One thing I know I can do. One call. And after the call, I'll do the next small thing on the list. And the next. Bit by bit, step by step, drop drop drop.

And you? Why not keep going? Not walking away from anything, but towards it, driving something. It's going to be ok. Keep going, keep going, keep going.

(The voice fades, as if we are leaving Ali behind. Then, in the distance -)

And wish me luck!

Announcer If, like Ali, you're feeling anxious, overwhelmed, depressed or isolated, small activities such as getting exercise, enjoying some fresh air, and breaking down intimidating tasks into small steps can help. However, if these thoughts continue to hold you back from living the life you want to lead, it might be time to share how you feel with a friend, family member, community support group, or your GP.

There are also links to additional support on the Hear Myself Think website.

In this episode of Hear Myself Think, Ali was played by Cherrelle Skeete. The episode was written by Olly Gully, with dramaturgy and direction by Kaleya Baxe, and sound design and composition by Kieran Lucas.

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