

Hear Myself Think

Make a hot drink with Kim

Transcript

Announcer Hi. Welcome to Hear Myself Think, in this episode you're going to be making a hot drink with Kim, so if you're not in the kitchen ready to go, then just pause here, and start again when you are.

Kim Hello, I'm Kim. You're here, actually, at just the right time, I could do with someone to talk to. I've just come back from a date. A real live date with another person. And - it was really awful.

So I'm putting the kettle on - making myself a hot drink - because sometimes that helps, a small simple task I have some control over - beginning, middle and end, that I can get right - and it would be a real delight to have a bit of company.

So - the first thing we can do is fill the kettle, or whatever you use (*tap filling kettle*) put it on the boil and - there we have it - the first step in the process.

(Exhale.)

I thought I was ready. For this date. I'd met him through an online site I'd joined ages ago and forgotten about, and last week up he pinged (*dating site alert*) he lives locally, and he's not bad looking, for an old man, and I think I must have been having one of my good days because I said yes.

It still took a lot, a hell of a lot of time building myself up. I live alone, and - I don't mind it, the things I can get up to! - but often it can feel a little like living apart, isolated, where small thoughts become big thoughts like - that.

But, for the first time in a while maybe I felt sort of... desirable. And I know that shouldn't necessarily be the thing that makes me feel better, I know, but - hey, it didn't hurt.

And so I really tried - I chose this great outfit, I put earrings in, perfume on, I'd looked at the cafe menu online in advance so I felt prepared, I practiced things to

say, practiced my rippling laugh (*she pretends to laugh*) - and I'd tidied the flat, because you never know, do you?

I felt ready, I felt attractive, I felt - good!

And as I walked into the cafe, I took a deep breath, and really tried to imagine I was a movie star (flashbulbs) elegant, shoulders back, confident - but even before I'd sat down, with my coat halfway off my elegant shoulders, he said -

Date So, tell me about yourself, what do you get up to?

And all of it just fell apart. I froze. My brain filled up with fog and my stomach fell out from under me. Because - out of nowhere - I suddenly felt all this confidence was false.

Date (*Repeat*) So, tell me about yourself, what do you get up to?

Kim Just hanging in the air...

Date (*Repeat*) So, tell me about yourself, what do you get up to?

Kim And my mind went blank. I could've made all sorts of excuses, but I could tell he could see right through me - he knew that I'm not one of those people who do things, who're useful, purposeful, happy, who fill their days enjoying close friendships, fulfilling family relationships, good dental health, regular athletic sex followed by a wholesome home-cooked meal.

That I didn't deserve to feel this confident. That I have nothing to offer. And despite attempting my rippling laugh (*she half-heartedly pretends to laugh*) there was no coming back from it. So I made my excuses, and came straight back to the flat, trying not to make eye contact with anyone on the way.

(*Exhale.*)

And I know I'm one of the lucky ones. My life hasn't been "successless." I had a job I was proud of, and good at, and useful in, kept me busy, and I've been happily married, until it wasn't, and we both had to step back, I didn't want kids,

and I don't regret that - but how do you justify yourself, your life, to people now, today, when you don't feel proud, good, useful? When you don't feel busy and happy anymore?

My kettle's finally starting to bubble now, so - it's time for a mug! I'm getting my favourite mug, if you want to do the same?

Mine's a little odd looking thing, brown and yellow, with a flower pattern, and chipped, but because it's followed me everywhere now for about - 40 years? - and just absolutely refused to break, I love it. Is there a little quality that sets yours aside?

And what are you making? Is it tea? Herbal maybe, and fragrant, or coffee - what does it smell like, does it smell like it tastes? Because sometimes it doesn't. What does it feel like? Is it one of those time travel senses?

The sound of the water boiling throws me back to when I was about 8. My dad, in our little kitchen cooking for us. I was never allowed in because I was clumsy and I'd always knock something over, so it was a mystery to me - boiling water - it seemed so dangerous, unpredictable, such a risky thing to do inside.

Do you remember that? Not my dad, obviously - but a time, however long ago it was, that you had absolutely no idea how to do something that seemed so alien, adult, and complicated - that maybe now you've mastered. Well, "mastered" is a big word for my talents in the kitchen, the only thing I've mastered is hanging a teaspoon on my nose.

Can you do it? Go on, give it a try. If you get a teaspoon, any kind, and hang the domed bit off the end of your nose. It helps if you (*breathing*) "huh" "huh" on it. Maybe tilt your head back.

Can you?

(*Pause.*)

If you can't, then that's ok - it took me a long time! And though it's a silly thing I know, I am actually pretty proud of it.

So why, when my date asked -

Date (*Repeat*) So, tell me about yourself, what have you been up to?

Kim Didn't I pop the teaspoon on my nose and go - Ta-dah! - How's that for a life well-lived?

Because isn't there value in these small achievements? I mean it.

Making this hot drink, for instance, a small achievable action with a goal. Beginning, middle and end. And only you can say what success is - how it should taste, what should go in it.

They may be small, but can't pile them up and impress ourselves? Lay up all the hundreds, thousands of everyday achievements and successes that are honest, and our own? Celebrate them, cherish them. Small steps forward that maybe stop us slipping backwards.

Because getting up and having a shower, is an achievement. Making a nourishing meal, is a success. They're small, yes, but undeniable, and they add up.

And now... you have another one. Your ideal hot drink. On top of everything else. So what now? Well enjoy it, it's yours. And while you do, if you've got a minute - is there someone who might be happy to hear your voice? If there is, why not give them a call, a message, say hello, if you can, it might make a world of difference to them, because it does feel good to talk.

No other use of your time will be so... well invested, believe me.

And if - after all this - they say -

Friend It's lovely to hear your voice, tell me about yourself, what have you been up to?

Maybe you can rise up, like steam out the kettle - and say -

(Warmly) Well, I've just made the most perfect cup of tea.

Announcer If, like Kim, you're feeling anxious, isolated or overwhelmed, small activities such as taking a moment to focus on the present, acknowledging small positive achievements, and reaching out 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, or medical professional, or "by getting in touch with a local community support group.

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

In this episode of Hear Myself Think, Kim was played by Louise Jameson. 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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