



THE FATIGUE SUPER CONFERENCE

Carers Session 3: 5 top tips for carers

Guest: Alex Howard and Nik Cook

Alex: Welcome to the Fatigue Super Conference. This is the third, and last session of sessions for carers. Obviously going through fatigue in its various forms is enormously challenging. There's also a lot of challenges and difficulties being the carer of, a friend of, the family member of, the supporter of somebody that's going through that journey. One of the things that can often happen is one's life almost ends up being put on hold. People can end up at times almost burning out themselves by being in that role of carer.

Alex: In this series of sessions with Nik Cook we are together exploring these themes through a few different perspectives. Nik is ... his wife Lisa has been going through her own journey with chronic fatigue. He's been sharing some of his experience in the previous interview. Nik shared his story, and their story together. Nik has also been doing our therapeutic coaching practitioner training program. He's also got some perspective insights from that.

Alex: I'm also time sharing some of my experience of practitioner, and I think I referenced in one of the other sessions that my sister-in-law suffered from Lyme disease for a number of years, and actually lived with us for two and half years. I got to also be in the role of carer at times, and have some experience around that. This is going to be Nik's really top five tips, and I think perhaps somewhat, some of the things that he wishes he learned at the start of that process. But again Nik welcome, thank you so much for joining me for this session.

Nik: No problem, good to be here.

Alex: We talked quite candidly in the previous session about your journey as being a carer, and we touched on some of these ideas a little bit as part of that. I know that one of the key themes that came out for you was ... I think it's common for a lot of people is learning to ask for help for yourself. Let's start there as your first tip. What would you say about that?

Nik: Yeah undoubtedly, if I was going to say one thing it would be ask for help, and don't be afraid to ask for help. Although you're not the one who's actually ill, the amount of time, energy, and stress that you're putting yourself under, caring for somebody who is fatigued, ill, is huge. We were really lucky. We reached out to my mother-in-law, and she was absolutely fantastic, actually living with us for a period of time. But also then, further down the process I asked for help, for professional help when I was actually struggling with the later phases of Lyssa's recovery, and some issues that that threw up for me. Speaking to a therapist then was absolutely invaluable, and really helped me. But also it was ... you find out who your friends really are, particularly with fatigue, because as we discussed previously, people see your partners on good days when they're up and about, and so there isn't anything obviously wrong with them on those good days.

Nik: You can lose friends, and you do get missed out on that loop of being invited out and whatever, because you keep on having to say no. By taking the time to sit down and talk to your friends and tell them what's going on, and letting them know what's going on, just saying, do keep on asking me, do keep on asking us, do just occasionally pop around and have a cup of tea, or pop around and say hello. We might have to say actually it's not a good time, but don't forget us.

Alex: I think it's a really good point, and sometimes, partly the challenge could be, I think people not really understanding what's going on, and I think perhaps the first action that we did together, where we unpacked a little bit of what's often happening with fatigue is actually a great one to send to people to get them some education. But also I think there can be a certain ... sometimes I think it can be pride, in terms of asking for help, and I think also what can happen is people can think, well, my loved one, their situation is far worse than me, they're the one that's in crisis. I need to just pull my socks up as it were, and get on with it. My feelings are not important in comparison to the enormity of what they're facing. But I think that can cause going to be problems thinking that way.

Nik: Yeah, I definitely had feelings of I shouldn't be asking my 70 plus year old mother-in-law to come and help us out in this way. But I'm so glad that I did. One of the main thing is, it gave me the option to take some time out from caring without that guilt of leaving Lyssa on her own, and I think I'll leave that until later on actually in one of my later tips.

Alex: I think also that help could be in different ways, right? Sometimes that help is more emotional, like being able to go out for a pint with a mate and say, watch where you sit. Just to be out, to talk about it, sometimes that help can be more practical, like people helping with preparing food, or helping with

if you need to go out a bit, go off and do things, and have some time away. It can also be, perhaps the help can be financial help. Helps that's just care and consideration of things that are not getting done because all the energy's go into supporting that person. I think sometimes people around a family that are going through something like this, often can feel quite powerless and quite frustrated. I think people are often surprised when you ask for help, it actually gives them something that they can do, which is often received far best than our fear the people will think we're being demanding or being a burden, or whatever else.

Nik: And going back to my mother-in-law. Her help was very, very practical. That's the sort of person she is. I think that's a Dutch strength. She's very, very practical, but by being practical, that was also a massive emotional help as well. She just gave me that extra time and energy to be able to process my own emotions better. And also just as an objective sounding board. You know, there were days when Lyssa was ill, and she was acting out her own emotions. She was angry, she was frustrated at being ill. My mother-in-law and myself would often be the recipients of that anger and frustration. The number of times we'd just sit in the kitchen saying, "Gosh, she's being a nightmare today, isn't she?" And just being able to have those conversations and having somebody to relate to in that way was just invaluable.

Alex: I think so, and I think not being afraid to sometimes be, sometimes people are very sensitive, and they can see what's needed and what would be supportive. Other times just being quite prescriptive I think, and not being afraid to actually, the thing that would be most helpful right now is that this person I'm caring for is on this really restrictive diet, and it's actually taking quite a lot of time to prepare that food. If once or twice a week you could cook up a bunch of stuff, following this recipe. I remember one of the kids in our eldest daughter's class had leukemia a couple of years ago. It was obviously a enormous, always a difficult time for the family, and we're actually that close to the family. We lived nearest in terms of location. My wife ended up having some conversations with the mum, and basically figured out the thing that they really wanted was really good, healthy food. And they were Greek by background, so Greek influenced food they particularly liked.

Alex: It was actually a real joy for my wife to be able to a couple times a week, turn up with a big load of food that they could freeze some, they could use some, and the fact that we were given something we could do, was a relief. It felt like we could do something. Something actually very small in the scheme of things, support this family. Thankfully ... the boy did amazingly well now and it's an amazing kind of outcome. I think sometimes being that prescriptive and of course the challenge with something like fatigue, particularly in the severe range of the spectrum, is that it can go on for a long time, and

sometimes it requires a dialog with people, and maybe some people are happy do to that for a month, then they've got their own life they're dealing with. So perhaps it's bringing in different people in different ways. I think having bold, honest, transparent conversations around that isn't always easy, but I think it is important.

Alex: And it's something as a carer, it's almost like when the airplane's going down, you've got to put your own oxygen mask on first, not because you don't care about other people, but if you don't, you'll have passed out by the time you've helped anybody else. So it's that taking care of one's self and asking for help is really important. Let's come to your next top tip.

Nik: Next up to this. Find things to do together, which sounds really sort of simple, but if one of you is healthy, and one of you is ill, it can be quite difficult and it can lead to a real separation as a couple, and that separation ... it doesn't necessarily have to be massively physical i.e., one of you is up in the bedroom in bed and the other one's sat downstairs watching stuff on TV. There aren't those shared interests. There aren't those shared activities, and actually it took me breaking my leg while, that she'd really come to that realization and that's when we ... we'd just sit together reading, or we'd binge on box sets together. Or we'd, when I was able to drive again, using alternate car, we were able to drive to the top of a local hill that we would've previously walked up together, and just sit up there together. So we had those, we were able to have those shared experiences. It was just really, really important, and brought us back together again, which I think really helped.

Alex: This is one I think can be quite an adaptation for people if they ... for example, I know you guys were very, very used to being active and cycling, and being out and climbing hills together. It can be an adaptation when one is used to bonding through physical exercise or through a lot of social activity, someone's younger, that they're relationships or their friendships are going clubbing and partying, and suddenly you can't even get out of the house. It does take some change sometimes, change in habits and yet there is something that I've noticed that people that manage to do this, either in intimate relationship or with close friends or with family, is also very bonding. Because actually, you're spending, really potentially quite deep quality time together, even though it may not be through choice, and even though one party might be feeling quite unwell some of the time, there's actually intimacy that can be built through that, which can be very precious. I've heard people talk about how a lot of friendships have been lost, some have been really deepened. Same for the family relationships have become strained, but others have also become deepened.

Alex:I know that with my sister-in-law, we have a bond that will last a lifetime, spent two and a half years, barely left our house for two and a half years. And there was endless, endless times chatting and talking and supporting, and we'll come to this on the next time. I'm not going to deny that I was happy when she left. A number of years later, we have a really deep connection because of that quality time we spent together.

Nik: And I think another thing that obviously you can do together, and you will do together, is researching and looking into the illness and recovery etc., etc. I think that was an important part ... I think it's important to strike a bit of a balance with that, and I think that's something that ... and I was talking to Lyssa about this this morning. I feel that's something we did quite well. We didn't necessarily identify ourselves or label ourselves as somebody with fatigue and a carer. And I think that was quite important in maintaining Lyssa's own identity and our identity as a couple. So this was a phase in our lives, it isn't a sticking point that we were going to move through this and we were going to move on. Yeah, we did miss, or I would look at the work Lyssa was doing with the clinic, I would look at the processes, and how I could help her with those. But we didn't become obsessed about it. I wasn't asked to focus.

Alex:Yes, and I think if one finds themselves in a role where they end up becoming quite deeply involved in that physically if someone is potentially bedbound for periods of time, one is doing a lot of things in a caring role, which are quite significantly for a time, change the dynamic of a relationship, I think it's then also important that the people find ways to also connect as ... if it's an intimate relationship, as lovers and partners, or as friends, or as family, so it's trying to boundary and somewhat compartmentalize it, so you can still maintain the ultimate connection even though for that period of time, some of those ... there are times you have to shift down on some of that.

Nik: And I think, you can definitely as a partner, and a carer, facilitate recovery, but you can't fix them. And you can waste an awful lot of energy trying to do that, and the mess of rushing around trying to constantly do things, and I fell into those patterns so many times and I probably still do. There's probably still a part of me that is overly sensitive to when Lyssa is tired now. Normally tired. And that's when those, what can I do? Well, I'll do the cleaning, and I'll do all the cooking. It's trying to avoid going into those patterns.

Alex:I think that's right, and I think that's where cultivating one's own self-awareness in the process also becomes important, and I think that's where if someone's work you've got some health credit for example, you're looking at the kind of manuals, listening to of kind of recordings, the different kind of

pieces that are there, and almost looking at oneself, and going, how does this apply to me, because as you say, if you start trying to fix the other person, you will tend to push them away and cause more distance and more frustration, though it's hard to let them be the captain of the ship with their recovery, but being a really good first mate sort of thing. That you'll support them in all the best ways you can, but understanding that they already feel like they have little control in their life, but one thing they do have some control over is the choices they make on their recovery path, and it's important that you allow them to have that. Let's come on to the next one that you alluded to, which I think is the flip side to the sense of this one.

Nik: I think it's of two parts. It's give yourself space, but to also in doing so, and, being conscious of as well, which it's easier said than done. I think because giving yourself space, that has to be both ... and environmental. You need to physically step away from that caring role regularly, but you need to do that in a way that doesn't create guilt within yourself. You need to give yourself that time and that space. I was good, and that comes back to number one. If you need to ask for help so that you can ... somebody can be there with your partner, so that you can give yourself that space, then that's another reason for asking for help. Because I found ... if it hadn't had been for being able to go out and ride my bike for a few hours at a time, once a week, or whatever a week, or even if it's just as I said, going down to the pub with my mates, so that was just a huge, huge thing.

Alex: And I think it can be easy, as we touched on a bit earlier, to get into this mindset of well, Lyssa can't go out with her mates, Lyssa can't ride her bike, she's going to think that I'm being selfish or it's not okay for me to go and do what I love to do because she can't do what she loves to do. But actually the more that you take care of yourself, the more that you have a genuine smile on your face, not the kind of forced smile, the more that you're in a good place, often the less guilt, the one that is ill feels, because it's important to remember that often when someone is chronically ill, and those around them are supporting them, that can be a lot of ... not to say that they shouldn't be feeling this way, but nonetheless what can happen is people can stop feeling guilty and feeling responsible for the suffering of those around them.

Alex: So actually, the more you take care of yourself, actually you're alleviating that burden on the one that's suffering. But also when they're needing a punch bag and needing to vent how they're feeling, you can take that in a way that you're not so frustrated that you're reacting and flashing back at them.

Nik: Exactly. We also talked about that previously as well. Part of me giving myself that space, it was also almost distancing myself when Lyssa was flashing out like that. I'm just saying, no, that's not really her. That's the

illness. That's the frustration with the illness. And although she's saying some hurtful things, or yeah, that's not really her. And again, we were talking about that this morning, and she was actually saying she would tell herself after those episodes, that wasn't me really speaking. That was the illness speaking. So I think that's quite important, because hurtful things will be said both ways. It's a very stressful situation for a relationship, for a couple, or for a parent and a child. And you've just got to take it little step back from it and be as objective ...

Alex: One of the things that I realized in hindsight with my wife and I and my sister-in-law was that she was with us at the time that we had a newborn baby, and we had a two year old. We were also very much in that don't leave the house taking care of the children kind of thing. In hindsight, one of the things that I definitely would have done differently, is made sure ... my wife and I did go away for the odd weekend or go on a holiday. But most of the time, we were home, which remember, we were in this triangulated relationship that kids would go to bed, I'd finish work, and it would be half past eight, and then the three of us would watch TV together. It was great in terms of bonding and connecting, or whatever, but it was ... my sister-in-law was all best time of day, because A, she often felt the best of the day, but also it was actually the contact. So was that then meant was that my wife and I were in this triangulated relationship ... just my wife and I having our time together.

Alex: If we weren't watching telly, we'd be sitting around chatting or we might a friend over for dinner, but it was realizing that it would have been more skillful for my wife and I to go off and more regularly go out, the two of us, and have dinner, or to just to make sure that we were taking care a bit more of us, than just being in this kind of situation altogether. It would have been a little bit more resourceful at times in terms of sense of handling that. And I think that it's easy to see these things in hindsight and yet at the time, it's very easy to get in, you just getting through each day, and supporting this person and wanting to be there for them.

Alex: But yeah, you really do have to look after yourself and take care of yourself. In some ways, it was easier for me than it was for my wife, because I was going off to work, so I would have the day away. My wife was at home with the kids, and that had it's challenges with it, and it had it's gifts in terms of the deep meaning and the bond of the relationship.

Nik: And yeah, you're going to make mistakes. You're going to say the wrong things. You're going to do the wrong things. And you've just got to get into that mindset of yeah, I'm not a professional, I'm not perfect, and move on. You

can't dwell on those things, that goes back to the whole not trying to fix them. Just do the best you can.

Alex: And as you say, you will screw it up, in a sense that that's part of being on that journey together. So let's then come to your fourth tip. And again, it feeds on from this a little bit.

Nik: Yeah, and that's changing your environment for both yourself, which is part of giving yourself some space, but also for whoever you're caring for. And I think within the course, you talk about environmental change, and environmental tiredness. That really resonated with me when Lyssa was ill, and I thought, actually, yeah. Let's try that. You have to make the judgment call, because they can be far too tired, or feeling far too ill to be able to go somewhere. But occasionally, there were quite a few occasions where, with a little bit of pushing, with a little bit of saying, let's try this. It's worked previously. It's really helped previously, just going somewhere to get change in where we were.

Nik: Getting away from that bed, that bedroom, that sofa, and just, so getting some fresh air, even just going for a drive, or even just go and sitting out in the garden. It made a massive, massive difference. It was huge.

Alex: And I think this just a bit more contacts around us. We talk about four types of tiredness. There's a kind of mental tiredness get when one's been using their brain a lot and they've become tired through that. There's emotional tiredness that one gets through giving a lot of oneself emotionally. There's a physical tiredness that one gets, which it's purest form is much more like if you've been out for a two, three hour bike ride, might get back and it's how your body's physically tired from the exertion of doing that. Then there's this environmental tiredness where you can just become drained by being in the same environment for too much time. And it's a ...just as a simple example, it's like producing this conference. Over the last weeks, I've probably spent about 12 hours a day sat at this desk and so going out for a walk in the woods around the corner, or going to get some fresh air, or going to throw the kids around on the bed or whatever, just that something that just even as simple as that, it's amazing how it just clears one's head and gives a new sense of focus and clarity.

Alex: I think the challenge with which the more severe end of the spectrum of fatigue is that one becomes quite sensitive to changes in environment and so what happens is that people can become increasingly restricted in terms of the environment that they're in, but in a way after a while, that can also become its own source of stress because it's like the system just gets used to being in that and that change can be part of what will help switch the system off. Even

if that is, if someone is fairly housebound, just moving rooms in the day. Moving from the bed to the sofa, back to the bed, back to the sofa, those kind of moves, even at that level if someone's able to that. If someone's completely bedbound, even just changing the lighting a little bit in the room, changing some of the smells, just little subtle things in the environment will help.

Alex: If someone's further down the recovery path and not as severely affected, things that you were describing that you and Lyssa just getting in the car and driving to the top of a hill and just having a view, and having some fresh air. One could take the attitude of, I'm not doing that because I used to be able to run up that hill, or cycle up that hill, it just reminds me of what I can't do. I understand why one might think that way, but actually it's not helpful. It's much more helpful to give a what can I do, which is going to give that shift. And then further down the recovery path, and again not someone that's not severely affected, it could things like going for mini breaks or going away for a few days, even if one is going to a hotel and doing their same routine and resting and not doing much, just that change can be invigorating.

Nik: That was quite interesting you should say that actually, so there were a couple of times fairly early on in Lyssa's ... when she was ... I would say she was recovering, that we did try and go away, and we went away and it'd be fine for 24 hours, maybe 48 hours, and then she would get really strong, almost visceral need to be back home and back safe. I think it was one of the real markers of her reaching a later stage in her recovery, when she wouldn't get that. She would go away, and she would be so happy with being away, and being away from that safety and that routine.

Alex: And then taking this ... that's interesting, taking this back in terms of the carer, it's so important that if the person that you're caring for is restricted in their environment in those ways, that making sure that you don't then almost just by default become living on the same restrictions of getting to different places. If we go back to point one of asking for help, if you can get that week handled, that week or that even three hours, whatever it may be, just to go and be at different places and that will give one new energy, new life, new perspective, which will come back and only generally be positive in terms of support that person.

Nik: I think this was very particular to us, but I think actually one of the key moments in Lyssa's recovery, one of the key decisions we made was to actually move house. Because we loved our old house, and we loved the village that we lived in, we only live about two miles away now. She really came to associate that house with being ill and needed that sort of fresh start.

Alex: Yeah, I think sometimes ... and I know that my sister-in-law, that there were times where she would go and stay with family and that other members of the family, and then when she recovered to the point which she was able to move out, that was a whole new lease of freshness and such, and she was finally where she wanted to be, and then ending up living out in the English countryside, being another new source of, and I think sometimes one associates so much of the misery of being in a certain environment that that change is like a new chapter like a fresh start. For those that can't move house, sometimes it's just redecorating or reordering the rooms or just something, just to create a sense of change.

Nik: Just pops into my head now actually, this weekend just gone I was actually down in London at the OHC doing one of the practitioner training weekends, and for the first time, Lyssa came down with me, and actually picked me up from the center, heading back north home. And it's the first time she'd been to the OHC since her 90 day course. And just being back in that environment, she said she found that really emotional. And I think that the impact of environment, just came to me, it can be underestimated.

Alex: It's funny we've been in that same training center now for over 10 years, and it's funny we've had people that have come as patients, then recovered, trained as practitioners, and then come to work for us and then taught 90-day programs. They've gone from turning up years earlier being ill, doing the program, having that experience, then coming back and being in that room as a student, and then coming back and being the one that's teaching. One of our newer practitioners a month or so ago, was saying to me, it was their first time teaching the 90-day program. And they were like, this is really emotional for me. It's like I remember being the one sat on the sofa the first time, so I do think environments have that ... they're kind of intoxicating in a sense. And so remembering to change that and freshen that up can surprisingly effective.

Alex: This fifth one that we're going to come to, and I think it's a very interesting one as well, because it's something you spoke about in the last session when you were talking about your journey with this. And how this has been really helpful. So yeah, it's come to this fifth one.

Nik: Yeah, it definitely needs to be formal as such, so if you don't need to be writings of notes the whole time or whatever, but just keeping some form of diary, and recovery log, and illness log if you want to call it. Just so as much as anything else, you for your own sanity, can see that there is progress being made, but also that you can remind your partner that they are making progress. Because the progress isn't going to be linear. You do slip back, so when Lyssa introduces something new into her life, even if it's now, if it's a new ... whether it's starting her teach training, or whatever. That has a

reaction. It makes her sort of tired. She might need to go and sleep for a couple hours when she gets home in the evening.

Nik: And so that can make them fearful that they're slipping back into illness, and it can make you fearful. If you can look back and say, actually when you did that, when you added that into your life, that caused that reaction and then that reaction got less as you adapted to that. You help them out objectivity, and you can say, actually we've seen this pattern before. It doesn't mean you're getting ill again, it's just how this works.

Alex: I think it's really, really helpful. I remember years ago having a patient who was the FD of the first 100 company, and so he had spreadsheets. Boy did this guy have spreadsheets in terms of tracking every kind of symptom and graphs, and averages, and I think he was having spreadsheet withdrawal syndrome, so he had to find a way to use that part of his brain, but there were times that he was overly using it. It was a source of the same anxiety, but used in the right way more often than not for him, it is actually really helpful to go, it's incremental, and I would have noticed it. And actually I am better than when I saw you last month for example. As you say, sometimes you've got these big ups and downs and obviously part of what we try to do is just stabilize the recovery process so it's not too much of a roller coaster, but it's really helpful to be able to go actually this is where I was, this is where my wife was, whoever was, compared to where I was before.

Alex: And I think that's also where without wanting to become the practitioner as the carer, you can move carefully, very carefully chosen one sometimes. You are able to just remind someone, I really hear that you feel terrible, and you're really struggling today, and you know what, today's bad day was considered a good day six months ago, or three months ago, or a year ago, whenever it may be, because one of the things that we see on a recovery path is that over time, what we see is the highs become higher, and the lows become less low. There are more highs and less lows and the highs last longer and lows not as long. So it's like some of us still have a longer way, they'll still have those bad days for a time, but it's seeing them in context. Sometimes we might feel terrible for a day, whereas that would have been ... as I say, a good day six months ago, but it would only have lasted a day is a good day, and they would have had three weeks of bad days.

Alex: Now they're having three weeks of good days, and just a bad day, which would have been a good day. That makes sense. So it's that tracking that and be that with an Excel or Google sheet, or just even just making notes of what some of them do, I think it is helpful.

Nik: I think also, there's a point and with Lyssa, she doesn't even now, really remember how ill she was. And whether that's a protective thing, and whether she will at some point, remember that, but as you say, when she's having a bad day now, it's nothing compared to what bad days were. But for her, understandably, she's fearful if she's having a bad day. Being outside, you having to sleep for a couple of hours today, that would have been two weeks a few years ago.

Alex: You can speak for a couple of hours because you had a really busy week, training at work versus because you went to the post office sort of thing.

Nik: Yeah, exactly.

Alex: So just think as we summarize this just to remind people. So your first one was asking for help, second one was finding things you can do together. Third one was giving yourself some space, the fourth one was getting changes in environment, and this last one was keeping a diary or a recovery log. I guess a question I also have for you, is for someone that is supporting someone on their path, and they just got this all sounds like they change or it's too difficult, or I am who I am, like what do you mean I have to make these changes? Someone's going to be quite resistant to the idea of changing. Is that something that you thought, or what would you say is encouragement to someone that it's possible to go on this journey.

Nik: I'd say, I've changed profoundly as a person. And I think Lyssa did as well. It's inevitable. You will and you will adapt and you will cope. It's just making that adaptation and coping as easy as possible for yourself. I also found that part of my own change ... there was time with regards to Lyssa's change, and Lyssa, as part of her recovery, changed and evolved hugely as a person. And then once she was "better" there was a big ... there was suddenly I felt it almost a sense of, wow, you've moved all of that, what about me now? And that's when I started looking at doing the practitioners course and seeing how I could evolve as a person, and again come together. I think you'd have to accept there will be ... you won't less slowly grow together as a couple at the same time. But there are huge opportunities for coming back together and coming out of it the other side stronger and closer.

Alex: I think it's also hopefully helpful to say that the personal growth is an inherently satisfying process. There's a pride that often comes from it in a good way that there's a sense of achievement, there's a sense of becoming more of who we are en route, and it could be quite an intimidating scary path to start on. But it's a path that often brings a great deal of free and joy and goodness as it were to one's life, and I think it takes a lot of courage to go on that path, and sometimes, those that are suffering from fatigue related

conditions, they didn't choose that and they didn't want to have to go on that path. Same is true when you're caring for someone and yet, there is opportunity in that, and yes, it's at times, very I think appropriate to mourn the things that one's lost and to feel the frustration and the grief and sadness around that, and to remember that when we grow, life also has ... there are things that get better in life, and things that improve.

Alex: And I know that you said in the last ... talk about your story with Lyssa, there were things about your relationship that have become significantly improved. That you've had to grow together in that process.

Nik: Yeah, and to somebody who's ... whether they're ill, or whether they're caring for somebody who's ill, this might sound really trite and clichéd to them at the moment, and they can't possibly see how this could be true, but undoubtedly the us as individuals and us as a couple, Lyssa's illness was one of the best things that ever happened to us. The changes, yeah of being incredibly positive. That's not saying that it was hell. Would I go through it again? Probably not. Am I glad where we are now because of it? Yes.

Alex: Yeah, and I think that's because you've gone on that journey together and that she's been willing to open to the journey that she's been forced into and you've been willing to open the journey you've been forced into and you've worked together and I think it's a testimony to both of your characters and spirits as people as well. Nik, I really appreciate you sharing so candidly. I hope this has been ... I think it has been a really helpful session to people. And I hope the people will act upon some of what they've been hearing here, and if nothing else, at least feel that they're not alone, they're not the only one that's going through some of these troubles. I thank you.

Nik: It's been a pleasure. I enjoyed it. Thank you.

Alex: Excellent.