



THE

FATIGUE

SUPER

CONFERENCE

Recovery story: Help for helpers

Guest: Gemma Hunt

Alex: Welcome to the Fatigue Super Conference and, for this session, I'm talking with Gemma Hunt, who is one of the psychology practitioners at the Optimum Health Clinic who, like a number of our practitioners, has had different stages to her journey with us because, actually, she was formerly a patient. She then did the practitioner training program that we run, and then has gone on to join us as a practitioner. We've covered Gemma's recovery story as part of our Facebook Lives so, if people want to go and check out that, they can do that.

We'll start off with just a little bit about Gemma's story. But, really, what we're going to focus on in this session is the role of the helper pattern in fatigue recovery. We talk about different subtypes and we break it down to the psychology side and the physical, nutrition, functional medicine side. And one of the subtypes on the psychology side is the helper pattern, and that's really the place where we are defining our self-worth by what we do for others. And so what tends to happen is that we tend to burn ourselves out and sustain our burnout by constantly making other people's needs more important than our own, and it could be quite a deep process and challenge to build awareness of and transform and change this pattern.

We thought it'd be an interesting way to explore this would be through the lens, in a sense, of a real story and, particularly for Gemma, someone who's also working as a practitioner, there's different levels to the insights around this. Welcome, Gemma. Thank you. Thank you for joining me.

Gemma: Thank you. It's good to be here.

Alex: Just for people that may not have seen your original recovery story, maybe you could just say a little bit about just briefly your story of how you got on to the kind of journey that you went on with chronic fatigue.

Gemma: Yeah. It was November 2014, and I started with a virus and just wasn't getting any better. At the time, I was planning my wedding, which was

going to be the January, so I had a couple of months before my wedding, was working for a promotion at work. As well as working full-time, I was running a health and fitness thing at work as well, so on lunchtimes, I'd be taking people out running, so I was pretty busy. And I got a virus. And when I first started feeling grotty, I was like, "I know. I'll sweat this out," so I was cycling to work to sweat it out my body and get over it that way. That didn't work.

Gemma: I took a couple of weeks off work, working from home on my laptop as well, rather than actually resting, and it just didn't go away. And I did go back to work, but on reduced hours for a while, but it just wasn't shifting. I did have my wedding, and adrenaline and alcohol got me through. I wouldn't advise that. And after the wedding, I really crashed, and I was like, "What is going on here? I've been like this for a few months now," so I started looking around trying to get answers, badgering the doctors, but they didn't know what to do with me.

Gemma: And I think it was around end of February, start of March, I stumbled across the clinic online. And at first, I was a bit wary, I have to admit. I was like, "Really?" And I was watching the recovery stories, and I was like, "Is this real?" And so I had a 15-minute chat, spoke to people, and I was like, "Okay. Yeah. This sounds good." So I went to the 90-day program in April, and I had some real light bulb moments there, where I realized I needed to stop trying to work part-time, and actually just take some time for me, so I did that. Into my journey, nine months into being off sick, I was made redundant, because the company was restructuring and I opted for it, and then I realized, actually, this is an opportunity to kind of do something different.

Gemma: And I already knew my heart wasn't in going back to what I was doing before, so I started on the practitioner course, and that helped me, along with my recovery, and helped me understand some of the patterns that were playing out because I had a few, and, yeah, continue studying. I remember, actually, when I spoke to you about the practitioner course, I asked you, in my initial chat, "How do you become a practitioner at the clinic?" And you obviously gave me a very diplomatic answer back then because you didn't know if I was any good.

Alex: I suspect it was something along the lines of, "Well, we have 25 students a year. Most people do practitioners, maybe one or two get taken on, so I wouldn't do the course if that's what your heart's set on. That wouldn't be the reason to do the course."

Gemma: I think that was pretty much it verbatim, actually.

Alex:I've answered the question a few times over the years.

Gemma: Yeah. And I did the course and completed it and, obviously, yeah, along the way have recovered, and now living life, and yeah, working as a practitioner.

Alex:And obviously, there were many facets to your recovery journey as we discussed in the Facebook Live, and I know that nutrition was an important part of that and there were lots of different pieces to the psychology piece. But for the purpose of this conversation, we're going to focus primarily on the helper pattern. And one of the things that I think is quite interesting is that, initially, you didn't really identify that as being part of what was going on. You could see the achiever pattern and, from the way you've told your story, I think people will be able to see that you were pushing yourself beyond your capacity and your limits.

Alex:And of course, at stage one, we talk about three stages of recovery, and I can't immediately sign post where, but it will certainly be covered somewhere in the conference, but, at stage one, being the crash stage, it's relatively easy to just say no to everything. I guess, even at that point, you were perhaps not so aware of it because you couldn't do the pattern. But, yeah, maybe just say a bit about there, where you weren't even identifying the pattern as being part of what was going on for you.

Gemma: Yeah. Well, I remember on the 90-day program, I was like, "Achiever, definitely, that's where I sit," and helper, I just skirted over. I didn't even think about it. And then I took some time out, started getting a bit better, really focusing on my achiever pattern, and then, when I started getting a bit more energy again, I started noticing that I was really people-pleasing and that, when I was trying to balance the boundaries, I found that a lot of the energy I was spending was to please other people or do something for other people.

Gemma: A silly example, I have always, when it's friends', family's birthdays, I've always made them a cake and, when I was really ill, I didn't, but as soon as I started getting a bit of energy in the bank again, I was like, "I've got to get back to doing that." And I started noticing these things playing because I'd been paying attention to myself, and I was like, "Oh, what's this? Is this another part of the achiever?" And then it dawned on me, "Oh, this isn't. This is helper." And I was like, "Oh, god, another pattern. Great."

Alex:I think the people that are watching or listening, it's a really interesting point, that it's when there's no energy, you're even a no to taking care of ourselves, if someone's that crashed out. But it's really interesting, as energy

starts to come back and you're really limited in what you can do and you're prioritizing making a cake over have a shower, for example. Those are real basic things for oneself that are a struggle, but immediately that energy's going in to wanting to be there for others. And for people watching or listening, it might not be making a cake, it might be taking the phone call from the sibling that's having a difficult time when you haven't even energy to talk to your friends in support for yourself, but it's making other people's needs as being more important than one's own needs.

Gemma: Yeah. And, interestingly, when I started seeing that I had a bit of a helper pattern, I noticed that, because I crashed a few times in my recovery, and I noticed, even when I crashed and I couldn't help others, I also couldn't accept help and, well, I wouldn't ask for help, but if it was offered, I felt a lot of guilt around that and I felt like a real burden. And, yeah, actually, accepting help was a real challenge for me. It was like you always have to swallow it down and go, "Okay, thank you." Ooh, it was really uncomfortable.

Alex: Yeah, it's another clue of the helper pattern. Helpers are really good at doing things for other and they often really struggle when others do things for them.

Gemma: Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. And then I started to see how much this has been there and just under the radar.

Alex: And as you started to recognize it and you were just beginning to perhaps sometimes prioritize yourself or just beginning to change the habits, and we'll talk more on some of the deeper reasons behind this, but how did people respond do that? Because, often, we have relationships set up in certain ways, and we start to change, that could be quite challenging for those around us.

Gemma: Yeah. And I had mixed. A couple of people in my life were definitely really happy that I was finally accepting their help because, obviously, I was helping because it made me feel good and other people like to be able to do that as well and I took that away from them for a long time. Some people really liked it. Others, it jabbed slightly. You know when people ask you to do something and there's an expectation that you just will, and then when you say, "Oh, well, actually, no," they're like, "What?" There's a bit of shock. And, for a while, a couple of people struggled with it a bit, but the more I stayed with it, they adjusted and actually they stopped expecting so much of me and it became, I guess, a much more balanced relationship after that as well.

Alex: Yes, yes. As I know you know the metaphor that I really like is it's a dance of change and, if we're used to being in a certain dance with somebody

and then we change the dance, really they have one of three choices. They either try and put us back into the old dance, they come with us in the new dance, or we dance separately, we dance a different dance. When people try and pull us back into the old habit or behavior, it's not because they don't love us, it's because they do love us and then they're scared that, if we change, they're going to lose us in some way. But it does take a kind of courage and it takes a certain clarity to see what's happening, to be able to break through that pattern.

Alex: But maybe it's also worth saying a bit about boundaries, because I think one of the things that can happen here as well is that we realize that we don't really have any edges of our needs versus other needs, that we just get consumed by ... Say a bit about how that was for you.

Gemma: Yeah, absolutely. Like you say, the more I started to understand the helper, listened to some of the things on Secrets to Recovery, I started to resonate with it a lot, and it talked about boundaries and taking on other people's stuff and that really resonated. I've always been very good at tuning into what other people are feeling, and that can be something that's really, really helpful, but it can also be exhausting and, I guess, tuning into other people's feeling is fine as long as you don't take them on, but I definitely did. If someone else was feeling stressed, I would tune into that and feel their stress. If they were feeling sad, I'd tune in and I'd feel their sadness.

Gemma: And I had emotions of my own I was working through and then I'm also feeling everyone else's. It was exhausting. And even the TV, for a little while, I had to limit the TV I was watching because I would tune into how the people on the TV were feeling, and there'd a sad scene, I'd be sobbing because I was just feeling it all because I just became so good at tuning into all that and, yeah.

Alex: And learning to recognize that pattern and to put in place good, clear, healthy boundaries is, of course, a crucial process. And for you now, as a practitioner, having done that work, I'm sure it's been rather important, otherwise completely consumed by all the people you're working with. And I think it's a testimony to the fact that it really can change, but one has to recognize that they don't have those boundaries and that they need them and to put those in place.

Alex: And maybe it's worth saying a bit about what, and it may be in some of the stuff we're going to come to a bit later, but what helped you to recognize that and what helped to put those boundaries in place?

Gemma: Yeah. I guess some of the things that helped me recognize it, working with the Stop Process in my thoughts was a really good thing to help me see where I was, because I think we have these thoughts all the time and we're so unconscious of them. And when you actually start getting conscious about what you're thinking, you can see things playing out, and I started to see that I was taking on other people's stuff and I was feeling resentful to some people as well, and I started seeing that and investigating, like, "What's that about?" And I realized that I felt like my boundaries were constantly being crossed, and then I realized it was because I didn't have any.

Gemma: And so one of the things I did was a really nice visualization of a protective bubble and then just really working with that. There's a few hypnosis on Secrets to Recovery again, isn't there, and that's something I went back to time and again, and building up this bubble and thinking of it very much as my safe place and keeping other people and their feelings on the outside of it and only having my stuff on the inside of it. Something else I remember someone told me about was thinking about where my energy was. And when they said that, I was like, "What?" And then I just-

Alex:What are you talking about?

Gemma: Yeah. And then they said, "Okay, just close your eyes and imagine, if you had to say where your energy is right now, where is it?" And I was like, "Okay, well, it's surrounding my whole house." And they're like, "Okay, so it's surrounding everyone in your house." I was like, "Yeah, yeah."

Alex:And everyone on the TV that's in the house as well.

Gemma: Absolutely, yes. Yeah. And they like, "Okay, pull it in to you." And, actually, I've found that so effective so many occasions, just thinking of my energy as me and not spreading it out to everyone else, just a really nice little exercise. Things like this, just really being present with what I'm thinking and working with my thoughts and, yeah, looking at my boundaries.

Alex:I think one of the things that, it can sound so over simplistic, but I think is really an important piece of all this, as you're talking about it, is really boundaries is where is your attention? And if your attention is on everyone else and how everyone else is feeling, that's what you're going to be feeling. If your attention is on yourself and listening to your own body and listening to your own feelings, that's what you're going to be feeling. It can be as simple as is your attention in your head and on your anxiety or on your body and on calming your system? Is it on everyone else or is it on your own heart and your own needs? And that shifting off that attention and retraining that focus can be, obviously, really helpful.

Alex: But I think it also raises another question here, which is that there's the habitual level, like where are we putting our attention and where are we putting our focus, and there's the bigger why. There's, well, why are we making other people's needs more important than our own? Maybe say a bit about what you discovered in terms of what you were really trying to get through being the helper for others?

Gemma: Yeah, yeah. And this is something I had a lot of help from my practitioner at the time with, because I could see it playing out and I knew I wanted to change it, but I realized I wanted other people's approval and I wanted their love. And the biggest catch of this was that it got me it. The people would love me because I'd make them cakes. People would approve of me because I did nice things for them. But it never felt like enough and what I realized was it never felt like enough because it was really conditional love. I had to do something to gain that. And I'm sure everyone would feel the same, to have unconditional love, that's what we all want. But then taking it even a step further, actually not needing external love because I love myself, and that's where I eventually got to, and it really wasn't a quick journey.

Alex: And I think, just to interrupt a second, I think it's important also to make the point, when people hear self-love, the danger of people thinking about narcissistic famous people, they're like, "I don't want to be like that." But what, of course, you're talking about is something much simpler than. It's not a, "I'm great. I'm amazing. I'm the best," and they're like, "Look at me. Look at me," but in a much more simple acceptance and love and appreciation of ourselves, not for what we do, but just for the fact that we're a human being and every human is worthy of and deserving of love. It's a much more realistic and simple and appropriate objective, but it's very rare, actually, that people really have that, unless it's something that they actively realize it needs to be cultivated and needs to be put in place.

Alex: Maybe say a bit more about some of things that helped you. What helped you cultivate self-love?

Gemma: Yeah. And just to say, well, I'm a lot better. I wouldn't say it's there all the time. I still have my moments of, yeah, beating up on myself, but I notice it and then I change it to a much more compassionate voice. But, yeah, I guess-

Alex: You're saying you're not yet a fully enlightened human being. I'm disappointed.

Gemma: Not quite. Yeah. But I guess, initially, it was really realizing how I actually spoke to myself, and that was a bit of an eyeopener for me. I'd heard

of being a critic. I'd done a little bit of work on it, surface level, and I thought, "Yeah, yeah, I'm all right with that." And then I saw it and I saw how intense it was and, actually, it was just nonstop and that's why I hadn't realized it, because it's not like it popped up every now and again and I could see it. It was just permanent, so, yeah, really working on that and looking at where that came from as well on a deeper level, like where did I learn to speak to myself like that? It was some pretty deep work, but then, alongside that, there was things like a meditation practice and doing a loving-kindness meditation practice, lots of EFT on my emotions around all this as well, and actually being okay with my emotions. That was quite a learning curve as well.

Alex: Which, of course, is its own act of self-love, right?

Gemma: Absolutely.

Alex: That when we feel emotions and we reject those emotions, that's an act of self-rejection in a sense. If you're feeling angry or you're feeling sad or you're feeling grief around something, the very act of allowing that emotion to be there and not necessarily vomiting it over other people, but just letting yourself feel the feeling, you could say that is self-love in action really.

Gemma: Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, and that one took time. I really had some beliefs around emotions to work through, and I got to the stage where I was like, "Yeah, other people can have emotions," and it was like, "Well, what about you?" And I was like, "Ooh, I don't know." Yeah, it was a real process. And, I guess, really tuning into how I felt in my body and really sitting with myself because, I think, it's so easy to be distracted from yourself and how you feel and your needs. And, I think, anyone who runs a helper pattern can be very, very disassociated from their own needs, so actually just really sitting with that and thinking, "This is what I need right now and, actually, I could give it to myself and that's okay. There's no judgment there. I'm not selfish and I don't need to feel guilty. Actually, this is what I need now."

Alex: I think one of the things that happens when we have these kind of patterns is that we set the world up to support the belief behind the pattern. If we're an achiever, we design our life that we are being valued for our achievements because that's the kind of people we spend time with. We spend so much energy achieving that, when we do, people must feel awkward not saying we've done well because we're so clearly looking for that kind of recognition. When we're a helper, we tend to end up surrounding ourselves, either by people that need or want us to help them or, at least, people being used to us being in that role. And so there's almost a confirmation bias that starts to happen, that we start to reconfirm the fact that this is how it is because we set the world up in a certain way.

Alex: And so that move from doing that to doing something different, it's a little bit like the analogy that we use, as you know, it's like being on an airplane and it's going down and, suddenly, the air masks pop down and I go, "Well, I've got to put it on my children first," but if you don't put it on yourself, you'll pass out by the time you've got it on your children. It's the kind of thing where you have to take care of yourself to then be able to take care of others. But one needs to gather the evidence to demonstrate that that's true and sometimes, also, as we talked about a bit earlier, the people around us and the relationships that we have, either we change the people in our life or we change the way that we relate to the people in our life.

Alex: As you started to make more substantial progress in terms of working on this through the different pieces that you were working on, how was that then received by people around you, that as you started to get more clarity, and sometimes we can be like a pendulum that swings so far the other way that it's just like, "I'm not helping anyone," but as you were navigating that, how did that go?

Gemma: It went a lot better than I thought it would. I think, like I said earlier, there was some initial bumps when I started saying no, but then, when I was just getting back to health and actually changing where my priorities lied and my focus lied for being much more ... still looking after people, still caring for people, but definitely not at my own detriment, and I think people respected me more, and I actually felt very different towards people as well, which they probably picked up on because I know that I definitely resented the fact that other people didn't do as much for me as I did for them.

Gemma: And, as a helper, you're very good at tuning into people and knowing what their needs are, but not everyone is, but then you think, "Well, I can do it, so why can't they?" Yeah. And then even when they would offer help, I'd still say no because I couldn't accept help, so they were in a no-win situation. It actually, I think, really helped my relationships because I can accept help from other people, I can give help to people, but I'm also really looking after myself. I'm in a good place when I'm doing things for people rather than doing it, but being exhausted and almost resentful with them. Yeah, it's probably made most relationships stronger, all the ones that are worth keeping anyway.

Alex: And, I think, going back to what you were saying a little bit earlier, that the goal of this is ... you still have some helper pattern and self-esteem is something that, for all of us, is an ongoing evolution in a sense, but it's also the goal of this is not to become someone that doesn't give a shit about anyone else and who's just like, "I take care of me. You take care of you." Some of the

greatest joys in my life have been doing things for others where I'm being helpful and I'm supporting and not always in an equal exchange, not that, well, someone's paying me for a consultation, so I will be helpful because they're paying me, or this person in my life, that I have a responsibility so I have to do it, but the open-heartedness of loving giving and loving caring for and helping and supporting people. And sometimes one gets paid in a professional context, other times one doesn't. Sometimes it's a role, sometimes it's just the right thing to do.

Alex: But say a bit about the joy of being a helper, but in a way which is sustainable and is also taking care of yourself.

Gemma: Yeah. I guess, before, like I said, I definitely felt drained by doing it, but, now, yeah, it is just a pure joy and I'm not doing it to get something back. I'm not doing it because I need their love. I'm not doing it because I need their approval. I'm doing it because I actually really enjoy it and I enjoy seeing people happy, and that's a really nice place to be. And I think, so often, working with clients, when we talk about helper patterns, achiever patterns, they're like, "Well, I don't want to get rid of them," and that's not, obviously, what we're trying to do. It's just getting it into a balance where it's not at the detriment of yourself. And to be able to do that, to do something that I love doing, helping people in personal and professional life, but actually still be really well myself and not feeling drained by it and exhausted by it, it's really nice. It's really refreshing, and after years of feeling like I was running myself ragged to get that, so yeah.

Alex: And, of course, the irony is that the more that one takes care of themselves, the more you can sustain doing that. I also think it might be helpful, as we start to wrap this up a little bit, to touch on a bit of ... we started with a bit about the general principles of your recovery story. As we talked about the helper, maybe say a bit about, as you evolved in this pattern, how that related then back to your recovery, any of the stepping stones or milestones or ways that it impacted upon either getting better at pacing or getting better at taking care of yourself, but, yeah, how did this, beyond being something that I'm sure people can identify is super important in living a healthy, happy life, how did it impact upon your recovery process?

Gemma: I guess, initially, in bouncing the boundaries, it was so helpful because I would always do too much to please other people and then I'd crash for days. You can go through that cycle over and over and over again, and I did for a little while because I wanted to keep other people happy. I wanted to do the things they wanted me to do. When I started getting a bit of energy, I remember people being really excited, like "Oh, you can come and do this again and you can come and do this," and I would, knowing that I couldn't

handle it, but I wanted to keep everyone happy because they were happy that I could do things again.

Gemma: And if I'd have continued down that route, I'd probably still be booming and busting and not quite getting there. Yeah, realizing that, actually, I needed to put myself first and, yes, they might be disappointed that I couldn't come out, but, if they really cared about me, they'd understand and, actually, if I spent the time getting myself well, I can then consistently spend time with these people rather than dipping in and then having a month to recover and, yeah, it made me more consistently available to them.

Alex: And, of course, that's one of the things, I think, that's so important here, isn't it, that it's one can see how the helper pattern can cause someone to crash with fatigue in the first place because they're endlessly using up energy they don't have and burning themselves out. Sometimes it's not always the question of what caused someone to get sick, it's what's stopping them from getting well and, if each time the energy's coming back and the body is on a recovery path, one keeps giving out their energy to everyone else, then they keep, as you were describing, they keep crashing back down again. And until you break that pattern, recovery can't really happen because the energy keeps going into others rather than into one's own body and one's own healing process.

Alex: As a final question, what would you say to someone that's watching this or listening to this who is really resonating with what we're talking about and going, "Oh, my god. This is the story of my life. You are, literally, you are describing me," and is thinking, "But this just feels overwhelming. This is who I am. You're asking me to change who I am as a person. That seems impossible," what would you say to someone that feels that way?

Gemma: Yeah. First of all, it's not about changing who you are. I am still a massive helper. I wouldn't be doing this job if I didn't want to help people. My friends and family know that I'm always there to support, but I'm always there to support as long as it's not at my detriment. Yeah, it's not about changing who you are. And, also, for me, it was instrumental having a practitioner help me, guide me through it, because I saw the achiever pattern and I thought, "Yeah, I can handle that. I'm working my way through it," and then I saw the helper and it felt really deeply in-ground in me, so I needed the help the just navigate that, to ease it off. And it's not about doing it all at once. It can be really, really gradual and just chipping away and just putting a bit of boundaries in one place of your life and then at another.

Gemma: And, I think, the other thing of navigating it on your recovery path is that each stage of recovery gives you a different challenge with it. Very

much, stage one, it was easy to say no. Stage two, it was people's expectations of what I could do. Stage three, it was then more work things, so I had responsibilities to people at work, expectations on me that I wouldn't want to let people down. Again, just knowing that, I think, we can often think, as helpers, if we say no to something, the world might fall apart and, yeah, so really looking at that and looking at your thought patterns around that. And then, now, as someone recovered, there's a whole other element to it because, yeah, I'm back in the world and it would be easy to not have those boundaries now because I've got energy, but, actually, I really like those boundaries. They keep me well. They keep me happy. But it's not about doing it all at once. It's working with where you are at the time.

Alex: I think it's that thing of what you're saying, as well, around what you're responsible for because, I think, a helper will tend to make themselves responsible for everyone and everything and sometimes it's almost something we have to remember that everyone's responsible for their own life, and sometimes people are in positions who they're, for whatever reason, not able to be self-responsible, but fundamentally we're responsible for ourselves and, yes, being a loving, kind, good person, but that doesn't mean taking responsibility for everyone else.

Alex: One of the big lessons for me, over the years, particularly in running Optimum Health Clinic, when there's inevitably various dramas and temporary crisis and things that happen, is that my old response used to be, "Well, I've got to fix all of this now and I've got to know the answer. I've got to figure it out." And then you discover, a few times, that you spend all night trying to solve a problem, and then, the next morning, it's fixed itself because for whatever reason. And this is a thing that you start to build, I think, more trust that, yeah, sometimes you have to engage with an issue and you have to find a way to deal with something, but, often, other people will step up and other pieces will get resolved, and sometimes the crisis is simply that there's a terrible snowstorm and people can't get to London for an event and, the next day, the snow's gone, and just like that, you just solved the problem.

Alex: There's a trust, I guess, is the other piece that we didn't really touch and there's this trust that builds and that's really what, I think, you were speaking to there. There's a trust that you don't have to be responsible for everyone. You're responsible for yourself and to do the best you can, but not carrying that weight of everyone on your shoulders.

Gemma: Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. And it's trusting in yourself, it's trusting that the world won't fall apart, and it's trusting in other people as well, that, actually, other people have resources and, if you back away and allow them to find them, they do. I think we can often feel like we need to look after people

because they'll fall apart otherwise, but often, when we give them space, it allows them to grow and that was definitely a learn on my journey as well. I think helpers can almost enable people to not stand on their own two feet sometimes, whereas, if we move away, they find they can.

Alex: And if what's happening as we're attracting energy vampires, that people are just abusing our helper side, we're not the first helper they've found, we're not the last one they're going to find. When you have those really toxic relationships, you do just have to have a boundary and you have to step away. And almost by definition of the very physics of how this works, that person will just go and find someone else and they'll play out the same pattern. But when we're feeding someone else through us constantly helping and them constantly taking, we're not actually helping them, we're just perpetuating a cycle.

Alex: And it's like that thing of you give a man a fish for a day, you feed him for a day. If you teach him how to fish, you feed him for a lifetime. When you're just going to end up having to feed that fish every day, and, actually, it's more supportive to that person and us to put up that boundary and say, "I don't do this anymore. I can't do this anymore. We need to stop. I wish you luck to find another way forwards." And that takes a courage, but it really goes back to what you were saying earlier, that it's having enough self-love and self-respect and self-worth to be able to put that boundary up.

Gemma: Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. And it's tough, but it's rewarding when you get there, definitely. And there's lots of little rewards on the way as well.

Alex: Yeah. Gemma, thank you so much. I think that's been really helpful, I hope it's been really helpful, input for people and I think it's one that a lot of people are going to resonate with. And thank you, also, for being courageous enough to talk about it from the lens of your story. Thank you very much.

Gemma: Thank you.