



## Conscious Life presents

### Life After Loss | Hope In Therapy with Paul

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**[00:00:00] Paul**

This morning, I woke up quite tearful. There was a specific thing that happened with my father when I was younger.

**Alex Howard**

You've become the father that he needed. And what you've been learning to do through this process is to be that father for him.

For me, there's still a piece that I would like us to explore, which is Zoey.

**Paul**

It's been a little while since my last session, so I'm not looking forward to seeing Alex on Friday.

**Alex Howard**

All right. You want to do it?

**Paul**

Yeah.

**Alex Howard**

Before the episode starts, I just wanted to say that what you're about to watch is real therapy. Sessions have been edited down, but everything you are seeing is raw and unscripted. Please be aware that at times there is strong language and there are themes of trauma and suicide throughout. This is Paul's final episode. If you haven't watched the first 3 episodes, go back and do that first.

**[00:01:13]**

Last time, Paul and I explored what's blocking him from fully feeling his emotions, and we discovered that underneath his grief are feelings of anger and resentment that he is trying to repress. The problem is we can't feel selectively. What's happening right now?

**Paul**

Just try to keep a lid on it.

**Alex Howard**

What would happen if you didn't have a lid on it?

**Paul**

I probably wouldn't be here.

**Alex Howard**

To try and shift some of the anger that Paul was holding onto, I took him out of the therapy room to give his emotions space to move, and we uncovered some deep-seated resentment towards his father.

**Paul**

Why did you do it?

**Alex Howard**

We begin this episode talking about how Paul has been doing since that breakthrough session in the woods.

**Paul**

I came out of there really feeling great. Honestly, it was euphoric, but it didn't last very long. I found myself getting fucking angry, a lot more angry than I would normally, over stupid shit, really stupid shit.

A few people got it in the neck, and then I had to apologize because I'm very much aware that if I fly off the handle, there's no excuse for my actions. I've got to apologize and try and explain to people that I've got all these feelings and this anger coming up. Yeah, it's been an interesting 10, 11 days.

**Alex Howard**

To give you a little bit of context on what I think is happening. I think the initial euphoria is partly just the moving of a lot of trapped energy, getting space. But also, I think it sometimes can be the euphoria of knowing you did something that was really scary and really hard to do and like, "Fuck, I

did that". I think there were quite a few moments where you're like, "I can't go there. I don't know what you're asking for. I can't do it anyway. I don't want to do it".

**[00:03:24] Paul**

Yeah, it makes sense.

**Alex Howard**

And the fact that you found your way through that is a sense of, "Fuck, well, if I did that, what does that mean?" But then I think what's been happening as a follow-on from that is what we want to have happen, but I think it's important we give some context around it.

We all walk around our life with a big black sack full of unprocessed emotion. Things that have happened that we didn't process at the time, things we didn't know how to process, emotions that maybe we thought weren't acceptable to feel. For most of us, the lid's pretty tight on that.

Every so often, it opens a little bit and a bit comes out and it goes in again. Part of what we were doing together, in our session in the woods, was we opened it up. That's why it surprised you what came out and the content that came out.

**Paul**

The way I would look at that, my analogy would be my Pandora's box has been opened, all the other shit's flown out, all the really nasty stuff. But there's still a load of stuff in there. And what you've done... I've picked them out and bought them out of the box. It's like, "Oh, okay, what the fuck do we do with these?" Because I don't know what you want me from me. It was like, "Okay, I've got to go and pick that one up now".

That's how I see it. I've picked it up, now what the fuck do I do with it? Then we dealt with it and then, okay, there's not much left in there now, to be honest with you. In fact, I can rubbage around in it. Okay, there's one or two little things that might be like a horrible spider in the corner, but there's nothing in there that bothers me anymore, which is a good thing.

**Alex Howard**

I think then what's happening, the reason why I find with people, an experience like you had is important. It's for two reasons. One, it's the thing we work with. But of course, we didn't go in with, let's work on your relationship with your dad. We went in, so let's see what's there. But it's also what you learn from the experience. Because for a lasting change with your emotions, it's really important that we don't just pack it all back into Pandora's box.

But also, as I know you know, and I appreciate the sensitivity of how you described it, this is not about, "Great, we just fucking let everyone have it then". You still need to treat people, as you know, with kindness, with care, and with respect. But In the past, there were two choices, repress it in Pandora's box, or throw it at other people.

**[00:05:51]**

What you're learning to do is a new way of being with it, which is actually to let yourself have the feelings. That might mean that you're crying and you're devastatingly sad for a while about something, or you're just fucking on fire with anger about something for a while. But if you give it space and you stay with it, it will also move through. It's like a wave that comes. Rather than you fighting it, you're letting it move through your body and through your experience.

## **Paul**

This morning, I woke up quite tearful. There was a specific thing that happened with my father when I was younger. I must have been about 12, 13 because I was coming into that stage where I got quite rebellious. I called my stepmother "A fucking fat slag". He pinned me against the wall and said, "Don't you call your mother a fat slag", I went, "She ain't my fucking mother". That moment, I knew, I effectively lost him, he was committed to her.

I was quite tearful about it. I was thinking, why am I tearful? I remembered the session we did with the young inner child underneath the table. I was asking myself to question what's going on here? I imagined me walking in the room where he was pinning me up against the wall.

And I just dragged myself out, put him in the car, drove him around, showing him his life, what was going to happen. "Ain't going to be fucking easy", I was telling him, "Ain't going to be easy, but I've got your fucking back. Don't worry about it. It's alright. You haven't got to rely on these people". I just pulled him in, gave him a cuddle, and I was sobbing.

Even though it was all quite sad this morning, I'm glad I went through that process of looking after that lad and saying that everything's going to be alright. In a way, you've given me the skills to be able to deal with stuff like that, because obviously, there's going to possibly be stuff that comes up.

## **Alex Howard**

Well, as we talked about last time, Pandora's box is not empty. There's more that's going to come up. What is really touching to me is how you responded to it, because that stuff will have tried to come up lots of times in the past, because it's there and it needs to be processed. But historically, your response would have to try and reframe it into a positive, or just to go and get busy, or to numb out.

The fact that you responded to it in the way that you did is all that I can hope for, in terms of the work that we're doing, because your inner healing and transformation is not primarily what happens in these two chairs. It's what happens in the time outside of our work together. What happens here is hopefully learning the frameworks and the strategies and the ways to respond differently. But what you just described is a perfect example of responding differently.

## **Paul**

Also, while I was sitting there this morning, I was looking at the video that I originally sent in.

**[00:09:12]**

I actually want to go through this process and come out the other side whole because I feel, at the moment, I'm in bits, I'm broken. I remember shooting it, and I remember not thinking, "I'm not going to fucking send this in". I didn't even edit it. I didn't even look at it. I just shot it and sent it off. Looking back at that, all I can say is that the feelings I had then, I certainly haven't got now. I felt broken, I felt I couldn't move on or I didn't want to move on. I wanted to process, and I feel that I've achieved that. It seems to be a purpose to things, which is good.

**Alex Howard**

I think your relationship to your feelings and emotions has also significantly shifted and changed. Just what you described in terms of what happened this morning, that emotions came up and you were allowed to, not just let them be there, but also track what the origins were and what was going on and to actually support the little boy in the way that he needed. Again, what that shows us, it's not just you had some powerful experiences, but for me, far more importantly, you've learned and integrated a different way of responding to what's happening.

**Paul**

I think that, I mentioned this right at the beginning, I didn't feel I mattered as a child. I felt I mattered this morning. I mattered enough to go back and say, "Look, I've got your back, and the great thing about me is I'm very strong".

**Alex Howard**

Also, although it's not how it necessarily always feels, you aren't the needy, dependent little boy anymore. You have the resources of the man that you've become. You've become the father that he needed. What you've been learning to do through this process is to be that father for him.

**Paul**

Wow, that's interesting. Yeah. I look at the way I am as a father, and having a father like me.

**Alex Howard**

Not bad, eh?

**Paul**

I like that idea.

**Alex Howard**

You'd take one of those, wouldn't you?

**Paul**

Yeah, I'll take that one.

**[00:11:36] Alex Howard**

It feels to me that there is... We're moving towards a point of completion of work. I'm not sorry, it's not completion of work, it's going to continue forever.

**Paul**

I know what you mean.

**Alex Howard**

But it's the completion of our work around some of these pieces.

But for me, there's still a piece that I would like us to explore, which is Zoey. Because interestingly, it's because of Zoey that you came to this process. But actually, if you would account the hours of time that we've spent together. It's actually a relatively small amount of that time that we've talked about, Zoey. I think that was right because a lot of what was important in the context of Zoey, was your childhood and how that shaped you and how that set you up.

One of the things that has been sat in my mind for a little while in the work that we've been doing together, particularly since I read Zoey's letter after our first session, was that I found myself wondering, and really this is a question to you, but wondering how I would feel receiving a letter like that without being able to reply. I'm going to give you where I'm going with this, and you can tell me if it's a helpful thing or not. But what I found myself wondering is, would it be a helpful part of your healing process to be able to write your reply to that letter?

**Paul**

I'll do that. It's a good idea.

**Alex Howard**

I wonder about a letter to your mom as well.

**Paul**

Yeah, that would be very touching. That'd be quite a long letter, I think.

**Alex Howard**

It's not like it has to be one letter. It might be something you do a number of times in different ways. But I think, particularly at this point, as we come close to a point of completion of the work that we're doing, and the journey that you've been on with your own heart, and with your own emotions, and to be able to write from a place that is integrating of that. I think it would also help the integration of that.

**Paul**

Yeah. So I got a bit of work to do.

**[00:14:01] Alex Howard**

You've got a little bit of homework.

Paul has made meaningful progress with regard to feeling and processing his emotions, particularly when it comes to supporting the little boy inside of him. But this work isn't complete without closing this chapter on Zoey and his mom. This doesn't mean they won't still be present in Paul's life, but it's important that he moves through his grief and expresses all of his emotions, not just the ones that are easy to feel. I just hope he's prepared to go to that place with me.

**Paul**

It's been a little while since my last session, and I've noticed a marked difference. Even the people that are close to me say, Oh, wow, I've improved massively from where I was. I just can cope with things, and a lot of them old demons are gone, really. It's been tough writing the letters that Alex has asked me to do. Really tough. I wrote them once, and I've rewritten them. It's interesting because I did actually write a letter to Zoey, probably about a month after she passed. It's a very different letter now. Very different letter.

Lorry in the background.

It's been a bit tough writing them letters. It's going to be really hard reading them out. I'm not looking forward to that. I don't know if I'll be able to contain myself, whether I'll be just in bits. That's going to be hard. So I'm not looking forward to seeing Alex on Friday. Sorry, Alex.

**Alex Howard**

When we lose someone that we love suddenly, part of our trauma is the words we never got to speak and the feeling things we never got to share. For Paul to find a deeper peace with his grief, I've brought him to Zoey's memorial so he can reply to her letter from the place he has now reached.

All right. You want to do it?

**Paul**

Yeah.

You alright, baby girl? I miss you so much. I know you can hear me. I know you can. Sometimes I'll sit on the bench, sometimes I'll tend to your garden, sometimes we'll have a brief chat. But it does give me a great deal of solace coming up here. I just feel at peace here. I must be honest with you, though, this has been far harder than I ever imagined. It rocked me to the core, babe.

The pain's immense. And there's many times I felt like joining you. The good news is I'm past that now. I know you wouldn't want me to anyway. I know you wouldn't. I'm sorry if you feel I've not held up as much as you would have hoped, but it's just the way it is, babe. I need you to know something. It's important. I'm going to be okay. I'm going to be alright.

I found it harder because I thought I'd got through to you over the last 10 days of your life. That was a super precious time for me. I know if you had to give me an inclination of what you were going to do, I wouldn't let you out of my sight.

**[00:18:11]**

I felt so foolish. I didn't realize that you'd blagged me. I had no idea. You have no idea what it did to me. Honestly, that was really tough. I know logically, it was for the best, as if it allowed you to pass peacefully. And I get that. I do get that because I would have hated it if it was fraught. I do accept your apology, and please forgive me for being angry with you. I screamed for days, girl, days. I just kept on saying to myself, "How could I have missed it?" But enough of that.

I've decided to allow your passing and grief to stay with me for a while. I refused to bury it. I let it flow, which is unlike me. It was hard as it brought up a lot of past trauma, and that was brutally hard to deal with. I've been very fortunate because I've managed to get help and I've had some therapy, and this has helped me massively. And as you know from my previous letter, I had not been handling it well. But as you said to me in your words in your letter to me, "If anyone can take a shit situation and turn it into something we're fighting for, it's your dad."

I'm in a better place now and I'll be able to move forward with that. And I will do this, but I'm going to take my time on this. You know I usually just jump in there, I work it out as I go along, but this is important. I've had a lot of work to do to be able to move on with my feelings. Mum's death has surfaced, and hopefully you found each other. She would have been so proud of you. I can see light at the end of the tunnel now, that's the good thing. The therapy has helped me heal those old wounds, and my inner child that was desperate for attention.

So in a backward way, you've inadvertently helped me, and it's typical of your dad to find something positive in something so tragic. I've got some really good ideas of what I'm working on. Up until now, I've not been super committed, but it's time to move on now, and stop the self-pity. I'm not talking about your passing here, but my past. I've allowed it to stop me doing things, but I'll no longer tolerate that. I'll be popping in a couple of times a week, and I can fill you in on my progress. It's going to be awesome, I promise you that. I'm going to go now, babe. I miss you loads. Love Dad.

**Alex Howard**

How do you feel her right now?

**Paul**

I miss her. I was a little bit apprehensive about writing about, she'd blagged me, but that was the first thing out of my mouth. She'd blagged me. I was angry with her as well as devastated, but I was angry with her.

**Alex Howard**

But as we talked about, that anger is okay. Feeling angry doesn't mean that you don't love her. It doesn't mean that you don't miss her. It's just you also... And that's part of being in loving, intimate



relationship. It's not always just cuddles and love and easy. It's also the hard stuff as well. I think it's really important that she knows that you're okay. I want her to know that you are okay. Because for her to really, truly be at peace, it's knowing that you are okay.

**[00:22:11] Paul**

She knows that.

**Alex Howard**

We then move on to Paul's letter to his mom.

**Paul**

All right. Here goes.

Hello, Mom. It's taken me a few attempts to write this now, but it dawns on me only this morning why I've been having problems writing it. It's been a long.. I've been going through a therapeutic process dealing with my past traumas. As you know, Zoey's passing was hard on me, and it brought some old stuff back up that's been sticking around. The reason for that is I was too young to understand, and I suppressed all the feelings. Having gone through therapy, it's helped me heal that little Pauly, who resided under Nan's table, you know the one.

There were many times during my childhood, I didn't deal with the situation well. My coping mechanism has helped me forge who I am today, but it would also regularly pull me back, as you know, and hinder any progress that I made. And that got me thinking this morning. I've never had a problem writing to you before, but writing today is from a different place. I'm a man now, Mom, and I'm no longer that hurt little Pauly. I built a great life for myself. I have a strong, tight-knit, close family around me, forged by my own experiences and values that I'd learned from the tragic and traumatic experiences I've had.

And again, another reason for the hesitation is I know I've moved on, and talking to you from this position as your son and not your little boy is hard to let go of. But I know I am now. I'm ready to let go of it. It's time to let go of that sad story that's been held so tight. I'm no longer hurting. But coming from this place is a wonderful connection with you, and one where I can move through the grief of yours and Zoey's passing.

I love you and I miss you dearly. That will never change. Never. It's just how I process. The whole thing has changed. So for now, my dearest mother, bye-bye. But don't forget, I love you. Paul.

**Alex Howard**

How was that?

**[00:25:08] Paul**

The irony in Zoey's passing has, in a way, had to happen in order for me to heal, because I probably wouldn't have done it before, because no one would have got close. This has allowed me to say, "Well, no, I can move on with my life". Not from her...

**Alex Howard**

Yeah, I understand.

**Paul**

But from the past.

**Alex Howard**

And of course, that is the gift of her passing. It's not that you wouldn't do anything to change it, but the truth is you know that you can't change what happened, but you can choose what you make it mean and what you do with what happens. That's what you've been doing.

**Paul**

That view really represents my flexibility, whereas before it was always littered with non-coping mechanisms and running down rabbit holes and diversions. New Dawn. Thanks, mate.

**Alex Howard**

You're welcome.

**Paul**

Thank you very much.

It feels like I've learned to be again, learned to walk, learned to understand all these emotions and feelings that came up. It was so overwhelming at the time. And someone's there holding your hands, saying, "Okay, what about this?", and talking me through. And that journey that he took me on was rehabilitation. That's what it feels like. Rehabilitation. Back into... We're going to push you in, get you to where you need to be, and then, Okay, we're here now. I can let go of it, and you can carry on.

**Music**

It's just the beginning. We'll chase the sky, watch us shine.

**Alex Howard**

Life can be brutal. Life can be more painful than we can imagine. For Paul, his worst nightmare came to life. When we're faced with our greatest fear, pain beyond what we can imagine, we have to find the courage to keep stepping forwards one step at a time.

**[00:27:47]**

Courage isn't the absence of being afraid. Courage is the next step that we take despite the fact that we think that we can't. And then we find our hope. We find our hope one step at a time. The hope that we may get through to the other side, the hope that things can be different, the hope that we can be different. And we can. You can.

And that is Paul's message for all of us.

### **Music**

We'll chase the sky, watch us shine. It's in my eyes, burning bright. It's just the beginning. We'll chase the sky, watch us shine. It's in our eyes burning bright. It's just the beginning.

### **Paul**

How was that summing up?

### **Oliver**

I think that was so beautiful, to be honest.

### **Alex Howard**

If you've been inspired by Paul's story and you want to go on your own transformational journey, I'd love to have the opportunity to work with you directly. I'm super excited to be launching a brand new program, the Awakening Program.

It's a three-month journey, which at the heart of it is a three-day in-person workshop with a live stream option, where you're ultimately going to learn how to heal the impacts of your past, to create your future the way that you want it, and then to learn to truly live in the gifts and the joys of the present moment.

To find out more about the Awakening Program, you can go to [www.alexhoward.com/awakening](http://www.alexhoward.com/awakening).