

Project: 'Reflections of trauma, challenges, and healing: An oral history'

Respondent: Paul
 Year of Birth: 1971
 Age: xx
 Connection to project: Respondent
 Date of Interview: The 5th August 2022
 Interviewer: Indira Pole
 Recording Agreement: Yes
 Information & Consent: Yes
 Photographic Images: No (Number of: 0)
 Length of Interview: 48 minutes and 30 seconds.
 Location of Interview: East Kirkintilloch
 Recording Equipment: Zoom H4n (internal mics)



Time (from: mins/secs)	Description	Transcribed Extract (from- to: mins/secs)
0.53	Respondent states that he was born in Glasgow and when he was a year and a half old his family moved to Liberia, West Africa where they lived until there was a military coup and the family felt it was no longer safe for them and they returned to Glasgow. The respondent was aged nine at the time and lived with his father mother and sister.	
	"When I came home and growing up in Africa and I came back to Scotland and everything was new to me. And I didn't fit in. I felt, you know, that everything was different. And I, kind of, went from being very active and happy and outside all the time...And, I stayed in the house all the time. And at that age I, kind of, used food... I over ate because I was unhappy. You know...And that was the, kind of, start of my childhood; the first half. Up to about nine or ten or so."	1.27-2.04
2.05	Interviewer asks the respondent about any happy memories that he has from childhood.	
	"There were a lot of happy memories in Africa. Yeah, a couple of bad ones but a lot of happy ones. Yeah, I was for the most part happy over there. I mean...Yeah, because the company my Dad worked for in Africa...Because my school...There was kids from all over the world. Germany, American, Italian, the UK. And we were all in the same class together. So I mean it was...I didn't know any different at that age. To me that was normal but it was just so different you know and yeah..."	2.12-2.47
2.48	Interviewer asks the respondent about his family relationship.	
3.54	Respondent replies that his family do talk and meet up however the respondent said that they do not show affection. He says he is not saying he was deprived. Respondent said he had happy times in Africa with his friends and his best friend his dog.	

4.18	Interviewer asks the respondent about the coup in Liberia which his family experienced and whether it happened suddenly.	
	<p>“Well, yeah, it certainly seemed sudden to me. But, yeah, like I say, the country at that particular time it was kind of... A bit kind of chaos...But the particular incident that happened just before we came back; some soldiers from the army held us up at gun point and robbed us. I mean that in itself...Getting robbed at gunpoint which was obviously frightening. The worst thing about in my mind about what happened was that...You know, they’re talking money and jewellery off us, watches and my mother had her wedding ring on her finger. And my Mother’s got hands like me. She’s got chubby fingers and they demanded the ring from my Mother’s finger. And my Mother...And I think now my Mother has anxiety as well. But, she couldn’t get the ring off and she was panicking. And the soldier swore at her and demanded the ring. And she was getting really anxiety, panicked that she couldn’t get the ring off. And the soldier grabbed my mother by the wrist and said-‘Well, if we can’t get the ring off we’ll just take you.’ And my father to his credit he grabbed the...The soldier’s got a gun in his hand and he’s got my Mother’s wrist in the other hand. And my mother grabbed...My father grabbed the soldier and said-‘Let my wife go,’ And the guy’s got a gun in his hand and full credit to him for that. But, the other soldier that was there, and I’m assuming he was in charge, he took the soldier’s hand off my Mother and ripped the ring from my Mother’s finger and said-‘Leave, go!’ And, I was only eight coming up for nine at the time but as I got older I thought-if those soldiers had took my Mother away what would they have done to her? It doesn’t bear thinking about. I don’t even want to think what would have happened to her if they took her away. But, yeah, I mean, kind of, generally happy up until then but that...I mean, like I say, from my opinion, the bit at the end where they were going to take my Mother away. Me personally that’s what affected me the most. But, you know, what if they had taken my Mother away? But yeah...”</p>	4.24-6.58
6.59	Interviewer asks the respondent if he witnessed the incident.	
7.02	Respondent replies that he and his sister and his parents were there during the robbery. He says that as a family they don’t talk about it but he knows that it obviously particularly affected his mother.	
7.34	Interviewer asks the respondent what happened after the soldiers left.	
7.45	Respondent replies that after the soldiers left the family went to a friend of the family who worked in the local radio station and he put this out over the radio warning people to avoid the area.	
8.19	Interviewer asks the respondent what subsequently happened.	
8.36	The respondent replied that they went back home but that plans were made immediately to get the family back to Scotland. His father stayed on continuing to work for a few months but sent the rest of the family home.	

9.25	Interviewer asks the respondent about the return to Scotland.	
	<p>"I mean, like I say, when I came back home. Well it was the year I turned nine. It was just before I turned nine and like...And partly from having a different lifestyle than what I was used to but also because of that incident (getting robbed at gunpoint in Liberia) when I came back home, eight coming up for nine, I didn't leave the house unless it was to go to school. I...From being very active and outside all the time I stayed in the house as much as possible. And like I said, I went from being very slim and all I did was sit in the house and eat and eat and eat. I put on a lot of weight. And from being very active and slim I was now over weight and didn't go out. I think part of that was the change of lifestyle but it was also that incident. And it was my way of coping at that age. There was nothing else...Just eat food. As I got older and into my teens, and that, I started drinking and there was a bit of recreational drug use as well and issues with gambling, you know, and stuff. In later years that's how it, kind of expressed itself in me but at that age it was just eating, you know. I think I used it as a kind of...to kind of suppress my feelings a bit, you know. With food and stuff like, yeah."</p>	9.34-10.52
10.52	Interviewer asks the respondent if he had friends at school in Scotland.	
10.57	Respondent replies that he had people he hung around with but only one whom he would call a real friend.	
11.50	Interviewer asks the respondent how he felt after the incident where his family were robbed and whether it is still fresh to him.	
	<p>"When I recall it, it does feel quite fresh, yeah. I think initially it was partly relief that we managed to get away, but, and also panic. I mean my GP diagnosed me with anxiety and depression. And I think anxiety that big...You know, not being in control of a situation and there's nothing you can do about it. There was another incident that happened when I was fifteen that I'll maybe speak about in a while. But I don't make friends easily, you know, I don't...kind of personal relationships...I've went through my whole life...I'm fifty one now and I've never really had kind of close personal...Things people that...are normal for other people like personal bonds and making friends usually and stuff like that. I feel ridiculous that I've reached fifty one and I don't have those skills that other people seem...It's just normal for them. But, yeah, I don't make friends easily. I don't open up easily. I don't...I kind of missed out on that in life."</p>	11.24-12.58
12.58	Interviewer asks the respondent why he thinks he has these issues.	
13.06	Respondent replies that he doesn't think that he developed those skills as a child. He says that he does want to have close friendships with people in life.	
13.40	Interviewer asks the respondent what his time at school was like when he got back from Africa.	
13.47	Respondent says he came back half way through the school year and as it was primary four most of the children knew each other well. He states that he	

	<p>found this difficult due to his lack of social skills as well. It was also a different system because in Africa it was the USA system. He mentions that he got in to trouble for using the American spellings and had to relearn some things. He goes on to say that he didn't do well at school. It's not that he is stupid but he wanted to leave as soon as he could and get work.</p>	
<p>16.05</p>	<p>Interviewer asks the respondent about the incident that happened when he was a teenager.</p>	
	<p>"When I was fifteen...I was drinking and smoking at that time. And when I was fifteen and had gone to the city centre of Glasgow... And I got myself a half bottle of vodka and a couple of cans and was just wandering about drinking. And I was sexually assaulted. The man at the time I think he was about mid-thirties. And being the type of person he is he's obviously spotted me a young boy at fifteen, drunk and he's taken advantage of the situation. And he took me on a train to Gourrock. Booked into a hotel and he's taken me up to the hotel room and what happened, happened. But, in the morning...And I had no money in my pocket and how do I get home from Gourrock? And because he paid my train fare back I stayed on the train with him till we got back to Glasgow. When we got back to Glasgow we couldn't get away from him quick enough. But, the only reason I sat on the train with him from Gourrock back was because I had no money and how do I get home? But, I eventually got back to my parent's house in the afternoon. And, obviously, when I didn't appear back home in the evening my Father had phoned the police. And so, when I get back home the police are there. And, so, the police where quizzing me-'Where were you? And I didn't want to tell them what had happened. So, I was just making up a story about how I had a drink and I slept in George Square and I didn't come home and I missed the bus. But the police obviously didn't believe me. So, they sent my parents out the room and quizzed me further. And I broke down and I told them what happened. They made me tell my parents which I just didn't want to do but yeah. But, I went down to the police station I don't know if it was the next day or the day after that. But, I was in a room with four other police officers all quizzing me about what happened. And when I've heard people saying that when they spoke about to the police, and all that, it's almost like it happening to them all over again. And when I hear people saying that I understand how that feels because when I was getting quizzed...And bearing in mind I'm only fifteen and when I'm getting quizzed by the police and they're really grilling me. Like, it's as if I've done something wrong. And eventually one of the police officers said to me-'What that man did to you. How do we know you didn't charge him money for it?' But that's what he accused me of doing. I'm there to report a crime. I'm the victim. And he's telling me- 'Did you charge that man money for doing that?' And I broke down and I swore at the police officer and I said to him-'Well, you tell me how I can prove it and I'll do it. I broke...I'm sitting there crying and everything. And he swore at me and told me to shut up. Now, I'm there to report a crime and from that one visit to the police station. I never went back. I never reported...I never took it further. I just...A fifteen year old boy goes in to report that happening to him. And you're shouting abuse and him and stuff; the police. Do you know one of the things about that see in</p>	<p>16.15-20.15</p>

	front of my parents saying...Because, see if the police hadn't of made me do that I don't think I would ever...I would never of told my parents that. I would never even have spoken about it. I found that quite traumatic. Having to tell my parents what had happened."	
20.17	Interviewer asks the respondent what happened to his relationship with his parents after the incident when he was fifteen.	
20.23	Respondent replies that it was never spoken about again. He goes on to describe his family dynamic. He goes on to say that his parents divorced. He stayed with his mother and feels that this was to enable his addictions in part.	
22.35	Interviewer asks the respondent about work and work colleagues.	
22.39	Respondent replies that he was a security guard for twenty eight years so did not have to interact with people much.	
23.19	Interviewer asks the respondent if drinking and gambling were his way of coping with the traumatic experiences he had endured	
	"Yeah for a lot of the time. Not all of the time. But, yeah, I think it, kind of, acted as an escape, you know. I did attend AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) meetings in my twenties...I don't think I'm an alcoholic but I think I've got a dependence and that. I use it as a crutch. But, you know. Yeah, I think that was just my way. The easiest thing to do was to reach for a drink, you know. I did try recreational drugs for a while in my early twenties and I had a bad reaction to that. Some people's systems maybe can't cope with that. I was one of those people...Very quickly after I went down that road it was bad times, you know. But thankfully I went into that and came out of it within six months so, I mean the reaction I had to the drugs and stuff I, kind of, see that as a blessing in disguise because if that hadn't happened I probably wouldn't even be here. If I'd gone too far down that road."	23.34-24.48
24.49	Interviewer asks the respondent if he felt when he was in his twenties that he should leave drugs and alcohol and gambling behind.	
25.00	Respondent replies that at that age he was too wrapped up in himself and he wasn't thinking about the future. He did have moments when he realised things were bad but he didn't know where to turn. He says that he went to AA but doesn't think that he was ready for it at that age.	
25.47	Interviewer asks the respondent about his time with the AA and whether it was his idea to go and if it helped with his alcohol issues.	
25.52	Respondent said at that age he wasn't ready to seek help or open up to other people. It was an acquaintance who invited him along to AA. He went to AA for about three years when he did stop drinking at times but he didn't feel as if he was getting any better or that it did him any good. He didn't seek any support from the NHS.	
	"Well, I don't know if I said it but I'm fifty one now and I just so want to change. I want to find a way of just, kind of, being normal, you know. Just	27.24-28.05

	feeling better...I know fifty one isn't old but I think-How long do I wait then? Do I wait another ten years? I want to change. And whereas before I just blocked everything off. But nah, I feel now while I've still got time left I want to live a life. "	
28.06	Interviewer asks the respondent when he decided to look for support and if there was a particular incident that sparked that need.	
28.10	Respondent replies that it was in the last couple of years and that he can't remember there being a particular incident that sparked the interest. He says that he feels as if he has not done anything with his life and wants to do something now.	
29.28	Interviewer asks the respondent if that was his incentive to look for different support.	
	"I didn't know where to look or where to go. It's when I spoke to my GP and my GP diagnosed me with anxiety and stuff and it was...I think she referred me to somewhere. I can't remember who it was but they phoned me up and then they mentioned GRACE and I came to GRACE. And the guy from the Citizen's Advice put me on to the trauma counselling which I'm doing. So, that's two things Grace and the trauma counselling. That's a great place to start, you know. Because, I think it was round about August or September last year I came to GRACE. And at first I was being my usual self where I didn't open up and I didn't speak to people. But in GRA...Something happened in GRACE that I opened up very quickly. These are nice people. And it's unusual for me that I said very quickly- No, I can talk to these people they're ok, you know."	29.53-30.47
30.47	Interviewer asks the respondent if he is now getting the support that he needs.	
31.12	Respondent said he still feels nervous but he thinks he is in the right place to get the support he needs.	
31.50	Interviewer asks the respondent about the outcome of his addiction in his life.	
	"Well, the kind, of health side of things and the, kind of, missing out on a life and all that. You know, that's a bit of a problem as well is filling up my time. Because, when I was drinking and gambling all my time was consumed with either finding the money or doing what I did when I had the money. It's kind of...Now, it's, kind of-What am I interested in? What are my hobbies? What do I want to do? And I think that's...Part of getting better, I think, is to fill your time up with healthy things. You need to fill that time up with good things. Because if you're sitting there with nothing to do and, you know, you can get pulled back into that way of thinking and stuff. You know, I need to fill up my time with healthy things and. you know, my walking group. My walking group rates as a good thing. I know GRACE does a lot of different activities but I think the two things particularly that helped me were the Mindful Moves and the walking. I do find both of them particularly beneficial, you know."	32.03-33.19

33.20	Interviewer asks the respondent if he has been able to stop gambling etc.	
33.25	Respondent replies that he has been drinking quite a lot in recent months but the gambling is getting less and less frequent. He had come away from drinking but has gone back a bit. He hopes to maybe go back to AA with a friend he has reconnected with.	
34.40	Interviewer asks the respondent about his hopes for the future.	
	<p>“As I say it’s taken me till this stage to open up. And I’ve met some nice people and other people who’ve had really bad experiences and they’re on the road to getting better. And they’re really friendly as well and I think that gives me hope. They’re nice people and if they can do it then you know...Being part of GRACE and the nice people that I’ve met. That kind of gives me hope. It’s like...Since I’ve started to open up I’ve realised people are just people. Whereas, before I was always negative about what other people were like and, you know, if I tell them something it will be a joke or judgemental or anything. But, by coming to GRACE I’ve realised people...Probably even most people aren’t like that. You know, most people would want the best for you. They’re not going to judge you or criticise you. I think that’s partly where the hope comes from. You know, so...I mean the judgemental thing’s a big thing because you always fear that-if I tell somebody how I really feel or how I’m really thinking then they’ll think-Oh, he’s not right. You know...But it’s not like that. I think most people are good now. I’m starting to realise that. That gives me hope so...”</p>	34.59-36.29
36.29	Interviewer asks the respondent if he has been able to build any trusting friendships through GRACE.	
	<p>“Yeah, well, like I said the people in GRACE; I feel comfortable being there. I mean...I still haven’t managed to make any close friends in my own life but I am hopeful of that. I mean, you know, if I, kind of, resolve my issues and I become more open and outgoing I think that I will be able to make friends, you know. Prior to that because I was so wrapped up and the barriers were down. I’m not going to make friends if my eyes are down and I’m drunk all the time. But I think as the barriers come down and I start to become more open and interacting with people then friendships will develop from there. I hope...I think...”</p>	36.50-37.44
37.45	Interviewer asks the respondent about his views on socialising, friendship and hope in a person’s life.	
	Respondent said if you haven’t got hope you turn to other things, drinking and gambling for example. He always felt there was something wrong with him. He now has hope and is going in the right direction. Happiness is important to him and to have the ability to be amongst other people and interact with them. The walking group has been good for him, walking and talking to people.	
40.08	Interviewer asked if his life would have been different if the right support had	

	been offered.	
40.30	Respondent says he had never thought of that but he thinks maybe that is correct. He says he dare says people did try to help him and he was not close. He says he was never materially deprived but that he didn't find his family were supportive or affectionate. He says his father raised his hand for minor things. He says that he thinks a lack of encouragement can be damaging to a child.	
44.17	Interviewer asks if his feelings of worthlessness and sadness are diminishing since joining GRACE.	
	"Like I say, well, maybe about a year ago or slightly less... But, I'm. kind of, surprised how quickly...I know I'm only at the beginning of the journey but, you know, the trauma counselling...And I opened up in GRACE very quickly and I...It feels, it feels...Maybe I was just ready for it but it feels as if, you know, this last year that something's changed. That I am, kind of, on the right path. And that makes me hopeful. That's where the hope comes from. It definitely feels as if I'm doing the right thing, you know."	44.34-45.20
	Interviewer asks the respondent if he will continue with GRACE.	
45.35	The respondent replies that he absolutely will. The sense of belonging and sharing of experiences at GRACE are important to him.	
46.22	Interviewer asked the respondent about his hopes for the addiction problems he still has.	
	"Like I said, the friend that I am in contact with I have been back to a couple of meetings with him and I think that that's going to continue. And, like I say, I used to go to school with the bloke and I know him, kind of, reasonably well and I think I can open up to him so...I mean he's got a lot...He's been sober quite a while and he's got a lot of experience and I think if I do open up to him he'll be able to guide me the right way. Point me to the right...The programme and doing the right things and how to stay safe and stuff. I think he'll...Yeah."	46.54-47.33
47.10	Interviewer asks the respondent what he thinks the value of peer support is.	
	"Yeah, I mean, all through my drinking and my gambling I did have acquaintances. People that I spent time with but they were all doing the same thing as me. And so they weren't friends they were just somebody...company to drink with or company to gamble with. So they weren't really friends. But, yeah, I mean that's an important part of it all. Like I say, I think at heart underneath it all I am quite a people person and I want to have, you know, kind of real friends. And do the things that I feel that I've missed out on in life. Just to be happy and just to do normal things. And, kind of, change how I feel. Change how I behave as well."	47.30-48.25
	Interviewer thanked the respondent for sharing his memories with the project.	



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