If someone had told me 20 years ago that I’d have been mentally strong enough to appear on a gameshow, I never would’ve believed it in a million years. You see, at that time, just the thought of meeting up with friends filled me with anxiety. I had also been suffering with depression from the age of 19, something which started before I was due to move away from home for university.

I recently gained the courage to open up about this and share my story in order to raise money for Hull and East Yorkshire Mind. A friend from university had just shared, on social media, some photos from our time there and looking at them brought it all back for me. I have never looked back at my time at university with happy memories, in fact, I have always tried to not think about it and I literally have one pack of photos from the three years I spent there, which I never look at. University is supposed to be a place where you not only go to learn, but to also meet new friends and have a great social life but for me it was a place where I could hide my depression from friends and family. All those new people that I met, had no idea what I was like before the depression set in so it made my life easier in that I didn’t need to try and be the old me, however, this is what I was desperate to be so the internal struggle was shear hell. Three years of my life where I was supposed to be having fun and the best time have my life was instead, for me, a struggle to get through every day. I was so deeply unhappy but did not know why, something had suddenly triggered in my mind and it had started, and no matter what I did, I just couldn’t get out of it. I remember doing things like listening to the music that had previously made me euphoric, in an attempt to make myself “snap out of it”, it didn’t come close. Even now when I listen to the album Be Here Now by Oasis, it brings the memories back of me trying to do this and I will forever associate those songs with the shameful feelings I had of being depressed. Whenever I went out, I drank copious amounts of alcohol as it was the only way I could fake enjoying myself and escape what was really going on in my mind. It got to a point where I could no longer cope with the feeling of being so deeply unhappy, and wanting to escape the feelings and thoughts of my own mind every second of every day, when I made the decision to see a doctor about it. I remember feeling so embarrassed to do this but it was the only way forward as far as I could see, I needed some help, and back then there wasn’t that many options for help with mental health out there. Mental health was not spoken about like it is today and there was a great deal of stigma around it. The internet had only recently been invented but even then, it was only accessible through the university library. Mobile phones still only existed in the form of bricks that businessmen carried, so we didn’t even have the forms of communication that we have nowadays which make help more readily available. I was depressed, lonely and isolated and no one had any idea. I took the anti-depressants which the doctor prescribed and also went for a 6 session bout of counselling, I would say it helped to speak to someone about how I’d been feeling all that time but it didn’t bring me out of my depression. I continued to take the medication even after leaving university.

I’m not sure how or when I could think to myself “I am no longer depressed”, but it was a battle that I eventually won. I now feel strong enough to share my story in the hope that it will help others out there who are going through a similar experience, and also to help others to understand that depression isn’t just feeling sad and something you can decide to just snap out of, it is an ongoing internal battle that you so desperately do not want to be fighting. I count myself lucky in that I am one of the ones who has managed to come out of the other side and lived to tell the tale, because sadly, we all know too well that not everyone does. This is why the work that HEY Mind does is so essential. I cannot change my experience of depression, but we can help change it for others by raising awareness of the need for help for those suffering.

To those out there who are suffering, you can come through it, I am now living my life free of the feelings of depression but I know that there’s nothing stopping them from one day coming back. I ensure that I do things to keep it at bay like exercising regularly and taking time out for myself. I now have a young family and things have been tough for all of us in recent months. I believe that the mental trauma I have been through in the past has made me strong enough to deal with the impact of coronavirus. For me, lockdown was so much easier than the feelings of trying to escape my own mind.

With regards to the gameshow I mentioned at the beginning, I spent so many years struggling to get through every day life, I am now trying to make up for it by doing things I never would’ve been brave enough to do in the past. Being free of depression is exhilarating and I want to grasp any opportunity to enjoy life that I can. I had an ambition to appear on a gameshow, somehow I did it, and am so proud of myself, despite the silly things that I came out with and the simple questions I got wrong. I spent 4 nights in a hotel at the other side of the country, with 23 other contestants who were complete strangers, to take part in 10 episodes for the BBC. Yes, I was anxious but I got through it, enjoyed every second and did not want it to end, something a far cry from my dark days at university and that I never dreamed would happen for me.

You can catch Eve on Impossible on week days BBC1 2.15pm between 13th-24th July.