Dan’s blog.

How the art of professional wrestling has given me an alternative to my reality.

To begin my story I will date back to 2008. That year was the year where I discovered the beauty of pro-wrestling and the WWE. I remember the first time watching it, experiencing it and being utterly amazed by the athleticism and skill of the athletes. It was like watching real-life superheroes! The euphoria of watching and learning the sport only made me want more and more…

My childhood was full of mixed emotions from witnessing my parents go through a divorce at the age of 6, to being diagnosed with Tourette’s Syndrome at 10. I began to feel the need to worry extensively and always think of the worst case scenario. “Will I wake up tomorrow?”, “What pain awaits me?” It would appear as if I was, in a sense, God’s crash test dummy. Being bullied and excluded from the odd sporting activity due to my rare form of spinabifida I had to find something else that would drive my passion and give me a sense of release from this scary nightmare that I was living. One day I came across some kids playing with some trading cards and seeing the expression on their faces, I just had to know what was so interesting. I remember being mesmerised by the attires, the face paint and bright, gold championships. Almost instantaneously I thought that it’s what I want to do and be a part of.

Throughout my life, I’ve always shown to be the maestro of confidence, on the outside, but on the inside my anxiety would only seem to increase and keep a tight sleeper hold on my life. As I grew older my understanding of what mental health was just seemed to turn into my own demons. The more I saw the hidden fear of others and took focus, the more it appeared to grip a hold of me. Always being the happiest one in the group, I began searching for people who I wanted to share my love of wrestling with. My friends were always sceptical on the idea of it and like 95% of wrestling fans will tell you, people always say the same thing… “You know it’s fake, right?”. “It’s just men in tights, fighting each other” (Whilst they sit watching the latest Marvel movie of men in tights, fighting each other) Thanks for the reality check, hypocrite.

Adapting into my adult life it seemed to be all going well for me. I had a job, an apartment, a fiancée and the world at my feet but through the strange elements of the human mind it all had to come crashing down. Within the first half of 2018 I lost my grandma, my engagement fell apart, I lost my job and because of an agreement I made went up in flames, I was in a large chunk of debt. Unknowing to my peers, came my thoughts of suicide. It seemed to be the only way out. I was experiencing very dark thoughts which led to horrifying panic attacks and insane amounts of trust issues. It took me a lot to get back on my feet again (for now) and there are many people I would like to extend a huge thank you to, you know who you are. My mental health has always been something I’ve taken seriously and I try my best to put it first in every sense. I know I’ve made mistakes in life, ‘we’re only human’ as they say. By the end of 2018, I was comfortable in a new job, I had made new friends and I was back on my feet again. It took a lot of hard work and self-development to get back into the state of mind I’d once become so familiar with, but it’s how you push yourself to forgive, push yourself to be better and find something you are passionate about in life. Then came the decision to start at the university and create my own future in business which I’m proud enough to say that I’ve completed my foundation year and finished it with a 2:1. It’s been an extremely rewarding journey so far and I’m excited to move on to the next step. Now I can proudly say that I’m in a fresh, new, happy relationship, spending more time with my family and friends and preparing for an exciting future.

That was my short story of battling depression, it still lives on today and will live on in my memory forever. Right, onto the happy part. Using professional wrestling to help conquer my demons and create an alternative reality to my nightmare. Wrestling, to me, has always been my escape, it’s an alternate reality in which anything can happen at any time. Where else are you going to find drama like a billionaire challenging God to a fight or two guys fighting in a ladder match for custody of one’s son? Not on Eastenders, I’ll tell you that much!

It’s someone to look up to when your parents aren’t there, it’s a second home to watch, learn and grow. It’s the thrill and excitement of your favourite superstar. I’m 22 years old and I’ve been a wrestling fan for over 12 years and nothing has come close to the euphoria of my favourite wrestler winning his first world championship. Believe me, I’ve tried to recreate it. Wrestling has done so much for me and my mental health, It’s introduced my to new people, reconnected me with old friends, introduced me to a new style of music, made me a more confident man and gave me that hope that I’d been searching for. My favourite wrestler was Jeff Hardy. Having a favourite superstar as a child meant so much to me. With my father out of the house after the divorce, I felt like I was missing a role model, someone to look up to and be there for me in any way that he could. We’ve shared emotions, I’ve cried at the losses and celebrated the victories. The sheer anticipation to see what kind of face paint he would wear or the insane feeling of him kicking out of what seemed to be the final pin-fall. Some feelings just cannot be compared and that is what made my childhood such fun.

Being 22 now, I still face a lot of issues in my life and I’ve always tried to keep myself busy, wrestling has always been something I can depend on and I believe it continue to be. I just wanted to share my love and my story with everyone on how professional wrestling helped saved my life. In January of 2020 I was attending a local wrestling event at Tribal Bar on Kingswood Retail Park and I was approached by a local, non-profitable organisation called WrestleCares, they told me their story and I was instantly hooked. For such a lovely couple to combine two of my favourite things into such a great cause, I just had to get involved! So, in February I contacted them through their Facebook page and we scheduled a meet-up, I asked if there was any way I could get involved as I shared the same enthusiasm about wrestling & giving back. The two guys I spoke to at WrestleCares, Andy & Ash, were extremely hospitable and welcoming on my arrival and with some cool ideas and passion behind my speech, I was asked to join in and be a patron to this new, innovative charity.

I’ve been working with the guys at WrestleCares for almost 6 months and even though we’ve had a tough time with the Coronavirus pandemic halting all of our scheduled events, through all of that we’ve actually done some incredible work. It’s all self-funded and we only take donations to try to help fill shoeboxes that we fill and donate to less advantaged children around Hull. Teaming with some incredible charities and pages around our local area has been extremely fulfilling and we are looking forward to another successful Christmas but this time we are looking to double, if not, triple our donations with the help of the public and donations. Andy & Ash are two of the nicest and most thoughtful people I’ve ever had the pleasure to meet and work with. Their dedication to this cause has really inspired me to get involved and do what I can. It is argued that there is a stigma against men doing this kind of work and we are here to change the culture and show that our gender doesn’t make a difference to us doing what we do best. It’s time to show that we are proud and that we care, WrestleCares.

If you’d like anymore information on WrestleCares and what we do then please visit our Facebook page for further details.

Thank you for taking the time to read my story and I hope it has opened people’s eyes the the life that isn’t shown on the outside. We all face different battles but as much as we deny it, we all need somebody.

My story isn’t to collect sympathy, it is to reach out for others. You are not alone.

Please help in anyway you can, whenever you can.

Thank you.

Dan,

WrestleCares.