

Whiteseal interview

KA: Great. I'm going to take you through some kind of boring-y admin-y stuff first um and then we can get started with the main questions (.) um. So yeah I know we've kind of covered a lot of this in our introductory call before but my name is Kiera Adams and I am studying my D Phil at the University of Oxford and I'm looking at the role of interoception in the overlap between autism and various different mental health conditions including anxiety and eating disorders (.) um. This study is part of my wider er research thesis and I hope to gain an understanding (.) um (.) like a deeper rich qualitative understanding of the experiences of autistic people with regards to anxiety and interoception (.) um (.) and I'm doing this kind of prior to any big (.) quantitative er research I do just because I want to make sure that my research is actually addressing needs and concerns of the autistic community rather than trying to like come up with my own ideas first and then enforce that on my participants. Um (.) so yeah that's kind of why I've started with doing these interviews. Um (.) so yeah huge thank you for participating (.) um (.) your time that you've like given up for this it's so valuable to us um and all of us in the lab are greatly appreciative of you doing this.

Um (.) now you have had the chance to have this introductory call like last week or whenever it was um and I know I've also sent you like the information PowerPoint. I just wanted to cheque if you wanted a chance to look over that information PowerPoint again or are you ready to get going?

Whiteseal: I'm just ready to get going

KA: Cool cool. So you have the right to withdraw at any time which means that you can just you know leave the call if you want. There's no need to give a reason for that. Um and you're also more than welcome to take breaks whenever just by letting me know um or (.) you know if you maybe are feeling a bit overwhelmed feel free to like turn your camera and mic off for a bit and then come back you know whatever is (.) makes this kind of this experience easier and and less anxiety inducing for you don't feel the need to have to like justify why you need a break or anything like that you can just take one. Um I think we will try and (.) well we'll kind of pause for a bit around the halfway point and um I'll give you the option of having a break or not. Sometimes our participants like appreciate a break at the halfway point. Sometimes they feel like they've just got into the flow of saying what they wanna say. So it's completely up to you (.um). And yeah if you are uncomfortable with a certain question or even just don't really know how to answer it you can skip a question or you can ask me "can we just come back to this question later when I've had a bit of a chance to think about it?" that's absolutely fine. Um there are absolutely no right answers. As I said I'm interested in your experiences so whatever you have to say is valuable (.) um. But (.) yeah (.) there is also sort of no right or wrong way to answer (.) um (.) and that goes for the way you're articulating your answers as well. So you'll notice that I say like and um lot and that's absolutely fine (.) that's kind of just how humans talk (overlap)

Whiteseal: Oh me too

KA: Yeah yeah. And I think it can be especially difficult with these interview studies sometimes because I'll be sending you a transcript which is the written down version of what we've said and you'll notice how many times in there you see um and like but you'll also notice that it's not just you like it's me and the transcript as well. So just a uh yeah a pretty warning it can be quite a funny experience (.) um (.) to (.) suddenly be really aware of how much you were saying and like. But yeah (.) also if you maybe you know you're not feeling like you're able to like verbally communicate certain things I have access to a uh whiteboard application and I'm just going to put this link in the zoom now (.) um (.) and (.) yeah if there's anything- I mean you could even just like doodle and stuff on here- but if there's anything you wanted to write there or alternatively you can just type some stuff in the zoom chat and

what I would do is just put like screenshots from the whiteboard or copy and paste the zoom chat into the transcript with just a little note to explain that it was like (.) not audio recorded it was kind of uh a different medium (.) if that makes sense (.) Um (.) cool (.) um ((pause)) Yep. Did you have any questions about any of that or anything (.) else?

Whiteseal: I don't think so

KA: Cool (.) um yeah well if that changes even like at any point through the study there's no right or wrong time if you wanna like check in with me or ask me about something. Um (.) and I just wanted to check with you do you have any preferences with regards to communication or anything that you think I should be aware of before starting the interview?

Whiteseal: Um ((pause)) I mean I don't usually – I'm usually once I kind of get going I kind of go on forever and stuff so um I don't really think I'll have an issue with actually verbally saying anything. I do stutter a little bit but I don't think that's- it used to be a lot worse it's gotten a lot better (.) And I speak a bit fast-

KA: Mm

Whiteseal: But apart from that I don't think there's anything really massive there sort of thing. I think that's just kind of it. But yeah

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: And if I need to use the whiteboard then I will do in case I have like an idea that I can like try and draw out. But I don't think I would but yeah I dunno

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: I'll see what comes to mind and I'll kind of take it from there

KA: OK that sounds good. And yeah again if throughout the interview there's something that maybe you think I could like change or adapt or approach in a different way (.) again please let me know (.) em (.) But yeah I think that is all of the admin stuff. Um I just wanted to get on audio recording do you give your uh verbal consent for participation in this study?

Whiteseal: Yeah

KA: Amazing (.) OK cool. Um the first questions are kind of like a bit of a warm up question um I just want to get to know you a little bit more (.) um (.) So yeah I wanted to ask you can you please tell me a little bit about yourself? And this can be anything it doesn't have to be related to autism or anxiety just generally.

Whiteseal: Uh ((pause)) ok ah (.) Well I'm [Whiteseal] ((laughs)) That's a good start. Um (.) I'm 17- sorry that was my dad sneezing in the background ((laughs))

KA: ((laughs)) That's ok!

Whiteseal: He's in the house anyway so just ignore that. Um ((pause)) wh- oh (.) what's interesting about me? I don't know. Uh (.) I like music

KA: Mmhm

Whiteseal: And I play guitar (.) I sing (.) I play a bit piano and stuff (.) uh (.) yeah

KA: Very jealous of that. I can't do anything musical at all. I tried to do guitar lessons as a kid but it did not end very well for me

Whiteseal: Yeah I did music for GCSE but then I decided not to do A Level cos it kind of took the fun out of it a little bit I think. I think it then became too exam-y for me and I was like mm no this kind of lost it- lost it's fun. So I kind of them took that um like academic part away. But yeah (.) um (.) Yeah (.) I love the colour pink ((laughs))

KA: Ah

Whiteseal: Everything around here's kind of pink so yeah (.) um (.) What else? It's weird though because I'm not like, I'm not like massively girly but I kind of am at the same time it's like I'm kind of more like just casual like I've got like tracky bottoms on like leggings sort of thing. I don't usually often wear like dresses and stuff- I like them but I find it more comfortable just to kind of be like in leggings and stuff. So yeah it's kind of weird it's kind of like my wardrobe and then I really kind of like contradict myself-

KA: Yeah?

Whiteseal: because it's like two opposites things you wouldn't expect to mix ((inaudible)) the opposites in like style wise and then kind of clothes wise. Uh (.) What else? I don't really know. Uh (.) I have well I used to slash do have (.) have like an obsession with Teddy bears. I used to have like (.) well I still have them like 100 like of them up in the loft and stuff now because it was like too much and was like all over my room (.) and I finally kind of I didn't throw 'em but I did kind of like tidy up and kind of like redistributed them and stuff elsewhere cos it was kind of overtaking the whole entire room

KA: ((laughs))

Whiteseal: So I kind of did that. Yeah it's all fun and games until like half your bed's completely just gone and it's like mm maybe if you're trying to remove the front there's still like ten in here but like that's obviously manageable and it's not a complete state now

KA: I was going to say even in my uni room now I still have I was obsessed with seals when I was younger so I have loads of like seal toys

Whiteseal: Oh right!

KA: ((laughs))

Whiteseal: I have some (.) I've got a few build a bears (.) and then I've got one that I've had since I was- I've got one just like the normal teddy bear which I have since I was like (.) well it seems like possibly since I was about six months old or it could be that I was a little bit older but it kind of like got damaged when I was like five in the wash and then instead of like one of these normal ones it came out a special one and then it's kind of just been clung to ever since so

KA: Aw huge sentimental value I'm sure

Whiteseal: Yeah yeah. And then it's kind of hard though coz like ohh I can't keep on washing it but I kind of have to but it's like oh well I'm scared it's just gonna fall apart. It's still pretty (.) It's still pretty solid but it's still kind of like I don't want him to kind of disintegrate ((laughs)) but he's ok (.) it's alright. Got a lot of life left in him still thankfully

KA: Good

Whiteseal: But yeah um. So anything else kind of exciting? Uh (.) I have a massive collection of Funko pops which are kind of like the figurine things like there's some up there's on shelves over there got a whole entire unit over in that corner there over there and there's like Stranger Things, Star Wars, Marvel (.) How I Met Your Mother. Yeah I ((stutters)) love all those kind of fandoms and I kind of like got the things and stuff. And I (.) Yeah it just makes the room just look nicer I think

KA: Yeah! Yeah I think any kind of merch for like stuff you're into it means when people walk into your room they have like a better idea of who you are as a person already which is quite nice

Whiteseal: Yeah. It used to be quite bare and then it kind of in the past sort of two years I think I kind of then really like actually like made it my own like customised and stuff. It was kind of just like a bare shell before and then I finally put my own like stamp on it but like eight years later but yeah I finally then kind of did something with it. And yeah and now if you walk into it it's just kind of like oh this is definitely Whiteseal's room

KA: ((laughs))

Whiteseal: It's what you want really

KA: That sounds fab

Whiteseal: Um I like astrophysics. I wanted to go into it but now I think maybe it might be a bit difficult and plus also I don't know if it's going to pay enough

KA: Mm

Whiteseal: Money is an issue everywhere so I'm like mm maybe go into like accounting or something and actually get a decent salary like

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: I still do like astro physical and stuff and it's still I've got like a big physics poster and stuff like that just over there. So yeah

KA: That's very cool. That's very cool ((pause)) And how about now would you mind giving me a bit of info about like your autism journey like when were you diagnosed? How did that change things for you that kind of thing?

Whiteseal: Yeah (.) Um. I was diagnosed well I think relatively quite late literally just under two years ago. So this was June 2021 (.) so (.) yeah it's I guess not kind of I dunno it's not that long ago but it's not like yesterday either. It's kind of like it's been a bit of time (.) Um (.) But yeah I'm trying to think back to when (.) Well I went privately. I was kind of privileged with the fact that my parents had the inheritance money to go privately bless my grandad for that one. Um but yeah so (.) I think my mum contacted the people's (.) they're called DATS they're in [city in UK] um (.) I think that was like the

start of March I think and then I got seen literally in like three four months I was very lucky sort of things that I was diagnosed in that short period of time but yeah it was (.) it was kind of weird because I felt like it was kind of like a four or three month kind of waiting period like actually kind of waiting kind of like just sitting there like not knowing really what to with yourself. That was kind of strange but I feel like I made a lot of these discoveries (.) before that March and I think it will kind of hit me more I think in the November December 2020 sort of thing. And then from there it kind of just built and more things start adding up and stuff I can't actually remember exactly how I kind of really started looking. I think I stumbled across something on the Internet I think it was honestly in Instagram or Tiktok or just some something in that kind of weird random region and then I don't know (.) And then it's like domino just kind of fell and I was like whoa what on earth is this and it was just a very kind of weird chain reaction

KA: Mm

Whiteseal: Yeah (.) yeah I can't even like pinpoint the exact day it kind of like clicked but I think I think I'd always knew and then like I read one thing and then saw the word autism and then it just sudd- (stutters) there's a whole like light bulb moment massively and it was just (.) it (.) it was amazing but it was strange and I was like what on Earth. And then I remember literally after I got off the Zoom call because it was Zoom cause this was like still COVID times

KA: Mm

Whiteseal: I went in for like an actual kind of like in person session but for my parents one was virtual they had like (.) so this was in the final one of like oh like saying like the results and stuff. And then I remember like coming back up here lying on my bed after and just going "yes!" but then at the exact same time I then kind (stutters) of sat there and thought well what on Earth do I do now?

KA: Mm

Whiteseal: In the sense that kind of thing of I don't know where to go with this now and it's like it's all well and good and that's a massive relief and it's nice to know after 16 years that you're not completely mentally deranged obviously. But then it's sort of like what do I actually do with myself coz I think the actual like post services support as well was terrible like I- there was there was nothing there for me at all from school anyone. I think like there was like one thing on the letter recommended which is kind of like I guess more like a family thing but it just seemed like absolute crap so ((laughs)) we and (.) and like it didn't intrigue my parents either I think they kind of just skimmed past that and I was like well I don't even wanna interact with that at all. And then the only other thing that was kind of offered I think was it seems to be that when I get like nervous and stuff or I'm more worked and I'm more kind of anxious like I always wash my hands a lot as well. I think it's like because then like uh (.) I dunno this is when I get stressed like I get clammy and stuff and like nah just clean it off like your hands off then like just clean the stress. I dunno I think it's something like that. So then the only kind of advice I was given ((audio cuts out))
Sorry I think you froze then. Did you catch what I said?

KA: Yes sorry. I was just about to say the last thing I heard before it froze was you mentioning the washing hands because they got clammy um-

Whiteseal: Yes. So the only thing I was recommend for that or for like kind of within that region of stuff to kind of like stop me doing like that sort of stuff was um CBT

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: Then I'd already heard previously like from my own research and stuff in the past few months before that that it doesn't really work or not for autistic people (.) it doesn't really (.) wasn't really that effective. And like I don't (.) like I couldn't really see myself with like being reprogrammed to not do those things cos I've done them for so many years. It was kind of like I dunno it just didn't sit right with me and I was like I don't really want to do that either but ((overlaps))

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: Then it was kind of then two very limited mostly unhelpful options of support so I've basically kind of pre doing this now never really spoke to anyone about anything post diagnosis really at all coz even though my school (.) other than going into like student support, in sixth form that September they got sent like the actual 25 page documents sort of thing and stuff like that they never read it or anything. They didn't care. So and then I wouldn't kind of like-

KA: Such a shame

Whiteseal: they'd give me no kind of like exam accommodations until literally like two weeks before I had the mock exams let's say I just got ambushed like one random lunchtime two weeks before exams. Like oh yeah we just realised and it's like oh time to wake up sort of thing. But yeah

KA: Urgh

Whiteseal: So (.) it's frustrating. Um (.) I'm trying to think of like yeah I don't know. It was just a strange time and then I think also it's then kind of like trying to then tie in kind of like then you realise oh there could be more to this cos that you have like the comorbid conditions and stuff like that and then that's how then I came to discover well one through bit of an invasive way but then one from kind of like a passive kind of accidental research thing that then I (.) I'm hypermobile and then well slash well it's either HEDS or I'm hypermobile (.) I'm on the spectrum somewhere basically. I'm diagnosed as hypermobile but my pain probably could crossover but it's kind of a weird kind of like diagnosis boundary. So I kind of I'm ((stutters)) I'm on there. But it's like people say differently so yeah

KA: Mm

Whiteseal: And then also then I'll see then I saw ARFID as well and then it was (.) so then it's kind of then that thing of ohh these parts tie in. And then I didn't actually realise that I was hypermobile until and this was about two and a half months later when I dislocated my knee getting out of the shower-

KA: Oh no!

Whiteseal: On a Sunday. Yeah I literally was in the doorway took a step in ((stutters)) my room and then my left knee completely dislocated (.) just by walking (.) just by taking a step through a doorway and that was it

KA: So I also have hypermobility funnily enough and I-

Whiteseal: Oh really?

KA: Yeah weird coincidence (.) But I had it once when I had just come back from a gymnastics session and all session my shoulder had been fine and then someone knocked in to me on the bus and my shoulder just dislocated and it was the first time it happened and I was like I've done loads of stuff

with my shoulder today and it's been fine and just someone knocks into me and it just pops out of place it was so strange

Whiteseal: yeah because I was like obviously in the shower like I'd bent down I'd shaved and stuff like that like I'd moved everywhere. So it was like well it's not really like I haven't done stuff today but it's quite weird though because that- I've never passed out in my life- that morning I was standing up and I was um stripping off my bed and like I'm like putting clean sheets on and stuff like that and I was over in this corner in my room and then it's often where it feels like that sort of thing felt a bit dizzy kind of visions gone black. And then it was that morning I thought nah it's fine I'll just keep on going. And I passed out on my own in my room and my head was that close to like hitting like my radiator literally about three centimetres. So I quite possibly (.) almost got concussed on my radiator as well

KA: That's so scary

Whiteseal: It's weird how that happened that morning and then my knee happened literally about 5 hours later it was a strange thing of kind of like woah body crumbled within hours of each other and I was like this is really strange so yeah (.)

KA: Yeah!

Whiteseal: But then I hadn't been diagnosed with POTS and stuff because I don't think I probably pass out enough to kind of get diagnosed. But it turns out that most people actually don't pass out anyway which is kinda funny (.) um

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: And then it's just purely because of like oh I haven't pursued that because is it worth my time of doing it if like I (stutters) I know kind of how to manage it sort of thing like I drink more now a few sachets of salt. I'm kind of alright so

KA: Yeah I think um even getting the diagnosis for POTS as well can be- so yeah my sister has the diagnosis and you have to do a lot of tests that are quite unpleasant like the tilt table tests and things like that. She definitely didn't enjoy the process to getting a diagnosis but yeah

Whiteseal: Yeah I met a friend who actually joined my sixth form from a different school and um we actually had way more in common there and we realised though so she's also autistic she has ADHD as well and then she's also hypermobile and has POTS. So we're like pretty much almost like identical or kind of nearly so. So yeah it was-

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: So I think the person that I think I really spoke to kind of and then like processed everything really was her because then I kind of met her about five six months kind of after I got diagnosed sort of thing that's when we became closer like talking and stuff. So I think it really was. And then she got diagnosed I think about two months after me so like kind of like the August of that same year. So we were in a very similar position health wise mentally and I think then we really bounced off each other and it was really good for both of us

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: So I guess I had that but apart from that I've never really had like a kind of like support network. I guess she was my support network we were each others and that's kind of how we survived year 12 and we both literally dropped out of sixth form within about a month and a half each other as well because we both just couldn't do it anymore so

KA: Right

Whiteseal: Yeah so we're both in very similar situations so it (stutters) was good to kind of be like look this happened and she's like no I'm literally the exact same thing so I guess that was really what helped me throughout year twelve though. But it still is kind of like (.) you're in the dark right but now like you know you're kind of like the alien of the crowd and stuff and it's like that's kind of then like you're then more aware because now you know that like oh I'm definitely different. It's like but then I'm still here functioning in this environment and it's like ohh and it just feels weird. It's like you're kind of then an impostor

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: Because that you're you're trying to kind of continue to fit in but you (.) but you're like in deep cover cause even though you know that you're not normal these people that you know past six years all assume that that you are or think that you're just quiet and it's like oh and it just feels like a really weird kind of mind game that you're that you're playing each day. It's kind of like you walk in it's like uh push on the mask and kind of like deep cover mode like spy mode sort of thing. It's it's a really strange experience

KA: Yeah yeah that's (.) yeah I can imagine. Um (.) Could you tell me now a little bit about your like also like we just talked about your journey with autism (.) but what about like your journey with anxiety? Can you remember when you first started to feel really anxious and how was it affecting you?

Whiteseal: Yeah um (.) I have to think back here a bit. This is a long way back

KA: Yeah take your time

Whiteseal: Um ((pause)) The first time I think people noticed that it openly affected me is possibly about the age of mm (.) eight I'd say cos that's when I kind of got my stutter and stuff that's when that really kind of became a thing was because I was like anxious. And it was apparently because of like what was like bullying as well. So I kind of have I had two bouts that I had like one bout in year four which wasn't really bullying but it kind of was because it was like more exclusion kind of bullying but it wasn't purposeful but it's still obviously affected me. And then another kind of bout which (stutters) is proper like cyber in person it basically was everything apart from physically punching me basically

KA: Oh

Whiteseal: but yeah I didn't get punched. It was everything but that basically so that

KA: Still horrible though

Whiteseal: Yeah so my mum then said a few years like after she said no it was definitely from year 4 onwards that I think you would clearly know just how anxious you were each day and stuff. And then I'm pretty certain that (.) I think then year four was also like the school refusal thing as well that's when that started then as well. So I think it became really bad then as to when it properly started I think it always has been like I ((stutters)) can remember I think literally since nursery since I was about 3 like

it is it's always been there because I've always had that sense of I'm not normal. Like there's something wrong with me. I need to kind of do everything in my power to not be kind of found out and I've literally had that thought since I was three since I went to nursery so I was always so hyper aware of being the outsider and stuff I've always kind of had that anxiety there

KA: Mm

Whiteseal: But it really wasn't until I got to I think about age 7 or 8 it really like started again basically and it was then really visibly noticeable to I think everyone and it was really (.) yeah ((pause)) And then it kind of just got worse from there as you can imagine

KA: Mm

Whiteseal: I sorry I laugh because I feel like I processed it enough in my head over the years and like I've cried it out and stuff and it and it's more like now I don't really get emotional about it I think it's more compartmentalised now. Well I say that but it if I do end up teary at some point in this I do apologise that's not usually- I usually am quite stoic until I'm on my own sort of thing

KA: You never need to apologise for getting teary. Believe it (.) like I've seen it all in these type of interviews and it's very normal to get upset when talking uh about this kind of stuff and even if you think you're normally quite stiff upper lip type person sometimes these interviews can just (.) I guess bringing up emotions that you ((overlaps))

Whiteseal: Yeah because I am quite a sensitive person but I think when it comes kind of comes to myself um like I have quite dark humour like with myself like I'm really empathetic and sympathetic like to everyone else but with me I kind of just laugh at everything or just make a really sort of dark humoured joke about it and that's kind of just what I do and then and then it isn't really til late at night I'm lying there and then it's like oh I think come back and then you kind of feel like crap and then it's like eh but then you kind of have to just brush it off and then in the morning and it's like now I'm back to just laughing dark humour and stuff so yeah so that's kind of how I think I seem to work (.) um (.) but yeah so (.) the anxiety (.) I think once again there was always in my like I was always scared of putting up my hand and stuff like that even just like doing anything actually I thought about this literally really random but kind of also related but literally this came to me in the shower literally the other night and I thought I've got to say this on here (.) um (.) I think I was so hyper-vigilant of kind of not being noticed and kind of going under the radar because like I knew (.) I knew I wasn't normal like I would even avoid like putting my hand up to ask for water and stuff or just going to the toilet or anything like not drawing attention to myself like

KA: Oh

Whiteseal: Plus also what doesn't help is most of the time I was so heavily masking that I didn't really know that I needed those things. But even when I did I'd actively avoid it until like even then was like a break where it was like designated for everyone in the whole entire class to move and to do stuff like that then I (.) then I could obviously slip out and then like be like camouflaged doing it with everyone else sort of thing. But like I would (.) feel immense anxiety around how having to do that and I don't really think until I really got to the age of about (.) huh (.) I don't even think it was until secondary school I actually really stuck up my hand and kind of said I need to go to the toilet or anything really like that because it just wasn't really on my ((pause)) radar cause it's more like oh yeah don't slip out of class sort of thing and draw attention to yourself and everyone's like staring at you everyone's watching you walk out and walk like in like they're watching your every move and it's like I don't want to do that

KA: Ah

Whiteseal: So (.) um (.) yeah I think like e- I can even remember sitting on the carpet when I was in (.) in receptions I was like 4 at this point it was a it was a win- wintry morning and stuff and like even just waiting to hear your name in the register as well like my surname is [REMOVED] so I'm (.) I'm relatively towards the beginning but it's still like [REMOVED] like before me and stuff like that and then even just from that age of four just sit- sitting there rehearsing your like response in your head to make sure like the tone's right and stuff I get nervous about that and everything. Actually that was even in nursery as well . Now that I think about it even when I was like three so that's always been in my head yeah always. And I didn't even realise that til just this second. But that's kind of always happened as well. So I've always had a very I guess strong relationship with anxiety I think we're best friends at this point ((laughs))

KA: ((laughs)) And-

Whiteseal: Cause we've been friends for forever so it's like you know ((inaudible))

KA: Would you (.) would you see your anxiety as something that kind of exists separately to (.) the autism or is it like your the traits that arise from autism like directly cause the anxiety?

Whiteseal: Oh this is actually interesting cause I (.) because I used to think that (.) my autism just was an anxiety. That's what everyone thought it was until I was literally 15. So it's just ohh Lauren just had really bad anxiety so for me it did exist separately because I didn't know I was autistic and then I just thought oh no I just have terrible anxiety and that's (.) that's what everyone thought. So it has existed separately. And then when I first got diagnosed it kind of then was like oh no that's (.) the autism that's the (.) anxiety. But then literally like in like a few months and after that then you kind of like start making way more sense of things like you kind of go through kind of like a second ((pause)) it's not even like a puberty but it's kind of like a second kind of mental kind of like realisation or kind of like processing things a few months after and then it's kind of like then the lines start to blur because then you (.) you realise oh I don't think that was a panic attack I think that was a meltdown but really really fuelled by my anxiety which is why it's like ((pause)) yeah. It's coz they were so anxiously fuelled I think they very well came off as panic attacks which is why until I was 15 and a half I didn't know I was autistic at all

KA: Mm

Whiteseal: because it was like such ((pause)) so fuelled by (.) by that so I guess to me they have existed separately until basically I realised that they weren't and they were heavily intertwined. Literally since I could talk and since like as far back as like I can remember and stuff. So I've had experiences with kind of both like learning oh no that's the anxiety that's autism or like no. And then and then like I've kind of slowly watched the lines blur. So I've (.) I've seen it all kind of thing

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: I've had both kind of perceptions of it so

KA: Yeah that's really interesting. And yeah it's we hear like such different things from our participants but I think one thing that does come up a lot especially with um women and girls is that for so long it was just categorised as (.) an eating disorder or anxiety or something. And then when it gets to some time and they're like mid teens then they're-

Whiteseal: Yeah yeah ((overlap))

KA: given autism as a label. But if you were to describe like how anxiety feels to you how would you describe it?

Whiteseal: Um ((pause)) I mean my kind of knee jerk thought right now is like the heart pounding quite kind of thing. I start them breathing quite rapidly. So those two things kind of come to mind immediately (.) Uh (.) I very much so get quite clammy like I ((stutters)) will start sweating like no tomorrow (.) um. One thing I think I've noticed more recently is (.) it seems to be I think this is a more kind of like recent thing like this didn't used to (.) happen but I think that's because I was de- I was too dehydrated for this to happen but um I feel like now I need to like go ((stutters)) to the toilet more when I was like oh I need to pee but I don't actually I'm just nervous or I kinda do but yeah. I think cause I started actually drinking more water so I'm finally kind of listening to what my body needs that's kind of now become more of a thing so I didn't used to but I think cause I just had like no liquid in me to kind of do so anyway so (.) um (.) That seems to be the main ones I think

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: Uh my (.) mum says that I used to get like really fidgety in the car and stuff like she ((stutters)) could feel my our entire like aura mood demeanour and stuff just completely shift. She used to say as well like and like so like on the way to school like leading up to a panic attack I guess at this point I dunno if they are meltdowns or panic attacks like once again the line blurs. So it's like I think it was it was kind of both. So like she like I get really really fidgety like I'd be moving checking like the time and stuff like that (.) um (.) I'd like be kind of like bumping my knee up and down or like kind of like um yeah dropping my leg and stuff and I'd kind of like be tapping I'd just kind of be completely fidgeting stuff as well so yeah. But so that kind of all would happen at once so like that breathing heartbeat checking the time sweaty just fidgeting like just cannot sit still cause it's kind of like I just wanna like it's like get going get somewhere on time or it's just like I just wanna kind of just move on with my day without trying to deal with it sort of thing I guess like

KA: Yeah and you spoke a lot there about I guess like the (.) the physical side of anxiety. Do- is anxiety more of like a physical feeling for you or are there like thoughts and feelings that go along with it as well?

Whiteseal: Hm ((pause)) Yeah I guess ((stutters)) I didn't really think of inside coz I think like it's always said to me having like external signs that I show sort of thing like I mean (.) I guess (.) internally like I'd get like a sick feeling in my stomach as well so like I feel like really queasy and stuff and then I feel dizzy and like disoriented like not a headache but just really like woozy and like just completely out of it (.) uh (.) um (.) apart from just feeling really like kind of like flushed and panicked and terrified I think

KA: Mm

Whiteseal: Uh (.) and then ((pause)) afterwards kind of like I then just feel completely exhausted. But yeah I've just yeah that that's the main ones that comes to mind. I think it's such a blur when it actually happens I've never really thought about it until now until like actually I've been sitting here asked to be like what actually goes on in your head. But that's what now I think about it that's what I can kind of get from it

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: But yeah I think coz it all kind of just swells up into one big really overwhelming mess it's kinda hard to like kind of like make distinct kind of categories of what exactly it is so that's I think as best as I can get pretty much

KA: Yeah no that's a fantastic description. Um ((pause)) and yeah it sucks. Anxiety really sucks ((laughs))

Whiteseal: Definitely

KA: Great. We're going to talk a bit now about alexithymia and I don't know if I went over what alexithymia is in our intro call (.) um but it's basically a difficulty with identifying and describing your emotions (.) um (.) and we see it's quite common among (.) um (.) autistic individuals um but it's also really linked to anxiety and things like that um (.) So I just wondered if that's anything that you'd thought about before you know do you sometimes struggle to identify or describe your emotions?

Whiteseal: Er ((pause)) I don't think I suffer with it that majorly. Not as bad as I think other people that I know of (.) um (.) But I think sometimes a bit like some- sometimes I'll be in quite a negative mood or like I know I'm kind of like just overwhelmed but I can't really know like which parts of me are kind of like overwhelmed and stuff I can't really find the root emotion or the root kind of two emotions that are causing it. So sometimes I could be like in just a really weird negative haze for like half a day or a day, but not really know why

KA: Mm

Whiteseal: That's not mega common but it's definitely (.) it happens a good ((pause)) say it say about once a month sort of thing I think I'm kind of in a bit of a mess so it happens but it's not like regular (.) um (.) but yeah I mean so I guess a bit I mean yeah I don't really know yeah

KA: I guess it's something we don't normally think about much is it? Especially if we-

Whiteseal: No it's not

KA: Yeah and this is a bit of a ((pause)) tricky to conceptualise question um but when you say think about how you would identify that you're feeling a certain emotion does it just kind of feel automatic to you? Like you automatically know oh I'm sad oh I'm happy or are there things that you kind of think about or check in on to help you understand that?

Whiteseal: Actually I think I should say that the things that I kind of benchmark like physical sensations I like kind of benchmarks sort of things so like when I'm overwhelmed or kind of like upset like I tend to get like a bit of like a lump in my throat and stuff like not the like I'm gonna like cry like quite cause that's I do sometimes and sometimes I don't it's kind of like you know but then or sometimes like when I'm like overwhelmed or kind of sad like my throat will kind of hurt like I've been like crying cause it's almost like I need to shout or cry but then I never do so that's kind of like how I know I guess that I'm sad. When I'm like ((pause)) when I'm like really happy or really really really excited the best way I can kind of explain it is kind of like it's an overwhelming kind of like rush of just every single positive hormone in your body at once and like and this isn't just kinda like something that can last for seconds like it can last like half an hour. Like it's kind of like a it is like a kind of temporary slash semi-permanent high. So it's kind of like someone's just drugged me but they haven't but yeah. So I guess that's kind of how I know that I'm like happy and stuff and then stressed and probably overwhelmed once again links back to obviously I guess the thing like I said before like the clammy hands or then like actually being like sick or in my stomach or like woozy in my head or just completely kind of out of it or dazed like I guess (.) I guess some- sometimes when I just kind of feel

completely kinda like detached and kind of like not really anything I just feel really dysregulated and stuff like I'll just kind of feel completely kind of like out of it

KA: Mm

Whiteseal: I had a weird thing that's well (.) funny just gone where I was driving and that happened and that was a bit of a scary experience like

KA: Oh my god

Whiteseal: Yeah like go- going down this road like 52 miles an hour and I was like I feel completely not in not in my body and that's scary. So I guess that's how I know that I'm probably either stressed completely out of it or just kind of like so overwhelmed but also so busy that my brain's kind of just compartmentalised into a weird kind of dazed box it seems (.) so (.) yeah

KA: That sounds intense

Whiteseal: ((inaudible)) I guess but yeah (.) it's like so when I listen to like music and stuff though like I would get like that kind of overwhelming happy feeling and like (.) and like it's basically (.) it's apparently called like autistic joy because like I think we experience things so much on like so many different levels and like we experience things kind of like so deeply that it kind of is like an up it is a literal high but like but (.) but it's just the way that our brains produce chemicals when we like do something that we love and stuff and it's like. Yeah I guess that's one thing that is kind of like I've kind of been I'm glad that I'm not normal because like I'd hate to not kind of experience the things I love the way I do and stuff because like it's just that feeling and like it's just strange to think that people don't experience those things that strongly and it and it's like I personally love that because it's like (.) yeah it's just really really nice. I dunno

KA: Yeah it sounds amazing (.) I guess it's almost like imagining like the world if you couldn't see as many colours as you do (.) or something

Whiteseal: Yeah yeah

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: Like I hear everything I see everything I feel everything like and some sometimes it's kind of to my benefit sometimes it's kind of more like a curse than a blessing but like I wouldn't change it because I feel like if I didn't I wouldn't be me like I've said this to (.) I haven't said this to many people before but I said this to one to one or two (.) um (.) like if I wasn't autistic I wouldn't be me because I can't imagine me not autistic because ((pause)) like because it's not something you can take out of you (.) like me being autistic is my whole entire personality because it literally is the way that my brain's wired so (.) like if you attempted to take the autism out of me you wouldn't be left with [Whiteseal] you'd be left with some [brunette] shell basically. So that's the way that I kind of think about it like it's not me otherwise. So yeah it can be an absolute pain sometimes and it can drive me absolutely round the bend up the wall and everything but I wouldn't change it because I (.) it's like sometimes I wish I was normal but then there's been times that then I'm like no I don't want to be normal cos if I'm normal I'm not me and I like being me most of the time even though I'm kind of a bit of a chaotic overwhelmed mess a lot of the time like it's me so-

KA: Yeah it's weird, isn't it (.) like I don't think you would ever say to like a neurotypical like ohh if you if your brain completely worked in a different way would you like prefer it? And it's just so difficult to conceptualise isn't it?

Whiteseal: Yeah exactly yep

KA: OK we're probably a bit over halfway now. Did you want to keep chatting or did you want to take a break?

Whiteseal: Uh I think I'm quite on a roll actually I feel quite OK I'll just keep on just randomly sipping water if that's ok I'm a little bit thirsty if that's fine?

KA: Oh yeah absolutely drink as much water as you need. Yeah it's really this is maybe kind of gross it's really hot today and I feel like I've been sweating so much over the last few days

Whiteseal: ((overlaps)) yeah same

KA: that I've been just drinking nonstop ((laughs))

Whiteseal: Me too. Yeah I went out and ran some errands about two and a half hours ago and like I came back and I was just sweating out and I was like it's not even like 30 degrees. But yeah I think also what didn't help is for like the bit of shops that I went to is kind of like you have to get uphill and downhill and uphill again and it was just a bit ((inaudible)) and I think it was more like muggy as well so yeah

KA: Mm

Whiteseal: I kind of got back and I was like oh (.) and then I just kind of sat in front of the fan for about ten mins just to kind of like chill but yeah it's (.)

KA: Muggy's definitely the right word for it

Whiteseal: Yeah it's coz it- it's like grey where I am it's not like dark it's a like bit cloudy and stuff so it's kind of just more urgh

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: Yeah more sticky ((laughs)) I don't like sticky

KA: No neither do I ((laughs)) not my favourite (.) um (.) cool. So we'll talk a bit now about interoception um which as I said in that intro call is like our ability to detect and understand the signals that are coming from within our body so like heartbeat, needing to use the toilet, hunger, fullness, thirst (.) um (.) how hard we're breathing. All those kind of things ((pause)) um (.) and yeah I think the example I gave for Heartbeat on our intro call is that you know you can pretty much anyone can feel their pulse by like holding on their wrist but for some people they can feel it in their chest and some people can't always feel it but like in certain circumstances would be able to feel it (.) um (.) So yeah (.) um (.)

My first question about interception is just in general do you find yourself quite aware of these signals in your day-to-day life?

Whiteseal: Um ((pause)) I think it depends on the situation like if I'm really worked up then all I can really focus on is how fast like my heart's going and like how hard I'm breathing because that's kind of so (.) kind of like detrimental in that in that moment cause it kind of feels like you're kind of dying

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: So that's all you can really think about just trying not to die. Um (.) re actually everything else I think for me what's- it depends cos ((pause)) I think I touched on this slightly earlier is like when I was masking at school like I wouldn't really feel hungry or thirsty and stuff and like I often wouldn't even go to go to the toilet until I literally got home got through my front door and then like kind of unmasked more. And then you're kinda like crap I really should have gone to the toilet like hours ago but I didn't because I didn't know I needed to. Then you're sprinting to the toilet and then (.) yeah (.) and then you realise that you haven't drunk anything and it's like oh that's possibly the most unhealthy toilet experience ever because that was just horrible

KA: Mm

Whiteseal: Yeah I've always been like complained about for years for just not drinking enough like my mum's always in my face about it. Like she's never not said it to me so it's kind of so like "why don't you drink more water?" but it never really goes in and I'm usually quite terrible (.) um (.) So in that sense and then I think one thing I didn't really realise until I was in secondary school was I was like my stomach could rumble but I would never feel hungry. So it so it's like I just thought that my body was just making weird noises so I was like I didn't feel hungry was telling it to shut up and then it wouldn't even like transpire til hours later and then I'm at the dinner table at actual like dinner time and it's like oh I probably should have eaten cos it turns out I was really really hungry and it's like oh but then I've always had a weird appetite anyway cos I can feel full really really quickly. I've always had that but I think that's also a bit of an ARFID thing as well as like I know that at least for me is I don't really have a great appetite anyway I never have done and I discovered that's definitely linked to that (.) um (.) but (.) yeah I think also it's like then the environment I was in like also I think I was so focused on masking like I didn't really feel comfortable eating around people either it was more like ((pause)) Plus also everyone would constantly say that for years to me why my lunch is always like so unhealthy and like why I had the same thing every single day (.) oh (.) but yeah anyways so that explains all of that and stuff. Yeah it wasn't even that unhealthy I mean I didn't think that there was something wrong with ham sandwiches but you know each to their own um

KA: I feel kids can just wanna like pick on each other for like the silliest things

Whiteseal: Yeah like I would barely eat what I had because I was just terrible at eating (.) anyway like and then ohh my mum was complaining so many- for so many years that [Whiteseal] you just don't eat any of your lunch and it's like but I don't really feel hungry because I didn't feel hungry. And then the small bit that I did I then got full so quickly it's like (.) I'm fine. It's honestly quite a miracle that I didn't really rot away from the ages of about 3 well three to about fifteen is at school lunchtimes cos I probably should have passed out about twenty trillion times. Somehow I didn't don't quite know how yet

KA: Mm

Whiteseal: But yeah and then I found that- obviously I started home schooling in September so I kind of left my school on a random Monday at the end of June ((laughs)) last June. It was like the final kind of like school trip thing of the year. It's kind of it was like the a uni kind of like visit thing but it was kind of

like all the unis they came and it was kind of like a big kind of uni conference thing. It's kind of like you go round-

KA: Oh yeah

Whiteseal: It's just that thing yeah. I remember the exact word it slipped my mind. But yeah (.) and then I literally went on that trip I'd emptied out my locker the week before and then that's the last time I went back to school and I literally you know went back after that trip and I haven't been back there since sort of thing. Um I noticed since I started homeschooling cos then it got I was like you know I'm here I'm working I'm doing my own thing that then I seem to kind of realise oh I need to go to the toilet I need to drink because I'm thirsty and then it took me about a month and a half to kind of really like get it in. So it wasn't really til I think like start or mid-October that it really kind of like made me look after myself more because then I because then I started to get my kind of trademark dehydrated migraine headaches which is more kind of like I don't drink, I'm doing work, I'm on screens and it's just like oh now my head is like exploding out of my skull so that I need to kind of sort that out (.) Um so I think then it finally made me kind of drink way more which then helps and then that then makes you then need to go to the toilet more and then my brain picks up more. And then also I actually started like eating a snack and lunch like pretty much every single day or most days which I didn't used to do really at all. So that completely changed and then like (.) I'd eat more. And then it's just then everything kind of then just gets better cos it's like you're kind of fuelling everything so then everything works more and then you're not in that environment where your brain's elsewhere all the time tryna like camouflage and mask and not trying to kind of balance out twenty trillion different things at once because that you're trying to speak in the right tone speak the right speed don't kind of seem judgy don't kind of be rude or seem sarcastic don't kind of have your words like come off wrong and then you're trying to manage the noise of the lunch or the common room and then it's like you're trying to then hear people, you're trying to you know sit properly like not fidget, don't kinda make a scene sort of thing, don't make yourself like a spectacle that then you don't really realise that you have to kind of like actually fuel and help your body function because it's doing like so so many things that you're kind of like an AI on autopilot

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: Or like you're tasked with so many things that nothing else really gets through so it isn't really until you completely remove yourself from that you kind of realise oh wow is this how normal people kind of work or kind of sort of work and it's like yeah it's strange because then it was kind of like (.) oh (.) I suddenly am eating and drinking and I'm remembering that I need to actually go to the toilet and that's strange to me

KA: Mm

Whiteseal: So it was this kind of strange thing of like ohh is this what mundane life is like? Coz I don't really know how to do that but yeah (.) uh

KA: So was it a bit like almost like all of the (.) the pressures and the like additional things you had to think about for the sake of fitting in and things like that were kind of distracting you from your ability to ((overlap))

Whiteseal: Yeah

KA: read those signals?

Whiteseal: Yeah this this once again wasn't just secondary school but this (.) this was like really since I was like (.) four. So like and then I'd always been like a slow eater as well because I didn't have the appetite sort of thing I was trying to eat to look normal. But I can never really finish (.) my lunch like I think I can count the amount of times on just both my hands the amount of times I actually ate a whole lunch I think in my time at school. So it wasn't it ((pause)) it ended up I think about eight times or something ridiculous I don't even know (.) but yeah but then I think all that became worse as in body signal wise in secondary school maybe I think then I wasn't so scared about putting my hand up to like goes to the toilet and stuff cos I think it was more kind of like accepted there or ((stutters)) like people are actually busy in their own stuff. Plus also I think then it's also the case of you know then girls get their periods and stuff it's like oh great then people who actually do need to go out to go to the toilet because then it's more like normalised sort of thing. So (.) so then I still wouldn't go but I would only go if I was in like a desperate sort of girl situation like that where it's like I need to go or else there's gonna be a scene cos then my brain would weight up the choice of having people staring for three seconds walking in and three seconds walking out or don't go and literally have a complete war zone over everything

KA: Mm

Whiteseal: So and I was like I would rather be stared at for a few seconds than literally have to walk round with bloody clothes (.) I was like I'm not doing that. So that kind of was in the logical thinking in my brain which is then what kind of made me the last few times well what the last kind of year of secondary school actually kind of asked to go cause it was more like a survival instinct was like no cause if you don't if you don't do that then you're gonna stick out more because then it's gonna go wrong and then it's consequences that then make you stick out even more. So it's kind of like then a what can kind of make me get seen as little as possible but that means that I'm not going to feel as stressed. So it's kind of like trying to balance out the kind of size of it if your brain is kind of like it's kind of like head over heart but it's kind of not. It's a weird kind of logic balance that you're kind of trying to juggle but

KA: Yeah yeah. Almost like there kind of needs to be that motivation on one side to push you towards

Whiteseal: Yeah. But even still where I kind of had to choose logic and actually looking after my myself I still feel ridiculously anxious stuff like that but ((pause)) it (.) but it meant in the long run I wasn't in a lot of these situations so it obviously it helped out but it's it still was like annoying for me because I don't wanna have to lose. This is stupid. But I did have to I just didn't like to admit that I had to actually look after myself basically

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: Um ((pause)) but then it seems like once I got diagnosed, I think at school like my kind of I guess the way I picked out my body thing was kind of change I don't know it didn't change. I think my attitude then more towards being noticed and stuff changed cause I think I think at that point like at first in the first bit of year twelve sort of thing I was still like as vigilant as I had been like with the don't get noticed stuff like that but then it really kind of then got to kind of like the January February last year onwards that I think I really kind of ((pause)) broke in a way coz like I suffer I suffer with terrible chronic pain literally from end of August 2021 to literally I think Jan Feb April 2022. So I was like I'd come home from sixth form just get into bed and I'd just lie there I just was in agony like every single day

KA: I'm so sorry

Whiteseal: So that was that was bad then that's why then I got obviously behind and stuff I think not having time to process that I noticed and then the lack of support it basically made me kind of break. And then I thought about this the other day as well it's like (.) the way you know that an autistic girl's kind of fully broken and really lost it is when she kind of stops masking stops kind of caring about what other people think of her and and when she kind of does things that like she that ((stutters)) she's never done before because like I then got to the point of my physics teacher was terrible he literally was never in the lessons didn't teach. It was just me and another year twelve. And he would just teach the year thirteens so he would completely neglect us and stuff and then it got to the point where I literally I just walked out (.) well (.) Well I'd lie and said I need to go to the toilet and literally just leave the school I'd walk out. And like if me about a year or so before even entertained that idea I would have thought I would have actually gone insane (.) so (.) then (.) so then I was literally skipping lessons. Like (.) the my tone of voice towards I think like teaching staff like completely changed. Like I didn't give a flying fuck what I said anymore so I did not care. Like I didn't swear at them but like I then had like this very dark humour attitude towards them and all these teachers (.) but my sarcasm and my humour was then taken for like just sarcasm and humour but really it was me genuinely I think having a as close to a psychotic episode you can get. And everyone just kind of thought "oh my god look [Whiteseal]'s got so cocky now" and stuff ((pause)) It wasn't cocky or confident and it wasn't coming out of my shell it was honestly a cry for help and a coping mechanism (.) and yeah (.) and then I think I just really really kind of broke that year because then I realised I didn't really care about these things anymore. Like I'd walk out of class I'd ((stutters)) just go I'd just be like whatever I did not care

KA: Mm

Whiteseal: And for someone that's been so vigilant for that previous sixteen plus years of their life that was weird

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: Coz it's like I felt more like myself than ever than ever but I think it's because I felt so betrayed and stuff and that sense of justice finally kind of kicked in. And then I was so angry

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: that I just let everything go comple- like my gains- I made great great friends I came out of my shell because I was (slightly) unmasking more in school. But because I was like so annoyed and so stressed and so kind of still trying to balance everything at the same time that then I just kind of failed and I flunked and I kind of crashed and burned and then it led to me at the start of June last year sitting in a meeting discussing my future and maybe me retaking year twelve at school and stuff and ((stutters)) that and that's what leads to you screaming "I hate you you ruined my life" to your whole entire school board so (.) That's how you know that you've truly kind of damaged someone

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: It's when (.) when you're (.) a student is sitting there screaming that (.) she's literally lost the plot (.) so (.)

KA: I imagine after so long of having to like repress everything and mask

Whiteseal: ((overlaps)) yeah yeah

KA: that it was kind of you know that negative emotion it builds up and it builds up and it builds up and yeah

Whiteseal: Yeah I wasn't a bad student still (.) I was still really I'm still kind to everyone but I think you got no one else could tell I've I've only realised now that I just lost it I really did lose it. Like so most for most people that isn't unhinged that's fairly normal but for me that was unhinged that that was completely abnormal and stuff like ((pause))

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: It was just very strange it (.) yeah. I don't know. I don't know whether I'm that person now still cause I think that there's definitely elements of truth (.) I think it was completely me. I don't think it was like a complete like psychotic thing but like I think I think it was me but really deeply traumatised me that had been so suppressed that it came out so it was authentic it was just very very damaged me in the driver's seat trying to navigate ((inaudible)) And some parts were good for me like the friendship sort of thing. I think my social skills and stuff definitely got better because I understood myself more but (.) everything else went out the window basically so (.) yeah (.)

KA: Mm

Whiteseal: Sorry that ((stutters)) that sounds a bit off topic but I think useful for me to provide that information a little bit it all kind of links in

KA: Exactly like that's why I love to do these interviews rather than just like giving people questionnaires because there's so much stuff that's interlinked and tangled up I think we said in our intro call like it's just like a whole spiders web of little threads all linked together

Whiteseal: Yeah exactly

KA: Yeah. Just going back a little bit to like the interception stuff and like your body sensations and that kind of thing (.) um (.) in terms of like the times when you can feel these signals um do they feel especially positive or negative to you or are they just neutral?

Whiteseal: Um (.) hmm (.) I mean ((pause)) I don't really think they ever really feel positive I think to me they've all I think they at least always used to be kind of negative cos it's kind of like oh it's tryna just distract me from kind of trying to mask and do my thing. It's kind of like it just gets in in the way and then I don't think my chronically terrible relationship with food really helps with that either, especially with hunger. But I but I seem to have gotten better ((inaudible)) now. Like I think now everything now just seems more neutral

KA: Ok yeah

Whiteseal: Since I kind of started homeschooling helped me as well cos now it's just like no it's fine it's normal it's OK. The only issue now is that then I think that I need to run to the toilet less than a minute before tutoring starts. So that's the only thing is now just trying to run and do that and then yeah cause then it's actually being like saying to my brain like now you've actually got to go to the toilet or else you're gonna not be able to concentrate in your actual tutoring session. So that's like blurgh. But that's not really like that (.) that's just life I've realised now

KA: ((laughs))

Whiteseal: And that's like ok. So it's mostly neutral and I guess with food cos I've started like eating more slash like I've actually started making or like stocking up more like kind of like safe foods or things that I

definitely do eat and I make sure that they're always in the house and like I'm usually terrible with like fruit and vegetables and stuff like that but I've actually had like a recent breakthrough in the past week that if I like put like fruit in muffins sort of thing stuff I seem to eat them ((overlaps))

KA: Yay

Whiteseal: if i put stuff in muffins and actually it works. So I'm gonna start I think even like making more things homemade cause then like I know what goes into them sort of thing I know like the texture and the smells and stuff like it's (.) it's then my thing. So I think that's definitely improved my relationship with food in that sense. And now I think I get either a neutral or kind of like positive reaction to food most times apart from like apart from still the odd time I don't feel that hungry and it is like urgh I've got to eat but don't really wanna eat but that's always gonna be there slightly. But I think that's drastically improved at least since removing myself from mainstream school for definite. I think the same with also being thirsty as well like it went from being negative to like oh actually no it's good cause I want to drink cause because it seems to like just help me like in general like I don't really get spots anymore and stuff because I used to get it well I have a fringe so obviously you couldn't see it but I used to get like so many on my forehead but I thought I had acne but like I didn't it was just dehydration that doing my skin would go completely whack basically. So I feel like I definitely used to feel like they were negative cause they were just a burden and they were in the way and then when I did feel them then I you know freight train so I ignored them. But definitely recently they've become neutral if not then positive like in certain aspects like I'd say cause it's kinda like oh no good you actually are human today you know you're listening to yourself you're kind of in tune which I think is quite nice it's like oh I can actually feel things instead of just being so hyper focused on my perception (.) but uh yeah of my like uh having being perceived or my environment I had to kind of focus on surviving and you know nourishing my body and not having it rot away. So I guess yeah it's definitely gotten I think better so I think it's improved overtime in that sense

KA: That's really good I'm really glad to hear it um because yeah it's always nice to see like you know it's like watering a plant isn't it? With looking after your body like you just see yourself grow and become more healthy

Whiteseal: Yeah

KA: Awesome. I'm gonna ask a bit about your experiences of ARFID now as well

Whiteseal: Yeah

KA: Because yeah although ((pause)) as I said this interview was more focused on anxiety I also do research eating disorders as well and I think there is definitely like a really interesting overlap between all of these things. So yeah do you wanna tell me a bit more about that?

Whiteseal: Yep ok so (.) Just a disclaimer I haven't literally gone to the doctor to be diagnosed so I've never (.) I don't even know how you can do that to be honest with you I think you just (.) I don't know what that would do either but this isn't just a kind of just like I read one thing and then I said ohh (.) this is definitely years of experience months to two years of research like I just haven't just gone to a GP and said by the way

KA: Honestly like with waiting lists, the way they are at the moment and things like that ((overlaps))

Whiteseal: Yes exactly that!

KA: I believe fully and like people being able to self diagnose because people know themselves well and I think it's such a weird rhetoric when people are like ohh everyone's just gonna like self diagnose for attention and for-

Whiteseal: That is exactly what happens

KA: It's like who is doing that no one's doing that (.) people

Whiteseal: That's why for both ARFID and POTS I've never kind of pursued anything for it at all cause if it wasn't for my knee dislocating when g-getting out of the shower I still don't think I'd know that I was hypermobile. I still wouldn't know most likely

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: And then (.) then the only reason why then I was seen so quickly for was because it was then the nature of the of the injury the fact that I literally was doing nothing that then I got seen so so so quickly so

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: Yeah. So yeah I would love to I think get like an official diagnosis just to have that in my own brain and yay I'm right sort of thing

KA: Mm

Whiteseal: but do you have the time and the patience and stuff? No because I tried applying for PIP last (.) May April and I got rejected so hah (.)

KA: Urgh

Whiteseal: completely flat out so I didn't try that again either cause it just seemed like a waste of time and it's like you know what not gonna get very far

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: But yeah (.) um (.) with ARFID (.) um ((pause)) my (.) well yeah I've always I guess been (.) quite a picky eater. I think I'll always have like quite bad eating habits. I certainly don't have the worst in my house cause that's my dad who's definitely undiagnosed autistic but also undiagnosed ARFID so

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: Yeah. I think for me it never really stuck out that bad because I obviously grew up in what I didn't know this until very recently but I grew up in a completely undiagnosed neurodivergent household

KA: Mm

Whiteseal: So for ((stutters)) well I bet if people kind of look through the window people would be like why on earth are there like three or four different meals on the table? But for us it was just it was just normal so I guess it I guess that wasn't really a thing but then like obviously once you go to school and it's like oh (.) you have a weird way of eating but I guess once again like it wasn't really anything bad in that sense to me it wasn't really then until people and like "what you don't even eat this?" and then

like people like make jokes about what you eat or more in a sense a lack of what you eat and then people like constantly judging. But then it's like it's none of their business cause at the end of the day I'm not anorexic and dying

KA: Mm

Whiteseal: I'm not like rotting away. I'm still (.) I'm still putting something in me and I'm clearly somewhat surviving so (.) does it really matter if I have a ham sandwich every single day for years? No

KA: Mm

Whiteseal: It's just like (.) yeah so. I guess I guess it it is annoying when like people want to go out to eat sort of thing with you and it's like sorry but I actually don't like that stuff like and like then ((stutters)) people say it's like "ah but then how can you not like if you never tried it?" but then I ((stutters)) can literally go within a vicinity of somewhere smell something and if straight away it doesn't didn't agree I'm not going near that because if one sensory aspect doesn't agree it's a no go. It's a complete just no not gonna go there because ((overlaps))

KA: Yeah I was going to say is it like the sensory aspect of it that puts you off ((overlaps))

Whiteseal: ((overlaps)) completely

KA: certain foods? Yeah

Whiteseal: Yeah. I don't really (.) And then and then that induces the anxiety because then if it's like a smell that I don't like then I won't want to go near it and then and then it's like if then I do kind of try attempt to try something which is quite rare then I feel stressed about it sort of thing and about nine times out of ten or most of the time it doesn't really end up well and I don't really like it and then I'm like ah that's gross um (.) but (.) Yeah so I think it's just quite- oh sorry i dropped something- I just think it's quite frustrating cos it's like you (.) you want to come and be able to eat everything but then you know like you literally can't because that the second you go near something you well and I ((stutters)) get like even a whiff of it sort of thing and it just isn't right my brain straight away extreme visceral reaction internally it's like no it's straight away. It's completely like I hate that don't go anywhere near that cause that's just horrible (.) um (.) One like massive kind of like eye opener to this was when I was in reception so I was once again four and you know how in primary school they have like the snacks on like the big table at snack time and you have to like go and get one that's in like primary school yeah (.) um (.) so they I don't know why they even have this as a snack coz it's just awful but they literally have like tomatoes. So like and then so ((pause)) you go you go up and get like your carton of milk and stuff right? Cos you used to get like milk and stuff or at least I did cos I loved it

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: So then like to like walk round that table and then you're meant to like grab a snack and the smell of tomatoes still to this day makes me gag I would walk around that table and I would gag coz I could not stand the smell I wouldn't-

KA: Wow

Whiteseal: I literally even if I was about three- actually no even if I was on my table and then um ((pause)) and then like you had to then and one like TA was setting up like the snack time and stuff I would smell this stuff from across the classroom cause I could just tell no that's a tomato or that's this and I hate

that coz like my I was so tuned into it I was like that smells awful I don't like that I wouldn't like walk near that and like I literally I would gag literally gag I literally would want to like ((inaudible)) I hate this and then and then it's like then people expect you to try stuff but then it's like I cannot because the smell is literally make makes me gag I will physically be sick. So yeah I it's just very frustrating basically I think it's the main kind of thing of it

KA: Mm

Whiteseal: cause like my sister didn't have ARFID but I think like she's (.) she used to just kind of be a bit picky but she's gotten better as she's gotten older. But I but I think that a lot of neurodivergent people have like sensory issues even if it isn't like bad or like I think she had like some slight ones towards food when she was younger but like she's better now. My mum eats mostly everything. But then it's me and my dad are the ones that are like really like (.) like that if we're I actually eat a lot better than my dad so my dad's even worse than me (.) which is quite shocking actually so

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: I mean actually being at home with it wasn't really ever an issue because it's almost like my mum and my parents would like would automatically accommodate because it's like what they what they've done even before we came along em anyway because like you know my parents were together like seventeen eighteen years b- before I came along and I'm the oldest like that so they're ((overlaps))

KA: Wow

Whiteseal: so yes so then they're so used to like my dad not liking stuff but then it was kind of just autopilot so it wasn't really like bad for them I guess it wasn't really like inconvenient I guess it I guess it was annoying for my mum a bit sort of thing coz it's kind of like "oh why don't you like stuff?" "Why are you like your dad?" and stuff but then it wasn't like a massive massive issue

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: It's not really compared to the outside where it's like oh this is now an issue because not (.) not everywhere is like my house so

KA: That must have been like a difficult adjustment from a quite accepting environment to not so accepting

Whiteseal: Yeah (.) yeah. I think I think I got quite (.) quite I wasn't really like forced to try things well my mum encouraging some and I did sometimes but one but once again if you could see that I hated the smell and stuff and like I advocated and said that then she pretty much most of the time like say yeah I think that's fine I don't wanna force you

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: But I found this out literally this past week as well is my dad's parents used to tie him to a chair ((pause))

KA: Wow

Whiteseal: Different experience so

KA: That sounds traumatising to be quite honest

Whiteseal: Yes (.) yeah quite possibly why he's possibly now also a narcissist but hey ho anyway ((laughs))

KA: ((laughs))

Whiteseal: So yeah I guess in that sense I was quite lucky that I didn't have like the kind of parents that pinned you down and forced you to have stuff

KA: Mm

Whiteseal: But I think that it was still annoying from them like outside of being like "why aren't you liking this stuff?" cos it's then like you couldn't really explain why when you're younger either coz I didn't have like the (.) the tools or like the

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: like the knowledge that I do now as to why I don't and it's like I can't really like change the kind of kind of like chemical background of my sensory receptors and stuff like I can't really change how they're programmed so I can't really help it if I don't like that smell so

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: Yeah and then and then I guess it was then more the appetite thing as well it's then like I never had much of an appetite at all (.) I think that that was definitely down to ARFID because then even in like foods that you like and stuff some sometimes there's like a ((stutters)) a little bit of like weird texture and stuff like that it's still like oh god I don't like that cos it's kind of like some- some things just aren't consistent and that's just annoying ((inaudible)) and then you're like oh that's frustrating. And then the other issue is then when you get so hooked on a certain food cause like you love it it's perfect it's great. And then you're obsessed with it for a few months and then and then like you can't eat it for about a solid year to two years because you just completely gone off it

KA: ((laughs)) yeah

Whiteseal: Like that. That's happened to me with cinnamon rolls I literally like binged on them for like three months and I just couldn't have them again. Haven't had them again for months. I just don't like well I still like them but I just got so bored of them

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: And it happened when I was younger as well with um spaghetti Bolognese as well like I used to have it so often and then it's like oh you know and then I didn't eat it for like two years because I just it just like completely like went off it so and that that's the issue that you can find the food that you love and then you obviously consume it regularly coz you (.) you love it and it's safe and it's great and it's like oh this is fantastic. And then a few months down the line to a year later it's like oh my god I've had this too much like I've gone off it sort of thing. Thankfully as I got older I managed to find a few more things that I do like and now it's kind of more balanced but it's still some days where ((stutters)) I'm just like I've gone off everything so I don't really want to have anything today and then it's kinda like tryna dig around and actually find something that you can actually stomach and then it's yeah just frustrating but you don't have like the options that other people do and it's like well (.) So that's annoying. But I mean I survive I haven't rotted away yet so I think I'm doing OK ((laughs))

KA: ((laughs)) I'm sure I'm sure (.) um (.) Cool. I think that is pretty much the end of all like the written down questions I had (.) um (.) but I wanted to check if there was anything that you wanted to add that you think might be relevant or anything that you think like I should have covered or that kind of thing?

Whiteseal: Uhh ((pause)) hm (.) um ((pause)) I mean ((pause)) just ((pause)) I guess you maybe could have asked about like people's overall kind of like sense of self like in in terms of like how kind of introspective they are on themselves like either when they're masked or they're unmasked maybe

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: I think coz I have such like a kind of like defined kind of like perspective on that and stuff (.) like that. Like I'm very kind of introspective like I've always kind of known what's going on inside me even if I didn't have the right words to if that makes sense like

KA: Ah OK that's really interesting

Whiteseal: Yeah even if I can't like explain yeah even if I'm struggling to like explain it always kind of knew in my head and stuff or I could explain it but because I ((stutters)) was so young people wouldn't take me seriously so it's like oh I'll just keep that one to myself then. Um (.) but yeah I think it is that (.) that thing of (.) I don't (.) I don't know if this is all autistic people or this (.) this could just be a me thing but like I think (.) at least for me I always did know like I always had that kind of instinct. And it's like it's strange it's kind of like ((pause)) it's kinda is more like a caveman kind of instinct where (.) where like other people are like ah that person's not in our pack sort of thing that ((stutters)) they're different like it kind of it kind of is like the kind of like black sheep type in instinct that's kind of like oh that's an outsider and then I guess it's kind of like when people see someone with a physical difference that they always tend to stare at that sort of instinct of ohh that person is different. And then like hm everyone automatically looks and like it's not nice but I think it literally is part programmed to us

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: And like I think I think it's a similar thing like I think that neurotypical people identify autistic people most of the time, even if they don't realise it

KA: Right yeah

Whiteseal: I think that's why a lot of us do get bullied for and stuff like that I think people detect a difference and stuff. Don't know what it is but it but it is that kind of herd primal instinct of oh that's person's different (.) we don't like that person or we don't like this (.) this difference this abnormality and stuff like that. And then the opposite end then from my end is then like the fact that then I had the instinct but then I always knew and then it is then the kind of like instinct to blend in and to camouflage and stuff. It is kind of like that ((pause)) yeah it's kind of like it it's sort of like a fight flight or freeze type sort of thing it's kind of like are you gonna (.) kind of just be completely authentic and be this alien in the crowd (.) uh (.) are you gonna freeze up and crumble or are you gonna kind of camouflage and blend in and try to succeed as best as possible sort of thing

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: And I vividly kind of remember the moment that that kind of thought process went through my head and ((stutters)) it sounds absolutely absurd to say that three-year old had that mental response but I literally did cause I can remember standing there and I remember the environment I remember like the lighting the people the sound everything. I remember the cogs turning in my head when I ((stutters)) stood there and it just twigged. You have that instinct that's like right what on Earth am I gonna do?

KA: Mm

Whiteseal: And then my instinct goes well I can't let anyone find out about this I've just got to camouflage and fit in and I literally had that exact speech in my head basically even at that young of an age. So I guess it is kind of like ((pause)) that sense of self. Like yeah I guess when (.) when we're masking and stuff like we drown out our kind of (.) our bodily functions like our need to (.) sleep and drink and eat and go to the go to the toilet. But like we're so in tune with ourselves that we know that we need to mask cause that that instinct's there. It's kind of like (.) it is sort of (.) automatic. And then you kind of then know that you're doing it because then you see a difference between social settings and home like you (.) you can feel the difference in yourself and I think (.) I think it's such a bizarre experience that then you're kind of automatically that versatile and you have that versatility to you which then others don't have and then and then the fact that then you're well at least that I'm I was aware of that. It was just a very surreal experience I think

KA: Mm

Whiteseal: And then (.) yeah I just think that (.) we ((pause)) I think that I think for most of us even if we don't have the means of explaining what we what we feel we always seem to know oh I don't feel hungry or like I don't actually know what (.) I'm feeling but at least I know that I don't know what I'm feeling like (.) I feel like we're all very (.) well at least me I'm very self aware like feeling so much that I will say in in my head I have no idea what's going to go now that I feel these sensations like I just feel like but for me I'm really in tune with myself and seemingly other people that I spoke to as well have (.) have similar experience and I think it's just that weird kind of phenomenon like we're painted out to kind of be maybe like these robots and stuff like that like we're so on auto-pilot especially when we mask and stuff as well but if you kind of it's like an onion if you peel back the layers and stuff you find this completely like kind of like ((pause)) omnipresent kind of centre and it kind of is like all knowing and stuff and it and it's like oh like actually I do know completely what's going on inside me

KA: Mm

Whiteseal: But it's all this input and this (.) box that society forces me to be put in which is why it looks like that I don't. And sometimes it seems like I don't because it's like it's like a square peg in a round hole sort of

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: scenario. It's kind of like it tries to crush you down into this tiny little box but which then uses all your resources and stuff. But really in reality you are like this very present very kind of introspective feeling person like I ((stutters)) feel like I have a very good sense of self I've always had a very good sense of self like

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: I've always known more what's going on like I have a strong sense of justice. Like I feel everything I see everything like I (.) I think of everything like my brain feels like sort kind of supercomputer most

of the time cause it's coz it's tryna do so do so many things at once and I don't think we get enough like credit for that. I don't think. I think it's more like we are these different operating systems. So why don't people open up their eyes and see what we can really do

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: instead of just trying to put us into boxes. Cause I cause I think if (.) if society was a bit different in stuff like I ((stutters)) I think I can become something quite good. But it's capitalism and

KA: ((overlaps)) mm

Whiteseal: it's kind of stereotyped and it's like I can't really (.) really do that and I don't think anyone's ever really seen that kind of side of me like what I'm saying now as well that- You're the first person that's kind of seen me kind of open up like this and say these things like I think it just is frustrating how it's like oh we're shy or we're kind of unemotive or like we're too emotive and it's like if you just stop stereotyping stop making us kind of like (.) stop like villainising stereotyping and all that stuff and actually sit down with us accommodate us and kind of let us do our thing and we can revolutionise the world and stuff. Like I think this is the thing that so many world inventions were created by autistic people I think because they finally I think accepted them- themselves kind of said screw the rest of the world and kind of did their thing and stuff

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: And like I don't think people really realise that we are and we have been a lot of the way forward and stuff

KA: Mm

Whiteseal: Like I don't think some people have said that they think that autism's kind of like an evolutionary step I don't know how far I agree with that I'm not too sure what I think of that actually

KA: Mm

Whiteseal: I don't really that that's the one thing that I don't really know mu- I don't really have much of an opinion on quite frankly it's a bit of a strange one. But I think it is like the like the different operating systems and stuff like that. It's like how different devices in the world sort of thing that they can't all run on the same system

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: Coz then we'll be limited to this one kind of way of doing things like we need the diversity it's like different plants wouldn't exist if they didn't have a purpose sort of thing

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: Different brains don't exist unless there's a complete purpose for and need. Diversity is there to flourish and to evolve or else it wouldn't exist

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: So (.) I think it's like (.) It's like when where most people see me you wouldn't expect that to come out of my mouth sort of thing cause until recently I didn't know I could do that either. So (.) I think it is really like the fact that we are I think quite introspective and stuff. Stuff like that even if we don't realise it for years it isn't really until we're allowed to discover ourselves that I think we really kind of (.) I guess unlock our kind of full potential or our full kind of like consciousness cause then once we have lined everything up everything just kind of links up and then and then you kind of do have full (.) full control and stuff. And it's like no but well melt downs and stuff you aren't in control of like another hand on the steering wheel but (.) at least if you understand your triggers and then like you know like what leads up to you feeling this way and stuff like that like then you have more of your hands on on the steering wheel like you have more control over it if that makes sense and stuff

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: I dunno if any of that made any sense at all ((overlaps))

KA: No completely

Whiteseal: This is just complete ((pause)) yeah

KA: No it was that was really really like interesting and also just like so useful to hear. And I think especially I like totally understand about ((pause)) we have I guess we'd call it in psychology like a deficit interpretation of autism where we would say like well not we I'm not including myself in this but as a field we tend to see it as like (.) oh OK this is this like

Whiteseal: Yeah

KA: A disadvantage

Whiteseal: Yeah

KA: And then it's so weird because I think I said this to you a bit in the introductory call we have a society that is so geared toward it's if you're a person whose brain works in a very specific type of way and any deviation from that is seen as a disadvantage. But it's like you're not comparing on an even playing field you're comparing

Whiteseal: ((inaudible))

KA: Like here is someone in their optimal environment and here is someone in an environment that's like actively hostile to them

Whiteseal: Plus yeah plus you can't even really like compare the actual internal wiring stuff

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: It's on my phone somewhere but I saw a video quite recently on a study and it's kind of like the actual neurons and like synapses and brain connections in autistic people. And it's like through adolescence your brain is meant to kind of prune some of these connections and stuff off

KA: Mm

Whiteseal: But with and ((stutters)) and most people about I think 80 plus percent of that is pruned but with autistic people it's only like 30% or some or some like low figure like that and stuff. So we keep most of our brain connections which is I think why we absorb more information for and stuff

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: that because that there's more ((inaudible)) there to do so and so like ev- like even in adults and stuff you still can't compare because it's still two completely different operating systems with a completely different amount of connections in your brain like. It's like you're going to compare like a CD machine and a two grand computer sort of thing

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: it's just complete (.) two completely different things with opposite functions it's like one just read a CD one you know can make a computer game or something like

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: It's like completely different ball games. It's not even on the same level and stuff like we're (.) we're all human we all feel and that what like unites us. But I think we've got to kind of stop either putting each other down or like lifting other people up like too high it's like

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: Let's not try and make neurotypical people or people that then want to come and make everyone the same that the same heroes because that's like that's not going to help anything and stuff like it in ((stutters)) my opinion if you want a de-evolution then that's the way to go

KA: ((laughs)) yeah

Whiteseal: That's coz that's not gonna cause anything productive is it so

KA: Yeah (.) just maintaining the status quo which is (.) yeah

Whiteseal: But let's be honest here what really is the status quo

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: Nothing makes ((stutters)) makes sense ((overlaps))

KA: ((overlaps)) It's just decided by a certain

Whiteseal: ((inaudible)) Yeah this is the thing with like all stereotypes is like if you think about it all stereotypes stem from one person that said something god knows how many thousands of years ago it became a trend and then everyone else started started agreeing

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: Every single like ste- like stereotype and like assumption is often what one person said and then the rest of the world like listened or like that Chinese whispers

KA: ((laughs)) yeah

Whiteseal: That's literally how they're created and stuff and it's like and then people talk about being normal and stuff like that and it's like OK I don't get how it's normal to have a weirdly long bodies with fingers and toes and stuff like why are they even called like fingers and toes like how come we're on the ball of rock floating in a vacuum of nothingness

KA: ((laughs))

Whiteseal: It's just like nothing actually makes sense

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: So why are we trying to limit ourselves when we've kind of been given this almost limitless environment?

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: Where there isn't meant to be any expectations put on us or if there is who knows what they are coz no-one's told us what they are. We just assume things (.) so (.) maybe we should just stop assuming and just start existing and just start (.) exploring and just kind of keep like just (.) trying to navigate this limitless environment that we know and just kind of make the most of it cause we're all here. I personally are I'm not religious so I don't know why we're here but I think we should just kind of just chill and just enjoy it and stuff coz

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: Yeah

KA: Why not you know

Whiteseal: Exactly yeah why not

KA: ((laughs)) OK well amazing (.) thank you for all of this. Honestly it's been so so great to talk to you um and I'm really excited to like look back over this and

Whiteseal: Oh I'm so scared to read the transcript now

KA: ((laughs))

Whiteseal: It's gonna be so endlessly repetitive I'm so sorry

KA: No it's don't apologise it's been absolutely perfect. And yeah I kind of knew from the from the intro call we had that you were gonna give me lovely long fantastic detail filled answers and you definitely did so huge thank you um

Whiteseal: No thank you. I've been kind of meaning to get this sort of stuff off my chest and off my brains for years like this is like a decade plus of built up stuff. So this is kind of (.) yeah (.) this has been sitting there waiting to be kind of used and kind of like put out so I'm kind of glad that you've given me an outlet to do so coz it's kind of helped me as well so thank you. I think I needed to process all that actually

KA: Aw

Whiteseal: So helped me as well

KA: Yeah well I'm so happy it helped. Um in terms of the next stages going forward um I will write up the transcript and normally that takes me a couple of days maybe a week um and

Whiteseal: That is fine I've said (.) I've said a lot so I don't really blame you that's going to take a long time ((laughs))

KA: ((laughs)) yeah yeah. But as soon as I'm done with it I'll send it to you and then you can use like the track changes function in Word and change anything if there's anything there maybe like you misspoke or there's something that like on reflection you don't want included in the transcript or anything like that you can make little amendments. Um you'll see when I send you the transcript it will have all been anonymised so your name will be removed and you'll be given a code name but also any identifying information so I don't think you did but if you made any reference to where you lived or friends names or school names that would all just be like (.) blanked out or replaced with something equivalent

Whiteseal: No I think that the only thing I said was [removed] which is like my diagnosis kind of thing

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: Like I went there. It (.) would that be blurred out then I guess maybe

KA: Um (.) potentially yeah um

Whiteseal: Oh fine ok

KA: But that's

Whiteseal: That's the only thing I can remember actually, I think saying related to anyone. I ((stutters)) purposely didn't say names for that reason ((overlaps))

KA: Yeah (.) yeah it's amazing though how- ((overlaps))

Whiteseal: I've consented but they haven't sort of things so that's like

KA: Yeah it's amazing how easily you can like forget certain things are identifying though so like it's never any stress for me to go through and look for that I do it with all the participants anyway just in case there's something that's slipped through. Um but yeah then you send me back the transcript with any edits on it um and then I will then start my analysis once I've got back a few different people's interview transcripts and that will likely take a couple of months but when I've sort of identified some key themes I'll also send them to you and you can give feedback if you'd like. It's not compulsory for you to provide feedback. Um but the one thing to note about that themes thing is that obviously the themes will be across like ((pause)) a load of different people's interviews so some of the themes you might not relate to yourself (.) um (.) but yeah it's because it's like a accumulated themes thing

Whiteseal: Collaborative

KA: Yeah

Whiteseal: got it

KA: Um and then once we've (.) done all of that um prior to publication we'll send you through a PowerPoint with like a more accessible version of what we've found because I wouldn't recommend to anyone reading the academic papers that I publish because they're so wordy and long and we just thought it would be nice to just send everyone like a PowerPoint um ((pause))

Whiteseal: Yeah that makes sense

KA: Um cool and then with payment and stuff um (.) we will (.) I will be in touch to like confirm the exact details of that a bit more in due time it's always easier to do this kind of thing over e-mail um but just to make you aware there's sometimes like a bit of an annoying delay because I'm not allowed to send you the voucher or anything directly um it has to be from the finance department in the Experimental Psychology Faculty and they just can be quite slow with things um but if there's like an urgent need for you to

Whiteseal: I- Don't stress I did this purely for my own enjoyment as well like a voucher's a bonus I did this coz I wanted to speak anyway

KA: Aww. Well that's OK that's wonderful that's wonderful. And then yeah last thing for me is just if you have any friends that you think might be interested in participating please pass on my e-mail to them. Unfortunately if (.) you were to give me their emails I wouldn't be allowed to contact them they have to like reach out to me first of all. Um (.) but yeah I think that's everything. Did you have any questions or comments before we finish up?

Whiteseal: Um ((pause)) I don't think so