

Laura Graham: Hello. My name's Laura Graham and I'm here with 60 Miles by Road or Rail interviewing Paul Marshall. Hi Paul.

Paul Marshall: Hello. Are you well?

Laura Graham: I'm good.

Paul Marshall: Yes.

Laura Graham: I'm very good. Thank you for talking to us today. Let's start off then with where you were born and grew up.

Paul Marshall: Okay. I'm a Yorkshire lad, so I was born in Sheffield. Although we moved down south when I was about six years old, I'm still very proud of my roots. Apart from mum, dad and my brother, all my family are still up in Yorkshire and I go to see it from time to time. And it's really nice to get back up there. So I was born in Sheffield. I was a young lad who was full of confidence and loved life until my brother was born when I was about four years old. And went to visit him when he was born in hospital and told the bus driver that... he said, "Where are you going today?" And I said, "I'm going to visit my baby brother." He asked me. He goes, "How's your mom getting on?" I said, "No, she's dead."

And that's what I actually said. So I was not happy when my brother came along, but luckily I've got the best experience with him and he's my best mate. But so I think I wanted to be an only child since I was really young. But we grew up. My dad was an electrician and my mom was a nursery teacher, and childhood was good. My dad always wanted the best for us as a family, so he decided to move us and try his... what's the word? Tried to get a different career path. So kept the electrician to one side.

And my great uncle was a very wealthy developer and they went into health suites. This was in the '80s. So they moved to Luton. That's where we moved. And my dad tried his hand at health suites and doing that sort of thing. Got a very funny story about Duncan Gucci came to... do you remember the swimmer from the '80s? Well, he'd just won his gold medal in 1980-whatever it was. And he came and opened it up and he had a Jacuzzi. There was a shot in the jacuzzi with my dad and my mom and Duncan Gucci, and they had this photo. And my mom went to stroke my dad on the back side and he had no shorts on.

She went, "Oh, Peter, you've not got any underwear on." And he goes, "No. Nor is Duncan Gucci." So that's quite funny. And mom's still got that photo now. And he gave my mom his actual swimming shorts that he won his gold medal with, which is quite nice. So that was good. So they tried that and then it just didn't work out. I don't know if it was... we were obviously quite young so it didn't work out.

But mom and dad then moved into... we moved to Bedford and they moved into a pub. So they did a lot of hours in there, worked hard. And that's when I really bonded with my brother, because we were quite young so we were quite... we had a flat above the pub, obviously, so me and my brother spent a lot of time together and we really bonded. And even my mom now feels regretful that we spent a lot of time on our own, but I don't think I'd have a relationship with my brother I do now if we wouldn't have had that time, so that was quite nice. And where did we go then?

Then we moved into Raunds in Northamptonshire and they opened a video store, which was good. Back in the day we had Blockbusters and all that. This was before all that. So we had a video store. And they sent me to private school, which I hated. I really didn't enjoy it. It was good, but I learned Latin and French from eight years old and it was... I don't know. I don't know why I didn't like it. I just didn't. I just found it really difficult. Coming from working class backgrounds, there was a lot of middle class kids and stuff. And they were boarding there as well and it was just... I don't know. I didn't make many friends there. I didn't really get on.

But it was just one of those things. And then we moved so I went to Raunds School, secondary school, and that was a mixed school, and that's the first time I saw girls, which was quite funny because I'd always been in a boys school up till then. And I had a head start and stuff because I'd done French and Latin stuff, and they were just starting French and stuff. So I did quite well on my GCSEs because I'd had that upbringing. But going back to the boys school, I just remember getting the slipper. We had the cane. I got a board rubber thrown at me once because it was just the norm, though, back then. You couldn't even imagine doing that now.

I wonder, some of the teachers. I remember having to sign this slipper before he hit me with it. His name was name Mr. Pell. He must have gone now because he was old then, but he really enjoyed doing that. And you

think, that's just odd. In this day and age, how it is. But I think what I haven't mentioned obviously is, while I've been growing up and doing all this thing, I sat down and watched a TV show which most people would know, called The Muppet Show. And that was one of the things that was quite big back in the late '70s, early '80s.

And there was a chap on there. I've actually got him here. Here's Animal from The Muppets. My son bought me that. I'm just showing that I've got an Animal ornament. My son bought me that when he was really young because I've always loved Animal, and that was it. I just saw him just crazy behind his drum kit and I just thought, "I love that. I want to do that." And just luckily, naturally I had the gift. My mom used to sing in a band. My dad used to sing in a band. That's how they met.

They hated each other, which was quite amusing. My mom came to the rehearsal. My dad played all the wrong chords on purpose so she sounded out of tune. But drums was always my thing and I always wanted to do it. And I just got a snare drum. Well, I had a drum pad to start with and I used to smack on it all day long. I used to put books out, saucepans, play with wooden spoons. I used to tap on everything and drive everybody insane. And then I got my first drum and I got my first drum kit. Then I started to have lessons, and I was just naturally good at it. So I had lessons with some people and they said, "Well, you were taught the basics. You can just go on."

I'm not arrogant with it. I was just good at it. I just felt naturally, I want to do this, and this is what I want to do. So I had my first gig when I was about 10 in a pub. Sat underneath the dartboard and just played. And people were just like, "Oh, who's this young lad playing?" I remember thinking... it was like the second or third gig. I went in with my drum kit. My dad had took me to this gig and they said, "We don't have kids." And then the band turned and I said, "Well, he's a drummer so he's got to come in." And I just started doing gigs with a few friends. I joined brass bands because I thought that was quite a big thing, orchestras and all through my childhood I just drummed. It's all I really did.

Most lads would go out on their bikes and climb trees and stuff. I didn't really do that. I just wanted to drum. And I was looking at an old diary I found in the loft, back in '88 or something. And I can see all the gigs, all the rehearsals. I was playing with five different bands and stuff. And my mom and dad were so supportive. They used to take me all over the country to different gigs, different things. They were so committed to

what I was doing. So for some people that might sound amazing. I don't think I missed out on childhood, but I was always drumming. That's just what I did.

I used to get in trouble at school for being late, nodding off in class because I'd been up the night before because I didn't get in till 1:00 in the morning because I'd been playing in Yarmouth or something. And that's pretty much what it was till I was, say, 16, till the GCSEs came around. But I did lots of tours. Through the summer holidays I used to go to tours on Germany, Austria, playing with different brass bands, orchestras. Just do different tours. And I think the pinnacle was... this must've been the late '80s, early '90s. Probably when I was about 17, 18 that the biggest brass band in the world was Grimethorpe and Black Dyke Mills Band. And Black Dyke Mills had just done the, what's the word? Theme tune for Ground Force, if you remember Ground Force back in the day.

And I actually got to play with them, so it was really good. And then I think it was just after my 17th birthday I had got really bad tonsillitis and my whole throat closed up. I couldn't eat, I couldn't talk. I had to go to hospital. So I missed out on a trip to play at Carnegie Hall, which, I was gutted. So I've never actually been to America. Done lots of Europe stuff but I was gutted on that. But it's just one of those things. But I still got to play the Albert Hall, Wembley Arena, all the big venues in the UK thanks to brass bands, really, because we had lots of contests and lots of playing and stuff.

And then just had a good upbringing. Parents were great. My dad doesn't show his emotions while my mom does. I'm very like my mom, not like my dad. He'd never say, "I love you," or anything like that. Or just say, "Oh, that was a great gig, mate. Well done." He just looked at me and I just knew that I did all right. But apparently every gig he came to, he used to cry. But he'd never tell me that. Mom was always like, "Your dad was crying. Your dad was crying to that drum bit because he loved that. That little solo, that was crying. He's so proud." But he'd never say, "Paul, I'm so proud of you," or whatever. Just never showed his emotions. Not until later in life. But done quite a lot of stuff. Seen a lot of stuff.

But I think for my story, I was around alcohol a lot and drugs and stuff like that. I got a bit pissed up when I was 13. I fell into a bin and got drunk, because in Germany's festivals it's just steins and beers and

people singing. And I think I got a little bit drunk. So my first taste of alcohol was 13. And I went to throw up in one of these, what do you call them? Thingy bins. Push bins. The wheelie bins. That's it. I went to be sick in it and fell in it. So all it did, my bandmate came and found me. Saw my two little legs just dangling out with a head for the sick. Like, "Lovely." But would I change it? Never. Not for the world. I absolutely loved it. I had a whale of a time. Met some great people, saw some beautiful places, and just did what I loved.

Laura Graham: And at what age did you move on from drumming?

Paul Marshall: I don't say I've moved on. I still do it now. Not-

Laura Graham: Professional drumming.

Paul Marshall: Professional drumming. I think it all stopped when I had my mental health breakdown. But from the ages of leaving school, I just knew what I wanted to do. Some of my friends at school, they just hadn't got a clue but I just said, "I'm going to go and do this." So I ended up playing for lots of different bands. Everyone asks me, "Oh, have you played for anyone famous?" I'm like, "Not really." But I've met some famous people. I've done lots of pantos where I've met lots of celebrities, or whatever you want to call them. And I've backed a lot of people. But I've not actually played...

I'd have loved to be in the band Queen or something like that. But it's the very lucky breaks that you get. And as I was coming through the ranks in the early '90s we had Oasis and Blur coming out. And I thought, if I get lucky break I could make it. But that soon faded out towards the end of the '90s and drums wasn't cool anymore. It was more dance and boy bands and stuff like that, and that's where they went.

But I used to play all over the country, all over. You'd see different bands, different things, shows. You name it, I did it. I was very lucky. Well, I say, "I'm lucky." I worked hard. I used to practice for like two or three hours a day because I wanted to be good. And I just did that for 18... how old was I when I stopped? 35. Maybe 17 years full on. And it was great, and I had a whale of a time and I earned well. I obviously exceeded in money and drink and having a good time. I think that eventually took its toll. I had a lot of friends.

It's funny. I had a lot of friends back when I had a bit of money and was flashing the cash and having fun and going out for nice dinners and stuff. And I don't know one single one of them now, funnily enough. Were they true friends? Maybe not. But we all started getting out. Because you're on the road. You see airports, you see hotels, you're in the pit every day drumming under the stage and stuff. And it can become quite lonely after a while because you're doing the same thing. Because obviously if you go to a West End show, like I did Grease and Chicago, and you just do the same thing every day, and the same people come in. And it's really funny because you think it's such a lavish lifestyle sometimes. And you're not. You just go in and you look across. You play a number, and then the bass guitarist or the trumpet player's just rolling up a fag while reading the paper.

It's something because you're not seen by the public, so you can just chill out for a bit. But it got lonely and it got a little bit... I didn't get fed up with it, I just got lost in it. And then the friends that... I thought I had friends. As my drumming career slowed down I didn't see them as much. I was just about to have my son and things just really slowed down. And it's the only thing I knew, so I didn't know what to do. I thought, "Do I stop? Do I go and do something else?" I tried teaching once but I just didn't get on with it. I just used to get frustrated at people, so I didn't have the patience. I think I could do it probably now, if I ever wanted to go into it. But I didn't have the patience when I was younger to teach people. But it just slowed down.

I think the last experience I had was I was on a TV set. It was a show called Delzian and Pascoe. I don't know if anybody remembers it, back in the day. But the bloke who, he's in Downton Abbey now. His name's Jim Carter. He's a very famous actor. So he was in this episode of Delzian and Pascoe and we were... the group I was with at the particular time, we got asked to go into the BBC to go and do a wedding. There was a wedding there and it was part of this. It was a detective series and Jim Carter was the bad guy. So we did this. It was a really interesting experience because I saw how film works and stuff, because there was a lot hanging around. It took us like 12 hours for us just to do this 30 second scene.

And they put the cameras in place and he'd go, "Action!" And then we'd start playing. He goes. "Oh, no, no. You can't use that song. Got to use a different song," because they had to get copyright and stuff. And I think we played It's Only Natural by Crowded House for some reason, which

didn't suit particularly wedding song. But it's action. And then you have to mime, and there's no music. So while these people are dancing we're playing nuts and off it. And the camera literally just comes past me for about four seconds. And I remember getting a solo because I looked at the camera. I couldn't help it because that's what... in my drumming career, you've got to look at the camera and smile and play. And I was like "Oh." And then they had to stop it again. I thought, "Oh, Christ. This is the BBC and I've just wrecked this... but no, it's okay." He told me it's happened.

But we did this one scene. And I just remember going out the back, and Jim Carter was just stood there. And he said, "Come. Come here, boy. Come here, boy. How are you?" And he did all this thing. And he started asking about my career and stuff. And then he gave me a cigar, because he was smoking one, and we sat and had a cigar together and just chatted about stuff. Because he was in one of my favorite films called Top Secret, which, not a lot of people know what that is. It's by the people who did Airplane. He was in that, and he was in Brassed Off. Being a brass band fanatic, I was like, "Wow, he was in that." And then obviously later on he went to do Downton Abbey and stuff. He was a very big theater actor.

And that was a great experience. And I always remember that one because I remember after that, things used to get a little bit dark after that. I just remember, when you look back on your life, you go, "Oh, I loved that experience. I had a great gig there. That was a great gig. That was one of favorites." And then just at that day, that's the last memory. I think that's the last good thing that I did, playing-wise.

So it was a great 17 years, even though towards the end it got difficult and it started to get a bit dark. I had a whale of a time, there's no doubt about that. I had all sorts of fun. Lots of different stories that I probably shouldn't tell, getting up to in hotel rooms and getting a bit tipsy and stuff. There's one I think I can share that I was... I don't know. I think we were playing for Leicester City football team's annual dinner and dance. And the champagne and wine was flowing in there. They know how to party. And as the band, we played. And afterwards, "Oh, join in," and stuff like that. And I think I got so drunk that I woke up the next day in the basement, stark naked in the hotel. Ain't got a clue how I was there, how I got there. So then I had to walk up and ask for my key, stark naked, to the receptionist.

I'm sure they see stuff like that all the time, but it was just like walking past people no hand or no towel, going, "Morning. Morning. Sorry. Yeah." Oh, dear. Dear. That was quite funny. And I had some fun, shall we say, but probably best just to leave it there for things like that.

Laura Graham: And during that time you mentioned that you were touring quite a lot. How did that impact your personal life and ability to keep up with friends and make relationships and stuff?

Paul Marshall: I did get married very young, at the age of 22, 23. Thought it was the right thing to do. Always had it instilled in me. My mom and dad were married for 51 years. They had kids. They did it the right way around. They got married and they had five years, then they had two kids. They stayed together. It was just instilled in me that that's how it happened. It happened to all my dad's brothers, with my mom's family. That's just what it was. And so I got married. We were kids, really. I was out gigging a lot. Obviously she had her own interests, and it just fell apart really.

It's no age. I didn't even know who I was properly. We didn't know who we were. So that ended. And I had a few girlfriends and stuff, but I think they just used to get annoyed because I was always gigging weekends. "Oh look, can we go out Saturday night? Can we do this? Can we do that?" And I'm like, "I'm playing." Did I put my drumming first? Probably. But it was my wage. I'm about Monday to Friday in the day. And they go, "Oh, well, I'm working." I'm like, "Well, that's not my fault." It's very unsociable hours.

And my brother's a chef. I'm very proud of him. He went to London and worked with Brian Turner, who he met just recently. Brian Turner's quite popular at the minute. Brian Turner was on Ready Steady Cook. He's got his own restaurants and stuff. And my brother went to London, and we used to meet up. And he was the same. He's just knackered. He used to start work at 6:00, 7:00 in the morning and end up... whenever the shift finished he used to... obviously there's lots of drink and drugs. I'm not saying he did any of that, but there's a lot of it about in that sort of profession and stuff.

And he met some famous people. And I remember him phoning me up once. And he was just like, "Paul, you won't believe what's just happened." I was like, "What's that, mate?" And he goes, "Just cooked for Lionel Richie, and Diana Ross walked in and they sang Endless Love." And he said he'd cooked for Trevor McDonald and Rowan Atkinson, lots



of famous people, because obviously they were celebrity chefs and my brother was one of the head chefs back there. But again, it's funny that we both picked unsociable hours jobs to do. But I just need to go back to what it was. I've gone off somewhere. Now I need to go back to what I was saying. What was I saying before?

Laura Graham: You were saying about relationships and ...

Paul Marshall: Oh yeah, that's right. Yeah. Sorry. As you can see, my brother and my family are really important to me. I always go, "I don't spend too much talking about friends and girlfriends because I spend a lot of time talking about family because they're everything to me." But yes, it was difficult. And I had some good relationships. I've met some interesting people. Lots of my friends were basically people in bands, because they got it. So on nights off or days off we used to go and play snooker, or we tried golf once, which was quite funny because I was absolutely useless. I didn't mind wearing the funky trousers and stuff because I like wearing bright-colored shirts and stuff, but I couldn't hit a golf ball at all.

But so mainly my friends were in bands and stuff. I've still got two or three school friends that I still keep in touch. And I did meet a beautiful man called John. He was my best mate for a very long time. I met him in the brass bands and he used to play percussion, so I would do the drum kit stuff and he'd play the big timpanis and the gongs and the xylophone and stuff like that. And we were a real double act, and he was so funny. He was a policeman as well in the day, and he had quite a high job. So he saw a lot of stuff. I remember him phoning. He used to call me Shag. There was nothing in that but that's what he just used to call me because I used to laugh at my arse and he used to call me Shag all the time.

And I remember him phoning me up on Christmas day. And I was like, "Hello, mate." I said, "Where are you?" He goes, "I'm just sat on top of the grove now." I said, "What are you doing up there?" He said, "Oh, I've just talked someone down. They were going to jump off it now." But he just saw a lot of stuff. He saw lots of dead bodies and stuff like that. And he was the one person, obviously apart from my brother, he was the one person who stuck with me. I'm sure we'll come to my issues, but he's the one who came and visited me, helped me through it. I just loved him, and we just got each other as well.

We had that thing about the drums. And then obviously I had my mental health issues. And in the end he suffered from PTSD and he didn't take his life but he just gave up. Just got a phone call one day that John had died, and I was gutted because he was my best mate for like 25 years. And that's tough. And that was tough. He's probably one of the beautiful people in this world that actually just sort of got it. My dad used to call him a fine-liner because he was always... just never knew. He was always having too much fun. He was always a bit too much to drink.

He was always a bit... his jokes were just on the edge. Everything about him was just... he was great and he was just... if I had been in Australia and said, "I've broken my leg," he'd have been there as soon as he could. 36 hours and he'd been there and he'd helped me and sorted me out. And vice versa. And he was just a fantastic mate, and I still miss him now. And he just had enough, I think. He just got sick and tired of life and the PTSD and the memories. And it was such a shame. But it was nice, his funeral. His kids asked me to read out his will with them and stuff, and that was nice.

But as far as other mates, I didn't have that many. I only had friends, a couple friends and stuff. But again, my job used to get in the way. But people would be interested in what I do. It was always a talking point. To me it was just, I just jump up and go, "Oh!" They said, "Oh, you were at the Derngate last night in the Pantomime and Darren Day is on. Have you met him? Can I have his autograph?" It's just like, "Ugh." Or whatever. Darren Day and Otis the Aardvark. That was one of the lineups that I did the Pantomime in Northampton. So just met some funny people like that. You don't really mingle with them, I suppose. You're just doing your job as they are.

Laura Graham: So you had quite a long and interesting career in music. I'm interested in the next bit, if you're okay with discussing that.

Paul Marshall: Yeah.

Laura Graham: What happened next?

Paul Marshall: I wouldn't say I fell out of it. I just started to slow down the drumming. With that became financial difficulties, because you're self-employed. You don't know where the next bit of money is coming from. Like I say, we're coming to a time now where live bands and things, they weren't coming to an end but things were really slowing down. Most people, I'm

48, my age, there was a band in most pubs, clubs. We used to do some clubs back in the day that was absolutely huge, where we played to working men's clubs up north and they'd be like 1,000 people. You do things like that.

But I used to do stuff, like I said, the Pantomimes and stuff. And things went into backing tracks and they would not have to pay a big live orchestra to play. They could do it with tapes. They could do it with backing tapes and save money that way. And there was lots of cuts going on. Not everywhere, but lots of places were doing that. I'm happy to see now that we've come through that and there are... I've seen West End shows and stuff, and they are bringing the bands back and stuff, which is nice because it's live music. But it's all money, and things got cut back.

Lots of pubs didn't have entertainment licenses and they just had discos. Discos were really popular back in the day, and it was cheaper to have a DJ than a full band. But I still did lots of wedding stuff and party bands. That was good because we could do a little jazz band performance or we could do a tribute or we could do a party band at someone's wedding or event or Christmas day, which was good. But the money wasn't there. Things just seemed to get out of control a little bit.

I'd never had to worry about money as such so as things started to get difficult I remember just getting my first reminder that I hadn't paid a bill, and it scared the hell out of me because that had not happened before. And I knew there was an issue because I used to hide it from my partner and stuff at the time. And I'd hide it under the microwave or I'd stick it in my drum case or something and just try and forget about it. And things started escalating like that. And I didn't say anything. I didn't tell anybody that I was starting to feel a little bit down. I had this little cloud come over me and I was just like, "This is strange." But I'm a performer through and through. I love the stage. I love being... I had a massive personality. I still have. And I would still be Paul.

I still laugh, joke. Terrible at dad jokes. Told them all my life. But I could always walk into a room and be fun, soul of the party. And I still was trying to do that. And then I'd come home and sit down and just go... I don't know. I wouldn't say I got upset, but I just knew there wasn't something quite right. So to try and make ends meet I went and worked in a couple of factories just to get some money, extra money, as the scene started drying up. And that was just soul-destroying.

And I don't mean this in any way, shape, or harm because lots of people do some great work in factories, but I was born for the stage and then I was putting tea caddies in a box. And then I've worked a bit for a haulage company and I was putting fridges on a van. And it was a long jump from having a cigar with Jim Carter or excessing at the Ritz and staying over there and having champagne and stuff like that.

And now I find myself with little money, working in a factory, being dictated by foremens what to do. "You will take your break now. You won't do that." It was just a completely different world for me. And I was just like, "Wow." And I did it for a bit. And I remember telling someone who said, "You can't do this. You can't do that. You can't have holiday. You got to come in." I was sick. I felt... "Well, you're tough. You've got..." and I just thought, "Sod this. I ain't doing this. This is crazy." So I tried to get into... So I thought I'll try my hand at teaching, but that didn't quite work out either.

I believed that I wanted to teach kids just how to play drums, like how I learn. I think there's a lot in... kids, for example, they hear an Oasis song or whoever, a Beatles song, Queen song, Coldplay, whatever it is. Even a dance track, Prodigy or something. I don't know. And they just want to play along to it. That's how you learn. So you teach them basics. You teach them stuff. And I remember doing a bit of teaching and just going into a school and speaking. And I spoke to the performance arts in, I can't remember where it was. Wish I could remember because they were just bolshy. And they're like, "Oh, you're not classically trained. You've got to learn the rudiments and the theory of doing this." I'm like, "No, kids just want to play." "Oh no, they have to do a paradiddle. They have to do a dragon, a flower, and a drum roll, and do it like this."

And I'm like, "Ugh. No, you're just missing the trick. Kids just want to get into it. They can do all that lately if they want to. Let's just teach them the basics. Let's get them involved." And they just want to play to their... let's get them a band. That's what they want to do. Not everybody wants to go to Royal College of Music in London or something like that and be a professor of percussion. I remember going to some seminar back in the day and it taught me how to play the tambourine properly. Or there was like 37 different notes on the triangle and I had to sit through it. I was like, "Oh God, this is just..." I'm not interested in that side. So I ended up just going back to school because I had never took... I took my GCSEs. I never took music.

The same reason why. I was like, "Okay. I'm going to take GCSEs. I'll get an A in this because I'm a great drummer." No, we had to learn about Beethoven. We had to learn scales, like to play piano. I'm like, "I don't want to do that. It's wrong. Why can't I use my instrument to do it?" But that's just how it was. So I didn't take it. So I did drama instead, of course. And actually I got an A in that because I like that type of thing. I think if I had my time again I'd be on stage where I'd love to be an actor. I'd love to do that. And I remember... sorry, just because memories have come in.

I remember doing a piece at school. I got this part and I got told by the music teacher I couldn't do it. I had a lead part in the stage play and I was looking forward, because I'd learned my lines and everything. And she told me I couldn't do it because I've got to play drums. So they gave me another part where I was like a referee, had to go stand up, blow a whistle, and go, "Fight!" And then go back on my drum kit. I was gutted because... It's funny little things that you remember. So I've got to get back to what I was thinking about now because I've gone off on one. Where was I?

Laura Graham: Teaching.

Paul Marshall: Teaching. That's it. Yes. Apparently, yeah. So that was no good. That's right. That was no good, so I didn't do that. And then basically, it's really hard to explain because I'm not saying I don't believe in mental health but it just wasn't a thing. Depression wasn't a thing. But I just got lonely and I got sad. And I just remember feeling so low and not being able to talk about it because I was keeping... I remember telling my partner, "Oh yeah, I'll get a job," or, "I'll get this and I'll get that." And not telling them that I'd left the factory work and stuff like that, because I started pretending that I was going to work.

Looking back on it, it's crazy that I was in such a bad place that everything just seemed to be going downhill, and I couldn't tell anybody. And I think the reason why I couldn't tell anybody was they would be disappointed with me or I'd have let them down. Or going back to my dad, if I went to him he'd just be like, "Get on with it, son. Go get yourself a job and do blah, blah, blah, blah." I couldn't even tell my brother. I couldn't tell anybody that I was poor. I was just like... we're talking about comic books. I was this superhero on his way and I wasn't. I was just crumbling apart.

Like a clown, I'd put my makeup on, I'd go out and do it, and then after a while I'd just come back and go, "What am I going to do?" And while this was happening, I'd had my son with my ex-partner at the time. And he was young. And we'd split up, and he wasn't very old but I wasn't seeing him as much as I wanted to.

So yes, I wasn't seeing him as much as I'd like to, but that was tough. That was tough. And I just had to get out of the relationship because it just wasn't working at all. And that's a really hard thing to do. I don't regret it but you don't know what's going to happen when you leave a two-year-old and go and go, "I'm going to go." But it was a very long process. It went to court and stuff. And it's ended up all good because he's actually living with me full time now, so it worked out, because I'm never going to abandon my child or... I've always paid my way, and I always wanted see him as much as I could and tried to get it 50/50 but it just got messy and horrible, and it didn't help my state of mind at all.

I'm having to mention my son because, as we get into it, it was the turning point. So I didn't really have a job. I was hiding bills. I was getting into debt. I was pretending, I was doing this, doing that. I was always going to get found out, but you just seem to lie, and then one lie goes into another. And then I got so deep in all this crap and miserable state of mind that I couldn't tell anybody now because I'd dug myself a big hole.

And then your mind is a funny thing because you think, why are you doing this? So you start to hate yourself. "Why can't I tell people? Why can't I say something? Why can't I do this? Why can't I get a job? Why am I not driven anymore? Was I not good enough?" All these things start to come out, and then you start to doubt yourself. You start to hate yourself. And then all of a sudden that horrible question comes around, and it's, "Well, if I weren't here, would anybody miss me?" And that's it. And then you start going to tunnel vision.

And I remember I was living in Northampton. I used to walk from Rectory Farm and I used to walk all the way into town and then all out to the other side towards Dustin, and then walk back again. And even looking back at it now, I can't even remember. Because I just used to walk. I just used to walk. I had my head down and just walk and just think about all these negative thoughts. It's silly now because, where I am, I talk about everything, how I feel. I talk to everybody. If I'm having

a bad day I'll let people know I'm having a bad day. Nothing to worry about.

Most people are like, "Yeah, I'm fine. Thanks. It's all good." Really. "No. No, I'm not. I'm all right but I'm just struggling a bit about... I'm a bit tired because didn't sleep very well because I was worried about a deadline at work." That's okay, you can say that. But, "No, everything was great. It was fabulous." And I remember doing this walking and just being miserable and so low. And then I'd walk into home or go and see mom and dad and they'd be like, "Hi! Want some tea?" Or whatever. It's just like, "Hey!" Rocking and rolling. Everything's great.

And I think eventually, like I say, you go down this tunnel vision. And then all these thoughts crept in like, "I'm not good enough. I'm sure if anything happened to me, someone will come along. My ex's partner will meet a good man and he will look after my son, because I'm a bit shit. I'm a bit horrible. I'm not a nice person anymore." And I can't even explain it. For someone who's so positive in life, to go from one day having so much fun and being the life and soul, and just loving life. And I couldn't wait to wake up the next morning and be me and go, "Yes, it's a fresh day." To just not wanting to get out of bed, not having to do anything. Couldn't be bothered. Drinking too much.

I was with a partner at the time as well and... Some of the memories have really faded because I just don't remember because I was just in such a rut, in such a horrible place. And I remember walking back late once. And I knew something's up because I'm not aggressive. I've never had a fight in my life. I'm a bit of pacifist. I don't like war. I don't like weapons. I don't like fighting. I hate boxing. I just don't get it. Don't understand why we have to beat people up and stuff.

I'm sure if anybody came through my door with their fists and were going to attack my family, I'm sure I'd stand up and do something, but I've never ever been put in that situation. I've never lifted a finger up at anybody. But I remember walking past a couple of lads in hoodies, and they were eyeing me up at night. And it was late and it was somewhere else, but I just didn't give a shit. They said something to me and I just stared at them. I said, "What's your fucking problem?" And they were like, "Oh, it's all right, mister," because I didn't care.

I thought, if they're going to stab me, I'm not bothered. I might punch them in the head and stab them back. I just did not care. So I thought... because it just didn't matter.

And then suicidal thoughts started coming in, and that was difficult. I actually truly believe now that I wasn't good enough. I was an asshole. I was a horrible person. None of this was particularly true because I hadn't done anything wrong. I'd just got myself in this hole that had just got deeper and deeper and deeper and deeper and deeper, and all these negative thoughts just built up, built up, built up, and I just didn't let it out. I must've been like a massive fizzy bottle just full of fizz, waiting to explode.

And unfortunately, when I would explode in telling someone how I felt, the explosion would be I would try to take my own life. And so there's lots of different things. So I used to go on walks, and then it was about, "Okay, how are we going to do this?" I used to go and stand on bridges and look how far I would plummet and then go, "Is that going to break my leg? Because if it's going to break my leg, there's not much point. So let's go find a higher bridge." So I'd go find these bridges and look over. And then I said, "Well, I have to do it at night because I don't want to chuck myself off and someone run over me, and then they've got to live with that." So I was still thinking about other people.

And so I did that. I had a knife once. I remember sticking it on my stomach just to see, "If I push that hard enough, where is that going to kill me? Do I push it in my heart? If I put it in my stomach I might still survive." I started watching violent films, where they slit your thing. And I remember getting a cord once and putting it around my neck and seeing how tight I could pull it. And unfortunately those memories... Isn't it funny? I can't remember the walking and some of the things that I did, but clear as crystal I can remember all that.

I can remember looking in the mirror. I could see my face, and it's horrendous. And I just couldn't understand what I'd done wrong, where I'd gone wrong. And I felt like I was the only person in the world this has happened to. Everyone else had their nice lives. Facebook had just started, and a few other things. Hadn't started, but I was never one for social media. And it's like, "Oh, look at our lives. Aren't we great? Look what we're having for tea." And it's like my life wasn't like that. So again, I'm like, "Why is everyone really having this fun that I used to feel and love life, and now I feel like this?"



So I made a plan. I thought, "Well, I'm not going to jump off a bridge. Too scared to do that." And then of course that's another thing. "You can't even do that. You can't even jump off a bridge. You can't even stab yourself. You can't do this. You can't even hang yourself. What's wrong with you? You're just absolutely..." sorry for swearing, but, "You're fucking useless." That's just what I used to tell myself. So I really was no good to anybody, but yet I was still functioning.

It's a bit like, I read Matthew Perry's book recently, and also Dick Van Dyke. They were both... they were both alcoholics but they were functioning alcoholics, especially Dick Van Dyke. I watched something on him when I was drinking heavy to try and spur myself on. He had an interview years ago. So when he was making Mary Poppins and stuff, he'd never drink in the day but he would get absolutely out off his head at night and then go back to work. And this is what I was doing. In the day, I was awful and miserable. And I would drink and I would hate myself and stuff like that. But at night, when I saw my partner or saw family or friends, I would be Mr. Happy, and everything's great.

So I was a functioning depressive, if that's a thing. So after all that I'm feeling absolute useless. I thought, right. "Okay, I'll make a plan. Do you know what? The easiest thing to do, is to take pills." I'd seen it on programs. I'd Googled it. I'd looked at how many pills would probably kill you. And I thought three packets of paracetamols, and then found out that you can't buy three packets of paracetamols from... I'm talking about big packs.

So all I did was I made a plan. It was going to be 9:00 on, I can't remember what day it was. It was near the beginning of March. I think it was March 5th, which is funny because lots of males in between 35 and 44 are the biggest target of male suicide and they do it January, February, March. So that fits exactly on what happened to me.

Laura Graham: What year was this? Do you remember?

Paul Marshall: 2010, I think.

Laura Graham: And so you were what age then?

Paul Marshall: 14 years ago. 34. And it's horrible because on the day that I'd tried to take my life was when my nephew was born. So I'll always remember it for that. So I went to a shop and then went to another shop. Went back

and then, "Right, this is it." I remember having a few beers the night before and I thought... I stuck on my favorite film or I watched something, I can't remember what it was. But I didn't go around people to tell them goodbye or anything. I thought it was better just to go.

So I looked in the fridge. I thought, "What can I drink these pills with?" And there was a couple of bottles of Sunny Delight, which is really funny because Sunny Delight is the one thing that probably saved me. So I started drinking Sunny Delight and just started popping these pills. And I took 72 in total. I wanted to do it properly if I'm not going to be here. And it was so simple. It was so easy. And I was just taking these, popping these pills and drinking. It was simple. It wasn't hard at all. Two or three at a time, just glugging it down. And then I remember feeling fuzzy and my head started to spin a bit, and I thought, "Okay, well, this is it."

And then I remember I took the last paracetamol and thought my stomach was going absolutely insane because I'd drunk like two two liters of Sunny Delight. And I remember falling onto the rug, and then I looked up on the fireplace and there was a picture, there was a picture of my son, my boy. And all in a split second I thought, "Shit, what have I done? What have I done?" And I started vomiting this Sunny Delight everywhere. And I remember reaching up for the phone. And my face was in the rug where all my sick was. And I knocked over my son's picture and I grabbed the phone. I pressed 999 and I started to speak to someone, and that's all I remember. I passed out.

And then what happened was, the next thing I do was I have this thing of laying in an ambulance and people about, and then I was in hospital. So I don't know if I had a conversation with them or told them where I lived or not, or they knew where I was by the phone call. But they came. Apparently they kicked the door down, they got me, put me in the hospital, and took me to the hospital. And then I woke up.

And I still remember I remember waking up and thought, "Oh, for fuck's sake." I can laugh about it now because it's... but I'm like, "I can't even do that. That was supposed to be it." And then I didn't realise it then, but obviously if I'd have had water I don't think I'd be here today. I think it would've done it. I think it was Sunny... they said the Sunny Delight, it made me sick so I threw up lots of the paracetamols. But I think if I'd have took it with water I don't think I'd be here. So you could say Sunny Delight saved my life. You could say that.

I've never touched it again. I don't know if you can still buy it. I've never seen it. My son and Sunny Delight, that's the two things that stopped me to do it, and thank God it did. But again, when I came out I was still depressed. I was still like, "Oh, for fuck's sake. What have I done? I've not done it." And I remember, in absolute anger... again, it's funny but I was so distraught and so angry that I ran at a window in the hospital and tried to throw myself out. Of course they've got triple bloody glazing.

I bounced off it and landed in some bloke's bed and landed on him. And he was like, "Oh, what's going on here?" And it's just like... and of course I've got... and he's mad. And he's, "What's he doing?" And it was just like... I can laugh about now but I thought, "I can't even do this. I can't even chuck myself out a window." And then anyway, they did some tests and put me on a drip and did this and did that. And I just didn't know what I was going to do. So I remember taking... so when they gave me, they had food. I took a couple of knives. They were quite blunt but I thought I'd my wrists then. One of the nurses found that I had a knife. I put it in my bag. Why was I hauled into this center? Because I might just try and... And then they realised that I need to go to a hospital for mentally ill people. So there was a hospital that had just literally been built that year in Northampton.

So I went to hospital and then realised quite quickly that no one's going to really help me here. They put lots of activities on the stuff, but they're just here to medicate me and just monitor me. But I didn't want to be medicated and monitored. I wanted to talk to someone and say, "What do I do now?" So I'd speak to the nurses and they'd just be like... I'd speak to the psychiatrist. I remember one of the psychiatrists, he didn't even look up. He asked me some questions. He said, "How are you feeling today, Paul? I've had a look into your thing. You might have personality disorder. I'm not sure yet." So there was no, "How are you feeling? What's going on? How is this for you? Why do you feel like this? Why are you in this situation?" I still didn't know. And then this was years later... I have to write this down so I can remember it perfectly.

But years later I heard a Neil Diamond song. And when I first heard it I just started crying my eyes out because I'd realised Neil Diamond had therapy and he wasn't listened to either. And it's this very famous song called I Am, I Said. And the lyrics are, "I am, I said to no one there. No one heard at all, not even the chair. I am, I cried. I am, said I, I am lost and I can't even say why. That just leaves me lonely still." And it's beautiful. It's a beautiful song. And those lyrics, that was it. That's

exactly how I felt. I'm lost. I couldn't even say how the hell this has happened to me. What am I doing? And no one was listening. No one was... I remember sitting in the ward and just bawling my eyes out. And she just went, "Oh, let me go and get you a tissue."

And it was just like, how am I going to get through this? I remember sleeping. They used to shine a light on you every half an hour like you're in some sort of prison. They'd strip me of all razors, I couldn't shave. So I looked like when Forrest Gump went running. He's got that big... it was just crazy. Everyone had beards in there, and I'm not surprised because no one shaved. And it was just like, even the shower facility. There was just like a hole that water used to come out when... I'm like, "This is a really modern building." But they said, "Well, no. Everyone's mentally ill and stuff like that, so they could hang themselves." Well, I get that. But I said, "But some of us are just trying to get better. I've not committed a crime or anything, but that's how I feel." And I'm like, "Is this really what goes on?"

So I spent about two or three weeks there and just hated it. They used to have this big, massive window. I don't know if they've still got it. And they would monitor you. I'm not having a go at the people. They're doing a job. They've been told that's what they do. They monitor or they medicate or they do something. But the whole fucking system's wrong, because what good is that for anybody?

Some people might've got some help and the psychiatrist might listen to them, but they certainly didn't listen to me. And I've heard many, many, many, many, many, many people who have been there and been to other secondary mental hospitals and they've not listened. And this is why I'm in the job I'm in now, because they don't listen and they don't help. And if it's there to monitor and stuff, well, good. But it doesn't do anybody any good.

So I used to think they obviously think we're mad so I'll just act mad. So that's what I used to do. So they had this big goldfish bowl where they'd look at you. I just used to go up to the window and push my face up against it. And just do silly little walks in front of them and just go, "Do you know what? If this is what you're monitoring then monitor this." And they said, "Are you feeling all right?" I was like, "Yeah, I'm fine. Just being me, really. Is that all right?"

I remember getting a bit arsed, too, with them because it's just like, "Can I go now? 'No. No, you can't.'" And I remember there being where the doors... because the doors were always locked, so you couldn't go anywhere. You weren't allowed to go anywhere. I couldn't go for a walk for four days. And there was a vending machine on the other side of the doors.

Cheers. Thanks for that. So, "Can I have chocolate bar? 'Well, no. We need someone to come with you and unlock the door and go to the vending.' Okay." Went like, "Oh, I don't know." They would back off. Then they were right back in a couple of hours. "Yeah, but I want a chocolate bar now. 'Well, you can't.'" I'm like, "It's a fucking chocolate bar that I want. I just want... I'm not trying to be difficult. Can I give you some money? 'Oh no, I can't do because I'm monitoring this. And we can't unlock the door. And this person can't do that.'" And I'm just like, "This is..." mad is the wrong word because we're in this business, but that's how it is. It's ludicrous.

But I am sure that they have helped a hell of a lot of people, so I can't... I'm not talking for everybody. I'm just talking about my own personal experience. And I'm sure people will be very grateful to the service they received there, so I don't want to come over as, what's the word? Just don't want to come over as being all criticised. But maybe I just wasn't ill enough. Maybe they just dealt with really ill people, but I still needed help. I needed support. And like I said, no one was listening so I just didn't know what to do.

So they kept me in for three weeks and then just went, "Okay, we think you'll be right now." And just, what's the word? Discharged me. Said, "Right. You can go home now. You can go back to your own life and someone will be in touch. You've got an appointment with a psychiatrist in three weeks. And if you want a bit of counseling, we'll have an office and they'll be in touch as well." And I just went home and just sat in despair and went, "What the fuck am I going to do?"

Anyway, I did have medication. It was difficult because medication, as many people might know, antidepressants, they take you down and you go back up. And when I started to go back up I thought, "Right, I'm going to have to do this myself because no one's going to help me." So I had a good, long chat to myself. I said, "Paul, do you want to get better or do you want to just finish it?" And I thought, "No, I want to get better." I had a lot of explaining to do to my son's mother, obviously, because I'd gone

through all this. And obviously I had mentally ill depression, smashed all over my card. Am I good enough to be a father and be in charge of a child? It took its time. And I said... I don't need to go into that but it all worked out happily ever after, if anyone's interested. And it did, and it was great. And I got a great relationship with everybody, luckily for me.

So the greatest thing is I thought, "Okay, what am I going to do?" I didn't fancy just going back to drums or anything. I thought, I can't do that. I remember going out to a job center and talking about benefits and stuff. I thought, because I need some money. I'd never signed on in my life. I didn't know what that was. So I got a few pennies together and then I just went for a walk. And then I just happened to walk past a volunteer center. And it said in there... I just nipped in there and just started saying, "I've been quite poorly with mental health and this stuff." And they go, "Oh well, have you been down to Mind?" I was like, "Mind?" I said, "What's that, then?" They go, "It's a mental health charity." And I was like, "No. Okay. All right, thanks." And just didn't think anything of it.

And then I remember, I think it was like two days later. I thought, "Do you know what? I'll go go down there and just see what it is." So I remember going through the door and speaking to a lady. Jenny, her name was. And she said, "Hello. How can I help you?" And I just said, "Well, I..." I didn't go into much detail but I just told her I'd suffered with my mental health and I was feeling really low, and I'm waiting to see a psychiatrist, and they don't really listen and they don't that. And she said, "Oh. Well, that's no good. Come and tell me about it." And she sat there and she listened. She made me a cup of tea and then she gave me some suggestions about how I could benefit my life, how I might feel better.

And I was like, "Wow, this is amazing. This person's actually listened to what I've said." And this ain't costing anything. She's just given her time for 10 minutes to speak to someone like me who... and I just thought, "Wow, that's amazing." And I just happened to... I remember looking over her shoulder and I could see lots of people. And they were cooking and stuff like that. And they were making tea, and people chat. I said, "What is this?" She goes, "It's just just a drop-in open service. It's like a day center for people who struggle with mental health." And I was like, "Oh, okay." I said, "So how long is it?" She's says, "It's Mind. We're part of the Mind franchise." And I said, "Oh." I said, "Sorry for being a bit naive, love." I said, "I don't really get it. I've just obviously suffered." And

so anyway, I had that chat. And that lady stayed with me in my mind for a good week or two.

And then I thought, "Paul, you are quite bubbly. You're quite outgoing." So I went back and had a chat with her and said, "Okay, do you have volunteers or anything like that?" And she said, "Oh, we're always open for volunteers, stuff like that." I said, "Okay." She goes, "But we don't get many males." So I said, "Oh, why is that?" And she goes, "Well, males don't really talk about their issues." And I said, "Yeah, I can identify with that." I said, "I've kept everything under wraps, a secret, for a very long time." I said, "But I've had it. I've been through it. I still don't quite understand what happened," but I'd obviously done a bit more thinking then and I'd got round that I wasn't a horrible, shitty person, and I wasn't nasty. And I'd just got myself into a big hole and all I had to do... the ironic thing is all I had to do was just say, "I'm in trouble. Can someone help me?"

If I'd have said that I wouldn't have had to go through those couple of years of sheer hell. And it was hell. It's tough, isn't it. All you've got to do is say, "I need some help. I need some support." That's it. Five, six words, rather than going through two years of trauma. Crazy when you look at it now. And I still see people do it now and I'm like, "Ugh." But I get it. That's why I think I went to Mind and I said, "Do you want a volunteer?" Because I get it. I totally understand how that feels. I didn't think I'd go through it. I didn't believe in it. I didn't believe in depression. I thought it was just hocus pocus, that it was just something that other people get, ill people or whatever. But no. I said, "Okay." She goes, "You just need to chat to a few members."

And I remember them having a pool table. They had a pool table upstairs, and that was right on my street. So I started a pool team up and we just started playing pool. And I'd sit with people in the cafe and I would have a laugh and a joke with them, and it just built. It built from there. I can say now that that was November 2011 that started. And now in 2024, as I sit here, I am now manager of this organisation at Northampton Mind that I came as a volunteer. So it's quite a journey, how I walked through that door and just started playing pool with some chaps. And now I'm actually running services, trying to make a difference, trying to support people as much as I can. And I still, 13, 14 years later I still have got that drive.

I still know how I felt. I still know that people get lost and they just feel emptiness. And I get it. I get it, get it, get it. And that's why I'm still here today, because I understand and I will help anybody. And that's what we're here for. You hear the stories still. It's still 13, 14... it's not changed. People have said, "No one listens. No one that, no one that. But Mind does. People listen to me."

And I instill that in my staff, volunteers, students, whoever it is. If they've come for the 50,000 time to a group or if they're here for the first time, it doesn't matter. They need our support, we should be here to give it to them. And I'm instilled with that approach today, and I'm really proud of what I've done. So after being a volunteer, I think it was three months later, there was a support worker, part-time, community worker. So I went for that and I got it. So that was great.

And I think I was lucky because I'm just good with people. Naturally people approach me. I'm quite warm, bubbly. And I think just having that lived experience, people like that. I think if I said, "Well, I don't really know much about mental health. I read a book once." No one's going to be interested in that. But because I've been through it... I never told service users or people my entire story, but I said, "I get it. I know how you feel." They go, "Do you?" I said, "Yeah, it's happened to me." And they want to know then. And I said, "Well, this isn't about me. This is about you. I'm here for you. But I'm just letting you know that it's all right." And they go, "Okay." And then they open up and talk.

So I had a job, and it was great and I absolutely loved it. It's a very different world now because we're in a different age and we're in a different time. We've had COVID and all sorts of things have happened. But we used to go on holidays. I used to take them on day trips three or four times a year. We used to go out to the Cotswolds, we used to go to London, we went to the seashores a lot. A lot of our service users, I remember having... I'll never forget it. There was me and two other service users and they said, "Paul, can we go and stick our feet in the sea and have a little paddle?" And I was like, "Yeah, of course." And this chap was in his 60s, I think. Yeah, he must've been in his 60s. And we went and we took our shoes and socks off and went in the sea. And I was just kicking my feet about and going, "Oh, this is lovely."

And I turned across and he was crying. Tears were literally rolling down his face. I can still see it now and it still chokes me up. And he goes, "Paul, this is amazing." He goes, "I've never seen the sea. I've never seen



the sea. I've never had the sea on my feet and it's the most beautiful feeling I've ever had." And I tried not to get upset because it was such... I was like, "Wow." And here's me, Mister fricking I traveled to Europe because I'm a drummer. And I've done this and I've seen this and I've done that. And here's a person who's never seen the sea. Never felt sea salt water on their feet. And I was just like... it was sad but yet it was beautiful.

But I got a real hit from it and thought, "Wow, I'm going to do this job. I'm going to go to the top. I want to be manager and I'm going to..." No disrespect to anybody that was above me, but I just felt like I could give something. I bided my time. That's why I had to wait for the openings, but I knew it was always going to come. People leave jobs after a while because, I get it. And even now, in these days, I still do. We've just done a... we did a sports day, for goodness' sake, which is something. Just a bit of fun. And we did stuff, and we've messed about. And we've gone on a couple of trips and stuff. And it's bringing back some of the old stuff.

But the feeling that people get, it's not all about anxiety courses and depression courses and educating people. Yes, there's a big thing of that. There's lots of work that's done. But just that human... I'm not a wordy person but it's just that human connection that you have with someone who is feeling down, feeling low. And yet let's go and have a bag of chips and go and put our feet in the sea. Why not? And they'll never forget that. And he never did. And I've never forgotten that, all these years later. And it's the beauty of the job that we do.

And I'm thankful to all the people who have given me a chance as well, because I've got no qualifications. I've done leadership management level three now and things like that because you have to do it to give your job a bit of clarity, I suppose. But I just go on instincts and gut and I just feel I know what people want. And I listen to issues and I listen to what the people want. If it was up to me we'd be a whole different thing, but there's funding and there's politics, there's blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. But we can do the simple little things, and that's the most important sometimes. And we forget that.

So it's been one hell of a journey. I feel like I've had two lives. I've had my rock and roll life and now I've had my mental health life. And who knows? I don't know what the future brings. I would like to go back to drumming. Not in a massive way, but I've still got my drum kit. I still play. I have gone back and done the odd shows, and think about getting

the band and stuff, but I would never do it on a massive level. Because I do miss it. It's what I do.

But obviously when I was volunteering and stuff like that, then everything became good, I met a wonderful partner who I'm still with now. I've got a beautiful stepdaughter, who I'll call my own. And I've got two. I've obviously got my lad who saved me and I've got my beautiful daughter as well. So I've got three wonderful kids and we're one big, happy family, who I absolutely adore and would do anything for. And they've been so supportive in this role as well, especially during COVID. I remember having Christmas day, I think it was 2020 because most people got put on furlough and stuff, and there was only a few of us working. And we had to get police letters and stuff to come to the phones because we had to keep answering the phones, because there was people who needed support. People were scared, people were lonely, and stuff like that.

And we did a couple of activities online and stuff, and I answered the phones. And I used to drive down to the local food bank and pick up loads of food and just take it in my car and leave it on people's doorsteps and back away and go, "There's the food." And they were so grateful. It was beautiful. I spent a lot of time doing that during COVID. But I remember Christmas day in 2020, and I just thanked my family and just said, "Look, it's been tough and I've been working. And you've all been home, and you've always been worried about me because I shouldn't be going out there." Because we didn't know what this COVID was.

And my youngest, she went, "It's okay, daddy. You're helping people with poorly heads, and that's okay. You're doing a great thing and we love you." And I was like, "Aw." So I was like, "Okay, so I have the support of them and they know how passionate I am about mental health." I get told off sometimes because I go over my hours and I do a bit too much, and I want to do this and want to do that. But it's just who I am. It's just what I want to do because it just boils down to it. I get it.

And I wish I knew. I still don't know what the answer is. I was still lost, and I still don't really get how it happened. But now people can't shut me up, as you probably heard for the last... stuff like this. I can talk for England now. And I can tell people how I'm feeling and I can tell people what I'm doing. And if I'm feeling sad, I feel sad. If I feel happy, I feel happy. And that's it. And it just makes life beautiful. I've got very open.

Open with anybody. I'll talk to anybody about anything. It's interesting. If I look back at that lad who was on his drum kit or having a cigar with Jim Carter and go, "You're going to be a manager of Northampton Mind, and you're going to take your own life." I'd be like, "What? Get out of it. Get out of it. What a load of rubbish." But yet here I am, and it's good.

Laura Graham: What advice would you give to anyone who was going through a difficult time, especially men, especially in the age group that you've mentioned? What advice would you offer?

Paul Marshall: You've just got to tell people how you're feeling. You've got to tell people how you're feeling. It's all about... it's okay to talk. I think the one thing that I've learned here and how we do... especially when I was a support worker, was if you sit down like this, like we are today, and go, "All right. All right. All right, mate. Yeah, I'm fine. Yeah, I'm all right." They say, "Well, we did it well. Mrs said I've been a bit down," or, "Doctors have told me to come down here. Well, I'm all right." No. Okay, let's go for a walk. Let's go play pool. Let's go and do something.

That's it. As soon as you do that they can tell you their life story. So if someone wants to come to Mind and talk, don't think you're going to be sat in a room in the council and you're going to be judged and this and that and the other. It's okay. Places like Mind, there's other good charities out there that also do support.

You just talk it through. And it's okay to ask for help. We still live in that thing, the male should be the dominant species. And we go to work and we roll our sleeves up, and everything's going to be all right, and look after the family. And we've got to pull our socks up and be brave, and stuff like that. It still happens. I see it all the time still, but it's okay. It's not a weakness. I wish I could have gone back. If I had had my time again, I wish I could have said, "I need some help." But I probably wouldn't be the person I am today, but I have moments where I go, "Oh, shit, all I had to do was..." I said earlier, what I had to do is say six words, but just couldn't find it. But it's okay. And there's people out there that will help. There's people out there that do listen, and you can have the right support.

Sometimes there's no answers. Some of the best conversations I've had with people over the years is you just talk it through and you just listen. And they've come in to you and they've cried their eyes out, and they feel like they're at the lowest step. And they've talked it through. And

you've sat there for half an hour and you've listened. You've probably not said too much. And you think, "I've not really helped."

And all of a sudden they look up at you and they smile. Their shoulders relax and they go, "Thanks ever so much. I can't tell you how better I feel." And sometimes it's like, "Okay, life's a bit shit but look at you." And they go, "Yeah." And then they come back next week and they go, "I was talking to the Mrs, or I talking to somebody about this and I told them that I didn't want to do that. I don't like mascarpone in pasta." It could be something stupid like that. I've had that before, "And it's okay. I ain't got to eat it." It's even little simple things. Or, "I don't like the way you talk to me. I don't like..." and it's just like I had the confidence to do that because we had had that chat. And it's just about saying, "It's okay." It sounds really simple, and it is simple, really, even though it's tough. I'm contradicting myself, but it's easier than what you think.

And I think the great thing as well, as we're probably coming to the end of this chat, is that when I was hospitalised, my family didn't get it. My dad couldn't talk about it. He just didn't get it. My brother was so angry at me for being his best mate. Goes, "You call me your best mate and yet you're locked up in his place." He goes, "What the hell are you thinking? Why did you not talk to me?" He hated me. And that's okay. I get it. But he forgave me quite quickly and we talked it through, and he sort of go, "Okay. I get it. I get it." And our relationship blossomed.

And then my dad was always saying, "Are you going to go back to the drumming now?" And I was like, "No, dad. Do you know what? I'm going to go with this mental health thing." And he didn't really get it. And just like, "Okay. All right. Well, I think you're wasting. I think you should be back on stage."

I was like, "Yeah. I know that, dad." I said, "But I didn't feel well when I did it." He goes, "It'll be all right." I was like, "No." He didn't really get it, but we had a beautiful moment a couple of years ago and he said... I think it's when I became manager. And he actually said, "I'm really proud of you, son." And he put his arm around me and said, "I think I get it. You're good with people, aren't you? You're making a difference." And he goes, "I just want the best for you, and I always thought rock and roll was, but I see what you're doing and your mom tells me all the time what you're doing, and this and that. And I've started to listen more and I sort of get it."

And it's funny, we had that conversation and then we just... I don't know. He talked more about his feelings, which was just very strange for him. And then he passed away last year. He got pancreatic cancer. It was quite quick. But my dad was like, "Oh, it is what it is. I've had a great life. I ain't going to stop drinking now anyway, so sod it." And I've still not had the heart to take it off my phone, but the last text he sent to me was, "I love you, Paul" with a kiss. And that was it. And he sent me that the day before he died, because he was really poorly in the end. And he sent me this text. It wasn't the day before he died. It was the day before. He started to go really fast downhill and it was a week later that he died, which is beautiful. I still miss him, obviously, but he got it in the end.

And it's sort of like I'm just glad he got it. That's all. I'm just glad that he didn't have that front... I thought if I can change my dad's attitude just a little bit, then that's got to be a plus. If I can do that to my dad, imagine what we could do to any males that want to walk through the door and stuff. Sorry I've gone off on a bit of-

Laura Graham: Thank you.

Paul Marshall: ... a family thing there, but yeah.

Laura Graham: And hopefully if people listen to this in years to come, they'll be able to listen and see how much we've moved on in terms of men's mental health.

Paul Marshall: I hope so.

Laura Graham: So all of these conversations that we're having now will hopefully have a big impact in the future. So thank you very much for sharing all of that today.

Paul Marshall: Oh, it's an absolute pleasure. Thank you. And I just hope that anybody listening, if they even get a little bit out of it, then that's helped.