



Behind the Smile Transcribed Audio

Henrique Beirao

Hello. My name is Henrique Beirao, but I'm also known as the fabulous and gorgeous Rhubarb Rouge, and I am a voice of hope.

I moved from Brazil to New Zealand when I was 13. My mom got a job and met a Kiwi. The job worked, the Kiwi didn't.

And it was just such a culture shock because in Brazil, I was in a co-ed school. You don't have a uniform, you have, like, the school's t-shirt and you can wear whatever you want, and you have your friends, and I was starting to feel cool. And then you move to someplace like New Plymouth, where I go to an all-boys school. And it was at that time that I realised that I was also gay.

Dealing with knowing who I am but not being able to really be myself and also being in a total different country where I didn't speak English. But I don't think anyone knew that I was struggling when I was 13 with my mental health because I'd always been the social butterfly. My whole life I've been very good at hiding how I truly feel. But what I noticed about my mental health growing up that was changing, was a lot of anxiety. I just noticed the need to eat to have to deal with my feelings.

And the more you become of an outsider, the more it becomes uncomfortable, the more you you need to seek the comfort in something. And the older you get, the comfort kind of changes. It wasn't until I think I was about 15 that I started struggling with it and that's when my mum was like, 'Okay, something's going on.' And then I think that's the first time I went to the doctors and they started prescribing me on antidepressants.

So, that's the first time I kind of reached out and then I tried suicide for the first time when I was 17. And I think it's dealing with my sexuality and then a lot of things happening in my head and being, you know, the outsider teenager, not having friends in high school. So, when I was 17 and I tried the first time, that's when I started doing a little bit more therapy.

Performing and theatre, that kind of stuff, always been my escape. And I remember from being a young age, probably a huge Madonna fan and dancing in the bedroom in front of a mirror has been a little bit of the escape of having that moment of like, 'I'm free, I can just be myself.' And I think that's why I probably reached out to drag.

Drag has given me so many opportunities that it's changed my life. The opportunity to do my own sold-out show at the Sydney Opera House, to travel with it and meet different people, to be

VOICES *of hope*

on Shortland Street. RuPaul once said, 'You should use your strength and drag on your everyday life.' And for me, it's not being ashamed of being who you are and just being yourself.

I think the main thing, if anyone is dealing with mental health, or is worried about their mental health, or someone else's mental health, is it's okay to ask for help. You shouldn't feel bad about feeling the way you feel. Just ask for help.