



Behind the Smile Transcribed Audio

Vikram Selvaraj

Kia ora, I am Vikram, and I'm a voice of hope. The relationship that I had with my mum is very special and, being the first son and being a mummy's boy, the bond that we had is a very unique experience. Closer to her time that she was leaving the earth, she started becoming my best friend. And losing her at that stage, that kinda impacted my mental health, and I kinda gave up on life, basically. And I gave up on hope. I gave up on love. I gave up on communicating with people.

Mum promised to be with me the whole journey and- and support me and everything, and losing her at a crucial age, at the age of 12 years old. It's- it was hard to take and it was hard to not talk about it because coming from an Asian country, it's hard to talk about mental health. And coming from that society, I've- I was never given an opportunity to share how I really felt.

Because I was not able to cope with those emotions, there were I- I even thought of even ending my life. I don't see any reason for living, and I don't see myself sharing with anyone. I can't share with anyone. No one understands my pain. So what's the point of living? And, like, it especially triggered me even more when I lost my dad.

Coming to New Zealand, that's when I started accepting my pain. I started accepting my sorrows and- and I just saw a different version of me. I started loving things. I started having hope. I started having courage, and I actually started reaching out to my fellow colleagues, my lecturers, my supervisors, my friends, and that kinda brought another side of me that shows that it's okay not to be okay, and- and people will accept you.

Hope is the fundamental component in my life. Hope gave me two things that I thought I- I wanted to share, which was courage and love. Courage to step out, courage to step forward because I could not do that. And love, I- I thought I would not be able to love anymore. I thought I won't be loved, but the hope that I had in my- in my journey, the hope that I the people had in me, gave me that love, gave me that courage that has brought me to where I am today.

When I got my dog, Tiger, that changed my life. You know, when I come back home, when I see him just jumping around and just being excited, the- the joy that I get and- and the joy that I've given him in his life, in his dog years, the bond that we have, I realised that you only live once. You need to live in that moment.

My favourite place to go and have my- my me time would be the beach. I'm bringing my dog for a walk, more than a dog, he's actually my son, you know. And, like, I will just talk to my dad and

VOICES *of hope*

he will be looking at me as his son, and I'm bringing my son for a walk. It's like a- a cycle. I just feel connected with them, especially when I'm near to the ocean.

I just want people to know that they're not alone in their journey. There are people who always wanting to see you smile, always there to help you but we just need to ask, need to seek, and just be vulnerable and- and share your problems and- and- and just be yourself. Hope is very important in their life and hope is something that is beyond words that you can describe on- on how much impact it it can have on someone, and I'm living proof.

Hope is what has brought me to where I am, and I want them to know that, yeah, hope is just phenomenal. Just hope. Just hope, hope, and hope.