[Theme music]

Hannah 0:00 Hello and welcome back to Sharing things. I'm Hannah, a fourth year Edinburgh University student and your new host for season six. But before we jump into a new round of fascinating and heart warming conversations, this episode offers the chance to pause and reflect on the vast array of wisdom and insight shared by our previous guests. Pulling from a variety of episodes over the last five seasons, we focus on the theme, making spaces, liberally interpreted of course. I hope you enjoy and maybe even stumble across the words you've been needing to hear.

Amalie 0:39 You touched on kind of the feeling of being alive and stuff. What do you think specifically makes you feel alive?

Rachel 0:45 I'm sort of a bit embarrassed to say this, but it is my faith. So there's this sense of being connected to something bigger. And that can be triggered when I look at the mountains, like on the train ride here, and there was full moon, and there's just that awe--

Amalie 0:58 Yeah.

Rachel 0:59 --of, whether you call it nature, I call it God, that just bigger thing. Or-- yeah, it's in the still silent moments, because I meditate or pray in the morning, and it's those moments otherwise, I would rush through life. You know, you talked about being busy, Ellen, I would just go from one exciting, brilliant experience or awful, stressful moment to the next without ever really getting that--

Ellen 1:20 Yeah.

Rachel 1:21 --feeling--

Ellen 1:22 Yeah..

Rachel 1:22

--of stopping.

Ellen 1:23 --processing. Yeah, and reflecting.

Rachel 1:23 Being alive and being in awe. Basically being in awe of the miracle of wonderful, awful, mixed up, beyond our comprehension life. Because we can't box it and explain it.

Ellen 1:36 No, that is so interesting, because that answer is so similar to my answer in a very different way, because as someone who's not religious. As soon as you said, what makes you feel alive, I was thinking about community, I'm thinking about people. And it is that overarching sense of belonging, and there being something there that you have, and whether that's from God, whether that's from people, whether that's from whatever else you believe in.

Rachel 2:02 For some people, it's a belief system of politics.

Ellen 2:05 Yes, yeah.

Rachel 2:05 Or campaigning for the environment. But, yeah, community and people.

Ellen 2:08 Community and you know-- and I think about, you know, the best times that I have, and it's times where I'm with a group of people, and you know, I think back to-- it was disability history month in November, so I barely got 10 days of it before I was-- nearly died [laughs]. And we had a lovely mixer at the beginning of that month and it was supposed to go on from 5 until 7pm and I got home at about half 10 having drunk a bit and eaten a meal and wasn't expecting to have such a wonderful, productive evening with these people that either, I knew and were friends with, or I'd never met before, or I kind of only half knew, you know, speaking about these big issues, and it felt like a productive rant of like, here's all of the things that I think are bad, that you know, ableism and the problems that we have with the institutions that we're in, but here's what we can do about it. And we haven't done any of that yet, but we will.

Rachel 3:10 And you know, you're not alone.

Ellen 3:11 Yes.

Rachel 3:12 I think it's that real contact. I'm a counsellor and a coach, and we talked about that true contact, when you're being yourself and talking about what matters rather than just--

Ellen 3:19 Yeah, it's so lovely to know that people have the same problems as you. Ultimately, we'd like the problems not to exist. But having that connection is just so important. And I think that there are pockets of the university community that I just feel so attached to that have made my time in Edinburgh what it is, you know. The classes are great and getting a degree is lovely. I would love to graduate, that would be nice. But--

Rachel 3:47 No, it's the connections with people.

Ellen 3:49 Yeah.

Rachel 3:49 I was thinking what do I remember from my year in Edinburgh, and it was the people that came to mind first.

Ellen 3:54 I didn't quite realise that I didn't love Aberdeen and I didn't get that sense of community there. I-- shout out to my friends at Aberdeen, I do still love you.

Rachel 4:03 I think there's something about leaving your home community and finding your own one where you're yourself. You're not the daughter of your parents. And you can reinvent yourself.

Amalie 4:12 They're your chosen family.

Ellen 4:13 Chosen family, I love that.

Rachel 4:15 And then I think when we return to our hometown, we see it with different eyes and appreciate it but we need to leave it.

Ellen 4:20 Yeah, you need to spread metaphorical wings.

Rachel 4:22 Yeah, yeah, to come back. What you said about belonging, I think we all have a deep need to belong and to connect and I run menopause cafes. And again, it's different because it's not really a disability, but it can feel like that. And the things that people say after it are 'now I know I'm not alone'. So even though the challenges haven't gone--

Ellen 4:42 No, it's just a 'okay'-- it's, it's normalising the things that you struggle with. And once they become normalised they, they seem smaller, and they seem more manageable. And there's hope.

Rachel 4:56 Hope is what we need.

Ellen 4:58 Yeah.

[Theme music]

SJ 5:04 When I think about this pendant, because it was brought about by the 10th guru, when the castle was formed, and the castle was made to protect those who were oppressed, and if you were to see a Sikh with a turban and a beard, you were meant to feel safe, because that was someone that can protect you someone that was sort of on your side, and I feel like something that I think, you know, people who I would never understand saying hello to me in Punjabi, who maybe would not know to do that, if I didn't have my hair, or I didn't look, the way I look, it's sort of, it kind of warms my heart a little bit. And it's nice, especially in a place in Edinburgh, where there's not too many of us. You see one and you do the signal, there's a thing-- [laughs]. I'm rambling on here, I'm sorry, absolutely set me off-- there's as a, there's a video that me and my older brother watched, and it was called "The Secret Singh Nod". And what it is, this is almost like this little code that Sikh people have with each other. If you see a guy with a turban, or a Sikh woman, you can usually tell if they were the bangle, you sort of given a little nod and you keep walking and I'll be walking with my friends, they'll be like, do you know that person? I'm like, spiritually, spiritually, I know that person [laughter]. And I know what you've been through. But yeah, no, it's, it's nice to be part of a community, even if it's sort of spread all around the world, and quite far from where the community actually is sort of in Punjab, but yeah, I'm really proud to be Sikh, so that's kind of why I brought my necklace in today.

Amalie 6:22 Yeah, yeah, yeah.

SJ 6:23 Even though I'm only 19, I do feel like I found a lot about myself, because of the way I look. And you say, you have to go through certain things to grow as a person, I feel like you experience certain things on the playground or at school, down the street or whatever, and that-- either you either run from it, so a lot of boys-- Sikh boys and girls have cut their hair and things like this because they want to mask that identity and they don't feel comfortable. And that's completely understandable. For me, I kind of walked into it, grabbed it with two hands, it was like this is who I am. This is what I'm going to be like and this is the person I'm going to be and that's really important finding your identity.

Mona 6:57 Did you ever feel you weren't in Edinburgh? Not because the medical school, but just because there are so few Sikhs here and you would stand out because you are visibly Sikh. Do you ever feel 'ah I wish I was somewhere it was easier to be a Sikh'?

SJ 7:08 A few times when I go back home I realise, and I see-- and my, my best friend from back home is Sikh and we have so much in common because we've had such a similar upbringing. It's like, you know instantly if you see a Sikh person that you have 60/70%--

Mona 7:25 You don't have to start from ABC.

SJ 7:27 --yeah, there's so much that you understand about each other. And even-- that's the same with even sort of people from South Asian backgrounds, and especially Indian backgrounds. Like, you share so much of an upbringing, because it's culturally, there's so many influences in how you're brought up and--

Mona 7:40 Absolutely.

SJ 7:41 --the way you are when you're young. But I think me, as I said before, I've always been kind of a free spirit. I don't really-- not really fussed about things like that anymore.

Mona 7:48 That's good. I think it's not till you have to take ownership of your faith, so you leave home, or you decide, well, what am I going to do with this faith? Not the faith that is within you, and that is your connection to God, but the faith that's visible, the faith that stands you out, but you decide then this is what's important to me, this isn't that important to me. I think for me, the UK in some ways, despite all the things that people go through, is a really easy place to live out your faith as well, despite the discrimination some people may face, despite the name calling, because I think after a while people realise that actually you stand for something, you stand for a belief or you stand for something principled, that they see it's not easy, you know, it's much easier to just blend in. But you can blend in as well as have your faith. I think this sense that it's got to be either or is actually a huge misnomer.

[Theme music]

Abrisham 8:49 It's interesting, because the authors of the book, I mean, they're fantastic, there's 52 amazing self identifying women in the book, who have kind of been like, hey man, I'm a dangerous woman, like it's all about me or like, this woman in history, who has been completely ignored, deserves to be given credit as dangerous, so that the idea of danger stems from a couple of lowbrow articles put out by the Daily Mail in around 2016 referring to first Shami Chakrabarti, former Head of Liberty, and then Nicola Sturgeon as 'the most dangerous woman in Britain', like inverted commas. Or like 'the most dangerous wee woman in politics'. I don't know, they throw the term around quite a bit about these quite powerful women, women with like, great status and ability to do stuff and challenge people and like, with the power to make a difference are being brandished as dangerous as if like they're a threat in some way. So I guess my answer to that would be to be dangerous, you should always be a threat. You should always be challenging an 18th century white male diplomat, I think, to be dangerous, you should always be doing something that wouldn't have been acceptable 100 years ago.

Srishti 9:58 I feel that in India, the very existence of being a woman, and doing what you think is right in your mind is being a dangerous woman. Because, of course, there are still a lot of traditional roles that are imposed on women. And I feel like there's less space for self determination. So I do feel that the very existence of doing what you think that you want to do for yourself is being dangerous. Because in that way, you challenge so many roles that are put on you or so many institutions that try to bring you down. And I feel that it's very different in the context of the East and the West, but I feel that it's so much more challenging to be a woman there, I feel that it's so much more also inspiring for me to see how women everyday fight against a lot of issues, and still are able to do so much. Yeah, I love the term dangerous women.

Abrisham 11:03 Got to reclaim it, that's what it's all about

Srishti 11:05 Yeah.

Abrisham 11:06 Do you mostly write in English then?

Srishti 11:08 Yes, yes. Because we are educated in English since a very young age. So I do write in English, mostly. I mean, our conversational language is also Hindi, my first language is Hindi. But I feel that we lose a lot of it because we're educated in English. Now that I look back, I want to reclaim my language and read literature in Hindi and start to write more in Hindi because a lot of the language is lost because you don't use it enough for English is more of an aspirational language, it's easy to find jobs., it's-- everything to do with it is better with English, because um... colonisation.

Abrisham 11:49 Exactly [laughter]. Big boss came in and said, 'you guys must speak like this now'.

Srishti 11:53 It's funny because of-- although we write in English, I use a lot of Hindi words in the middle because it makes it feel more authentic and more connected for people who would read it. It's hard sometimes to capture an experience in English, because it would be so typically Indian for me that maybe the language cannot capture it well enough as the language there good. But that is one of the struggles that all people who were colonised at some point face because they all have this other language that has been imposed for years and then they're probably like stuck in the middle, like, oh, I'm good at this, but I should be good at this. And now I don't know where to go.

Abrisham 12:41 Well, my family are from Iran. I mean, I was born and grew up in London, I've been in the UK my whole life. But I kind of see what you mean of that like, it's really upsetting to me that I don't speak Farsi. I go to Iran and can't communicate with people. And like, I love it there, I love my culture. I mean, it has its faults, of course, but the idea that that kind of 'English Englishness' prevails, I don't know.

[Theme music]

Udita 13:10 I've been in a leadership position for the last couple of years and technology, fundamentally, is quite male dominated. So you're definitely in the minority if you're a woman, you're definitely in the minority if you're non-white and also, if you're young, there's not a lot of young people. And by young I mean, below the age of 40, people in leadership positions within either technology or banking, right. So it's hard to find role models, I would say, and that is a bit of a challenge, because it's not something that affects you directly, or it doesn't affect your day to day. But when you think about it, it does seem to become this mental hurdle where you think, I'll never get that job, or I'll never get to that position because you don't ever see yourself reflected in like plus 15 years time. So I would say that that is a bit of an issue. The flip side is that I see a growth in engagement of diversity across, not just gender diversity, but just across the board, diversity in tech, because a lot has been done in terms of policies, and you know, putting a lot of things into practice to encourage more and more people from different backgrounds to get into it. But it's a work in progress and when I talk of role models, it's, it's something that if you set in motion now you'll see the results in like two decades time. So because those are the women or those are the people from other ethnicities, who will make it to leadership positions. And as we know, in banking, one of the, one of the reasons-- one of the contributing factors to the financial crash of 2007 was the fact that there was no diversity across the board. There was no difference of opinion and there was nobody saying, saying, 'no, we shouldn't do this and here's why'. And also, there is now research to show that businesses that are more diverse are actually more profitable. So I think, I would say that a lot is being done but there's, there's a way to go there still. And that would be probably one of the challenges that I've faced.

Beth 15:20 So I had this opportunity to go to Antarctica with 80 other women who were leaders in their fields from across the world. And we were selected, I was one of the women from Scotland that went, there was another lady from Scotland too. And we were there together, chosen because of our positions of influence or leadership, in whatever way that was, early career right the way through to people who were established in their careers as well. People who were interested and focused on sustainability in whatever shape or form that may be, and then we were-- and also the, the gender aspect as well about being female, that was part of it, too. And so we came together. And what that gave me apart from, you know, this fantastic experience of Antarctica and the people that I met along the way. But what it's left me with is this network of women that I would never have met otherwise, who are doing fantastic work across the world, in different fields, in different-- and so interdisciplinary work suddenly becomes a lot more possible, I can physically get in contact with them to establish research, to-- to just say, I'm feeling challenged by this, how would you react? What would you do? So there's a range of conversations that you can have. But what's important about that is not just that that influences me, it's that I can then look at students that I'm working with, I can recognise in others that perhaps they need to be connected to this as well. So the network isn't just for me to feel connected to others, it's actually about what can I do then when I'm in this position to support others. So whether it's understanding what it's like to juggle children and study and part time study and work or whatever experiences I've had, if I can help in my leadership position that I have to support others and to connect them into this, I think that's something I can do to try and mitigate for some of those challenges, I think that I faced, personally have faced.

[Theme music]

Richenda 17:10 I think I was sort of drawn into it just because yeah, like I'd known about it, but I'd never really thought there was ever opportunity to play it, just because I'm from the Central Belt, which isn't really a place where it's played very often. And then I actually didn't have a clue that there was a Uni team at all until my third year. And then I found out and I was like, do you know what, just, just go and do it and find out, you've got to try things. And I think I was a bit impressed with myself that I did try it and then did sort of throw myself in. And I think it helps that the people that I've play with, it's very much a bit of a family, which I think I'd struggled to find in Edinburgh until then. People talk about imposter syndrome. I think I learned about that phrase and I was like, 'oh, that's what it is'.

Amalie 17:50 I can definitely relate to the imposter syndrome and throwing yourself into something that you have always wanted to do maybe or that you're too scared to do and also finding a community within that thing that you were scared to do, but then you finally did. So the, the shinty stick is like, like one object that you have kind of an emotional attachment to?

Richenda 18:15 Yeah, definitely. I think that's thing, that's why-- I looked around and I was like, what do I actually have that I think, you know I'd care about enough to, to lose, I think they're just very beautiful objects as well. The grip here it was given to me by one of my friends on the team who was about to go on a year abroad and I think it was really nice because I'd-- I'd said for ages, I was like my favourite colour is light blue. And then she found this, she found this light blue grip, and she gave it to me just before she went, I think that meant a lot. And also because yeah, like it sort of represents pushing myself on to do something. I still don't think I'm a very good, good player and I think that's definitely something I need to work on. And especially I think a lot of that stems from the fact that even now, yeah I don't see myself as a very sporty person-- on paper, I probably qualify as a sporty person, whereas just now I'm like, I like the outdoors, and maybe it's just that I like to run about a field, kind of like a Labrador, maybe that's what it is. But yeah, I still don't really consider myself that way and I guess sort of branching off from that, I think that makes me more keen on making stuff like that more accessible to people. Because I think that puts a lot of people off, it's like, well, I don't belong there. Like I don't fit to preconceptions of what a person on a sports team should be. And yeah, I guess before-- yeah, say if you'd asked me, say in second year of uni, I'd be like, 'no, of course, I'm not gonna be a sports team', I like to...

Amalie 19:21 President of one! It's-- you're doing great. Maybe people find-- I like-- maybe, maybe people can find inspiration from that. The fact that you are not-- you don't categorise yourself as a sporty person, but like you still are the president and high up in a sport society. So people can be like, oh, like, yeah, making-- like, sport is accessible.

Richenda 19:45 Yeah, I guess it was kind of like, you know all this stuff about representation and like even in say, like politics or the media and just having different people from different backgrounds and different say labels attached to them. It just means that you can see yourself there and you're like, oh, cool, like I could, I could go and do that if I wanted, like be a politician or an actress or whatever.

Amalie 20:02 Yeah, representation is, is so important. I feel like representation has-- obviously this is not the same thing at all, or it has to do with representation, but in general, I feel like for the past, like three years representation has been key to getting me through my whole, like, sexuality, identity crisis, like, I feel like I-- it's so important to see people that you can identify with, to realise that you can be-- you are valid and that your experiences are also valid. I feel like, yeah, it's just so important to, to see people who look like you who, who have gone through the same things as you and to see them happy. And, um...

Richenda 20:56 And do you do that on purpose? Or is it just like a thing that happens to go that way that you always have somebody? So like representing yourself, do you go out to look for that?

Amalie 21:04 Yeah, definitely. But also, I think, at this point, it kind of falls into my lap automatically as well. Because I'm so-- because like, you know, how the algorithms give you what you want, tailor whatever they recommend to you to, to what you've watched before, or to what you've seen before, who you follow, and whatever. So I feel like my Instagram Explore, my Netflix page, my, like, all of these, all of these, like social media platforms they recommend things to you, they always end up just giving me basically what I want, which is nice.

[Theme music]

Richenda 21:46 In terms of diversity in academia and education, why is that so important to both of you?

Charles 21:51 I would say it's important just because of the fact that different people bring different ideas. I mean, the whole point of academia, is it's supposed to be a part of civilization, where people think. That's what universities were designed to do, to challenge existing paradigms, to advance the state of society, our ability to express ourselves and an universities should see themselves as places where that should happen. So it's diversity of people and ideas. In fact, diversity in all realms of human existence, is what universities should be trying to encourage, that, that's really their mission, I don't think we should ever lose sight of that. I think it's more difficult these days, because they're-- universities tend to become more commercially focused, they run a little bit like businesses, I think it makes it more difficult for them to, to create a space where people are just thinking about what they want to think about without having to write impact statements and demonstrate some sort of commercial value. I think that's something that perhaps we, we do need to push against, a bit. I think universities shouldn't lose sight of it. But I would summarise by saying that universities are about diversity, that's their whole purpose, to create diversity of human thought and people. So they should be trying to do that all the time.

Rianna 23:09 I completely agree with that. I mean, I also think that-- well, it's impossible for me not to be wrapped up in it because of my identity. But also, I guess, I-- on that note of the fact that university is supposed to provide a diversity of human thought, I think, being marginalised in that space, you notice the glaring gaps in, in the spaces, like not just the lack of seeing people that look like you, although that hurts, too. But also the lack of when you're studying, and people don't think that anyone black or brown has contributed anything to the cannon. And you notice that, and then you sort of think, what are they missing? I just think that by not having us there is a dis-- like, the university is doing a huge disservice to themselves. And there are certainly loads of spaces, like my friend is running the free black uni, which is a space that promises to be like an alternative edu-- a decolonized education space. You know, so we can do things separate to the university. I don't think it's the be all and end all. And I don't think that we should necessarily put all of our hopes in decolonizing a space that wasn't built for us rather than building our own. I think it's like a multi-pronged thing.

[Theme music]

Dalia 24:36 I don't think I've even tried, I think naturally, it's become a focus of mine, like creatively to, to hone in on stories that are very difficult to like people who are in between two things. So most often that's between two cultures, like Daisy and I. It can be a number of things, though, and I think those people are often in the margins-- are marginalised individuals or communities. So I think it's important because it gives people more, I guess, compassion, more just sort of an understanding of where other people are coming from. I think for me, having grown up between two very different cultures, I grew up in the countryside, but I'm Arab, and they're very opposing things. I think it's given me like a, a skill in that I can understand where certain people come from, even if I don't agree with them. So I will always be ready to hear someone's opinion, even if I vehemently disagree with it, I'm always ready to just like, take their argument and listen to it and sit with it, rather than just say, like, I disagree with you, I don't wanna listen to it, because it's very hard to, to not empathise with someone, when you do come from a background, that's so conflicted with one another. Does that makes sense?

Daisy 26:01 Such a good point, I think we need more of-- we need that in the world, we need more of that in the world. Because especially as we're facing a climate crisis, and as we're coming out of locked down all the big, big things, the challenges that we're facing, collaboratively, we have to make sure that we can, we can have grown up conversations and listen to each other and understand where other people are coming from, and all of that stuff. So the work that I do, and, you know, in, in Edinburgh, and Scotland, and the UK, with my UK role is exactly that, you know, if we are reshaping our streets, we have to make sure that right from the, you know, the communities who live there and work there and visit, they have to have a role and a say in shaping what happens to their street or the neighbourhood. And policies, politicians who make policies, they have to represent the, you know, the diversity of the communities that, that they're making policies for, and whether it's gender or whether it's, you know, ethnicity, or race or, you know, the whole equality and equity of what we're trying to achieve cannot happen if we don't have those conversations earlier like you were saying, you know, and it's such a good point that, maybe that's why you and I are doing what we do, because we have that understanding of two different cultures. I've never thought of it that way. But it's a really, really good point. Because it brings-- it gives you empathy, I suppose.

Dalia 27:33 Yeah, I think-- I am doing this magazine right now, which is about second generation immigrants and one of the writers, one of her, like, finishing sentences was that we should start seeing our kind of marginal place in society as less of a weakness and more as a power, as a superpower. I think it's super empowering. And I think it's helped me massively. And I think that-- also, like Reni Eddo-Lodge in her book, 'Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race', she says that the fastest growing demographic of children are a mixed race children. So I mean, no, we're not gonna have this world where someone's black or white, or this or that. It's, it's so mixed, and it's so varied and we yeah, we need to start looking at those stories and listening to them, because they're going to soon be the norm.

Daisy 28:33 It's so-- I mean, absolutely. My kids, you know, they're mixed race, obviously. And my son is very much like his, like his dad, like my husband, he's, he's, he's white, he looks like a white boy. And my little girl looks like me, she looks very Indian. So they, you know, they look similar, but they-- all four of us have very different skin tones. And it's been quite interesting during-- you know, we talk about this here, and we talk about what happens in America and the conversations happening across the world and obviously, age appropriate. But until the Black Lives Matter protest, which, you know, we've, we've been talking about that at home, it was interesting watching them react to that. And I overheard them both, they were in the bath, and they were discussing what colour their skin was. And they were saying, we're not, we're not white, we're not brown, we are golden. And I just thought, how beautiful is that? And how beautiful it is that they-- that's what they think. But also how sad that as a nine and a six year old, that's, you know, they have to think about skin colour or talk about skin colour. So yeah, I think we're living through a very interesting time. And you know, as you say, going-- you can see already not such a distant future that, you know, people are going to look very, very different to how things are now. Yeah, it's good to see kids who have got that sense of self.

[Theme music]

Tomiwa 29:53 I think for me, because I, I'm Nigerian and I was born and raised in Edinburgh, in Scotland and it was a very white, and still is, yeah, a very white environment. And I spent a lot of, kind of, my even later teens and time at university, really struggling to articulate my feelings and my experience and trying to situate myself and my world and these cultures and get to know myself, which I think is what you do at that age regardless. And so it just kind of all made sense. And part of it-- part of my work as well is just finding friends and communities and spaces that you are part of. And that give you joy, but also an energy and a power and thinking of the space the world is in right now. It kind of in a weird way feels like there's no other option but to like speak out in a way that makes sense to me. Because people do that differently.

Kate 29:58 Yeah, for sure. What about you, Elias, thinking about the roles that you have, and giving people those, those spaces to be heard. Why is that important?

Elias 31:19 I think that in the spaces, there are so many ways in which I am immensely privileged and I have a platform which amplifies my voice. There's many ways that I am not privileged and able to have a platform. And for those that have access to spaces, such as you know, for example, I have access to men's spaces. I feel like it's important to kind of bridge the gap of communication, of empathy, of solidarity. Like the question, why does it matter is-- it's like the top of the, of the branch of the tree, and the tree has deep roots underneath it, kind of like just acknowledging that oppression and power. Yeah, that's why it matters.

[Theme music]

Nicha 32:16 It's so, it's very weird to think about my identity, I guess. Because growing up in Singapore, you know, I was never like Singaporean. But I did go to Thailand, a lot more than I went to Finland. And that was up until age 12. So I've always, like kind of identified with that side of my identity a little more. And then, you know, I moved to Finland and it, I don't know, it's just a weird thing. And I realised how much I didn't really like fit in to the, like, culturally, I mean, and it was just, like, a weird thing to realise, um...

Laura 32:50 Were you happy there, though?

Nicha 32:51 Um, not for the first few years, no, but eventually, you know, when I kind of-- I think that's just kind of part of being a teenager, because, you know, the years were, it was harder for me, I was like, 12 to 15. And I think those years are generally pretty hard for people growing up, it's just like, you're, you're like, grasping onto anything to like, call your id-- like a part of your identity, you don't really know what you are, what you're doing. I am where I am right now with my identity and that's, you know, my dad is Finnish, my mum is Thai and, you know, I just am what I am, I have elements of those two cultures in me. And that's, you know, that's fine. You know, the point that you said, especially about people, that home is about people, and not like physical places, necessarily, I think, you know, the older I get, the more I will kind of lean into that. And I'm sure because, I like, am spending my university years in Edinburgh, it's kind of like the first few years that I feel like, kind of truly independent. You know, like I, you know, I've moved out obviously, and it's like, it's, I think that in some way or another, I will probably come to think of Edinburgh as like a home of sorts.

Laura 33:56 It's nice to know you can be happy in different places. I always said that about my year abroad in Miami that it just proved to me that you can go somewhere really far away on your own and be happy. And that's such a defining achievement in your life, especially when you do it when you're young. You know, I was 19 and it's something I'll always look back on and be so glad I did.

[Theme music]

David 34:18 It's a tale of this, this young boy, he's incredibly mischievous, much more mischievous than I ever was, I swear [laughter]. The trouble he gets into in these sort of domestic situations with his, you know, boring parents who want to, you know, instil order and sense into him. And he's just out there daydreaming constantly getting caught up in these fantastical imaginary adventures alongside his tiger friend, Hobbes. So in his mind, Hobbes is a real tiger but an anthropomorphic tiger who speaks and is actually very philosophical and quite witty and wry and all that. And it's really just about the sometimes quite mundane adventures that they have and how they transform that mundanity into something special, which is something that I think I, I liked to do when I was a child. And I still do. But I also kind of had to, to a certain extent, as hinted previously, by the idea that, you know, I'm very sort of, I call it porous, I get a tremendous amount from what's in my environment. And that could be good or bad. If I'm in an environment, which I feel is stifling, oppressive, boring, then I feel mired in that. If I'm in an environment, which is stimulating, interesting, dynamic, then I get a charge off of that. It's a big part of the reason why I moved to Edinburgh. How I relate to that now and this speaks to my experience in Scotland since I arrived, but particularly over the last nearly two years now, is for various reasons, again, largely out of necessity and for mental health, trying to find sources of wonder in the same street that I've walked down 500 times. You know, so the particular strip that really resonated with me and the line that I sort of keep in my mind wherever I go, is Calvin in his backyard digging a hole, which his dad later gets furious about, like, 'what are you doing? You're digging up the garden' and Calvin's, like, 'it's an adventure, come on, that's, that's a good reason, right?' And Hobbes comes over to Calvin, and he's like, you know, 'why are you digging a hole?' 'I'm looking for buried treasure.' And Hobbes is like, 'well, what have you got?' And he's like, 'oh, I've got a few dirty rocks. I've got a weird root and some disgusting grubs'. And then Hobbs is like, 'on your first try? That's amazing!'. Calvin says, 'there's treasure everywhere'. You know, isn't that great? Just carry a little bit around-- of that around with us. Wouldn't we all just be a little bit happier?

Caroline 36:57 Oh, gosh, yeah.

Ayanda 36:58 Yeah, yeah. Caroline, how about you, how do you, how do you interact with the imposter syndrome?

Caroline 37:04 Yeah, I think a lot of the interaction has been negative thus far. So we're trying to get into a positive interaction with it. I think it's also very common for somebody who's just finished their degree, from what I understand and the people I've spoken to, you know, it's a really big transition in your life. And so I think it's inevitable if you're not 100% sure what you want to do that you're, you're sort of plagued with it, right? And I think, yeah, it's, it's something that I also find important because it, it can act as a counterbalance, you know, it can be like an accountability check that everyone is an imposter to everything because not everyone-- no one's amazing and perfect at anything, right? So I think it's human to have it, we must have it, we must have it to innovate and to strive for change and be better. But I think it's just balancing it with, you know, reality, as well and knowing that, okay, you know, I can't have this expectation of myself. Because it's gonna-- it's crippling, and it's going to hurt me so much more. And then, you know, there the cycle keeps going and going, and that is the quintessential snowball. And I remember that I really had that in second year and that thinking, if you really feed into it, and you allow it to happen, you're just gonna start tumbling down, you know, because it's like, well, I didn't do that, well could have done that better. And, wow, like, I'm really viewing myself this way now. And it goes, and it goes, and it goes, and it's so much wasted energy, I think that's my biggest thing. I have to think of it that way. It's just wasted energy, where-- as much as I don't think I could do XYZ, I know I can do ABC. And that needs to count for something. And hopefully, at some point, that will take me to XYZ, or whatever that next step is going to be. Because I think a lot of the time impostor syndrome is, is experienced by people who are really, really ambitious and who care so, so much. And I remember there was a lecturer that we had, and he said, 'don't be paralysed by ambition'. And I thought that was such a wonderful thought that I always, always keep with me, because...

Ayanda 37:05 I need to write this down. There's so many things that are coming out of here today.

Caroline 39:13 ...because, I always think about it because it's true. I get so excited about something and I'm so passionate about it or whatever. And that starts paralysing me and then that impostor syndrome really starts to come in. And something that began as this amazing opportunity that I want to share with everyone has just turned into this horrifically, you know, nerve racking experience that I'm terrified about even just starting because, you know, what if it doesn't materialise?

[Theme music]

Ayanda 39:46 So where is home for you?

Nuam 39:50 Um, where is home for me? That's a really tough question because I don't know if I have a home. Sounds really sad. But I don't know if I can name one place home in a sense of like-- so when I-- in 2020, I was, I think I mentioned doing fieldwork in Myanmar, which is where I'm from, I was back among my community. And like prior to going there, I was super excited about doing fieldwork among my own people. Because I was like, I've grown up in Britain, I don't know, the language as well as I want to, I don't know the culture as well as I want to, but eight months of field work will set me straight. And it'll be nice to kind of contact, just connect with people and my culture again. And I got that I realised, oh, no, I'm very British, these people can't keep to time at all and I need a schedule [laughter]. So it's just like, things like that on a kind of jokey level, but on a more serious level, it was also kind of like, o h, I didn't find the sense of belonging and returning home that I thought I would find. And that was quite difficult for me to deal with, the brief kind of three months I was there, I kind of got a slowly-- I got a slow sense of realisation that like, oh, I had all these fantasies of being back home, but home doesn't recognise who I am, because I've become too Westernised or there are elements of this culture that I don't find comfortable. So, you know, crap, what do I do? And then that was kind of like a big kind of catalyst for all these big questions I had about like, who I am and where I belong, and what my identity is having grown up in Britain, but also looking physically different from most Scottish people and all that kind of stuff. Like, that kind of was a whole journey that I started in 2020 and still am on right now. So yeah, the question of home is a big one, I don't, I don't know where home is, I don't-- I think home is where you feel comfortable to be yourself. Which sounds very cliche, but I think in my case, it's certainly true. Because, you know, there's elements of British society where I feel very uncomfortable, and I feel very aware that I am an other. And there's elements of my own ethnicity and of my own culture, where I'm like, yep, I also feel out of place here. I think it's where you can feel comfortable being 100% yourself. And for me, thankfully, that's in my partner, and the kind of the life that we're building together. So that's nice. But yeah, I don't, I don't have a physical location for home. I don't think-- I think for me, it's just like that sense of like, yep, this is who I am and I don't need to hide any element of it. What about you, Olivia?

Olivia 42:18 Yeah, I would, I would agree with that. That's why I wanted you to answer first [laughter]. No, nowhere is home. So my parents have actually always lived, I've always lived in the same house at home home like so my, my, it should be my house. And it's not not home but it doesn't fit right any more, because you kind of-- and I know you talked about kind of putting different hats on when you're in a different place but I do feel like I regress--

Nuam 42:41 Oh, yeah, definitely.

Olivia 42:42 --when I'm home home. So that doesn't feel, like right. And I've got a really bad habit and my mum gets very annoyed of I will be staying in a hotel for like two day and I'll start referring to it as home. So I get very comfortable very quickly. Like, I'm going home now. She's like, 'No, you're not' and I was like, 'Oh, I just went back to my hotel', and she's like 'really Olivia? That is not home' [laughter]. I obviously adapt very quickly. So-- and then like you're saying my dad's from the Dominica, which is an island in the Caribbean. And I've been there a handful of times. And my middle name is my great granny, who's, who was one of the reasons we went back home home for our 100th birthday. And I fall into conversation and I call Dominica home sometimes, which is crazy, because I have no right in a lot of sense to call that home in, in, in a physical sense. But I think because you're-- I'm asked that question, not so much anymore. She says, maybe I'm just hanging out with slightly more aware people of 'oh, but where are you really from?' So I think that's, you know, that has played into it and now, I sometimes refer to Dominica as home, which doesn't make any sense. I settle into places very quickly and I have like my, my stuff. So I will make my bedroom, my home. I make my space mine. May that be your hotel room for two nights [laughter].

Ayanda 44:03 Usually when you ask that question people like give you a specific place. Oh, it's because of where I grew up and I think it's kind of what I relate to as well. I think as I'm growing up, I'm not always going to be like it's that place, that is home. I feel like you know, as you get comfortable with yourself, just kind of just to go back to what we were talking about earlier, when you get that comfort in yourself home becomes something that's within you, and the people around you like your chosen family as well. And I think that's really, really cool. And that's really, really awesome. There's hope guys [laughter].

[Theme music]

Hannah 44:43 Thank you so much for listening. Season six is coming very soon. So subscribe now and you won't miss a thing. I can't wait for you to hear this year's collection of voices and stories from throughout the Edinburgh University community.

[Platform One theme music]

Kate 45:11 I hope you enjoyed meeting members of our University of Edinburgh community. To connect with more join Platform One, our online meeting place for students, alumni and staff of the University. To find out more search Platform One Edinburgh.