# Growing up with alcohol problems – Transcript

***What was your experience of alcohol growing up?***

**James**: Things could happen in my family home, where it was chaos one minute and then the next minute people were hugging each other.

So, it was like nothing got spoken about. It was like there’s a big pink elephant in the middle of the living room and everybody knows it’s there. Nobody talks about it but we all know it’s there.

And that’s what I’ve learned about what it’s like to grow up in an alcoholic home. It’s basically alcoholism. Nobody talks about the alcoholism or the behaviours associated with it, or the violence and it’s almost as if you’ve just to get on with it.

My grandpa died in front of me when I was a wee boy and I just got up the next day and got on with it. Nobody asked me how I felt about it, if I wanted to go to the funeral or anything. It was just: 'You’ll do this, you’ll go here.' And obviously that’s the way my family dealt with things.

I’m not angry at them any more; I’ve gone through all of that. I remember looking at my mum and thinking I would stop drinking if it got as bad as that. And that’s the thing that alcoholics do. Alcoholics are the only people that can lie down in the gutter and still look down at people. It’s like: 'I’m not as bad as him, I never did this, I never did that' and: 'If it gets as bad as him, then I’ll do something about it.'

Part of the denial system is basically: 'They’re worse than me so I can’t be an alcoholic; that’s what an alcoholic is, alcoholic is a brown paper bag, homeless in the street' and failing to recognise that it doesn’t matter what age you are, or what your profession is, or how wealthy you are, alcoholism doesn’t discriminate amongst class. It’ll get you and if it’s got you, it’s got you.

 [End of transcript]