

EVEN MORE THAN THIS

Audio Transcript

Episode 1 - Roll Call

- 0:00 ANIKA We acknowledge the custodians of place, the traditional owners of our lands, waters and skies, wherever you are in this moment.
We created this podcast here on the lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Eastern Kulin Nation and pay our respects to the Elders and Culture Leaders past, present, and future.
- 0:20 LING Content warning. This is a quick heads up that this episode explores themes, such as cheating and feeling the sense that you don't belong.
- 0:28 [Theme Music from More Than This]
- 0:46 LING Hey, everyone, welcome to Even More Than This, a podcast based on the show More Than This. My name is Ling, my pronouns are She/They and I'm joined by Anika.
- 0:55 ANIKA Hey I'm Anika and my pronouns are She/Her.
- 0:57 LING So in this podcast, we're going to be exploring episode one of the show called Roll Call. And so at the beginning of the show, Mr. E asked his kids this question, and we'd like to ask this to you as well.
"If you had to write an essay about what it's like being a teen in this day and age, what would you say? Or essentially what does it mean to be an adolescent today?"
- 1:17 ANIKA Totally. And just a little recap of the first episode, if you've forgotten what it's about. So basically, in the first episode, we meet all the characters and get a bit of an idea into their personal lives as they wake up for school in the morning, and we see each of them wake up and start their day.
It's a pretty chaotic episode. And I personally think it starts the season with a bang. What do you think Ling?
- 1:38 LING Definitely, it's so packed.
- 1:40 ANIKA There's lots of drama in it. We learn a lot about the history between Charlotte and Leon, we see Jamie beginning to find their people, and lots more of the characters relationships are revealed throughout the episode.
But first, let's kick off the discussion with I'm sure a very familiar sound.
- 1:55 [Clip from More Than This]
Background ambiance, Alarm on phone sound effects
- 2:01 LING Okay, so I'm sure you'll hear the sound first thing in the morning. Everyone has their alarms on their phones at this point. And I think it just goes to show like how interconnected we are with technology and our dependence on it, because, like I'm

pretty sure nobody wants a clock anymore. Like pretty sure. And I think, because the show starts off with all the characters like reaching for the phones and checking it, etc. It like sets the tone of the show, with like, the tone being, this is a show about teens and it's obvious because like, you and I like I do use my phone first thing in the morning, I can't lie. And through that, like from a film perspective, we see how the characters are introduced as well, because it starts off in their rooms, which has like a very personalized tone. And it's all like very paralleled as well, which I think was super creative.

So like, for example, we see this like the stark difference between Jamie and Zali, where Jamie's room is super bright and colourful. There's vinyls on the walls, it's super cute and it's very yellow, which I think reflects their personality, because they're like super bubbly and everything as well. Whereas Zali's room is so like hostile, and clinical, which I think also reflects her current state of mind. But like, what do you think?

3:11 ANIKA I think from a cinematic point of view the, definitely the rooms that each character has are a representation of their personality, which I think is really cool. And we also see that in their alarm sounds like Leon's alarm sound is very interesting.

3:23 [Clip from More Than This]
Alarm on phone sound effect

2:27 ANIKA And then you compare that to other alarm sounds and I feel like that really reflects the different characters and their personalities, which is really cool. Kind of parallel to that as well, we constantly hear internal monologues throughout the show, especially when the characters are kind of reflecting on what does it mean to be an adolescent and all that kind of thing. And I feel like each character's room is almost like a snapshot into what's going on inside their head, in a way, like in a symbolic kind of way. Do you get that Ling?

3:53 LING Yeah, I actually never thought about like the internal monologue part. And I feel like everyone has their internal monologue, like, we're all just like talking to ourselves. But, going back to the kind of like omnipresence of technology in our lives, especially since we're young. There's always like this pressure to be online, and like to respond with constantly because I don't know about you, but like, responding to people online is like a workout. Like, it tires me out.

4:22 ANIKA It's a full time job I honestly think, it definitely is a full time job. And it's interesting because you can be so immersed in a situation that you're in, and suddenly like you could be having a conversation with somebody, suddenly you get a phone call, and your attention is suddenly like diverted from whatever situation you're in to that phone call. And so I feel like being present is really difficult when we're so interconnected with technology.

4:43 LING Yeah, I totally think that and I think that how we see like, the characters in the show, sometimes it's how we see people in real life. Because when you have like social media like Instagram or like Facebook or whatever, and like you post pictures of yourself. It's like everyone is their own customisable avatar, especially with like, like consumerism, and like the ability to shape your own identity and things like that around like things you buy. And it's like, it's like a brand. Like you're branding yourself and it's like your

own, you construct your own self image. What do you think about that? Like, do you think it's good or bad for you?

- 5:17 ANIKA I think it's just an interesting concept. And that's my personal opinion because I feel like if you think of social media, even the concept of having highlights, quote, unquote, it kind of reflects, okay, these are the good things going on in my life, we see almost a two dimensional kind of view of people, we don't see a three dimensional view of people, you see people through a screen, you don't see them for like for the good, the bad, the ugly, everything you don't, like, yes, we can make judgments and assumptions about people's personalities online. However, whether or not they're transferable in real life is another question to ask. Does that make sense?
- 5:49 LING Yeah, I never thought about highlights, because they're literally called highlights. It's like, these are the highlights of your life.
- 5:55 ANIKA Totally yeah, like these are good things that are happening, it's like your life might be going to shambles, who knows but, on a superficial level on a digital level, this is what people are seeing. And so people could be like, Oh, my God, they're out here living their best life, but who knows what's going on, you know, in the real world.
- 6:09 LING Exactly. And it kind of like pressures you to always be like, Oh, I see all these other people that are happy, so now I want to be happy, I want to I want to live that life.
- 6:17 ANIKA I agree. And this constant pressure to be happy to be doing things like it kind of plays into that hustle culture. But it's always like, oh, this person is happy, this person is happy, because that's what you're seeing. So you feel that pressure to be happy. And then that kind of taps over into like a little bit of toxicity at times.
- 6:31 LING Yeah, I totally agree with you. And personally, I think social media is toxic, but it's something that can't be removed from society, especially like as teens, it's just so integrated into our lives, that we can't take it away.
And, recently there's been lots of talk about, like, how social media, you know, represents an ideal version of ourselves and things like that.
But on the other hand, there's also been like, a lot of awareness about making it real, or like just making it more in touch with reality. And that actually reminds me of this new app that's been circling around called Be Real, have you heard of it?
- 7:04 ANIKA Have I heard of it, I feel like you were the first person who introduced me to it. And now I've been seeing it everywhere. I feel like everybody's using it. And conceptually, it's a bit different to other platforms that we have social media platforms that we have, because it forces you quote, unquote, to be real.
- 7:18 LING Yeah, yeah exactly. So just to give our listeners a little bit of like, an overview, Be Real is like this new app, that will send you a notification saying that you have to take a picture within two minutes to send to your friends. And the picture is like it's a front picture. And it's a back camera picture as well. And the reason it's timed is so that you can't be quote, like fake about what you're doing. And the intention, which is like indicated by the name is to 'be real, 'like it's to be authentic, and to portray reality, like

exactly how it is, which I think is unlike any other social media, but it's also like, obviously really easy to fake.

7:54 ANIKA Yeah, totally, you could easily just kind of change your surroundings quickly change your hair, fix your hair, I don't know, fix up your outfit, I don't know, really quickly to kind of then portray something that is real to an extent.

8:06 LING Yeah. And I think this is a very interesting concept, like you said, because it's fun. But it touches on like, a more serious topic about social media but it's also like a little bit ironic, because people are aware that social media is more or less fake yet this is like another social media app claiming to be authentic, because like, recently, there's been lots of like online discourse about like Instagram, or Facebook being like, all these influencers wanting to be real and more authentic and things like that. Whereas now this is an app literally built for them. Whereas the irony lies in that social media is just inherently not really like that. Do you know what I mean?

8:43 ANIKA Yeah, I agree. I think an interesting approach. And the approach that I take personally, when it comes to social media is this is not who I am, this is what I do. And I kind of got that from a singer. His name's Matt Healy. And he sings in the 1975. And I've taken that approach, because it's like, I feel like if you really pride yourself in your social media, and you're like, this is who I am, I need to portray exactly who I am on social media that can get you into almost a downward spiral of toxicity. And it can make you really question yourself, because it's like, if you're not putting yourself out authentically, quote, unquote, on social media, it's like who am I? And it's like, when we talk about being real. The only real time you can be real is in real life.

9:20 LING Yeah, so speaking of being in real life, connection through technology these days, it's like so normalised that I think sometimes we forget, you know, to socialise in real life. Which reminds me of the super cute clip of Jamie and Zali.

9:34 [Clip from More Than This]

Zali *"Hey, sometimes my friends and I grab breakfast around the corner from school. Next time we do it you should come."*

Jamie *"Really? I'd like to, I'd really like to, thank you."*

Zali *"Awesome"*

Benson *"Oh my god. I fucking love your socks!"*

Zali *"Jamie, That's my girlfriend Emma, and that is our very loud friend Benson."*

Guys, this is Jamie. They take the same English extension class as me."

9:59 LING So we see this really wholesome seen in this first episode where Jamie has found a super supportive friend group through Zali. And I just love the inclusiveness and the acceptance that they felt during the interaction. What do you think

10:11 ANIKA I agree, as a viewer watching this scene pan out, it made me so happy and it was such a wholesome scene, as you said. And I think it just really consolidates that there is a group of people out there for everybody. And whether you find it in high school, whether you find it beyond high school, you will always kind of find people who you resonate with, which I think is what really shines through in this particular scene.

- 10:30 LING Yeah, and even though it's like just the first episode, we can already see Jamie grow out of their shell. And it makes me think of, yeah, like you said, how important it is to find people to connect with because, especially when you're growing up, because it's such a fundamental part, you know, of growing up to have similarities with others, especially when you're part of like a marginalised group or simply just labelled as an outcast, you know, you don't really fit into like the popular group, or like, you know, the, quote, norm of society.
And obviously, growing up that will make you feel a little bit left out of things like that. And socialising at a young age is so important to grow your mind on like a psychological level and your ability to form relationships with others. And I also think that's because like the interests you form, at the Teen phase, and the type of people you meet, kind of shape your whole idea of the world. Like, even career wise, what you're interested in, growing up kind of tracks what you study, and what you choose to do in the future. And I think it's great to see that Jamie was able to find people who were like them, because it made them feel included. But I also feel like this is the opposite for Zali, in terms of her home life, what do you think?
- 11:39 ANIKA Yeah, I totally agree. And I want to tap back into Jamie, because we really see that character development, and we really see Jamie feeling like they belong when Benson says this.
- 11:48 [Clip from More Than This]
- Benson* *"Oh my God, I fucking love your socks!"*
- 11:52 ANIKA You really see a turning point for Jamie. And I feel like the concept of belonging is something that's so real, in real life. I feel like as just human beings, as a society as people, we all want to feel as though we belong. And we're a part of something a group of people community. And I feel like you learn through every person that you meet. And every kind of person that you meet is a different reflection of who you are as well. Like, I feel like there are so many people in our lives. And each person reflects a different part of ourselves. And I feel like for Jamie, maybe this group of people reflect a different part of their lives, maybe their mum and their brother reflect another kind of part of who they are. And for Zali, it's like the people at school reflect a part of who she is, but then at home, that is also another reflection of who she is. So I feel like all these external influences, especially when you're an adolescent, and growing up, really impact your development as a character. And more broadly as a person.
- 12:42 LING Yeah. And just going back to the Zali, because you brought up a really good point that like, 'cos she is so different, when she's in school, versus when she's at home. And I find that Zali's home life is like so hostile and pressuring. And it's like, she doesn't even belong in her own home, because her dad seems to be disapproving of everything she does. And I feel like he parents her in that weird, paradoxical way of really caring about her, but showing it in like the completely wrong way. Like, it's obvious that if you take the things he's saying to her, at like base level, it's clear that he does care about her, but it comes off as like so condescending and patronising. And I feel like when you're talking that way to a teen, it does make them feel like belittled, you know, like, what do you think?

- 13:25 ANIKA Totally, especially when you're still living at home, and you're spending so much time at home, obviously, you're going to and from school, so you're spending so much time at home, if that's constantly being drilled into your brain, of course, that's going to impact you in multiple different ways. And I think we've got a direct comparison between Zali's home life and how that influences her as a person and on a fundamental level. And even you see it cinematically with the lighting, do you know what I mean, the different lighting in the scenes, whereas you've got a direct comparison between Jamie's home life and how Jamie's mother is more nurturing. And it's a lot more bright. And that really shines through superficially, I guess, with Jamie as a character, but also, I guess, with Jamie's persona as well. But I think it's interesting that you bring up Zali because I feel like there's this internal strife with who she feels like she needs to be, and who she actually is. And I feel like that mainly stems from the pressure that her dad kind of puts on her.
- 14:15 LING So speaking of disagreements and controversies in the show, we're going to head to the most confrontational scene in the first episode between Leon and Charlotte.
- 14:24 [Clip from More Than This]
- Leon "All right so, I get that it was shitty, but you got to understand the circumstance. So listen, I was drunk. And you didn't speak to me for five days, and Legs was just there, and..."*
- Charlotte "Why did you do it?"*
- Leon "Fuck Shah, I get it was wrong.."*
- Charlotte "Which part? Which part did you think was wrong? Was it when you cheated on me and didn't tell me or when you broke up with me via text with no explanation? Because you've done some pretty wrong things."*
- Leon "Listen I'm sorry. Okay. You weren't replying to any more calls or texts. It was making me feel like shit. And we were just like fighting, all the time. I don't... It just happened. I get that I hurt you and I feel bad. And that I know what I did was fucked. It was so stupid because you meant so much to me."*
- 15:20 LING So what we all just heard was a clip from Leon in Charlotte's fight, which, in my opinion, was the juiciest part of the whole episode. But it also highlighted really well, like the dynamic of a toxic relationship because everything we heard Leon say, was I feel, so accurate, but also manipulative. So basically what happened was that Leon cheated on Charlotte with Legs. And he was essentially like just giving her excuses saying things like, Oh, you weren't responding, and Legs was just there. As if, like, Charlotte's absence was the only thing keeping him from cheating. You know what I mean? And I think it goes to show like how some people in a relationship cheat simply because they're too scared to break up with them. You know what I mean?
- 16:01 ANIKA Yeah, I agree. And I think Leon really plays into that whole ideology of victim blaming, firstly, but I also like how Charlotte does call him out on like, "which part?" I feel like that's such a powerful line. Because like, I know what I did was wrong. Which part? 'cos you've done some pretty wrong things like yes, exactly, go girl. When people are in those situations, they kind of sweet talk their way through, because their partner or the person on the receiving end, maybe they're so infatuated by them, they can easily

be manipulated. And we've all either been this person, or maybe our friend has been this person or of one of our family members has been this person. And I feel like when you're in this kind of relationship, you kind of romanticise all the good things that they're saying. And you really feed into them because your emotions are thinking rather than your head or rather than your like logic and you're struggling to see what's actually really going on.

16:52 LING Yeah, I think that's so true. And I think that relates to what happens, like at the end of the scene, which also brings up the question of consent because basically, like during their whole confrontation or fight, they actually ended up kissing at the end. And it was like a very heat of the moment scenario. And it was very much giving, like enemies to lovers. Because from the outside, it's clear that there's like two opposing rivals, yet Leon physically pushes forward and becomes, you know like, both literally and metaphorically, the only thing she can see, and Charlotte was in so much control for the first few minutes, like you said, and I think because he invaded her space like that, he brought down her guard and then she eventually gave in. And it was clear, like, from the argument and her words that she didn't want to kiss him at all. And it wasn't the appropriate thing to do, yet it still happened. So do you think that this was wrong?

17:45 ANIKA Yes. Because it wasn't mutually kind of like, agreed upon. Like he was kind of as you said, he really invaded her space. When we talk about personal bubbles. There was nothing there. You know what I mean? *[LING Yeah]*
So I don't think that that was the right thing to do. Also, given the context of the situation, obviously, they don't know that that's not the situation. That was not the right thing to do at that point in time. I think for me, what was particularly really hard to watch in that scene and watching it all play out, was just the way that Charlotte really crumbled under Leon's kind of influence. That was what I was really struggling to watch. What about you Ling?

18:21 LING Yeah, personally, I do blame Leon, because, like, he knew she was vulnerable. And he wasn't really thinking of anyone else in the situation, except for himself, which is obvious, because if he was thinking about her, I think he wouldn't have kissed her. And I think he was being selfish. And this resulted in nothing being solved. And then even more guilt from Charlotte side of the story, because then after that, we see the scene of like, you know, she's crying in the lockers, because, you know, she just feels so like hurt from everything he's done,

18:51 ANIKA Totally and deflated. And rightly so. And I think it's really interesting, because as adolescents were experiencing these kinds of relationships, for the first time, you know what I mean? These are new experiences. And so I think as you progress in every relationship that you partake in, or that you pursue, you learn from each one. And I feel as though for people watching, you can really learn from the experiences of Charlotte, Leon, and learn, okay, this is how this is done. This is quite common actually, in real life, how can I improve? Or how can I kind of change my ways or learn from this situation when I go about my own relationships?

19:23 LING Yeah, and it's definitely true that because as teens, we're still growing up and we're still trying to navigate this world. And all of these relationships are new experiences for us. So how it impacts us is going to be different and I think this is really evident in how

like the kiss slash fight scene effected Leon and Charlotte, because Leon had like this loving family to go back to, whereas Charlotte still had other things to juggle as soon as she got home like work and things like that, you know.

19:48 ANIKA It really kind of brings about like the idea of like, priorities. And obviously for Leon a priority was that Charlotte texted him back. But obviously that was not at the top of Charlotte's priorities because there are lots more things, not lots more, there are just different things going on in her world that that are ranked at a higher priority for her because their responsibilities are simply different because of that kind of class distinction, which I think is a like really important discussion to be had in relation to the context of the show. But I think also like broader discussion as well, because I think for young people, like everyone does come from different backgrounds and like this constant pressure to always be 'on', can be very unrealistic for lots of people dependent on like, what your priorities are, and I'm sure you would have found that in your life as well Ling.

20:35 LING Yeah, definitely. And I think this is really reflected in Charlotte's answer to her essay question. And because her life is so different from everyone else's, and she has a lot of other different priorities and responsibilities, her interpretation of what it's like to be a teen in this day and age is really different from everyone else's.

20:57 [Clip from More Than This]

Charlotte "You're encapsulated by a world that knows how to use you, but not how to value and understand you."

21:04 LING Yeah. And so to finish this all off, we hope you have a brief idea of the answer to Mr. E's question, what does it mean to be an adolescent today, and let's hear what some other people have to say.

21:17 [Background Music]

Participant 1 It's actually quite weird being being a teen in this day and age because there are lots of mixed social expectations. Because personally, I feel torn between what I think is right, what I think is socially acceptable, and what I've learned at home.

Participant 2 Being a teen in this day and age is, it comes with a lot of challenges. We're in an increasingly digital world where everything that we do is online, and we're sharing the best moments of our lives. So it can be pretty tricky, I guess, for a lot of people, an anxious sort of time, an exciting time, like growing up and going through all the challenges you normally go through as a teenager. But with that added sort of online thing. And then as well as that we've been through COVID the last two and a bit years. So it's been Yeah, I think it's it's interesting, and it's it's complex, but it's, it's a really good time to be growing up in a lot of ways.

Participant 3 I think being a teenager at any time period is very stressful and overwhelming. But I think it's kind of more overwhelming these days, because there's just like a lot more noise. Because maybe in the olden days, you had pressure from parents or like close friends or stuff like that. But it's like this stuff coming in from everywhere from social

media. And there's like a million people that you can compare yourselves to, at any given time, all at your fingertips. Like there's always someone who's doing better than you and achieving more than you. And I think it can feel very big, and just crushing that there's so much you could be doing, but you're just not.

Participant 4 But I think for us as teens, it was very difficult because obviously social media has a big part of our lives. And it's just difficult for us to try and be the best that we can when there's supermodels, athletes with like muscles and stuff like that, you know, it's very difficult. But again, social media can also help like Lizzo great example. Like with the body and stuff like that.

Participant 5 It's just like constantly trying to like go through life, ticking a whole bunch of boxes and trying to make sure that we are completing them. But then where do we find the time to complete them, like trying to sleep trying to eat proper food and everything, it just gets like very, very overwhelming. It's, it's a lot.

Participant 6 I think being a teen in today's day, and age is pretty freeing. You know, with social media, I think even though we talk about social media a lot as a negative, I think it does give you a lot of freedom, since you're able to meet and control who you talk to what kind of people you see, and control your life a lot more.

Participant 7 I feel like being a teen in this day and age to me, are two totally different concepts. I would say that it is both fun, and confusing at the same time.

Participant 8 I think being a teen at the moment is sort of a pretty complex state of being. Because there's an element of feeling like you have to live vicariously through a lot of other people. But then also, I think there's more of a recognition now that we should be trying to avoid trying to live vicariously through other people. And I think social media plays a really big role in that in terms of just, I don't know, like making your own decisions and trying to work out who you are.

24:57 LING So those were some really interesting responses I think, and I think how I can answer this question is that what I take from this episode is like the integration of technology into our lives because I feel like as teens, we're kind of so quote addicted to social media that we can never really decide if it's good or bad. But at this point, like it's so intertwined in our lives that we can't ignore its presence, So, I think being online is part of being an adolescent today.

25:22 ANIKA That's really interesting. I think, for me, the concept of belonging and how instrumental it can be to find a community and a group of people who you really resonate with. And that ultimately kind of reflect who you are at a particular time so you can kind of live out your truth. I feel like that's what part of being an adolescent is in this day and age for me personally.
But that's a wrap on Episode One. Stay tuned and catch us for Episode Two.

25:47 [Theme Music]

26:20 LING If any of the content in this episode raises any issues for you, Kids Helpline's qualified counsellors are available via web chat, phone or email anytime and for any reason. Kids

Helpline is Australia's only free, even from a mobile, confidential 24/7 online and phone counselling service for young people aged five to 25. Visit www.kidshelpline.com.au or call 1800 55 1800.

26:47

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