

## EVEN MORE THAN THIS

### Audio Transcript

#### Episode 3 Zali and Jamie

- 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 self harm, mental health and family, peer and school pressures.
- 0:30 [Theme Music]
- 0:48 LING Hey, everyone, welcome to the show Even More Than This, based on the TV series More Than This. My name is Ling, my pronouns are She/They, and I'm joined by a Anika
- 0:57 ANIKA Hey I'm Anika and my pronouns are She/Her.
- 1:00 LING And in this podcast, we're going to be exploring episode three of More Than This, which is all focused on Zali and Jamie. And just to reiterate, we're going to be piecing together, what does it mean to be an adolescent today?
- 1:12 ANIKA Okay, so, in this episode, we explore the characters of Zali and Jamie, and see how their different home lives really impact them as individuals. We watch them as they explore relationships, navigate their different school lives and undertake different tasks.
- 1:27 LING So have a listen to this confrontation between Jamie and their mum.
- 1:31 [Clip from More Than This]
- Jamie You didn't listen to me, mum. I am never allowed to go out. I have to look after Max all the time. And I have no freedom. This is supposed to be the start of my adult life, and I can't do anything. You're always working and you're never there for me. Have you even noticed I've been happier lately? Did you even notice I was sad before?*
- Jamie's Mum Are you kidding me? Are you kidding me? I work 60 hours a week! 60 hours to pay for your camera film, your art supplies, your clothes. I had to save up for weeks to buy your binder. I take on extra work so I can help further your transition in the most positive way possible. And I'm happy to do it okay, it's my responsibility, but I give you responsibility because I trust you. And I believe that you're mature enough to handle it..*
- Jamie And I'm grateful. But mum, I am so lonely. I finally have friends but I can't spend time with them because I have to be home with a 10 year old.*

*He needs you. I need you.*

- 2:32 ANIKA Okay, so this is a really interesting discussion between Jamie and their mum. It turns into a bit of a heated argument. And I think it explores a very complex relationship between Jamie and their mum, because obviously their mum is super supportive. But it comes at a cost for Jamie, which we explore throughout the course of this argument, do pick that up, Ling?
- 2:54 LING Yeah, definitely. But it's kind of a question of what kind of burden and who does this burden fall on. Because Jamie's mum is obviously in a very compromised position in that she has to work a lot because of her unfortunate circumstance. And then she still has to take care of her children. But then that burden also lies on Jamie because now they have to take care of their younger brother. And it makes a situation really complicated. Because it's really hard to you know, balance out everything. And I think one of the things that Jamie's mum said was really interesting. (*ANIKA Yeah*) in like the midst of the argument, she said something like, Oh, I know how to take care of my own child. And when she was saying that she was talking about Jamie's little brother, whereas it's like Jamie's your child too. So it's like, you know, you've got to balance the burdens. And I think sometimes because I feel like Jamie grew up very fast, she kind of forgets that Jamie is a child, essentially, as well. And they deserve, you know, to spend time with their friends to figure out who they are as every child or every teen does.
- 4:01 ANIKA Yeah, totally. And that's what Jamie should be doing at that age, especially as the oldest child. There are sometimes added pressures and responsibilities that you may feel. But it's important to remember like, Okay, I'm at this age, I should be finding myself. I should be spending time with my friends and exploring different relationships with people. And like you shouldn't feel bad for doing those kinds of things. I feel like we really see a division of priorities amongst all the characters, and there's an expectation from Jamie's mum that Jamie should look after the little brother. And that's more important than making new friends.
- 4:34 LING Exactly. I like the reality of the situation. But I also think the way they communicated was really good, it was so very clear cut. They each know what they want. They're each willing, you know, to compromise, to make the other person happy. I felt like that was so good, because the conclusion that they came to was like, oh, Jamie's mum would you know, cut off hours at work so that Jamie could go and spend time with their friends, and then Jamie would be more responsible in the sense that they would tell their mum if they wanted to do something and then set a time and a date for everything, stuff like that. I thought that was so good. And it was like one of the best examples of communication in like the entire show.
- 5:18 ANIKA Yeah I totally agree. I think it's really interesting, because I've definitely lived this kind of experience. And I'm sure you have as well Ling, when a whole bunch of different feelings and thoughts and little situations happen, where which kind of aggravate a situation, and then it all comes to a head. And you end up in this like massive kind of blowout with your parents, like hypothetically. And it actually takes that to then work towards a conclusion. Sometimes when little things happen, you're not super open about things just because of the way that it happens and the situation around it. However, sometimes it actually takes a bit of a big blow up to be like, Hey, this is how

I've been feeling for the past little while. And then all of these things kind of come out. And you can actually come to a bit of a conclusion, which I feel like this situation between Jamie and their mum is actually a very realistic like situation. That's definitely happened to me before, my siblings, also my peers, and I'm sure has happened to you as well Ling.

6:03 LING            Yeah, I feel like it's a very common thing to happen as well.

6:07 ANIKA            Yeah, totally. And I think that is a really lovely kind of segue into our next relationship exploration between Zali and her dad.

6:15                    [Clip from More Than This]

*Dad                    Saw the marks on your last assignment. What's it about Zali?*

*Zali                    I don't know. I thought I did pretty well. I mean, I was surprised with the mark myself.*

*Dad                    Well did you speak to Mr. Eliot? Ask him why marked you so poorly. Maybe he can reassess.*

*Zali                    Dad, it's just a B, it's fine.*

*Dad                    Have you forgotten about our agreement?*

*Zali                    No.*

*Dad                    Is it Emma? Is it some of your other friends because I know they don't work as hard at achieving their goals as you do. Are they a distraction now for you?*

*Zali                    No dad, I just had a bad headache that day.*

*Dad                    Do you need to go and see a doctor then?*

*Zali                    No, Dad, I'm fine!*

*Dad                    Don't you dare raise your voice with me. We had a deal. Straight marks or you're transferring. Do not make me regret giving you a second chance. This is not the year to be stuffing up.*

7:03 LING            So what you just heard was a rather intense discussion with Zali and Zali's dad. I think we can really compare this with Jamie's way of communication with their mother. And Zali's communication with her dad, because Jamie and their mum actually came to like a nice conclusion. Whereas Zali and her dad, like Zali just stomp, Zali just stormed off, and she slammed her door. And there was nothing, nothing really came out of it except for bad feelings.

7:33 ANIKA      Yeah, it's so true. I felt as, I felt as though that conversation that we just heard was more of an interrogation rather than a conversation. And the conversation between Jamie and their mum was actually more of a conversation where Jamie's Mum gave Jamie space to actually talk. And therefore that like ultimately led to a conclusion. That make sense?

7:53 LING        Yeah exactly, because Zali's dad was like, we had a deal, this, this and this, and he was like enforcing and imposing things on her, rather than letting her speak for herself.

8:03 ANIKA      Yes, yes. The questions were very leading, which felt very, like I felt overwhelmed being in, like watching it from Zali's perspective, yeah.

8:12 LING        And I think this is also reflected in, you know, from a film perspective, the set design of their houses. Because Jamie's house is so like, homey, and comfortable. And there's windows, and there's sun and everything. Whereas Zali's house is like, very studios, and clinical like you said, feels like a hospital. The lighting is like super intense, and everything's just gray or white or black. And it's very overwhelming and it's just so much. And, yeah, I think this also relates to how your home life and the way your parents live, the way your family lives, can really impact you. And the way that you think and the way you go out about life.

8:58 ANIKA      I totally agree. And I think that you've hit the nail on the head, the people around you really influence the person that you are I personally think. And we see this in the example of Jamie. Whereas with Zali, obviously her dad isn't as supportive. And maybe she hasn't got that support network, as Jamie does. As I feel in that example, it is very clinical. It is super.. it does reflect and manifest in Zali's personality, which is definitely evident. Yeah. If you have a direct distinction between the set design in Zali's situation and Jamie situation, it's a complete contrast, which is so interesting from a film kind of perspective.

9:37 LING        Yeah. And it's really clear that Jamie's mum actually supports them. Yeah. Because she said so in one of their fights, she was like, and I'm trying to support you in the most positive way possible. And this is evident, it's clear, whereas I feel like when Zali came out and her dad must have just been like, okay, and just like moved on, and just they didn't talk about it. It wasn't an open discussion, nothing. And it's very clear that he kind of like disapproves of her, which is really sad. And this also like, manifests in all the pressure that he puts on her for, like good grades and to be really smart. And, you know, have her life together when it's really not. And I think this is definitely seen when Zali breaks down after their fight, and she has this whole episode of self harm.

10:26            [Clip from More Than This]

*Zali*                *I feel like I'm a burden.*

*Emma*             *No, you're not a burden, ok.*

*Zali*                *It's just a tough time at the moment. It's just the pressure at school and at home. It's making me a bitch.*

*Emma*                    *You're not feeling too low, are you? Like, you going to...*

*Zali*                      *No. No, I'm not, I'm fine.*

*Emma*                    *I can help you, you know that.*

10:46 LING              So we just had a really intense exchange between Zali and Emma, discussing Zali's experience with self harm, which is not explicitly shown in the series, but it's very heavily alluded to. And just to give you a little heads up, we will be talking about self harm in this segment. So if it makes you uncomfortable, or if it triggers, you feel free to just stop listening, or log off and just take a breather.

11:10 LING              So the whole trope of Zali and her experience with self harm, I think is also manifested in the fact that she works out, like first thing in the morning every day. And I wouldn't say it's necessarily a form of direct self harm, but it's very much from the pressure that everyone puts on her to be, you know, this kind of perfect person all the time. And it's seen in her dad, you know, trying to get her to have good grades and everything. But it's also seen in Emma, because she's always saying, like, Oh, you're not feeling too bad again are you, I can help you, you know, things are better when this this and this. So I feel like the pressure that she puts on everything to be perfect all the time makes Zali feel like she needs to be perfect. This is also seen in that huge fight that Zali and her dad have. And I think Zali just felt really emotional. And it was very overwhelming for her. And she was feeling a lot of that mental pain, which I think she couldn't handle, which really converted itself to physical pain. And it's a very in the moment, heated, panic response that she felt from that. And she felt relief in it, which is obviously not a healthy way of coping. And essentially, nothing in her life is really helping her at this point.

12:32 ANIKA             I think when you're so in the moment with things, you can feel very overwhelmed by lots of external pressures and it's really hard to see what's actually happening, and what's really in front of you, what you're actually experiencing. Because, like, emotional responses to certain situations are so normal, are so relevant, and need to be experienced. But I think, obviously, the way that Zali goes about it is very tricky.

12:55 LING              Exactly. It's a form of denial, almost, because she can't exactly process all the emotions that she's going through that she needs like an outlet almost, to make it kind of go away. And I also feel like the fact that it's a scar that's on her body, kind of means that it's going to be there forever. And it's when you look at it in the morning afterwards it's like, oh, you're seeing the scar, and it's just like a reminder of the pain that you've been through. And it's so hard to heal from that pain when the scar is there. And you have to see it over and over again. And it might heal, but it's never really gonna go away in that sense.

13:35 ANIKA             Yeah, I totally agree. I feel like no matter what you're experiencing, nothing is ever, ever, ever the end of the world, everything is, you can always work through things. There are always always people out there who will support you and love you. Even though their approaches may not feel as though they are translating in that way. And as I said, like sometimes when you're so in the moment with things, it's really hard

to see that. But it's really important to remember that there are always people out there who are willing to help you out with things

14:08 LING Exactly. And I feel like Zali really needs the support system that she just unfortunately does not have right now.

14:15 ANIKA And I think seeing the support through Emma and through her dad who are her main sources of support is very difficult. However, though, it's interesting the influence of Jamie in her life because they provide a very different kind of support. And they approach the situation in a very different way. In a way that doesn't feel as though it's an external pressure. Because I think sometimes when you're experiencing what Zali is experiencing, people around you and the support from other people can feel like added pressure, that pressure to always be okay. I think that's so relevant. So Zali reaches a point of self-harm, which is really heightened through the pressure that she is experiencing from having to make a speech at the assembly. And Zali feels as though she hasn't been given an adequate amount of time to prep for it, and she's feeling really stressed and really nervous about it. So she vocalises this with a teacher and he is extremely dismissive of her concerns. And she's quite annoyed about it. And so she then approaches Emma with these same concerns, and Emma too, is quite dismissive. So let's head to that conversation between Zali and Emma.

15:18 [Clip from More Than This]

*Emma* *Isn't that a good thing, though?*

*Zali* *I mean, yeah, it is. But I wanted to do some more work on it*

*Emma* *You'll be fine.*  
*Hey, Where are you going?*

*Zali* *Bathroom.*

15:32 LING It feels like Emma is almost gaslighting her a little bit into thinking that she's okay when she's really not. Because I feel like Emma does put a lot of pressure on Zali to be okay. And Emma's intentions are definitely there. Like you can see that she wants what's best for Zali. But the way she goes about it, it's just really not helpful. And it stresses Zali out even more. And I remember one of the things that Emma was saying, when she was apologising to Zali for, you know, lack of communication in their relationship. Emma says, Can you try to be more open with me. And I think Emma was asking a lot from Zali in terms of sharing things about her personal life. And I also feel the portrayal of Emma and Zali's relationship is done really, really well, in the sense that Zali doesn't want to be a burden to Emma with everything that she's going through. But it's really hard for her because then she has to struggle with this on her own. And it's really hard for Zali to be open with Emma when she knows that her actions, and the way that she treats herself not only hurts herself, but hurts Emma, and it hurts other people that you love.

16:42 ANIKA And I think that's really showcased through the fact that Emma then approaches the school counsellor. And it brings up the question of is Emma approaching the school

counsellor because she's concerned about Zali? Like, yes, sure. There's some truth in that. But then at the same time, I think there's a sense of going to the school counsellor to get support on how to support Zali. And obviously that raises a concern with the school counsellor, and then the school counsellor isn't all that helpful, which shows another kind of unhelpful approach to Zali's situation.

17:13 LING      Yeah, I actually think it wasn't wrong, that Emma went to the school counsellor, because like, it's valid, that you want help. But then it's the fact that the counsellor told Zali that Emma went to see her was really off because firstly, anyone who sees a counsellor, it's like, confidential information, right? But then it's like to let you know that your girlfriend has been sharing information with somebody else. It's like a bit weird. It's almost like a consent issue at this point, because it's like, oh, I told you this in confidence. Now, you've just gone until somebody else. And I'm not comfortable with this person knowing anything about me.

17:50 ANIKA      Exactly. And we'll be tapping into consent in the next episode. But I think it's just the different approaches from people really impact the way you go about different situations in your life. And I think that approach from Jaime, really is very telling.

18:05            [Clip from More Than This]

*Zali*            *Let's just say, it's a weird time.*

*Jamie*         *She was fine. I had a really great time, your friends are so great.*

*Zali*            *Yeah, they are. They are a good bunch. And hey, you are part of that. Also, thank you. For helping me with this. Instead of assuming that I'm smart enough, or I'll be fine. I really, really appreciate it.*

*Jamie*         *It's okay.*

18:37 ANIKA      So in this section, we really see Jamie supporting Zali in a way that she hasn't felt supported by previously.

18:44 LING      Yeah, and I think this is really seen in the fact that Jamie gives Zali space. And even when they're practicing, like her speech in the gym, I think, Jamie really gives her time to like practice on her own, and to make mistakes, and to not, I guess, shame her for making those mistakes. I feel like that's really what Zali's dad and Emma are doing.

19:07 ANIKA      I agree. Yeah. And it's almost as though it's like a productive form of support. It's like, okay, you're stressed about presenting, how can we directly tackle that and reduce that stress? Instead of being like, you know, I see your stress, obviously, you're stressed, like, obviously,

19:23 LING      The whole counsellor thing all over again.

19:25 ANIKA      Exactly.

19:26 LING      Whereas it's, this time like Jamie's the counsellor.

- 19:28 ANIKA And obviously, it's done in a way where Zali's really appreciative, as she then thanks them for helping, for helping her out.
- 19:34 LING Yeah, exactly. And that scene was super wholesome as well. But even though Jamie did help her a lot with the assembly, unfortunately, she still passes out at the assembly. And it's almost a metaphor for everyone watching her.
- 19:48 ANIKA I got this as well. And I think as young people, we constantly feel as though what we're doing and our lives are almost a performance, in a way, and everybody's watching what we're doing, whether it be on social media, or people keeping up to date with our lives of like, Oh, what are you doing this year? What are you doing outside of school? What are you doing.. What are you doing in your life essentially, like that constant pressure to always be doing something and that constant pressure as though people are watching us, and people are keeping track of what we're doing. And we should, that pressure of, you know, being okay, and continuing to do things. I totally agree. I definitely saw that experience at the assembly with everybody watching Zali, a bit of a metaphor, I totally saw that.
- 20:27 LING Yeah, from a film analysis perspective, it was definitely much like the people in the assembly hall, were a metaphor for everyone else in Zali's life. And the fact that she had to stand up and perform and, and was pressured to execute this speech really, really well.. was yeah, just a metaphor for like her entire life.
- 20:49 ANIKA And through the interaction between Jamie and Zali, we really see a form of support that Zali hasn't experienced before. And evidently, she's really grateful for it.
- 20:59 LING So the portrayal of Zali and her pressures translated into a metaphor was a really interesting concept. And we thought it'd be cool to ask some other people:  
'If you had to describe the pressure you felt in year 12 as a metaphor, what would it be?'
- 21:11 [Background Music]
- Participant 1 I don't know about, if this is a metaphor, but more of an old saying, but I'd say, doing your 12 in 2020, probably felt like an uphill battle. Just this never ending sort of series of challenges that were thrown at us. But you know, really interesting and fun in a lot of ways uphill battle.*
- Participant 2 I felt like for us, it was very much like being a bee, a working bee in a honeycomb in a hive. And sort of COVID felt like the queen bee where we were all just kind of like trying to get things done. And it sort of felt like we were working towards something that really just didn't pay off in a way.*
- Participant 3 If I could describe the pressure I felt in year 12 as a metaphor, it would probably have to be walking on thin ice. Because you could be treading so carefully, but in putting all your effort into maintaining your well being, socially and academically, but one little slip up, not even by yourself, but some external factor could cause you to snap and slip into the ice.*



*Participant 4* There's like a story in Greek mythology that I remember reading about, which is essentially somebody who had been punished by Zeus to push a boulder up a hill for eternity. And whenever he would get to the top of the hill, the boulder would roll back to the bottom, and then he would have to keep like rolling it forever. And that's kind of what year 12 felt for me, because it felt like a never ending workload. And no matter how hard I would push the boulder and how long I would work, the work would never finish. And the end was like never in sight.

*Participant 5* It is like being on a train platform and waiting for a train. But Sir, this train is never going to come. And it is like you know, when you're in year 12, you get through one English essay, and then it's like once this is done, I'm going to be chill. But then a SAT comes along. But once this SAT comes like I'm going to be relaxed. And then you know, exams come around, and it's like, well, once this exam finishes, I'm going to be in university and in my degree that I want to do and it's all going to be fabulous. And then you get to uni, and it's just like the same shit all over again.

*Participant 6* Okay, I wouldn't describe it in a metaphor, but I'll describe it as, in one word, which will probably be confusing.

*Participant 7* Literally, like a boat, in the ocean. And it sounds very, like very simple and basic. But if you think of it, when you put a boat in water, in the elements, like in the ocean, you've got waves coming in different directions, you've got different weather patterns, you've got moments of sunshine, moments of like wind moments of rain, you could be driving, you could feel like a bang on the side of the boat and that's just a wave hitting it. So I think in year 12, I was the boat and everything else was the ocean.

24:16 LING Some great responses, there are so much to think about. And so just to circle back to the main question of the podcast, what does it mean to be an adolescent today? And so from this episode, I think what I picked up was the struggle of coping. Because I think it's inevitable that you're going to struggle with something in life in general, but what really matters is how you cope with it. And I think that being a teen and going through things, you know, like for the first time in your life coping can really tell you a lot about how you are as a person.

24:43 ANIKA I think something that I took out of this discussion was that sometimes big blowouts with your parents happen. And that's okay because you're at different stages of your lives. And inevitably, you'll run into disagreements. I think something to note is that you're navigating growing up whilst they're also learning how to be a parent.

24:57 LING Yeah, that's so true. And that's something I didn't actually think about. But I think this is a great place to end the episode and we will see you in the next one.

25:04 [Theme Music]

25:37 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 5 to 25. Visit [www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au) or call one 1800 55 1800.

26:04

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