

Soho Media Club Meetup

# EMPATHY AND RESILIENCE

Soho Media Club's October's meetup took place at Halo Post and was focused on mental health.

Moderated by Sarah Burbidge, Head of Change at the BBC,



Defining  
empathy &  
resilience

A commitment  
to the  
collective

Tools to  
help you

Create  
purposeful  
reflection

# Empathy and Resilience

---

Our industry can be a fun & creative space to be a part of however, media and entertainment is an adrenaline driven industry and sometimes it can all get a little too much.

Soho Media Club's October's meetup took place at Halo Post and was focused on mental health. Moderated by Sarah Burbidge, Head of Change at the BBC, the goal of the meetup was to put a spotlight on Empathy and Resilience through three incredible, personal stories.



## **About the Author: Tom Button.**

I'm Tom. Passionate about all things Film and TV, I love film just about all things media. I also consider myself an amateur film critic

# Defining empathy & resilience

---

To jump start this insightful panel on Empathy and Resilience, Sarah asked each of the panellists to define what empathy and resilience means to them.

**“Resilience is not always about bouncing back, sometimes you have to climb back”**

For Shoku Amirani, Diversity and Inclusion Lead for BBC Children in Need, “Empathy is something we all have as human beings but it is also about lived experiences. When you have been through something difficult, it is much easier to put yourself in someone else’s shoes and really understand and help them. She added, “Resilience is not always about bouncing back, sometimes you have to climb back.”

**“My dream in life was to pray like Jesus and dance like Elvis Presley”**

Reverend Peterson Feital, Founder and CEO of Haven London combines his faith with his passion for creative artists, “My dream in life was to pray like Jesus and dance like Elvis Presley” he shared with the audience, “but within that came being a misfit. So empathy is to really being able to listen to what it means to be the “other” and resilience is to keep going regardless of the obstacles you face ”

**“One of the downsides to empathy is that it’s always easier to be in someone else’s shoes, if you wear the same shoe size.”**

Lindsay Kohler, a writer for Forbes, as well as a Behavioural Scientist who focuses on employee engagement, flagged that “One of the downsides to empathy is that it’s always easier to walk in someone else’s shoes, if you wear the same shoe size. So, with empathy, we have to catch ourselves and make sure we don’t have blinders on.”

---



# Purposeful reflections

---

Shoku spoke of her 20+ year journey in production and what it was like working in a fast paced, high pressure environment. Working within the industry can be exciting and gives you a real buzz, but there is another side, as it can become relentless.

**“When you are being discriminated against or “othered” in some way, it comes with a shock and you internalise it.”**

As well as work stress, there are other stresses which creep in such as discrimination, bullying and micro aggressions. That’s the kind of stress which you can’t switch off from when you come off air and it starts to affect your mental health and physical well being.

Shoku talked about being ‘othered’ in her work. When Shoku came from Iran to the UK to work, she found herself in a white, middle class elitist environment and that’s when you start to feel different and it starts to affect you. Shoku shared that it’s usually insidious, “When you are being discriminated against or “othered” in some way, it comes with a shock and you internalise it. The overall effect is that it chips away at your confidence, you start feeling like you’re not good enough and then you dread going into work.”



These experiences have led Shoku into her work in Diversity and Inclusion and making a difference. Shoku went on to Chair the BBC’s embrace network, which has been one of the most rewarding things she has done as she could support others.

Shoku concluded with advice for the audience. The tip that stood out is the need to put on your own oxygen mask and look after yourself first and then you can help others.

# “We can’t talk about empathy and resilience unless we’re honest to ourselves.”

The Rev shared his story of working within the Film and TV industry and his purpose of supporting creatives through his own life experiences.

During many trials and difficult moments in his personal life, the Rev has experienced incredible loneliness and in those moments, film and TV played a huge role. The more he opened up and explored creativity, the more he realised he wasn’t alone in his mental struggles. The ‘Rev’ then made it his mission to bring creatives together and start a conversation about mental health and vowed to help people using empathy as a driving force. Through meetings with creatives, he found one common thread connecting each story. “No one is listening to me.” It shocked him that the system is designed in such a way that there was no one to talk to or listen to you.



And thus, the Haven was born to create a safe space for creatives to talk and be listened to, to prevent them from getting to that place of loneliness.

The Rev also recently shared his own story of bullying in the Church of England on BBC’s Panorama Coming from Brazil. It was tough; his accent got picked up on and bullying and racism seeped in, making him feel isolated. A consequence of that was that he withdrew from speaking, because he didn’t want to hear his own accent. All of his experiences made Peterson realise his purpose in this world. “We can’t talk about empathy and resilience unless we’re honest to ourselves.”





## “Quitting doesn’t diminish your resilience but emboldens it.”

---

Lindsay listened to these brave stories and put a different spin on resilience, “Part of resilience is being a little selfish and saying no at times.” Lindsay talked about finding the power to “Quit” and knowing when enough is enough and understanding your limits.

“Quitting doesn’t diminish your resilience but emboldens it” stated Lindsay “Resilience often gets conflated with perseverance but if we make “better quitting decisions”, it can open up so many more opportunities and can help us realise what we really want and where we belong.”

One of Lindsay’s top resilience tips is “taking back control.”

She gave her first hand experience when through lockdown she had to battle a combination of not sleeping and manic energy but found mental liberation through art and cinema and starting scriptwriting. Creativity saved her through the third lockdown and learning to do things for herself helped her take control.

Lindsay also gave her perspective on the common theme of ‘Otherness’, lack of belonging and differences. “There is an innate bias within us and when we recognise that, it’s a powerful tool to being more inclusive.”

# Tools to help you

---

## What helps our panellists get through difficulties?

Lindsay's lesson in resilience is to find that well of strength inside of you and find something creative to help you. "We tell ourselves no, before the world says no, and we need to stop doing that because we are more capable than we give ourselves credit for."

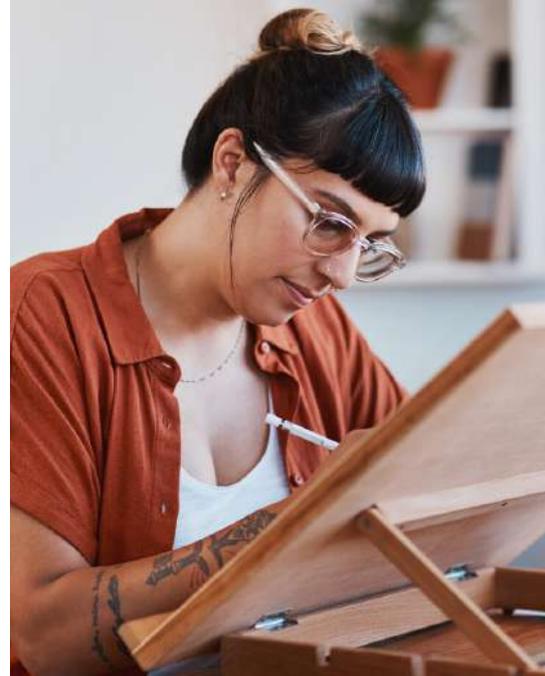
The Rev brought up his love of writing journals to help with his mental health, as well as prayer dancing. Dancing through emotions can help overcome trauma and feeling different, as dancing is universal.

Shoku mentioned that yoga, nature and connecting with friends has helped her feel normal again. Sleep and rest also are important. "Self-care was something I'd forgotten about", she added, "Do what gives you peace and joy."

## A beautiful commitment to the collective

There were some really brave and personal stories shared by our panellists and audience.

Opening up and sharing our journeys is key to understanding and helping others. Our industry can be a daunting and challenging place. If our talk on empathy and resilience has taught us anything, it's that we are not alone - get out of that toxic space, find your allies, do something you love and you will bounce back and fly.



By Claudia Alves  
Photographer

---

The Soho Media Club inspires collaboration in the media production, post-production and distribution community. Our club nights bring together passionate people with stories to share.

