

**At the Back of Your Mind
S01E07: Reality TV**

[00:00:00] **Juliette:** Hello, and welcome to *At the Back of Your Mind*, the *Inspire the Mind* podcast that brings you the sciences on mental health, with a no-nonsense attitude. I'm one of your hosts, Juliette, together with my scientist friends, Carolina, and Maryam. We're often joined by fabulous guests, so grab a cup of tea and let's dive into what's exactly at the back of your mind today.

[00:00:31] **Melisa:** Before we get into the episode, I just wanted to give a quick heads up about a few topics that some listeners may find upsetting. Trigger warning for discussions about suicide, body image, and relationships with food. Take care of yourselves while listening and enjoy the episode.

[00:00:44] **Juliette:** Hi everyone. Welcome to a new episode of *At the Back of Your Mind*. I'm Juliette, one of your hosts, and today we have nice, cosy setting with just my two co-hosts, Maryam...

[00:00:58] **Maryam:** Hello.

[00:00:58] **Juliette:** ...and Carolina.

[00:01:00] **Carolina:** Olá, olá! This is the earliest we've ever recorded.

[00:01:04] **Maryam:** Yeah.

[00:01:04] **Carolina:** I think our brains are still half asleep, but we'll do our best because we- we really want to share this with you. I have to tell everyone that I think scientists are especially bad at waking up early. It's actually 9:02, and we're considering this a very early recording, but we start late and finish late, right?

At the Back of Your Mind
S01E07: Reality TV

[00:01:23] **Juliette:** Well, today we're talking about people who probably don't wake up at 6:00 AM I'd say. Reality TV and mental health. Are they compatible?

[00:01:34] **Maryam:** Where should we start? Because there's a lot to unpack here.

I don't know about you guys, but I have been roughly keeping up with this season of *Love Island*. I feel like for most people, reality TV is this guilty pleasure and it's a way to like to switch off a little bit. I feel like *Love Island* is one of the only shows that I kind of follow that closely. But I have watched a lot of YouTube videos discussing reality TV shows, and...

[00:02:00] **Carolina:** I have a big place in heart for *Love is Blind*.

[00:02:03] **Maryam:** Oh! I started watching that and it was so boring first season...

[00:02:07] **Maryam:** ...and everyone was like-everyone was like, watch second season it gets so much better. But I did watch, what was that show on *Netflix* recently?

[00:02:13] **Juliette:** Oh, is it *Too Hot to Handle*?

[00:02:15] **Maryam:** No, it's not that one either. That one is like *Love Island*, but *Netflix's* version, and they're not allowed to kiss or anything.

[00:02:22] **Juliette:** That's the one where they can't do anything remotely sexy.

**At the Back of Your Mind
S01E07: Reality TV**

[00:02:26] **Maryam:** They lose money, right?

[00:02:27] **Juliette:** Yeah.

[00:02:28] **Maryam:** It's like just get a bunch of really attractive people, physically attractive people and be like, cool, you're not allowed. You're actually just not allowed to do anything. But, oh, what is the show called? It's the one where one partner wants to get married and the other isn't so sure.

[00:02:42] **Carolina:** *The Ultimatum.*

[00:02:43] **Maryam:** *Ultimatum.*

[00:02:43] **Carolina:** Yes.

[00:02:43] **Maryam:** *The Ultimatum.* I remembered. I watched that recently as well, like sometimes I'll explore other shows if they're on *Netflix*, if they're really popular, but I actually find it very difficult to sit through them. I watched a lot more when I was younger, which is terrible because I know the kind of things that have happened as a consequence for some participants.

[00:03:05] **Carolina:** And what are you talking about exactly?

[00:03:06] **Maryam:** I'm sure some people at least would've heard about the previous presenter, so *Caroline Flack*, dying by suicide, and I think two of the...

[00:03:16] **Carolina:** Mm-hmm.

At the Back of Your Mind
S01E07: Reality TV

[00:03:16] **Maryam:** Is it two or three participants, people that have been on the show...

[00:03:19] **Carolina:** Yeah.

[00:03:19] **Maryam:** ...as contestants have also died by suicide after the show.

I think one of them was a lady from one of the earlier seasons, Sophie, was it?

[00:03:29] **Juliette:** *Sophie Gradon*. And then the other contestant who died by suicide less than a year later is *Mike Thalassitis*.

[00:03:36] **Carolina:** To- to put things into perspective, we're talking about a pool of, we're on season 8 now, maybe 150 people that altogether have gone through the show and having three deaths by suicide is probably too high on the statistical side of things.

[00:03:53] **Maryam:** You know what we said about Mike as well, dying by suicide.

I remember there was this awful, awful trend.

[00:03:59] **Carolina:** Mm-hmm.

[00:04:00] **Maryam:** So, there's this whole thing called '*Love Island* Twitter', and when you go on Twitter, there's like specific people that only come on Twitter once a year to post about *Love Island*, but it can get quite mob-like.

[00:04:11] **Carolina:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

At the Back of Your Mind
S01E07: Reality TV

[00:04:11] **Maryam:** And I remember when Mike was on the show, it was 'Muggy Mike', like that was his nickname. And I think it was just a lot to handle coming out of the show. And I completely agree with you about it being too high a statistic, especially when another ITV show, *The Jeremy Kyle Show*, which is also, I guess reality TV, where people come on to talk about their problems that they're facing in their personal lives. So, whether it's like, you know, they don't know whether their child is theirs or their partner is cheating on them, or whatever it is, and *Jeremy Kyle* talks them through it, like talks them through their problems. Some, one person I think died by suicide after being on *Jeremy Kyle*, and they cancelled the show.

They've stopped airing it, but *Love Island* is continuing.

[00:04:58] **Juliette:** It's not just, is it too much for the eyes of the public, you know, for us to say, '*Oh, we need to put a stop to this*', but also statistically, we know, right? The lifetime prevalence of depression is one in five, so that means that one in five people will have an episode of depression in their lifetime.

[00:05:18] **Maryam:** Mm-hmm.

[00:05:18] **Juliette:** It's just one in five. But if you have what, 150 participants, that means 30 of them would have depression, and if three of them have died by suicide, that's 10%, and I feel like the whole world would be aware if 10% of people suffering from depression had it so severely that it led to dying by suicide.

It is way too high, but also it seems like there's not been a reaction, especially in terms of *Love Island* to, you know, stop the show or take

**At the Back of Your Mind
S01E07: Reality TV**

measures that are this strong. Although, to be fair, I think we all have done a little bit of digging around, and I think the media is highlighting the mental health issues that the contestants suffer from. When they leave those reality TV shows...

[00:06:05] **Carolina:** Yes.

[00:06:05] **Juliette:** ...there is a lot of noise around that, and you also have contestants...

[00:06:09] **Carolina:** Mm-hmm.

[00:06:09] **Juliette:** ...who come out and talk about how difficult it was.

[00:06:12] **Carolina:** There's a, I dunno if you remember in season 4, 2018, *Alex [George], Dr Alex*.

[00:06:18] **Maryam:** Yes.

[00:06:19] **Carolina:** He has a huge profile now. He's a mental health advocate and he works with the government.

He has this hashtag called '#postyourpill', where every, I think it's every month he posts a photo of his antidepressants and it's kind of to break down the stigma of mental health medication. And he talks about how helpful it could be, and this was a result of him being in the show.

Sorry, *Dr Alex*, if this is if I'm making this up, but I don't think you were taking I don't think you were taking those before, and I think it- it really impacted your mental health being on the show.

At the Back of Your Mind
S01E07: Reality TV

I'm talking to him as he's listening to me. Hi. Carolina. Nice to meet you.

[00:06:56] **Maryam:** I really like *Dr Alex* as a character, and I think by the end of that season, everyone adored him. But it's really nice to see how there's this encouragement, knowing that he's in the eyes of so many young people and they would've seen him on that season. And I think he's done a lot of work with young people's mental health. Like it's nice to see that he's encouraging that.

[00:07:15] **Carolina:** His brother died by suicide a few years ago as well and he was very open, very vocal about it. So yeah, he's been doing some- some great work.

My understanding is that there is a pre-screening of potential contestants' kind of psychological-based pre-screening to ensure that, well, that should ensure that people are in a- in- are in a place where they- they can handle the pressure and they're not too vulnerable. But from all the- the- the news articles I read, there's no clear explanation what is done in these psychological assessments and even the support during and after the show is very vague. So, I read that there's a- a team of mental health professionals and that someone is- is a senior first-aider like a mental health first-aider. To me, that's not enough. To me, that's not enough. And that they are given, the contestants once they leave, they're given either given I think eight sessions of psychotherapy. But to my understanding, that's also not enough. And also, it's someone that the production arranged for them, how do they know if they're the right fit to work with that person to that contestant.

**At the Back of Your Mind
S01E07: Reality TV**

It all feels kind of putting a- a plaster on a bleeding wound and hoping that it goes away.

[00:08:30] **Juliette:** I think it's the bare minimum, in the sense that, you know, if they didn't do that, they have no leg to stand on.

[00:08:36] **Carolina:** Mm-hmm.

[00:08:37] **Juliette:** Like it is the bare minimum that they can do. Is that enough? Not really. You know, you say it's like putting a plaster on an open wound, but I'm wondering if also just creating these shows and like the environment of these shows is, you know, that's creating the wound, so can you cause the harm and then...

[00:08:54] **Carolina:** Mm-hmm.

[00:08:55] **Juliette:** ...pretend that you're actually trying to protect people from that, or prevent any further damage being done to their mental health? I'm not sure, because at the end of the day, these are shows that thrive on creating drama, creating conflict, and I- I had a little look at the scientific literature just to understand what's out there, but something that's been highlighted a bit throughout...

[00:09:17] **Carolina:** Mm-hmm.

[00:09:17] **Juliette:** ...is that the contestants are not always doing well, and then we have a really tough time on the outside, but it's also because the way everything is set up, the way production set things up, it throws challenges at them. It's very unexpected. It's at any time during their day, they create on purpose, you know, like they foster kind of conflict and drama and things that can blow up. And if you put yourself in their

At the Back of Your Mind
S01E07: Reality TV

shoes for a minute, you're away from home with people you have just met in an environment...

[00:09:45] **Maryam:** Can't contact your parents. Can't contact your friends.

[00:09:48] **Juliette:** Yeah, exactly. You're away from your whole support network, which we know is a very- very important protective factor to have a good mental health in daily life.

[00:09:59] **Maryam:** It very much is that, that sentiment of, you know, and you're saying, we don't really know what these psychological tests involve when they're going on the show and like when they're screening for these people.

[00:10:10] **Carolina:** And what's the criteria for screening?

[00:10:13] **Maryam:** So, part of it is obviously they need to be physically...

[00:10:17] **Carolina:** Fit.

[00:10:17] **Maryam:** Objectively attractive. Yeah. Fit. Like they need to be objectively attract-, physically attractive. And there's an, there's a perception of what that looks like.

[00:10:25] **Carolina:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

[00:10:26] **Maryam:** And so that's what they go for. We've seen a lot of people come out of the show and create careers for themselves out of being on the show. So, there's that clear benefit. I feel like every

At the Back of Your Mind
S01E07: Reality TV

season, there's always someone who fits each role, almost like American school or something. You know, you say like, '*Oh, that's the jock*'.

[00:10:43] **Carolina:** Like an archetype.

[00:10:43] **Maryam:** '*There's the-*' Yeah, exactly.

[00:10:45] **Carolina:** '*That's the sweet boy. That's the villain*'.

[00:10:47] **Maryam:** Exactly.

[00:10:48] **Carolina:** Yeah.

[00:10:48] **Maryam:** And I feel like each year they have someone who fits those slots. And like for example, last year, I know someone did some research on this, so last year there was someone called *Faye [Winter]* and she was clearly not feeling stable in the *Love Island* environment. She was, she'd be screaming at the top of her lungs in that villa. And this year I feel like there is someone who fills that role. And it's the same with other roles.

[00:11:11] **Carolina:** Yes.

[00:11:12] **Maryam:** And so, I'm like, they have an idea of what personalities they want and whether they're gonna clash and how that's gonna play out on TV, like how that's gonna play out on the cameras.

[00:11:21] **Carolina:** There's enough research to show how dynamics of different kind of archetypes of personality, how the dynamics work

At the Back of Your Mind
S01E07: Reality TV

out. And it's just easy to find someone to fit those archetypes, those roles.

Actually, I wanted to highlight that on season 4 in 2018, there was this boy, his name was *Niall [Aslam]*. He was very young. I think he might not even have been 20 yet. Don't- don't get me wrong. And he was on the autistic spectrum, and he was brought in to be the funny one. His kind of personality was being, you know, squeezed into the role of the goofy, funny guy. And he lasted nine days on the show and he was removed to be hospitalised in a psychiatric unit with psychosis. There was a report from a psychiatrist from within the production, within the show to say that they didn't think he was going to last to the less- to the next elimination round. So, they were seeing this person deteriorate, but they wanted to keep him going. Until it made sense on the show to remove him, and then he gets admitted with psychosis, which is something really, really, really, really hard to recover from. It, it's not just a walk in the park, it's not take a pill and go home.

[00:12:32] **Juliette:** If we're all a little bit, you know, able to take a step back. We do know that we're only being fed a portion of what happens on these shows that we're, you know, they craft a story around all the, you know, footage they get every day. You don't get everything.

[00:12:47] **Maryam:** 100%.

[00:12:48] **Juliette:** Some contestants barely get any screen time and you can tell that, you know, they're really crafting a- a story or storylines that they want to see, that they think will sell and it's their job to get people to watch and to get people to continue watching, but it is

At the Back of Your Mind
S01E07: Reality TV

disgusting that they would keep doing it at the cost of somebody's mental health.

I really agree with what you said, Carolina, like psychosis is not just a, you know, go and get checked at your GP and you know, three days later you'll be okay. It is a severe mental health condition, and it could be like a one-time episode, or it can be something that, you know, becomes a bit more recurrent. It's not something you can ignore and shove under the rug.

And I think Maryam, to go back to what you were saying about *Faye [Winter]* having this archetype, I read a great article about this and recently they were using *Love Island's* last four or five seasons as a case study to understand like how they portrayed women. And basically, they were saying like, these shows generally perpetrate very sexist attitudes towards women, so that they orchestrated the shows in a way that, you know, it portrays women very emotional, irrational, like hysterical...

[00:14:05] **Carolina:** Wow.

[00:14:05] **Juliette:** ...type of women when you know they're reacting to what I think are quite normal situations.

[00:14:10] **Maryam:** Yeah.

[00:14:11] **Juliette:** But probably in the context, you know, you get people who react like very strongly because you get people to watch...

[00:14:17] **Maryam:** Emotions are high. Emotions are so high in there.

At the Back of Your Mind
S01E07: Reality TV

[00:14:20] **Juliette:** Emotions are very high, but they're portrayed this way and, in a way, where there's a very big double standard as well. So that if women act and you know, like a sex-positive way, they're like trying to explore their options and like get to know like different people, straight away they're portrayed in like a very negative light, whereas men would be praised and encouraged like, you know, '*Come on, go get some*'...

[00:14:43] **Maryam:** '*Go on lads*'.

[00:14:43] **Juliette:** ...type of way and that it really perpetrates like sexist double standards in this way.

[00:14:49] **Carolina:** I don't know if you remember in 2016, season 2, *Zara [Holland]* was Miss Great Britain and she had her title removed because she slept with one of the contestants, and she was heavily judged...

[00:15:00] **Maryam:** Yeah.

[00:15:00] **Carolina:** ...by her female cast members.

[00:15:02] **Maryam:** I remember that.

[00:15:02] **Carolina:** And, and that's a horrible, misogynistic thing to say because as Miss Great Britain, she had a mission. She had a year or- or so of- of things that she wanted to do. It was a job, and she was just behaving like everyone else was behaving at the house. And she was- she was shamed for it. I read somewhere that the production expects them to be 'hot, dumb, and ready to love', and you know, whether you admit it or not, that's also what draws you and I and

At the Back of Your Mind
S01E07: Reality TV

everyone into the show. You want them to be unbelievably, you know, model-esque too- too beautiful to be real. You know, I wouldn't say that people are dumb and they're playing a game. They're- they're there with- with a goal, with a mission. And, you know, they have careers, they have jobs, they have lives. They're, they- they do not fit this horrible stereotype and 'ready to love'. We want them to go through heartbreak. It sounds like a terrible combination, a terrible cocktail that we're all drinking from.

[00:16:00] **Juliette:** They are portrayed in this way, like not super dumb, but like when you look at the footage that's released, you never hear them have like an intellectual conversation. You know, like you- you hear them only talk about relations between one another. Maybe they have a very silly discussion, but that's the one that's kept because maybe it's gonna make the public laugh and make them seem more friendly. Because, come on, let's be honest. Don't we all have dumb as s*** conversations with our friends? Absolutely. But because they never show them have very deep chats about themselves or about...

[00:16:32] **Maryam:** Yeah.

[00:16:32] **Juliette:** ...their family, about their hobbies, about their work. And I think either it's encouraged in one way, as you're saying, but also it might be that it's just snipped out because I'm sure they talk about that stuff.

[00:16:43] **Maryam:** It's heavily edited. There was a whole thing the other night on Twitter how someone was in two places at the same time on screen. Yeah. So yeah, Juliette, you're completely right. Like they like to create their own story. Like what is the narrative that they wanna

**At the Back of Your Mind
S01E07: Reality TV**

run with each episode? Who do they wanna paint as the villain? What drama do they wanna foster?

[00:17:02] **Juliette:** But I think that's really, that's why, you know, it's partially like really hard for these people on the outside as well, because you come out of a reality show where, you know, I dunno how many people watch those, but you know, lots or lots and lots of people have been following you for what, a month, maybe two, and have created this image of you, this idea of you...

[00:17:22] **Carolina:** Mm-hmm.

[00:17:22] **Juliette:** ...that they have, that they've been, you know, criticising on Twitter, like, I dunno, at least three nights a week or something. And imagine if you come out and you see all of that, you see how people perceive you. It's not in line with who you are or even what you did because of all the editing that's been, you know, going on. I can understand how incredibly damaging that can be. You have a really stressful experience, on the show, probably, like it's not a walk in the park.

[00:17:48] **Carolina:** Keep this image that they created inside the villa, whatever image they thought they created versus the image that production created for them, but keeping that image that sells, like a mask, for as long as they can so that they can profit as much as they can from this appearance, because of course this is all money and fame motivated and no judgment there. The point is not to come out of the villa and go back to their old lives, right? It's to build a profile. But they need to build a profile according to what the public expects of them. And they need to stay relevant, and they need to stay important. And

**At the Back of Your Mind
S01E07: Reality TV**

probably in the first week, they get thousands of invitations. By six months, they probably get, you know, a hundred invitations every week. And seeing their fame dwindling and not knowing how to keep it up, it has to fit into whatever mental health challenges you're going through at the time.

[00:18:37] **Maryam:** Oh, there was someone who's talked a lot about how they care so much about their appearance. What's her name?

[00:18:42] **Carolina:** Is it *Megan [Barton-Hanson]*?

[00:18:44] **Maryam:** Yes. Yes.

[00:18:44] **Carolina:** *Megan [Barton-Hanson]*.

[00:18:45] **Maryam:** Yeah, *Megan [Barton-Hanson]*. She had a lot of work done before going into the villa. Not for the villa.

[00:18:51] **Carolina:** Mm-hmm.

[00:18:51] **Maryam:** But she'd already had that work done because that, yeah, she wanted to feel confident in how she looks, and she's come out afterwards and talked a lot about how wishes she was just comfortable with how she looked previously and how there's the, all this pressure about how women look, blah, blah, blah, like that kind of thing.

[00:19:07] **Carolina:** I read an article written by her that it was really, really interesting, really powerful. So it was talking about how sex workers are protected in the UK in terms of law, and she's probably one of the first women, at least in the UK, that I know that has a huge public

**At the Back of Your Mind
S01E07: Reality TV**

profile, that has a very public love life, you know, boyfriends, ex-boyfriends, dramas, all that gets feed into the tabloids, and she's also openly working as a sex worker and you can access her channels. She's an *OnlyFans* creator, but someone that can be a sex worker, have a big profile, and still be very open and accepted in society and have a love life. And I think this is quite a- a new thing, which is incredible. And I'm really happy for her to be treading the way to make that happen. And I like to see her advocating for the rights of sex workers and the protection, because it takes a big profile like that to get the conversation going. And that profile is usually not given to sex workers.

It's incredible.

[00:20:15] **Maryam:** Do we feel like the benefits of reality TV for the participants outweighs the negative consequences?

[00:20:23] **Carolina:** I think it's a personal, it's a personal journey, personal experience. I wonder if there's a pre-selection bias of people that would be willing to go into those shows and whether there can be certain vulnerabilities, which are more present in people that would be willing to go in. I know this is very controversial. I'm just throwing the idea out there. It wouldn't be an option to, for a lot of people, right?

[00:20:46] **Maryam:** Is that a natural need to be famous?

[00:20:49] **Juliette:** I think there's some science behind...

[00:20:51] **Carolina:** Go on Juliette!

[00:20:53] **Maryam:** Go on Juliette!

**At the Back of Your Mind
S01E07: Reality TV**

[00:20:54] **Juliette:** ...what you were saying,

[00:20:55] **Maryam:** hit us with the science!

[00:20:56] **Juliette:** ...'cause there's not- there's not like a ton of research on like reality TV per se.

I think you'd have to like derive and look at how things like peer pressure or constant attention, that kind of stuff, but not specifically reality TV, but there's like a few studies and to go back to, you know, are there certain profiles who are maybe more likely to go on them? I can't say yes or no, but I can tell you that there was a study conducted in 2011 that essentially found that young people who, you know, really kind of strove more for popularity and physical attractiveness, were more likely to have what is called 'connectedness' to reality TV programs. And they define 'connectedness' as basically how intensely you develop that relationship with the program and kind of like how strong that parasocial relationship is and how likely you are to engage with it.

[00:21:50] **Carolina:** Huh.

[00:21:51] **Juliette:** So I think if you know, people kind of want to be more popular, want to be more physically attractive and rely on those things in life, are more likely to feel connected or have a stronger parasocial relationship with reality TV show, aren't they also maybe the ones who would kind of look up to that and then later on try to be on them? I think that might be something.

[00:22:12] **Maryam:** Very, very small tangent, but it's kind of similar to how they've been doing these surveys amongst young people and like

**At the Back of Your Mind
S01E07: Reality TV**

what they wanna be when they grow up. And a lot of them say YouTuber now. And I know part of- part of that is that they're consuming a lot of YouTube content and they're seeing how popular YouTubers are and how famous you can get out of it, for example, *PewDiePie*. But then there- there's also that element of, yeah, it's- it's for fame, isn't it?

I have some statistics here as well from the Mental Health Foundation, so- so they were looking at what young people's, 18 to 24, what they say about reality TV and apparently almost one in four people said that it makes them worry about their body image. And then according to that same survey, so they surveyed 4,505 UK adults. A quarter of them said they had experienced suicidal thoughts and feelings because of concerns relating to their body image. So just- just how much they worry about their body image, let alone like watching. It's pretty horrendous.

[00:23:13] **Carolina:** In line with that, there was this study done in Scandinavia, and they followed up women that had had any plastic surgery 10 years on, and 10 years later they looked at the incidence of suicidal ideation and it was way higher. Something like three or four times higher...

[00:23:31] **Maryam:** Wow.

[00:23:31] **Carolina:** ...than the rest of the population that hadn't had any cosmetic procedures done. These were quite invasive procedures, but yeah, cosmetic surgery.

At the Back of Your Mind
S01E07: Reality TV

[00:23:39] **Juliette:** But I think what you've just said, those are like both, I think, great examples that for me, would support the fact that no, does it outweigh the negative effects? Probably not, because it has negative effects on the contestants themselves, but also producing reality TV that has those elements of, you know, like putting the hysterical overemotional woman at the forefront, the- the player, idealising drama and like very, very unrealistic bodies at the end of the day. Which, as you've both just said, that can have a negative effect on people and how they perceive their body image, later on, maybe their relationship with food, their relationship with their, you know, self-esteem, their self-worth. I- I don't think we can say outweighs the benefit. Sure. It's like, it's like eating crisps. It is a guilty pleasure. You start eating one, you can't stop. You're just, you know...

[00:24:31] **Juliette:** ...eating the whole thing, but if you look at it objectively, I think there's such a long way to go...

[00:24:37] **Maryam:** There's a heavy impact.

[00:24:38] **Juliette:** ...before. Yeah. Before we can say that...

[00:24:41] **Carolina:** yes.

[00:24:41] **Juliette:** ...you know, at least the impact is neutral.

[00:24:43] **Maryam:** No, it's definitely outweighed on that side of the negative consequences, unfortunately, and not just for the participants and contestants, but also for people that are watching at home for the audience, especially young people who are the target audience for reality TV. We thrive on watching other people's drama and arguments, and you sometimes forget that they're real people because it's on TV

At the Back of Your Mind
S01E07: Reality TV

and the way it's shot, the way it's filmed, the way they create their own narrative. You just forget. When I'm watching it and I have those moments of realisation, like this is a human being going through all of these emotions right now on camera. Like they don't even have a choice. Well, they did have a choice in going on the show...

[00:25:22] **Carolina:** Mm-hmm.

[00:25:23] **Maryam:** ...but then it's like they're just there, and if they leave early, then they don't have that opportunity to build the profile and build a career out of it.

[00:25:31] **Juliette:** Okay. Yes. So, I dunno guys, if you remember that, there's actually a contestant on *Love Island* this year who left for like his mental health. I think his name was *Liam [Llewellyn]* but that was like super, super early on, right? And I- I don't think he made it like a week, but he did...

[00:25:48] **Carolina:** Mm-hmm.

[00:25:48] **Juliette:** Yeah, he basically said he didn't feel like himself, but honestly, like I really applaud that because you are in there, you see the environment and you're like, that is not for me. This is not

[00:25:57] **Carolina:** right.

It's a great level of self-awareness. Yeah.

[00:26:00] **Maryam:** How interesting would it be to be able to see the behind the scenes of the making of reality TV? Because...

**At the Back of Your Mind
S01E07: Reality TV**

[00:26:06] **Juliette:** Yeah.

[00:26:07] **Maryam:** ...because we don't- we don't see any of this. Like we don't actually see it. We just hear the accounts of the participants.

[00:26:14] **Carolina:** Huh.

[00:26:15] **Maryam:** There is so much that we don't see, like we know that people go on into the villa, like it's not just them in the villa all the time. There's people that come in and they leave as well, apparently, they used to go out for nights out, like on the weekend.

[00:26:28] **Juliette:** I think there's a reason we don't see those things.

[00:26:31] **Maryam:** It would break it down. It would, it wouldn't allow it to run anymore because of the way they do these things.

[00:26:44] **Juliette:** I think we've drawn some pretty clear-cut conclusions today though, in the sense that...

[00:26:51] **Carolina:** Are we going to stop watching reality TV? Probably not.

[00:26:54] **Maryam:** I'm definitely gonna keep tabs on what's going on in the reality TV sphere. I tend to, like I said, watch a lot of YouTube videos about people criticising reality TV shows, especially like when *Too Hot to Handle* came out, I knew I didn't wanna watch it, so I just watched YouTubers criticise it instead, and that was enough for me. So, I'm definitely gonna keep up with the news and what's said about it.

**At the Back of Your Mind
S01E07: Reality TV**

[00:27:15] **Carolina:** I don't think it's sustainable as it stands, and things are going to change in the next few years to protect people more and maybe certain formats will be completely erased for the wellbeing of everyone.

[00:27:26] **Juliette:** I really hope so. Yeah.

Can you actually believe this is like the wrap on the season's last episode?

[00:27:33] **Carolina:** Oh, what a journey!

[00:27:34] **Maryam:** It has been quite the journey.

[00:27:36] **Juliette:** Right?

[00:27:37] **Maryam:** I'm really proud of us though. I feel like we've had some really interesting moments and it's been a lot of fun recording this season.

[00:27:48] **Carolina:** I think we always have a smile on our face when we're recording.

[00:27:51] **Juliette:** Yeah, we've, I mean we've done so many things, good episodes, but I think I'm personally really looking forward to the next one 'cause I think we've got quite a few good ideas brewing.

[00:28:02] **Carolina:** Ah, yes.

[00:28:03] **Maryam:** Oh, definitely. If you thought this was good. You don't know what's coming.

**At the Back of Your Mind
S01E07: Reality TV**

[00:28:07] **Carolina:** We have a few guests lined up already. We have some new additions to the production team, which will be really exciting.

[00:28:16] **Juliette:** Well, you know, I do think we have some hot takes coming for...for the next season.

[00:28:22] **Maryam:** Definitely.

[00:28:24] **Carolina:** I- I have to say I really enjoyed speaking to experts like Paola and Etta. Not just their careers and about women in science, but actually debunking some myths, talking about depression, talking about inflammation, talking about childhood history of trauma. I think that was really interesting. And I also really liked speaking to Akeem. Akeem has so much energy, I think we could have had him for like the whole season.

[00:28:51] **Juliette:** I really like speaking with like Monique and Akeem in the sense that in both episodes we brush on more, you know, like cultural, artistic expressions of mental health...

[00:29:00] **Carolina:** Mm-hmm.

[00:29:01] **Juliette:** ...and we had Monique who was, you know, very calm and every single word felt like, you know, it was really like, thought through very like calm energy. And then we had Akeem who was just like full of energy, you know, had like, so much to say which were, you know, both also very enjoyable episodes.

So, we had fun. We hope you had fun listening to us. I'll see you for the next one.

At the Back of Your Mind
S01E07: Reality TV

[00:29:23] **Carolina:** I'll see you on season two.

[00:29:25] **Maryam:** Season two.

[00:29:27] **Juliette:** See you in season two.

[00:29:28] **Carolina:** Thank you for listening.

[00:29:29] **Maryam:** Bye!

[00:29:30] **Carolina:** Bye!

[00:29:31] **Juliette:** Bye!

[00:29:40] **Maryam:** Hey everyone, it's Maryam. This episode of *At the Back of Your Mind* was recorded on the 6th of July 2022, featuring our hosts, me, Carolina, and Juliette. Be sure to check out our Instagram @atboypodcast and visit inspirethemind.org/atthebackofyourmind for more episodes, transcripts, and contact information.

A big thank you to our editors, Giulia Lombardo, Lilli Murdoch and Melisa Kose, and our research team Nare Amasi-Hartoonian and Celeste Miller. Thanks also to *Inspire the Mind* and Editor-in-Chief, Professor Carmine Pariente for helping us bring this podcast to the air.

And of course, thank you for listening. See you next year for season two of *At the back of Your Mind*.