

Advocacy and Listening

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, guess, important, feel, parents, talk, stigma, posting, mental health, friends, educating, life, week, ally, advocacy, teachers, step, feelings, jasmine, high school

SPEAKERS

Kaelyn, Dannie, Jonea, Jasmine

Kaelyn 00:18

Hi guys, and welcome to another Speak On It Podcast with the Steve Fund. My name is Kaelyn and I am one of the co-leads for today's podcast with Dannie. And today, our focus, our topic is focused on advocacy and programming as a mental health advocate.

Dannie 00:43

Hi, I'm Dannie. I'm a co-host on this podcast and take a gap year between high school and college.

Kaelyn 00:49

My name is Kaelyn and I am part of the Youth Advisory Board for The Steve Fund and I live in the Bay Area in California and I enjoy running marathons.

Jonea 01:01

Hello, everyone. My name is Jonea, and I'm currently located in the D.C. area. And I'm a graduate student at George Mason University. And I'm doing a master's in social work as well as in conflict resolution.

Jasmine 01:20

Hi, everybody, my name is Jasmine Gueyen. I am 20 years old. I'm from Houston, Texas. I'm approaching my senior year, or this fall I'm approaching my senior year at Spelman College. I'm an International Studies and French double major with a Political Science minor.

Kaelyn 01:42

Okay, so our first question would be, what does advocacy mean?

Jasmine 01:54

Um, I guess I'll start. So advocacy, for me, at least means to be passionate about something that can not only benefit you, but benefit society as a whole, to continue to promote just your personal ideas, your personal agenda, but for a beneficial reason. And also just to remain passionate about an issue that really stands out to you, that really affects you, so that way it can be governed in a different way or change in a different way by lawmakers in different government officials.

Jonea 02:31

And advocacy to me, you know, looks different based on who you are. But I think it's being able to use your platform to advance, you know, causes you care about, but also knowing when to take a step back to let others speak. So you can advocate for someone but you can also encourage and empower another person to advocate for themselves. So I think advocacy really depends and looks different based on you know, the types of power you have and the types of privilege you have in your environment.

Kaelyn 03:11

I like how you mentioned the whole overstepping thing, how do you know, if you're gonna overstep that line where you're... sort of I guess redirecting the focus of advocating or other topics--

Dannie 03:24

Or stepping back? And I guess in what situations when you think it's appropriate to step back?

Jonea 03:32

Yeah, I think it's really important to know how to read the room, because, um, and you really look at your environment and then decide whether or not it's good to step up or to step back. So if you are, let's say, advocating for a group and that group is not there. Then you can speak up if you've, you know, studied or educated yourself in regards to that group. However, if some group members are there, then it might be the time for you to step back and to allow those group members to speak for themselves, if that's what they want to do. And I also think being emotionally intelligent and being able to just look at the different situations to know whether to step up or step back, I don't think there's like a perfect formula to doing it. It just all depends on each situation.

Dannie 04:33

And I love how you mentioned the importance of taking note of whether that group is represented in that situation or not, because they may not always be. But that reminds me of what it means to be an ally. So what does it mean to be an ally, to you guys?

Jasmine 04:53

Okay. So, for me, being an ally is somebody who's willing to support, who has educated ourselves on the specific issue that we're discussing. Who supports, sees, empathizes with our concerns, understands our concerns and is also passionate about making sure that the issues that we are passionate about changing are the issues that we want to kind of modify, they're also with us in that sense. I feel like it means just to be kind of like a friend to the group, if we're talking about different ethnic groups.

Jonea 05:51

I do like the part of being a friend, and being willing to sit down with people and really understand or try to understand. And I also think an ally listens with the intention of understanding what the community is talking about and, also an ally stands with you not only during your good times, but also during the

difficult times and they advocate for you. They advocate for you, they encourage you to advocate for yourself, and they also advocate with you.

Dannie 06:38

Do you think a company is becoming an ally when they kind of like put out a statement like we stand with the black community or we stand with the LGBTQ+ community? Do you think that's enough? Are there other action steps that they can take to truly be an ally?

Jonea 06:52

I think, you know, it's one thing to put a post there but I also think it has to follow your action. I mean, your words have to follow your actions as well. So taking the step to write a letter, showing support for, you know, for whatever community is really important, but then also working with that community to see what other things that organization, that company can do to really push for change, because I don't think just writing a letter is enough. Like it definitely could create a conversation. But after having that conversation, it's also important to start writing what are some other ways we can push for change?

Jasmine 07:58

When people are just posting we support Black Lives Matter, we support the LGBTQ community, you know, that's great. That's wonderful. That's what we want to see. We want to see as much support on social media as we can, that way to other people who are looking at us from the outside looking in as a community, they'll see that we're supporting, but at the same time, you can't just put that in there without following through. I feel like once you feel like you're an ally and once you post these things, you have to follow through. You have to continue to push this issue. You have to continue to post. Show people. Tell your friends, you know. It all starts with your small group of friends. And then of course, you can spread outwardly to different-- like to different groups like to bigger groups, you know.

Kaelyn 08:54

I like that you said that they have to follow through. And on social media, I guess within my social circles, I guess, or like the people that I know. Some of them are like, targeting their friends and just saying like, "Oh, why did you stop posting about stuff like, this was not a trend, you know, you gotta..." (Jasmine: Exactly) But other people's argument, they're like saying "How-- what more can I do? Posting doesn't really do much," and like they shouldn't be like, sort of like attacking them for not posting on social media because they could be doing other things like educating themselves, or donating and things like that. And so I guess my question, or I don't think there's a question, but that's just like something I noticed, like, when people get angry when you don't follow through, but sometimes following through is not always like a visual representation.

Jasmine 09:49

No, yeah. I mean, I completely agree with you. I have seen that argument with people before about people not following through and just using this as a trend, but I think that also can get misconstrued very easily. We're not saying that you're just doing this just because I mean, some people are, I'm not gonna lie. Some people are just saying you're doing this just because you know, just because it's like the thing that we're talking about the most. But we want you to do it because you want to do it. We want you to do it because you see our point of view, you see the struggles that we're going through, and you

just simply want to help. And you know, people are saying, like, "What else can you do besides posting?" Just posting, it also shows that you're an ally or accomplice or whatever word you want to call it, you know. I mean, of course, there's more that people can do. They can donate. They can go, they can donate to their, to Black Lives Matter foundation. There's tons of different foundations online. That was the first one that just popped up. And there's also tons of different petitions that literally take three seconds to sign. You just have to sign and then put your email and that's pretty much it. And then also, they're just consistently posting like, about the issue. I know not everybody wants to mess up like their Instagram feed or whatever. So they won't use it as like an actual post. But just reposting the things that we're talking about or the things that concern us, and continuing to share and just kind of voice your opinion on certain things. But even if people don't really know what to do after just a post, just educating yourself and then educating those around you is, is pushing the issue, I mean, is already changing the issue, because that's all we want to do is just change the perception of how minorities are viewed, and to make sure that we all have equality and all have equal rights in the country that we live in.

Dannie 11:31

I think that's a great point. I think social media is a great place to start because a lot of people get their news from social media nowadays, especially in our generation. So they're not as likely I guess, to turn on the TV and watch the news as they are to scroll through their feed, like I guess given a free five minutes in their day. And then another thing I was thinking about was like certain companies I was reading some things about people saying when they make that statement, but it's almost like hypocritical because then you see like how they treat their employees or like where they're sourcing their products from. And it's important to look at all that, the whole picture. So we're not just saying up front, "We stand with you guys, like, we love our customers." Like I saw NoName posted something, when I guess it was supposed to be like a mock statement. It was almost like an SNL skit version of like a statement that a company would put out. And it's like "We realized that Black lives are just as important as money," or something like that. Which is interesting, because I guess, if a company is showing you that if they only say something about it now, **because we have a lot of power, like all of us do.** And other people of color, all the people who are putting their money and buying things from these companies like the dollar means a lot. So I saw there was like, a week of like, not spending, and I think some of it passed already, but like, on this day, we're not going to buy from these companies or on this day, we're not gonna buy whatever because like, I think your money is really your vote in a capitalist society like the one that we're living in. So I think that's another great way, supporting black-owned businesses. Supporting yeah black authors and like young producers and yeah.

Jasmine 13:04

no, yeah, I completely agree with you, Dannie, I was just gonna like just emphasize how important it is to use your platform because like you said, most people get their news from social media nowadays, like, not everybody's sitting at home in front of the TV to watch the news. I even put on my YouTube channel that I just started recently. It's called Jasmine's Journals. I put "Why Do Black Lives Matter?" It was meant to not only, like shock people, just by all the things I had to say and how I personally thought about my testimony, but it was also to educate people who are actually curious as to why do we even say black lives matter? Because some people just genuinely want to know, you know? So I think you're

right by saying like social media and everything else is just really important to push this in a positive way.

Jonea 13:52

And I just wanted to add that with the companies, some of them just kind of post to kind of like save themselves from like, not standing with everything that's going on right now in terms of the Black Lives Matter movement. And a lot of them, it's just kind of like a performance like performing on social media. It's like performance advocacy, where you're just posting to just make sure that you're, you know, to, I guess, to not get in trouble. But I do think that a lot of people are also doing things outside of the social media platform to support organizations that they stand with. And a really good quote that I always go back to, I don't know the author, but it says "Some of you are posting on social media, some of you are protesting in the streets, some of you are donating silently, some of you are educating yourselves, some are having tough conversations with friends and family. A revolution has many lanes, be kind to yourself and to others who are traveling in the same direction, and just keep your foot on the gas." So just the idea of, you know, advocacy can look different based on who you are, and really being able to use your power, your platform, and the influence that you have to really push for change. And that can look different based on who you are.

Kaelyn 15:32

And I don't want to like, completely shift the chat. But how would you say educating people on like mental health, like, how would you go about doing that especially? Or not especially, but focusing on the younger generations. Would you also say that when it comes to educating, doing it on social media would be more beneficial, or would you have a classroom setting? Because I know with some clubs at my school, um, they meet like, twice or like once a month, and they would just talk about whatever their club is about. So like for the Bring Change to Mind Club, we talk about mental health whenever we can. Would you say that's just as beneficial, if you were to have like some sort of Instagram account where you would post stuff about it to educate the people or the students?

Jasmine 16:34

I think one of the most important things in terms of advocating for mental health is to try to remove the stigmas behind it. I know in my community, the Black community, there are tons of stigmas for mental health. Like, I know some people just don't necessarily believe in it, in psychiatrists or therapists or any clinical physicians that are advocating for mental health because they just don't think that it concerns us. And I think that in itself, I think stems from different racial stigmas or racial implications from the time of slavery, because we were always seen as being strong, you can never show emotions, we couldn't cry or anything. So I think that's part of the reason why there's a stigma in my community, per se. And I feel like one of the best ways to kind of eliminate that stigma is by, you know, of course talking to parents, talking to the older generations that's teaching these younger generations. "Hey, this is not for you. Don't cry, like, don't show emotion," like that sort of thing. And then also reinforcing it into children, if we're targeting the younger population. I'm 20. So the younger population to me is like 10 years old, but I'm sure if we're talking to like 10 year olds and stuff like that, reinforcing it in the classroom, making a safe space so that way people can talk about their feelings and not feel ashamed about how they're feeling, making the teachers--. Well, I guess teachers are already open to listening, but just kind of

reinforcing that notion that you know, your teachers are here for you. If you're ever feeling sad, you know I promise I won't tell your parents that sort of thing, unless you want me to, or unless you're causing, like a harm to you or yourself, or yourself or others, and **just kind of making sure that students know that it's okay, you know, to really speak out.** And then of course, on social media, I feel like that should be another reinforcement, like making a page about mental health for your school, like all your mental health resources for your school individually. And just kind of consistently reinforcing the idea. I think that's one of the biggest things to help eliminate the stigmas because if we continue to say that it's okay, more people will actually start to like believe it and become willing to open up, and then it will just eliminate the stigmas altogether, I think.

Kaelyn 18:38

Yeah, I completely agree with that. I think that also when it comes to teachers, I feel like teachers should be educated on how different races have different like, their own struggles, (Jasmine: I completely agree) especially when it comes to mental health. I know that I've had my fair share of like, I guess like crying to teachers sometimes, or in the beginning of junior year when life was tough. But I remember two instances one was with, I had like two teachers that I would, that I broke down to. And one of them was really consoling and she really helped me like, she knew what to do. And she knew about mental health. And then the other one, she didn't know so much, and she ended up like, sort of said, "I don't really know what to do, like, do you want to go stand in the hallway and just to calm down before class starts?" And I was like, "Sure, I guess." And I was just like-- I didn't know how to react to that because it's not what I wished I could do and it wasn't as comforting. And I guess yeah, my day a little worse, because I wasn't able to relieve any thoughts in my head. But yeah, I think actually letting-- having a teacher let you know that it's a safe space in their classroom. Like a really safe space, not just saying it but also like opening up to their students about how it's okay and like it's okay to feel the way that you feel. It would actually really benefit students and probably help end the same stigma.

Jasmine 20:03

No, yeah. I completely agree. I think, I think it really all starts in the classroom because that's where children spend the majority of their time anyway. Eight hours a day for five days a week, that's where we go. We sit in a classroom all day, we interact with other students. And even the guidance counselor's that are at school, like, I feel like they should also-- because it's hard for children to really know that it's okay to speak out, especially if something you know, abusive is happening to their home, they've been trained to keep quiet, not to cry about it, you know, "Don't talk to anybody about it." But the guidance counselors who are at the school also can do more I guess, to just reinforce that it is okay to speak out despite what your parents say, because when we're little all we are looking at for guidance are our parents, really, and other authority figures depending on your family situation, you know, **and having another authoritative figure actually be warming and nurturing and open** also shows that like, "Yeah, this is gonna be okay, and I don't have to like shut up and like stop crying," and that sort of thing

Jonea 21:12

I also think it's really important to change the narrative of mental health in a systemic way. So not just in schools, but you know, across the board. So for example, within the media, and then also within communities. For example, in the Black community, a lot of people gather and come together during

church time. So it would be nice to also talk about, you know, maybe mental health during moments where people are doing Bible study. **And then also creating more platforms, like maybe writing children's books that get children to start having conversations early about sharing their feelings. In terms of education, it will be important for teachers to be more culturally competent and also culturally aware, so that they know that mental health, you know, challenges can look different.** Whether the child is, you know, in a Latinx community or whether the child is in a Black community that might look a little different. I think it's really important for staff members in schools to be educated on how to respond to student life challenges. And then also think, in terms of the macro perspective, it's really important for us so far as to change policies, and for us to increase funding for schools to hire more social workers and to hire more guidance counselors so that there are more resources for students that are having challenges. There are more staff members that are trained to respond to their challenges, whether or not that is happening during the school day but also give them resources so that if the challenges are happening outside of the school, they have the resources to get help.

Dannie 23:06

I was listening to a podcast the other day, it's called "Where Should We Begin with Esther Perel", and she's a relationship counselor. So the husband he tended to shut down emotionally when his wife got mad because like, I think two of her best friends abandoned her when he was diagnosed with Parkinson's or there could have been another detail. I don't really remember, but she was very mad at them. Like after all that she did for them, they kind of just turned their backs on her. And whenever she started talking about it, he like kind of shut down and then she was like, "Yeah, that's something that kind of makes me feel like I'm alone in this because he doesn't seem to empathize." So then Esther was like, "Okay, this is what you say, like, first step, 'I hear you.'" And then the second step could be like, just saying what's true to you. So like, "Yeah, I would be upset if I were in that situation," or like, "Yeah, that was really bad, that like was really sucky of them to do that," or whatever. And just like acknowledging it, and not feeling that you have to fix it right away. **I think if people like they feel like they want to fix it right away, and when it can't be fixed right away, then it's kind of like a stigma is placed on it, because they don't know how to help. And they'd rather just kind of push it away or push it off to the side, or kind of like, yeah, take their attention away from it, but that doesn't really make it better.** I think just learning how to be good listeners and be there for each other. We can all work to help end the stigma and just help make sure people are doing okay, and then they can do the same for us when we're struggling.

Kaelyn 24:52

Yeah, I think that also since we live in a world where we crave or whatever, like instant gratification, then we want things right away. And if it doesn't happen, we sort of just give up. And I think that sort of happens with Dannie with what you said how when people push it aside.

Kaelyn 26:05

There's different audiences when you talk about a stigma for mental health. So how would you end up talking to your parents about it? If they're part of the older generations, and they may not know much about mental health, like, how would you approach them? Because I know each family is different. So like, I'm just curious as to how you would tell your parents and like for other students out there.

Dannie 26:39

Well, for me, I guess it's kind of **important to choose your battles**, like if, I guess if there's something every day like don't complain about, like every little thing that happens, but if you actually have a genuine concern, well, I know my parents were always like, they just wanted to make sure that I had the help that I needed. So like I had certain psychologists and different people and then I know some parents will just be like, just pray, go to church, like, that's all that you should need. I think that's a maybe a common narrative in the Black community or just in different communities. Like you just might not be praying hard enough. So that's one thing and that can work for some people, but maybe not everyone. So I think, um, yeah, sometimes it can be hard. But with my parents, it wasn't very hard, because I think they just want to make sure each of their kids kind of has what they need, but sometimes it can be hard finding the right person, or the right medication. So you kind of have to stick with it and adjust things and yeah, and then I guess surrendering their trust over to the professional like, the specialist, like realizing that they, I guess, can't really be in charge of your emotional health anymore 100% like when you were little. I guess when you were younger, your problems are a lot simpler. So they could easily navigate and fix it and then everyone was happy and good again, like if they were crying and hungry, just give them some food. Or, I mean, they provided all the basics and necessities for life and then life tends to get complicated as we get older. So it's good to have a professional step in, like an unbiased third party. And I think being able to be like "I'm a good parent, even though my kid may need some extra help in this area like, that doesn't mean that I'm lacking or not doing something right." I think that can sometimes hurt people's pride sometimes. Or they feel like they're not doing enough. But just yeah, you can totally, you can totally be a great parent and like, **we live in a complicated, crazy world**. So sometimes people need someone to talk to about what they're thinking about what they're going through.

Jasmine 28:32

I'm kind of similar to Dannie in that regard. Both of my parents are psychologists. So it wasn't really hard for me to talk about my mental health or just the things I was struggling with mentally. But I think one of the biggest things to like, encourage parents, like if parents are kind of close-minded, I would just, if I was in that family, I probably would just, like just beg my parents just to listen to me, you know, give me five minutes just to explain kind of what I'm feeling or if I couldn't explain what I'm feeling, just ask them to be open minded to at least talking to a professional, just so they can give you some of the insight that I necessarily can't. Because sometimes I know when you're feeling overanxious or just overwhelmed in general, your emotions are at a skyrocketing level and it's hard for you to really conceptualize and kind of gather your thoughts, and let alone your words to express how you're feeling. **So I think like maybe just bet like just telling parents or the older generation really just try to be as open minded as they can.** And if they don't want to necessarily hear it from a child's perspective, air quotes around that, maybe they can listen to a professional who's an expert in their field and just kind of understand, try to get them to understand where you're coming from through the professional's voice.

Dannie 29:48

I agree, Jasmine, and when I was younger, my parents have always read parenting books and books about how to like raise, confident, healthy kids, and all these different books. So I think from the

beginning, they were kind of turning their attention to experts and authors who were sharing a lot of information on these things, and other resources that your parents can listen to are, like Ted Talks. Find articles online. There are books to read. And then I think it'll help them realize it's not just you like complaining about something like, I guess it's, it makes it more real for them, and it allows them to learn about it. And that helps to erase the stigma, too, when we learn things and we gain understanding.

Kaelyn 30:24

Yeah, yeah, I think it's also difficult for parents to sometimes acknowledge their, like, child's feelings or like thoughts, because they'll think, because I know multiple times I've heard of them say, like, you're like, "You're just a kid. You're just a teenager, like, you don't really know what's out there and stuff." And I'm just like, "Yeah, I know. But like, my feelings and my thoughts are still valid and everything." And I know I read this one post or something. It was talking about how kids these days are sort of, they don't know how to accept things or do things for the betterment of themselves, I guess I don't know how to word it. But basically, when children are younger, and whenever they say no, like, they don't want to do something, then their parents sort of like, make that word like invalid to them. Like, "It doesn't matter if you say, no, you still have to do it." And I guess like when kids grow up, when they say no, they just, they have the mindset of, "Oh, my no is invalid. So I should just do it, even though I don't like it." And they sort of get very sort of like pushovers on away, or sometimes their mental health or like, their self care can plummet. So I think that having an actual conversation with your parents, which can be really hard, and teaching them to, or telling them how to-- what do you call it-- be more accepting of your thoughts and your own opinions is really important to the development of a child.

Dannie 31:55

Yeah, knowing that your feelings are valid. It's so important for every person to have that. It can lead to like low self-esteem and other problems. And I think that reminds me when we were younger and we needed to try like all these different vegetables. And like, I remember my dad would like kind of make it like a competition. He'd be like, if you don't eat it, then I'm gonna eat it. And then my brother would get so excited. He'd just be like laughing and screaming, he'd be like, "I'm going to eat all of it, that way you can't have any of it." And then my mom would just be like, yep, you better eat it, or Dad's gonna eat it and then it would just make him think he wants to eat it. But this works of course, when he was like four and five years old. But then when we got older, it kind of felt like after a while, it does kind of feel like I guess what Kaelyn was saying, like they're just ignoring you like yeah, you don't like it, eat the broccoli, eat the kale. Yeah, we get it, but you still need to do it. I think that applies to some things, but not everything. And I think you need to have a conversation. So like, we were allowed to choose our own sports in high school, but after we were forced to swim and do soccer, I guess all the way until eighth grade. And it helped us learn a lot and we would definitely complain about swimming a lot, but I think it was definitely worth it. Like we did a sport all together. I think that was the last time we all did the same sport. And we just learned, I guess had to work hard and had to be on a team. And we had a really great team culture, which was awesome. But yeah, I think it applies to some things, but not everything. So I guess maybe we can just think of some situations where we think it shouldn't be an automatic "Just do what you're told," like, it should be more of a conversation or a question.

Kaelyn 33:27

I was gonna say that as some people are afraid to say no. And I was like, I don't have some friends. And their parents are telling them to go down this career path. And they're afraid to say no, because if they say no, then it completely changes their life. And especially with some cultures, if you don't follow through with that specific career path, or like, for like that family dynamic, you're sort of like an outcast in a way. So you're kind of forced to go down that path, even though you may not want to. I guess that's one instance. And then your other instances, Dannie with vegetables and like, yeah, of course, like you should eat vegetables. It's healthy for you.

Jasmine 34:05

I think it's also really important in like conversations to, I'm just going to say this quick tidbit, but like, if you're not used to expressing your emotions or being honest with yourself, like by talking through these things with, like your parents or adults, is gonna follow you for the rest of your life. And, you know, unfortunately, I've seen it happen to a lot of my peers where they're just not really accepting responsibility or even just saying, like, I'm sorry, or you know, just opening themselves up like mentally and just allowing the vulnerability to come out, it's really going to affect them in the long run, because, like holding something in or keeping something back is like holding your breath. And I just can't imagine going through life consistently holding your breath and not being able to really express your feelings. So I think starting young by telling children that it's okay to express their feelings is also really important for their mental health as well.

Jonea 34:56

And to just add to that, to your point of saying no. It's interesting because in my one of my classes, our professor made us all say no, because we, you know, we were taught at a younger age to always say yes to everything. So I think even if we don't have the opportunity to maybe learn those skills when we're younger, it's also really important to note to recognize that we can work on those patterns and behaviors that we adopted at young age, we can learn-- we can work to learn to unlearn them, if that makes sense. And then to just talk about how to approach parents: I think it's really important to approach them from a parent's perspective. So some parents might enjoy going on long walks and talking to the child that way. Some prefer sitting at dinner and having conversations. So I think it's really important to kind of adapt to the way they understand things, and also to speak their language because I think at least in the African community, it's really difficult to explain the word trauma. But then I was listening to a talk and the lady said, one way that she explained it to her peers that are African is by calling it "hidden wounds." So like, it still gets to the point. But then she kind of turned it into a language or into something that they will understand. So here, I think, choice of words are very important when we're having conversations. And then also, it's important to have families to have allies in your families. So maybe it's difficult for you to talk to your parents about what you're going through, but maybe you have a cousin or uncle who would be able to translate what you're trying to tell them, you know, try to, maybe you'll be able to have a cousin or uncle who'll be able to really express your thoughts to your parents. So having an advocate or an ally within your family group is also really important. And that's one way you can start the conversation and also talk to your family members about it.

Kaelyn 37:09

Yeah, I think it really helps to have at least another authoritative figure like in your family to convey it to like, I guess someone of like similar ages because some, because I know like in my family, they tend to only listen to the people like their age and anyone else who's like younger it's sort of like invalid and like their opinions. Unless you're in college and you're like going somewhere, then they'll start to take you seriously. But if you're in high school or anything below, they ignore it. But yeah, I completely agree with having another authoritative figure in the family to like talk to.

Dannie 37:46

Yeah, I agree. It could be like, yeah, or a trusted adult. Like, I definitely talked to two of my aunts, I think about most things and it's just really great because they kind of see me I guess well, not as a peer they both see me as like a child. But it feels like they don't see me as much as a child of a child as my parents do. Because like, I guess they're like, really, they feel very responsible for me, like when I'm traveling, like, they trust me to make the right decisions. But if I'm at home, it kind of feels like they're taking that time to impart all of their wisdom on me at one. So it can definitely feel like a lot. And they just want to make sure that they do everything they can to help me and teach me and guide me. But it's nice to be able to just have a conversation with someone where you can just say how you're feeling. And you don't have to worry about being judged for it. And so having people like that in your life, I had one host mom that I met through my gap year program. And we had conversations like that, where she would just kind of be listening with the time, and it didn't feel like she was really telling me what to do. But then afterwards, I realized that she had given me like three key points I could walk away with and put into action. I just felt better about the whole situation. And it reminded me of when I would talk to my psychologist in high school. So just having people like that in your life because like, different people can play different roles. You can go to your parents about some things. But then if you know you have, like a trusted aunt, uncle, or teacher at school that you know, you can talk to about other things that can be, yeah, that can be really helpful too.

Kaelyn 39:11

Actually I'm curious about one thing you said, Dannie, and I'm not sure if like Jasmine, or you Jonea can answer it. But usually, whenever I talk to people about, like, whatever it is, they're never, they're very hesitant to even give advice in a way and like, tell you what you should do. Like, do you know like, why that is? Because like, I know I found it really frustrating. Like, I would be talking about all these things, and then no one would give me advice or suggestions. They would just say, "I understand how you feel," like "Why do you feel that way?" And I don't know. I just got like, really irritated. I don't know. Maybe that was just me. I'm not sure.

Jasmine 39:53

I feel the same way too. Like, what are you talking about like from your peers or like your adult figures?

Kaelyn 40:01

Um, so like, I guess, like my high school psychologist would always do that. And then like the guidance counselor would do that. And then yeah. And then my actual psychologist did that and I was like, bro, I went to like an actual one. And like, you're just telling me the same things like everyone else has told me. And I don't know, I just got pissed a little bit.

Jasmine 40:21

I think. I think one of the goals of high school psychology and guidance counselors, that they really try to get you to do, is not necessarily tell you what to do, but kind of help you find that decision on your own. Because the last thing you need is somebody directing you like, "Do X, Y and Z." That's why they provide suggestions on what you should do. That's why they're like, "Maybe, have you tried doing this?" but even if they're not giving you that much, they probably just don't know what to do. I'd be like, like with my peers, and I'm like venting, or even with an adult. I'm venting and they're like, "Oh, yeah, I understand." And that's pretty much it. I'm like, "Okay, great talk." And I just kind of move on from that, but I feel like, yeah. I feel like for professionals, at least, they really try to suggest things for you to do and help you derive that decision from your own self. (Dannie: Yeah.) So that's why it might not seem like they're giving you much.

Dannie 41:13

and I think but sometimes you really do want advice, and I've definitely gotten that too. And it can feel so good. It's like you need a balance. It's like sometimes friends will just tell you to do something. So it helps give me some direction. It's like reading a horoscope. And it's like, okay, now I know, something I should do, because they said, do it. And that can feel comforting. But I think it should always come from using your intuition and your conscience and they can sometimes help guide you they can see things that you're doing that you might not see. But I think that sometimes, I remember one of like, one of the first psychologists that I went to like she was like, you're-- "I don't really see a problem." Like she was like, you're just seeing everything you're supposed to do. you go to school, you do your work, you do your homework, you do sports and activities, and you're not really falling down on the job anywhere. So I think a lot of people see that you're fulfilling all of society's expectations and then they think that you're good. So it's kind of like stopping there instead of like going into, I guess, like more of the emotional needs and things like that. Like, they just see that you're fulfilling all your responsibilities, and they don't want to tell you to do anything differently. I know that came up for me once.

Kaelyn 42:16

Yeah for me. It was when I was transitioning high schools, and then she told me, "Oh, like, all of your feelings are valid. Everything is just like a transition phase." And I was like, "A transition phase shouldn't last this long," and then she was just giving me-- I don't want to say meaningless, but like, somewhat meaningless to me. She was just telling me like, "Oh, have you looked into like, yoga or drawing or coloring?" And I was like, "Yeah, and I don't really enjoy those things." And like, I don't know, it was I just found it, like, irritating to me.

Jonea 42:55

I was just gonna say, um, **one thing that I know that we are taught a lot in Social Work is letting the client have self-determination, which means like being able to let the client decide what they want to do with whatever challenges that they're facing. So we really just hold a space for the client or for the person to think about their thoughts and feelings and kind of how that that is affecting their behavior.** And, for example, like if someone came to you and said, "Oh, I want to lose 10 pounds," it's easy for you to say, well go workout, change your diet, do this, this and this, but studies have shown that they

actually will probably not follow through with it. Whereas if you kind of ask them like, “So why do you want to lose weight?” And then they reflect on it and you say, “What ways can you what are some steps you can actually take today, or in the next month to lose weight?” They're more likely to stick with that with that plan and follow through because they thought about it and it's coming from their perspective instead of coming from someone else. And I know that sometimes when I speak to my parents about something, and they give me advice, I end up saying, “Don't tell me what to do.” Whereas when I make a decision on my own, I'm more likely to follow through because I'm like, “I'm deciding to do this. I want to do this. Therefore, I will do it.” So that's why a lot of mental health professionals try to let the client-- try to just hold a space for the client to kind of think through their thoughts and then kind of just serve as a holding space for them to make their own decisions. And that's why we also push for self-determination.

Kaelyn 44:38

Okay. Because I know for me, I guess with my experiences with it, so basically, I was like going through a lot. And then I feel like just having that outlet to like talk to someone. I feel like, maybe it did help me, but I personally feel like it kind of didn't help me because in my family, I'm known as the person who complains a lot, so everything I say is usually invalid. But whenever I have the opportunity to like talk to someone, to skip class and like talk to someone I would just take as an opportunity to cry almost. And I feel like with quarantine and everything, I just didn't have that same outlet and I just realized like, “Oh, you know, like, life isn't that bad,” and like, I learned to deal with things on my own since no one else was giving me advice. So I guess for other people out there, and like I have like other friends, would you say that learning to get through by yourself would probably like to-- like let's say to get over depression sometimes or like for mild depression. Figuring out how to be independent on your own will sort of like be more beneficial than talking to someone if they can't really get you there and get you the help that you need, like aside from medication and all that. But just learning how to love yourself, and basically, your happiness can't really depend on other people. It's basically just what you put into it.

Jasmine 46:07

Yeah, I think one of the hardest things, you know, for I would just speak from experience, one of the hardest things, you know, for me was to just increase my self-esteem. You know, a lot of the times it had to do with bullying, and then just bullying which kind of made me think worse about myself. It was just kind of like a vicious cycle. And do like, I feel like one of the most important things about depression is to try to remain, is to try to break that vicious cycle, the one that tells you you can't do it, you won't do it, you're too ugly, you're too this, you're too that you know, to where you can't be able to do it. But it also does take a lot of self practice, just like anything, any skill that you want to, like acquire in life. It takes a lot of practice, and I feel like trying to break the cycle of depression is definitely one of the hardest things you could really do, because you have to really kind of coach yourself re-teach yourself. You know, start with these positive affirmations, day by day every single day, and then increasing them from like one positive affirmation to like 20, positive affirmations, you know, and kind of making it that sort of thing. But like, for depression, I feel like it really takes your own personal journey. And it's also finding the little things that make you happy even though you may be ridiculed by your family or friends by like saying, “Oh, why do you like to watch that?” or “You like to do that?” or “You like to eat that?” like, you know, just take those times out of the day to stop listening to everybody who's criticizing you

about everything, and focus on yourself. Reel in. Hone into your emotions, reel into what you know. And then just find those little things that make you happy that you really enjoy doing even if not everybody agrees with them, you know? And just kind of like, move on from... not move on. Just move forward from there.

Kaelyn

So you would say it's more like a personal journey and like, turning to a high school psychologist it's probably not going to be as like beneficial?

Jasmine

I wouldn't say it's like redundant almost because people like high school psychologists can definitely help you through that. I'm not saying this is all on your own, you have to do this all by yourself. But it does also take a significant amount of your own personal journey to continue to do it yourself. To continue to help yourself and put yourself in a positive aspect. Because, you know, psychologists can like give you the expert can really tell you how to like hone into your emotions can give you all the techniques, you know, but also requires homework that's just like going to school, you know. You have to learn the lesson from your teacher and then when you go home, do the homework and then you perfect the lesson. So it's kind of like the same thing, is what I'm really trying to say, it's kind of like a balance of both. I wouldn't say one is completely like obsolete to the other, you know, both can work in a very beneficial way.

Jonea 48:51

I also agree that it looks different based on who you are. Some people like to just go through this journey by themselves, and others like to see, you know, mental health professional, and then also the work. But I also think, actually making a decision to go see a mental health professional is a decision in its own and is one way that you're taking a step to work on your depression or to work on your, you know, to work on the challenges that you're facing, because you have a choice to either not to see them or to see them. And also, oftentimes, like when you go see a mental health professional, it's maybe like for 45 minutes, once a week. So then the rest of the week you are, you know, you know, like using the toolkit that you learn from that mental health professional and then trying to get through that, the remaining of the week. So I think it's doing both, but then also whatever you choose to do in itself is a choice that you're doing. It's a choice that you're making when you're seeing a counselor or not seeing a counselor, and even small steps like walking outside, once a day, or even showering are all activities that you're doing to care for yourself, and to, you know, make yourself feel better or to kind of go through that journey of like, getting through your depression.

Dannie 50:30

This kind of brought up things that I did in high school to kind of like maintain my mental health. I actually did get into yoga a lot. I got into yoga, probably in like fourth grade, and then I just continued it and then I really picked it up, I guess like freshman and sophomore year of high school because it just helped me feel so much better. But that can yeah, whatever works for you. So I also started running a lot. I know you run Kaelyn, and then for everyone listening like if you like to job, make music, hang out with friends. Like I think like what Jasmine said, pay attention to like, what makes you feel good and the

people that you feel really good around. And another thing I remember we talked about, I think, goal setting, or oh yeah, so if you're working through something and you're going through like your mental health journey and you know where you want to go, you will probably have more success if you know where you want to go. Instead of focusing on how bad it feels right now. Like coming back to like a place where you feel good, to an activity where you feel good, and then setting goals and I want to share this one resource. It's called WOOP. And it's an acronym for wish, outcome, obstacle, plan, and I forget the lady who developed it, but it has a YouTube channel and a website-- woopmylife.org. And it can pretty much be used for anything like breaking a bad habit or starting a good habit. Or and I guess the timeframe is either 24 hours or a month. And I could go on and on about this, but we'll definitely share this info when the episode comes out, but it's really great because you think about the wish and you think about the best possible outcome and you take time to visualize each thing and then summarize it in like three to five words and put at the front of your mind, and then you go on to the next letter, then the next one would be like obstacles and you think of the main one that would be in your way. And then you think of a plan. So if this obstacle, then I will do this. So you've equipped yourself with some motivation and a plan of action, and something that you can come back to like when you run into those obstacles, because if you didn't have those obstacles, then you probably would have already done it by now. So it's good to address that. And then it's important to think about the outcome first, before you think about the obstacle, because that kind of, I guess that's the positive momentum that you need. **So you don't focus on how hard it is, but you focus on where you're going and just keep your eyes on the road ahead of you.**

Dannie 52:52

And then I guess to transition to our next topic, better, safe than sorry versus avoiding extreme measures, how to go about it if you see someone struggling or if you know someone struggling with their mental health, I guess what should you do? How can you step in? Or kind of intervene maybe indirectly, I guess. What do you guys do? Or if you've done something like this before, like tips and how to make it go well?

Jasmine 53:22

Um, I actually did this recently with a friend of mine, we were, she was feeling very overwhelmed, you know, and her anxiety was really getting at her. And so I don't know, I just kind of took over like that nurturing role. I just, you know, sat her down, we went to a completely different space, you know, one that's less stimulating, like, because before there's like a lot of music playing and a bunch of people so that can only enhance her anxiety in like a negative way. So we just went to a quiet place. You know, we talked. I tried to console her to say "It's fine that you're crying. Get it all out. Like don't worry, we can be out here for a long time," I basically was like, **"I'm here for you no matter what and we can do this on your own terms."** And I feel like that's also like really important is letting the person know who you see is struggling mentally, that you're going to be there for them. Like no matter what or as frequent as you possibly can, because of course, you can't completely devote your entire life to helping them, but just letting them know that you're gonna be there for them. And that you're waiting, like you're ready to talk when they're ready to talk. Because like I said, sometimes when you're having an anxiety attack, or just a panic attack overall, it's really hard for you to, like, vocalize your feelings or put your thoughts together. And like yeah, that was what to say was that's pretty much what we did. And she was able to

like, stop crying as much as you know, I was rubbing her like rubbing her back and just telling her It's okay. And then when she was able to like kind of get herself like to stop crying so where she could actually speak. She was able to tell me like what things were really bothering her and like, what specifically was causing her or what triggered her to actually have this anxiety attack. And I was like, "You know, I understand where you're coming from. It's not always easy." It's easier to understand if you knew the situation, but just for her sake, I'm not going to disclose all of that. All the details. **But, um, but yeah, no, I think one of the things, one of the most important things when helping somebody with mental health issues is just to really explain that you're going to be there for them.** And if they're having like, a, if they're having an attack, or they're having one of the, like, I don't want to call them episodes, but if they're having like an attack, or one of the stressors is triggering them, you should let them know that like, "You're fine, you're safe, you know, everything's gonna be okay." I just like continue to reiterate that to them until they're able to like really calm themselves out, calm themselves down. Also breathing exercises I find are really really, really good for helping someone to because you know, a lot of time when we panic, we're not necessarily breathing, we're more hyperventilating. And that's not getting enough oxygen to our brain, which could allow us to release like serotonin levels, and different hormones that can actually help us calm down. And the same thing goes with a hug, too, if you hug somebody really, really tightly, for some reason, like that just triggers a brain to like release, like dopamine levels and everything like that, and just kind of like calm them down.

Dannie 56:28

I love that because ultimately, we just want to feel comforted and like, everything's gonna be okay. I think that's something we all want to be sure of. But we can never really be 100% sure of it. But we want to feel like we're at least heading in that direction. So I think being there for people. And I know when things can get really hard in people's lives, like one of the things that they hold on to is that they have people who care about them. So just knowing that can make all the difference in somebody's life.

Kaelyn 57:04

Yeah, I completely agree with that. But I guess for me, there's like, I was talking to someone, like a couple days ago or something, and he was telling me how I should be wary or cautious when I choose to help someone, because then they might develop an **emotional attachment**. And then when, like, everything is going good, and then you start to like, I guess, like split ways. They're most likely or more likely to like fall back because they're not like, dependent on like, their own selves, or they're not independent. So like, they're depending on someone else for their emotional stability. So then, like, how would you go about doing that? Like, how would you just like let them do it on their own, or should you like help them but like, not so much?

Dannie 57:53

It's interesting. I think it's a really good question, I guess. Hmm. Well, I kind of can speak from experience because I've had relationship tips where I became emotionally dependent on the other person or they became emotionally dependent on me. And that can be really scary. And not good at all. Because then if you like break up, or if you stop talking if you're friends, that can feel earth-shattering. **So you do need to be able to stand on your own two feet, and learn from things.** If someone's pulling away, like, oh, maybe I am being a little bit overbearing, so learning how to kind of like, kind of pull it

together, I guess, to say, in a joking manner. But yeah, I think being there for someone and then having boundaries, because you're trying to like, I guess, show that you're there and show solidarity and then ultimately, it's up to them if they want to get better. And that's what people say a lot. People can go to rehab like 20 times and never get better. They have to just make that decision and they are going to have challenges like everyone does. But it's up to them. Like their minds, like they have to just decide if they're going to make the effort or not. Yeah, they just can't do it for them.

Kaelyn 58:56

Yeah, I think that's a really important like having like boundaries and learning to be some sort of emotionally independent, because like you said, depending on someone if you're like, like emotionally like and splitting ways that's really hard to like cope with, because then it's like kind of back to square one and you got to restart with something.

Dannie 59:20

It's always good to kind of maintain your personal power like and it makes you show up more fully in relationships and just show up more fully to life. And just like learning how to do that, because it makes it a lot better because then your friendships are richer. It's like you don't need them, but it just like enhances your life. And it's already pretty good. I feel like I'm almost getting to did it like just hanging out with myself now. My mom is trying to encourage me to "Reach out to your friends." So I do that every once in a while and also just being in quarantine. It does make it a little bit different, but just continuing to go outside of your comfort zone in quarantine I think is really cool thing, like taking online classes or reaching out to people, calling your older relatives and making sure they're okay. Things like that. It's like reaching out and being there for other people too. So it's like a balance. (Kaelyn: Yeah)

Jonea 60:06

Yeah. And to just add to that, I think it's also important to have friendships that are not just based on trauma. So like, the only time you guys come together a bond is like when you're both going through something, I think it's also important to like, you know, um, have moments where you guys are having fun or you guys are laughing about something, you guys are doing other things only, not just focusing on like, the bad and not just coming together when things are bad. So it goes back again, to be able to set boundaries, and being able to have a lot of different experiences within the friendship and not just focus on like the trauma and the sadness, or any of the drama that is happening. And not just bonding on that, but bonding on other things as well.

Dannie 61:00

That's a good point, you can almost kind of tell what kind of relationship it is based on when it started and like what you're going through at that time. Because like, I remember, I think there's like a TV show, like, when people get together during a hard time or because the person they really wanted to be with kind of dumped or something, or they're going through struggles with that person. And it can kind of show you, they're just doing it to feel better in that moment. But ultimately, it's not going to be what they really want. So yeah, being aware of that. Because I've had both kinds of friendships where I became, you can like when you start commiserating, and you build a friendship around that versus when you-- it's like a better time in your life. And like, that's someone that you're going to want to be friends with for

a long time. Yeah. Or I guess the first type of relationship, it can transform into the second if you both kind of, I guess grow and change over time. But yeah, being mindful of that is super important, you know, and I have to be emotionally dependent on anyone, because you're already whole and complete as you are.

Rose-Bud-Thorn Official Song

Rose, bud and thorn

A rose is something beautiful

A thorn is a pain and

A bud is something you're looking forward to

Kaelyn 62:26

I can go first. A rose this week was... Wait, what day is it? Oh, the week just started. (Dannie: Monday) I'll do last week. So I guess a rose would be that I got to hang out with my cousin who came back from his university and he stayed with us for like a week and so it was really fun like catching up with him, and like the whole family. It was really busy though. But it was fun. A thorn this week would be having to figure out college apps and picking a major is just hard. And then something that I'm hopeful for this week would be to clean my room, because it's kind of messy.

Dannie 63:17

Okay, so a rose for me this week was going on a run with my dad for Father's Day. So we used to run all the time. And then like in high school, I guess he started running at track practice and not as much with him, but I made it a point to like, invite him to go, and he can get very intense at times. So it's kind of hilarious. But it went really well and I ended up running for a lot longer because I've been building up a lot of stamina. So he kept saying this over and over and a lot of. Everyone was calling him through Father's Day. So he was so happy. He's like, my daughter outran me by so much and he was like exaggerating, I was like, "Oh my gosh," but I think it made him really happy and proud. So that was like one of my roses and just Father's Day in general. We had a lot of fun. And then let's see, a thorn was probably like today. It was really hot outside. So when I was running I ended up sweating and I was like okay I'm going to wake up earlier. So that will be my bud: I want to start getting up earlier and working out when it's cooler outside and not suffering.

Jonea 64:19

What are you looking forward to?

Dannie 64:22

Oh, well, well that yeah, that and then what else we're looking forward to? I think we're going on vacation we're gonna go see your family friends in Vermont. So I'm gonna do the water sports and stuff next week. So I'm excited for that.

Jonea 64:36

I guess I can go next. A rose was Father's Day. So my family and I, we all got together and had dinner yesterday and hung out together. So that was really nice. A thorn is I have a major paper due in a

couple of weeks. So just having to sit down and work on it. Not looking forward to that. And then something I'm looking forward to... I'm looking forward to being done with one of my summer classes. And just having one less thing to have to worry about throughout the week.

Jasmine 65:18

I can finish them off. So a rose for me was probably going shopping with my mom last week and not just because, you know, I like shopping or buying things. It's just like one of the times I really get to spend with my mom. And I really enjoy in general. So I love doing that with her, just like hanging out, necessarily. And then a thorn. Oh, so that's kind of hard, I guess probably that it's raining right now, you know, that's not all, but I kind of like the rain. So it's kind of like not necessarily a huge thorn. It's just a little one because I won't be able to work out later on today. And then something that I'm hopeful for is... I guess I'm just hopeful for to see what next week brings and holds. Because I feel like every week is like something different, you know? And it's only Monday. So we'll see what happens for the rest of the week.

Dannie 66:23

Trader Joe's? I remember when we did the live you were at Trader Joe's. I love Trader Joe's. I can't wait till next.

Jasmine 66:34

I know! The line was so long though.

Dannie 66:35

The line is crazy. No. All the time. Yeah,

Jasmine 66:40

Like out of the door.

Dannie 66:42

It's worth it for me, though. Once I get in I just take my time because I'm like, "I waited in that line like I earned this."

Jasmine 66:51

[laughter]

Kaelyn 67:24

Yeah. Okay, so with that said, Thank you everyone for joining, and we'll see you on our next episode. Bye.

Jasmine 67:31

Thank you guys for having us.

Jonea 67:33

Thank you guys.