Livier Martinez,:

One of the big things I'm hearing, and I don't think I'm the only therapist at Student Health that's hearing this is, because of the lack of structure, the lack of having the structure of going to the campus, having this academic life, that it has been very difficult for students to maintain their momentum, and now having to be self paced for a lot of the students that has been a big struggle.

Christina Barsi:

Hi, I'm Christina Barsi.

Sun Ezzell:

And I'm Sun Ezzell. And you're listening to The Magic Mountie Podcast.

Christina Barsi:

Our mission is to find ways to keep your ear to the ground so to speak, by bringing to you the activities and events, you may not have time to attend, the resources on campus you might want to know more about, the interesting things your colleagues are creating, and the many ways we can continue to better help and guide our students.

Sun Ezzell:

We bring to you the voices of Mt. SAC from the classroom to completion.

Speaker 3:

I know I want to achieve my goals, and I know people here are going to help me to do it.

Speaker 5:

She's a sociology major, and CalPoly Pomona. Psychology major. English major.

Speaker 6:

From transforming part-time into full time.

speaker 7:

Really like the time that we spend with Julie about how to write a CV and a cover letter.

Christina Barsi:

Or just finding time to soak in the campus.

Speaker 3:

To think of the natural environment around us as a library.

Christina Barsi:

We want to keep you informed and connected to all things Mt. SAC. But most importantly, we want to keep you connected with each other. I'm Christina Barsi Mt. SAC, alumni, and producer of this podcast.

Sun Ezzell:

And I'm Sun Ezzel, learning assistance faculty and professional learning Academy coordinator.

Christina Barsi:

And this is the Magic Mountie Podcast.

Christina Barsi:

This episode is being recorded and released during a time that is isolating in nature. That being a result of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic and the quarantine that we are experiencing as a result. This has been taking a toll on our mental health and maybe bringing up feelings of loneliness and many other emotions and stressors. So we decided to bring on some amazing mental health staff from the Mt. SAC community to have a poignant conversation about how we can help ourselves through any feelings of loneliness and beyond. Here's Sun to introduce our guests.

Sun Ezzell:

Hi this is Sun Ezzell, I'd like to welcome two special guests to the Magic Mountie Podcast, Dr. Seth Myers, licensed clinical psychologist, who works with student health services and Livia Martinez, licensed clinical social worker and current doctoral social work candidate, who's been lead mental health clinician at Mt. SAC for over 13 years. Today, we're featuring a conversation between Seth and Livia about mental health, isolation and loneliness, Seth and Livia. I hand it over to you.

Dr Seth Myers:

Thank you for the introduction. I work with Livia in student health services at Mount San Antonio college. And we are both really looking forward to sharing with you a conversation that hopefully will be helpful, could be helpful to students, to staff, to faculty, because what Livia and I are going to be talking about is something that is just a mere fact of life, of the human condition. Those occasional feelings of loneliness, feeling disconnected, feeling socially isolated. In some ways, feeling a little alone, those feelings often come up no matter what time of the year, no matter what year it is.

Dr Seth Myers:

But as Livia and I record this in May of 2020, of course, the unique challenges associated with the impact of the coronavirus and quarantine, stay at home orders. No one really has ever really experienced anything quite like this. So it is possible that people feel a little bit more lonely, a little more disconnected, a little more isolated than usual. So today Livia and I are going to talk about kind of how to deal with some of these feelings, how to make sense of the feelings. And so we will begin right now, I'm going to be asking Livia the questions because Livia is actually doing her dissertation on this topic. And so she's really developed an expertise in this issue. So I'll begin by asking Livia the first question. Livia, people throw around the words lonely or isolated, but can you describe what lonely and isolated, what those words really mean?

Livier Martinez,:

Yes, and thank you for that introduction. And I think it's not just a wonderful opportunity for us to be able to share this knowledge and hopefully be able to help our community learn a little bit about that so that they can understand it better. And then hopefully be able to implement hopefully some of the skills and the knowledge that we will share today. So to start off, and I know that a lot of people use the word, a lonely and socially isolated interchangeably, like they mean the same thing. And, but technically they actually are not necessarily the same thing. When I think of lonely, it's more to an emotional feeling, kind of like, you can feel alone and be very lonely, even though you can be in a room full of people. So it's definitely more to a state of feeling.

Livier Martinez,:

When we're looking at the actual terminology of socially isolated, it is an actual, it's not just a perception, but actually being separated from others, lacking social connections and those relationships that are needed to thrive. I just want to point out just to make sure, to have a good understanding that we're social beings, humans are made to be amongst others. We're meant to be with people, to socialize from the dawn of time. Those that thrived and those that were able to survive were those that were actually in social groups, if you were outcast, you did not survive. And that kind of continues obviously whether it's not the dawn of time and it's not necessarily of survival for food and our safety, but it's definitely our survival to thrive psychologically and also thrive physically. So hopefully that gives you a little bit description, I guess, of what the differences are in terms of lonely and socially isolated.

Dr Seth Myers:

Well, it does Livia and thank you. I like the way you differentiate between those two words. What are some signs that a person is feeling down disconnected or lonely? What are some of the signs?

Livier Martinez,:

Obviously, if this is a person, I tend to focus more on these socially isolated, just because that tends to be where my, kind of where my brain goes to. Not that you can't feel lonely, if you're socially isolated, you can, so there could be this overlap. If you are an individual and you are feeling alone, you have very little interactions with people and you might actually experience sadness, experience bouts of maybe even more like depressive symptoms, anxiety, and you really don't have people that you can count on and lean on. Definitely. I would say those are some of the characteristics that you would be looking at, and that's not necessarily drilling down to what some of the symptoms are.

Livier Martinez,:

And I think because there's different facets of the population that actually displayed different symptoms and different risk factors. So most people think of social isolation as affecting the elderly population, because that's actually where most of the focus and most of the policy and most of the interventions and any kind of programs are geared toward. And it's usually for the elderly. However, in recent years, the growing population of socially isolated generation is actually our young adults. And that's actually the largest population that has been identified as being socially isolated. And so when you're looking at young adults, they're experiencing higher rates of sadness, higher rates of depression, higher rates of anxiety, and actually even suicidal thinking.

Dr Seth Myers:

When you talk, Livia about suicidal thinking, I mean, everyone knows, right? To be socially isolated, to feel disconnected, that that is not a good thing. And I was wondering kind of what the risks are if someone gets to, starts becoming too socially isolated. So is it possible if you become too socially isolated, can you possibly start to have thoughts kind of questioning why you're here? Or can you give us a flavor of what the dangers are if you become too socially isolated?

Livier Martinez,:

Yes. Thank you for asking that Seth, and I think that you hit the nail right on the head, when and I said the very scary word of the suicide thinking or the suicidal thinking, actually, this is what the research is actually showing that we have seen more of a higher rate, especially within, and again, I'm focusing really on this younger adult population, that the thoughts of the suicidal thinking where we're seeing more of an increase of that, obviously just for what you pointed out, that's a major red flag. So I think when you are socially isolated, you don't have a sense of belongingness. You don't have this sense of that you matter to somebody, and you don't have anybody that you're relying on or connecting with, to and with.

Livier Martinez,:

And so definitely not just for our students, but not just for young adults, but for anybody that if you are in the place or space where you are feeling so socially isolated, alone, and you do not feel the sense of connection to people, then it's definitely time that it might be that you have to reach out and ask help, especially if you don't have, if you don't feel you have that sense of community or a sense of support that say others who are socially connected, have, say for instance, somebody that has a good support group with friends and family members.

Livier Martinez,:

Well, if you're feeling down, if you're feeling sad or you're just having a really tough day, you pick up your phone, you connect, you reach out to your people, your tribe, you reach out, you hopefully talk to them, you vent, you hang out, you do something, but if you don't have that and you're isolated, there goes your support.

Dr Seth Myers:

Well, I think that's such a good point. I mean, I think one of the things that it makes me wonder is how do you make the difference between, I'm going through a bad phase, I'm not feeling good, I'm feeling disconnected, isolated, lonely, but it will pass versus maybe the feelings I'm having are serious enough that it's time to reach out to a mental health professional? Where do you draw that line Livia? When should a person who feels kind of socially isolated and disconnected, at what point do they need to say, hey, you know what, it's serious enough, I need to ask a professional for help?

Livier Martinez,:

When we look at obviously any kind of risk factors that are going to put your life at risk, if you're experiencing suicidal thoughts of, or questioning your sense of self, and do I belong here, or where do I belong? Some of these questions are okay to have, but I think when you're now questioning your sense of belonging and if you're worth, or if you should be here on this earth, then definitely that would be a red, obviously a red flag in my book, and definitely reaching out to somebody to talk and to hopefully get the help, not only to talk to somebody, but hopefully to be able to find and build those coping skills and the tools needed to hopefully be able to establish solid relationships that could then be built into your life. So then hopefully you have that tribe and that support system so that you don't find yourself in this lonely and isolated place again, does that make sense?

Dr Seth Myers:

Well, it does make sense. And also, it's funny because when you were talking, I was sort of already formulating the next question I was going to ask you, but you already sort of started to answer it by talking about how do you make things better? And you talked about increasing the sense of social supports that you have. So that's what I think would be really helpful to the listeners. Can we take a minute Livia, and you can give us some ideas, some specific behaviors that anyone listening to this who feels socially isolated or disconnected, who just feels that sort of like emotional, blondness kind of questioning the purpose and the value of life, right? Quarantine is a very weird time and no one has any preparation for this. So what are some specific things you think people can do to feel more connected, to feel less isolated, to feel that they belong more to something?

Livier Martinez,:

It's a great question. And it's a big, heavy question, because it's definitely not an easy response in the sense of like, if you just do this one thing, it will result in a change in your life. I really believe and not just in my work of working with young adults for the past, over 13 years and being in this field for over 23 years, but also even in the work that I've been doing and focusing on, I would definitely say that for a young person who finds himself in this position, we have to start by changing and focusing on what are some of the aspects like taking little tiny steps. And what I tell my students when I work with them, And I say, we to start getting comfortable with being uncomfortable. I said, I know it doesn't sound like it makes sense, but it really does.

Livier Martinez,:

It's getting comfortable with being uncomfortable, because it means that we have to come out of that comfort zone. It means that we are going to have to put ourselves out there and be vulnerable to develop those relationships, to develop more meaningful relationships, not superficial, that, oh yeah, I can have, I know I hear from some of the students that they can have a lot of friends that they've collected in context through their social media, but in reality, when it comes down to having somebody there for them when they really need somebody, they don't have that person to count on.

Livier Martinez,:

So I definitely say, it's taking those steps to building more meaningful relationships. And that means that you are going to have to put yourself out there, and reaching out to your classmates, asking for people's number, not just to have them on your social media feeds, but to actually say, you know what, have you ever thought of just doing study groups? Because now you're not just, it's not just a classmate that's sitting next to you, but starting to develop more intimate relationships.

Livier Martinez,:

What I tell students is getting involved also with your campus activities. I said, there's so many things on campus. And I know right now it's really difficult because during COVID, we're not on campus. What I tell even the students that I work with now, even though we're, and we're still doing tele-health over Zoom in the phone, it's still being able to reach out to your classmates, connect to your professors, reach out, physical distances not social distance. That's been like my thing that I've been saying from the beginning, and I know I'm not the only one, so I'm not trying to claim it, but it's social distance and physical distances, not the same. And it means that you're still trying to develop those much more meaningful connections with people. And that can be very scary because you are vulnerable and you might get burned. And I know that can be a bit scary, but in order to develop friendships, that's kind of part of the package.

Dr Seth Myers:

These issues, right? They're complex. I mean, human emotions, feelings, the circumstances of people's lives are not simple, and no two people are the same. So I get what you're saying. Most of all, Livia, I really appreciated what you were saying about really pushing yourself to go outside of your comfort zone and reach out. And I know that's paradoxical. I know it's weird, right? If a person feels really disconnected or feels really blue or down or depressed, right? A lot of times you don't have a lot of energy, so you don't have the energy or motivation to want to reach out. But that is the very time each of us as individuals must use some discipline and say, even though I don't want to, I'm going to do it. Even though I don't want to, I will, even though it may not make me feel better immediately, I understand this as an investment, and with investments, you don't always get an immediate return.

Dr Seth Myers:

But if we try, if we don't give up, if we do reach out a little bit, as long as we can keep ourselves open, I think to that possibility that, well, maybe there is a 5% chance that I could feel better by it. Well, that 5% chance of things may be getting better by us trying harder, it's worth it. So I totally get what you're saying Livia, and agree 100%. So Livia, I only have one more question. And then maybe after my next question, we can share with listeners, especially those who are students, staff, faculty at Mount San Antonio College, what they can do if they want to connect with student health services, if someone needs counseling or resources.

Dr Seth Myers:

Before we do that, I'll just share my last question, and I'll preface it by saying this, 20 years of being a psychologist. I have learned that sometimes some of the simplest things have the most psychological value in people's lives. And one of those things is the value of a good quote, some people talk about this colloquially is like a mantra. You'll see like on a pillow or a tee shirt. Somebody says like a certain expression, positive uplifting expression, in mental health, we call that self-talk. What kinds of things we say to ourselves. So Livia, my last question is what are some simple statements, some mantras that people could tell themselves when they feel down or disconnected to keep a sense of hope and keep moving forward?

Livier Martinez,:

You're talking my talk. And I say that because I'm big on self-talk and I really also, I just want to go back. I know you just asked me this last question, but I'm hoping that I can kind of inject a tiny little bit with the previous response that I gave. And then you responded saying that you completely understood the response and being able to push ourselves out of our comfort zone because at least, having to do something, even though it's very difficult, especially if you're feeling down and how do you then try to connect to anybody if you're not even in that space. And I would first then say to that, is that you're right. And I agree with that. And if you're, hopefully if you're working with somebody and you are feeling so socially isolated, that you're first taking steps to focus on feeling better, and then when we get to a place where we're feeling better, then we kind of take the other steps of working on other areas.

Livier Martinez,:

So I think I'm so glad you mentioned that, that you reiterated that human emotions are challenges that we have, they're complex. So it's just, it's not just like a one thing that's going to take care of everything. So I appreciate you really supporting that and kind of solidifying them. So now back to the quotes, or back to the mantras and the self-talk. And I, even, when I work with students, I say that, I understand that just by saying this is one thing or these mantra over and over in and of itself is not going to take care of everything. And I understand that it's kind of part of the package. It's like, we have to do so many things to take care of ourselves, to take care of ourselves as a physical, psychological, that we hopefully eat well, that we sleep well, that we're taking care of ourselves like the entire body, not just some aspects.

Livier Martinez,:

So some of the self talk and some of the things that I know, and even working with students, it's things that are going to help you stay focused more in the present, not trying to jump too far ahead in the future, or even in the past. When we get stuck in the past or try to jump too forward into the future, that's when we can get into trouble, I say. We can kind of live here and in the space that we are now. And for that, it's not my quote, but it is something that I say, and I say it a lot. This too shall pass. It might take a little longer than expected or that I wanted it. But this also will pass. A couple of years ago, literally, this was my most favorite saying, and I constantly said it, and it is what it is, because it was just the fact, it is what it is.

Livier Martinez,:

I can't change it right now. I most certainly cannot do anything about it right now, but I can only try to accept it for what it is right now. It is what it is. And I have what are some things that can be helpful for students hearing this, or even staff that are hearing, this is something that will make you stronger. This is an experience that nobody could have prepared us for, but we're still living. We're still moving ahead.

Livier Martinez,:

I try to also really push being grateful and having gratitude for the things that we have, rather than focusing on all the things we don't have, or the things that we don't have yet. But hopefully in the future, the things that we're working toward, I also am big on having those quotes or mantras or pictures of inspiration. I encourage students to have them on their walls, their virtual walls, on their cell phones, on their computers, or like something of a posted note or something, in their bathroom mirror or their bedroom mirror. I said something that when you wake up and you, the first thing you see, this mantra or this picture or this inspiration, that's going to propel you at least, maybe for the day.

Dr Seth Myers:

When you mentioned the posted notes on the bathroom mirror, if you looked on my bathroom mirror now, you would see mantras, you would see a sticky note, literally pasted on my bathroom mirror. Sometimes I'll put a little sticky note by my bed. Some people will have a screen saver message, or like you said, Livia a picture as their wallpaper on their phone. But I agree, something where the person sees it every day. It's a way you're programming your mind. So thank you for sharing all those ideas. I really appreciate that. I guess the only other thing that I would add, when we were talking about quotes, you can say to yourself, mantras, self-talk statements. One of the things that I like is we all know things that we can do to improve our lives. We know, right? Everybody knows we're supposed to exercise seven days a week and drink 75 gallons of water a day, and only eat organic foods, right?

Dr Seth Myers:

But that's not always realistic and that's not going to happen. So the goal is to practice a few regular positive coping skills, but the things that we want to change, the things that are hard, when you feel down, when you feel alone, when you feel disconnected, it's not easy to go out and make new friends. It takes a little time. You have to think about where to go to look for them. What kinds of clubs or organizations to join, what your interests are.

Dr Seth Myers:

But it takes work, and it's not comfortable. And you do have to go out of your comfort zone. One of the mantras that I think is helpful for people, and I use the patient says, I don't want to do it, but I will do it. I don't want to do it, but I will do it. I like that mantra because it sort of gives us all permission to say, I don't want to. But it also makes us feel strong and empowered and reminds us of our own self control to say, but here's what separates me from someone who's going to accept being unhappy on an ongoing basis that I actually, I don't want to do it, but I will do it.

Dr Seth Myers:

So that's just one thing that I want to add. And then, so Liv, I think, as we close out here, could you just share how students on campus at Mt. SAC, if they want counseling or if they want resources, any ideas, even just to talk to someone for a session about what they could do to feel a little less lonely. Could you just take a minute and share that and then I'll let you close out.

Livier Martinez,:

Thank you for sharing your mantras and your examples of the post it notes. Because it's something so simple. And I think that's one of the things that I really try to impress with the students that I work with, in terms of the, I'm like whatever suggestions we cover, whatever, anything that we talk about are things that are doable. That they're realistic and that things are, I'm not going to ask you to go get a pedicure. Well, when we could get them, I'm not going to go and tell you to, oh, go get a pedicure, go get a massage, go on vacation. I mean, those are things that are great, but it's not necessarily realistic for everybody, but writing and finding mantras or things that inspire us, to remind ourselves why am I on this journey?

Livier Martinez,:

What was the reason that I'm trying to earn this degree or whatever it is that you're trying to do, kind of like those are sometimes the reminders. So thank you for sharing that. I think also I would like to also add that, I say, and you brought this up at the very beginning, Seth, where you talked about that, nobody could have prepared us for this COVID and being, so under stay home orders. And I can't stress this enough and telling people to be patient with themselves, that nobody is doing it necessarily right. That we're all trying our best to do the best that we can within the best situation, with the situation that we're in. I'm like be kind with yourself, be patient with yourself, because all you can do is just try your best.

Livier Martinez,:

So with that, I will also mention that student health services is even though, just remind, the campus is closed, but school is not closed, and services are not closed. So student health services is still operating. All of our services are provided through telehealth. So students still can have access to appointments with nurses, with our nurse practitioners, with our doctors and with our licensed therapist. By calling the health center at, and I'll give the number (909) 274-4400, between Monday and Friday, between 8:00 and 4:30. Also visit our website, mountsac.edu/healthcenter. We also have put together interactive workshop, style trainings, and outreach activities for students.

Livier Martinez,:

And we have some recorded stuff, but we also have some interactive workshop style. And again, I really pushed for that. And the staff at the health center did too, because I, again, trying to really get students to interact with people, because I think, again, that's that important piece of having interactions, and having at least socializing with others.

Livier Martinez,:

So that was really important for us to be able to offer that to students. I can't stress enough the need and to remind yourselves, to be patient, be kind with yourself, do something good for you every single day. And that could be from taking a 15 minute break, watching some 22 minutes silly video, something that makes you feel good for that day. It doesn't mean it takes care of all the issues, but it can definitely help you at least get a little bit of that boost or that energy to okay, got to tackle the next thing. And be patient with yourself. Nothing is resolved overnight. It takes time.

Dr Seth Myers:

Well, thank you so much, Livia. It's been really great talking with you. I really think that you've offered the listeners some really helpful tips. And I agree with what you said, that the unique situation we're in, what I was thinking is if you are struggling, you're actually having a normal reaction to a very abnormal situation. So to everyone out there listening, just to remember whether you're listening to this during the time of coronavirus in quarantine, or at a different time, there are always [inaudible 00:30:43] out there and Mt San Antonio College student health services is always there to support you. So again, thank you, Livia. I really appreciate your time today.

Livier Martinez,:

Absolutely. I'm hoping that this can be very helpful, not just for students obviously, but people and I thank you, I appreciate that you said that, struggling, if you're struggling, then this is a very normal response, this is a difficult period for a lot of people, so, thank you.

Sun Ezzell:

Seth and Livia, thank you so much for sharing your conversation with us. I feel like I've learned a lot from what you've shared. I was wondering, do you have time for a couple of quick questions?

Livier Martinez,:

Sure.

Sun Ezzell:

Okay, great. I was wondering if you might be able, just to share a little bit about what you're hearing from students about how they're doing right now?

Livier Martinez,:

One of the big things I'm hearing, and I don't think I'm the only therapist at student health that's hearing this is, because of the lack of structure, right? The lack of having the structure of going to the campus, having this academic life, that it has been very difficult for students to maintain their momentum. Once that kind of structured of going to the campus and having the classes and kind of having that gone, and now having to be self paced, for a lot of the students that has been a big struggle. And so I would be remiss if I didn't then reply with some of the suggestions that I have made and then we can also, I would love it if Seth would jump in also, what I have been responding to that, and what I would say to the students is that in a situation where it's very difficult to control everything that's going on around you, I said, what we want to do, or what I've been recommending is how can we try to then maintain a sense of normalcy in your schedule, in your routine?

Livier Martinez,:

So big for me when I'm talking to students and even with my own children, I'm like, every single day we have to wake up at almost at the same time, we're going to get dressed every single day. We're going to get out of your pajamas. You're going to take care of your hygiene. You're not going to merge from day to night, to night, to day, and not know what day of the week is. I think that's when we start to get into trouble.

Livier Martinez,:

And so one of the big things is really encouraging students to still build a sense of routine in their schedule on a daily basis, as difficult as that is, to still maintain that. I say, if you had classes on Monday, Wednesdays and Fridays, between the hours of, I don't know, 10:00 o'clock in the morning to say 3:00, I'm like that could still be your academic time. That could still be your academic time, even though you don't have to be in class, that could still be the time that you view your recorded lectures. That's when you do your homework, that is still your academic time. And that, you try to keep to a sense of schedule of when you wake up, when you go to sleep, you hold yourself accountable to that.

Dr Seth Myers:

I'm seeing really a lot of the same things that you just shared. But I guess one thing that I would add is one of the most consistent themes of feedback I'm getting from students is when everybody has been staying at home, right? Everyone is sort of on top of each other. There's very little sense of privacy, some people are sharing small spaces. And so I really sense that people are feeling a certain level of frustration, kind of this underlying agitation, for distress best, I did a video for Mt. SAC on how to deal with restless or nervous energy. I think that's one of the main things that I'm getting back from students is staying at home, not having the social supports from being able to go to campus, and have that normalcy and that structure that people are kind of feeling restless, anxious, agitated.

Dr Seth Myers:

And so, one of the number one questions, I will ask anybody I'm working with is, how much have you exercised for example, in the last few days? And I'll just make a quick point, exercise is another one of those things kind of like I was referring to earlier, everybody knows it would be great to run five miles a day. Well, that's not going to happen, but I tell people, listen, even saying to yourself, I will commit to five minutes of exercise today. That is light years more helpful than not.

Dr Seth Myers:

Because if you set a goal too high, if you say, I know I'm supposed to exercise, but I hate running. So I really don't want to. And I don't like swimming, that's fine. But everybody can do five minutes of exercise a day and people would be shocked. What a difference, even five minutes of getting out in the fresh air, getting some exercise, even doing jumping jacks inside your house can help. So, to answer your question overall, I think that people are feeling agitated, restless, a sense of confusion and really a lack of self control. So what do you do when you feel a lack of self control? You control the things you do have control over. You organize your brains out, inside your house, your closet, your bathroom, your garage, you exercise at least a little bit every day. You focus on the things you can control, that I guess is one of my thoughts.

Livier Martinez,:

Again, I have to, again, not just because it's Mr Seth saying this, but I'm a big, big believer in physical activity and exactly what Seth mentioned that even for somebody that likes to exercise like myself and I exercise regularly, it is difficult to do that when your whole schedule has completely changed. In my house, we call those bursts, we do five, 10 minute bursts. And sometimes if I can do maybe five, five minute bursts, that's like 25 minutes that I've exercised. That's like, I'm like, hey, that's almost a half an hour. And I even get my kids to do that. So it's like, yeah, you know what? We're going to do this, this for especially if I'm exactly what Seth mentioned, that if you're having the sense of like, oh, irritability or not finding the place. And it's like, yeah, you know what? We're going to do a 10 minute bursts, something really super simple, nothing too too difficult, but something that's doable. So I support that completely 100% even. I agree. And thank you for mentioning this other piece, that a lot of people are also experiencing.

Sun Ezzell:

You're both providing support and guidance to others during this unprecedented really stressful time. And I was wondering, what are you doing in your own lives to feel more connected or more present in the moment?

Dr Seth Myers:

I think that I'm doing probably what most other people are doing too, which is calling on the phone, more friends and family members that in my usual busy chaotic life, I don't always have an hour or so to talk to. So I'm definitely reaching out more. I'm definitely having longer and more frequent phone calls with people that I know and love. I am really pushing myself to get exercise a few days a week. I wish I could say or seven, but if I can go out and get some exercise three or four days a week, that's enough. And I have been organizing my house and I have never cooked more in my entire life. And I just would say, I think that cooking it's a very therapeutic activity. When a person is cooking meals, because there's mouths close by who are hungry and needing fed, cooking is not a therapeutic mental health activity.

Dr Seth Myers:

But if you have the time and space to cook, not because someone immediately needs that food put in their mouth in 23 minutes, or someone's going to have a meltdown. Cooking is a very mental health therapeutic activity. And it is because A, you have to focus, when you're focused on what you're making or a recipe or measurements or ingredients, your brain has to focus on that. And your brain doesn't have the freedom to focus on any negative thoughts or feelings. I also always try to play music when I'm cooking. And these are some of the things that have helped me to stay sane in a time that feels really insane, but Livia what about you?

Livier Martinez,:

Similar in that sense, to what you mentioned, I exercise regular already, even before this, and it's a little bit more challenging some days than others, but I really push myself and try to remind myself of how I will feel after I exercise. That's really kind of what motivates, kind of what gets me like, oh, I really don't want to do it, but then it's like, how will I feel after, oh yeah, I'll feel so much more, I'll feel better. And I will have more energy and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. So then I exercise regularly still, and I try to eat healthy, which is a challenge, especially when exactly for what you're saying Seth, we're cooking more. So we're doing a lot more comfort food, which really translates to unhealthy fatty or food. And so then I'm like, okay, I have to exercise now because I actually had cookies.

Livier Martinez,:

I have had Zoom dinners. I've organized Zoom dinners with our friends. And even though we could not physically be together in the room, we were still connected. We still hung out on Friday night. And that was very important for us as a family and me to model and to show and to say, even though we cannot be in the same room, we're still going to socialize. I'm still going to reach out. I'm still going to have that social life. That's very important to maintain. I have pets that I adore and I make sure that I spend probably even more time because we are home more often right now, obviously. So during those times where it's a little bit more, if I'm a little bit drained or I'm a little bit tired, I just cuddle up or I sit next to my dog or my cat and I just pet them and kind of that makes me, for me, that makes me feel better.

Livier Martinez,:

I'm currently in a doctoral program. So I'm still working full time. I have children at home all day. My husband is also working from home and now I'm working from home. So when I tell students, I'm like, I understand how you feel of having people in the home or having to be in school and having to still manage. And so having to do all of these other activities, it is very difficult, but you just, you try your best. And that's why I keep saying, be patient and be kind. Patient and be kind with yourself and all you can do is try your best.

Sun Ezzell:

Well, Dr Seth Myers and Livia Martinez, thank you for sharing your expertise, your insight, and your guidance with us today. I'm grateful that you're part of the Mt. SAC community and grateful to know that students can find support from you and the student health center, even though we're off campus for now. Thank you so much.

Christina Barsi:

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