

Ukulele Music

Keith: welcome to LeeCoSchoolsEdcast number 13 with Chelsea Neighbors and Caroline May of East Alabama Mental Health

Kyle: so Keith why did we talk to the people from East Alabama mental health

Keith: well we spoke to them because this is coming out in the month of September which is national suicide prevention Awareness Month and so we went in wanting to talk to them about the suicide aspect but what we wound up and what I think is a great thing is we wound up talking to them a lot about mental health in general right how we need to destigmatize the conversations around mental health because you know people are afraid to admit that they have some issue because there is this stigma around it right culture doesn't help and people's misconceptions don't help and what people need to realize is that just like you wouldn't want to you know ridicule somebody with a cancer diagnosis

Kyle: right or alienate them

Keith: or alienate them frankly and you don't give them guff about being on chemo right sure so somebody with the middle ill with a mental issue shouldn't be given guff about having to take whatever medication they're on that helps them out there's zero difference right and that's what people need to realize is that there's no difference it doesn't mean that you're weak it's just a thing that happens and that we need to and if people don't feel the stigma around it then they're going to be more open to asking for help and are receiving help right and everybody will be better off in the long run

Kyle: right well and you know the big one of the big things we touch on is the community around that and it really is you know when people start caring about each other it it really opens up a lot of those things it's not so you're not so walled off and you're able to seek some of those things you need so all in all I thought the conversation went really well I was really pleased with the wealth of knowledge that both these two young ladies had it was fantastic

Keith: and I feel that you'll probably going to hear more episodes with them in the future yeah the topics absolutely I've got they've got a bunch of knowledge and a lot of great stuff that needs to get out there I think that if we can help them disseminate that information we're doing we're doing some of what we set out to do

Kyle: that's right and they're passionate about their goals

Keith: very passionate and very knowledgeable and very approachable and easy to talk to yeah I think it's fantastic

Kyle: I agree

Keith: and so after listening to this if you find yourself with any questions comments complaints criticisms compliments colloquialisms conundrums or concerns you can find us on the web at www.lee.k12.al.us/edcast and on that site we're also going to have a lot in the show notes a lot of resources that we talked about in the episode we're going to link to it and resources other things so you can help educate yourself absolutely you can also find us on Twitter @LeeCoSchools you can find us on facebook at facebook.com/leecoschools you can email us at edcast@lee.k12.al.us and you can also find

us on the Lee County Schools app we have our own little icon LeeCoSchools Edcast good good without further ado Kyle

Kyle: hey here we go

Funky Transition Music

Keith: we're here at East Alabama mental health and we're talking with Chelsea Neighbors and Caroline May and so what are your roles

East Alabama Mental Health: I am the prevention services coordinator pretty severe mental health so we have grant funding that comes from federal government down to the State Department of Mental Health and then is disseminated out to the counties and so we have three grants right now that's cover Lee Russell chambers and Tallapoosa County one of them covers only prescription drugs in Chambers County and the other to cover underage drinking in all four counties and so basically we work to reduce the onset of adolescent addiction we work to reduce risk factors that encourage adolescents to use drugs or alcohol we have a lot of different programs that go in that and we also do community engagement and outreach so what that look looks like is we do media campaign to engage parents to talk with their kids about some of those you know difficult subjects that they may not want to talk about whether it's using drugs and alcohol whether it's suicide whether it's been a wellness the way that we kind of operate is we want it to be encompassing of everything we don't want it to just be about a specific topic so we want to encourage parents to talk to their kids about anything that they feel is important to them because we're seeing that we have a high rate of adolescents that either don't know how their parents feel about alcohol or drugs or suicide or mental illness or any of that kind stuff or they think their parents would approve of them doing these things so we're really trying to bat the comments Stigma that's associated with those things so that's kind of a gist of what prevention does we also do mental health first aid trainings so we do community trainings that kind of set up similar to CPR so we're engaging community members that may not know anything about mental or mental illness and teaching them tools to put in their toolbox to be able to engage with people in the community that might be experiencing a crisis or suicidal thoughts or panic attacks or any of those kind of things until they can link them to a professional help so we do a lot of it you know anybody can take those yes yeah anybody every team can take them and right now we're able to offer them for free through our grant funding so we've been really excited we have trained 118 people in Lee County since July last year Wow so she tell them like the different different people that have come because it's a pretty wide range of people who are interested we've had first responders we've had EMS we've had law enforcement we've had schoolteachers we've had principals we've had parents that I've had children that have been recently diagnosed college students we've had our university faculty we've had we're doing one with head start in the next couple of weeks we've had some probation officers so we've had kind of wide range of people that have been interested in it we've had some some people from different counties that couldn't find one in their area so they've traveled to Lee County to be trained so it's very it's grown a lot we're very excited about it we're really glad that we can offer it for free yeah we will have a class into the Smiths Station I think in August that we're excited about locations Gina Ivy is supposed to be helping me come live with that because I am NOT very familiar with some station area but if anybody would be interested in yeah that'd be great but it's kind of hard to put into a little bit show that all prevention does because you have a lot of little well annexes the things that we do yeah

East Alabama Mental Health: so I'm Carolyn May I'm the program director for the special liveries program so we're part of East Alabama mental health and we're how's that feed my children services so we provide in-home therapy parent education case management family support for moms with young children and so we can start serving our moms the minute they find out they're pregnant until their youngest child goes to kindergarten some of our women have been with us around the 10-year mark some of them are a little bit over that some of them are a little bit under but that's kind of the that's kind of the average for our women who have been here for a minute there's different ranges of progress and so because people start at different levels and so we received a lot of referrals from DHR we received some referrals from like pediatric clinic ob/gyn clinics that just see a need for moms who are lacking resources whether it be resources and support financial resources connection to community resources low education low SES or SES sorry that is a that's low socio-economic status so just low financial need not working not very much family support low father involvement is a big thing we don't see a lot of dads we have a cut we have three women who are married now mm-hmm which is a big deal for us we're really excited about that so we try and celebrate the wins just those research shows that kids who grow up in a family that has support whether it be community support just other people who are non family members in the home they do better in school they have lower risk of behavior problems in school and it's just a protective factor for the family so we try and be that for them or connect them today and so we also have she pointed to me earlier when she was talking about Head Start so we have a contract with ACHR which is Alabama Council on human relations and they have Head Start in Opelika in Auburn and in Hurtsboro mm-hmm and they contacted with my program to provide mental health consultations intervention in the classroom and potential referrals for in-home we're in Lee Russel Chambers and Tallapoosa County and we have probably almost 500 employees so we're a relatively big yeah agency if people don't really think about it you know a mental health is very stigmatized we we are a very large organization and then family Children's Services in and of itself is very large so we have a lot of different nooks and crannies and yeah the services that we offer

Kyle: well and that's one of the things you wanna talk about today yeah what are some common misconceptions with like a mental health crisis what are some things that if someone was listening to this they could gain something from knowing the misconceptions

East Alabama Mental Health: um I think the biggest ones that I've come across are that they're violent that they choose to be experiencing whatever stressor whatever kinds of this great tension yeah attention taking there all of a similar demographic or they're all have a similar socioeconomic status that it's a character flaw I think those are the biggest ones that I usually hear so I feel like in my little area they're just a bad mom like just because I work with moms pretty consistently or they don't do what they need to do to take care of their kids that has been a big thing we have lots of women who are experiencing PTSD just out of history and then they're classified as bipolar disorder is a big one especially among women when so the way that I think about it is that any symptom that you're experiencing is saying please help please help me there's something going on that I can't handle by myself and I need somebody I need somebody to come help me and so I think that sometimes it can look really scary and you can think that's none of my business and I don't need to get involved in that I need to keep my distance from that person I need to have really strict boundaries which boundaries are important so is also working really hard to meet people's needs in my personal opinion but that would be the big thing that they're scary I need to keep my distance somebody else will help right yeah they need a professional when really a lot of times if people are getting support or they had community

support I think we take that for granted sometimes that we have people that we can talk to that are safe and lots of times people don't have that they have that with their care provider and that's it and so I think that's something that mental health works really hard to do is we provide groups where people can make connections that's not support groups are so important to you know whether it's a whether it's the NAMI groups that I think all burn tumor of Commerce hosts NAMI groups which is the National Alliance of mental illness so they are support groups for somebody that is living with mental illness or support groups for something that's supporting somebody someone with the mental illness so if you can't get to a therapeutic group support groups are always always available think another one is that recovery is not possible I'm always gonna be this way yeah a lot of people whether they're living with an illness or they're experiencing a crisis or their family of somebody that's living with it they think that they're never going to get better that it's something they're gonna have to deal with for the rest of our life and they might have to do with it for the rest of life but it doesn't mean they're gonna be symptomatic for the rest of yeah it doesn't mean they can't hold a job does it say erase a fan maybe we should talk about what it looks like to be symptomatic and so they're different levels so like it's almost like eczema or psoriasis which is like a skin thing and so you can have it in your system and you can have flare-ups but then it goes away right then you can have a flare-up and then it goes away you can have a flare-up and so there's stressors all throughout our lives especially in 2018 where everything is so fast in there's fake community everywhere on social media and through the internet and so the same for mental illness so you might have a diagnosis of let's say schizophrenia that doesn't mean that you are experiencing hallucinations or delusions constantly non-stop there might be a stressor and then you have a flare-up and then you talk to your people and you adjust your medication and you start exercising you eat better and then it's not as bad as it what's wrong and I think the media plays a lot into that I when I say maybe I don't necessarily always mean the news but like Hollywood and TV shows it turns pop culture those yeah years and years especially in horror movies it was always portrayed that the villain had some kind of mental instability yeah and when you use the example of schizophrenia and made me think like you know schizophrenia is a very rare mental health diagnosis it's very very I mean in our community we see it a lot because people but just in general population out in the world it's a very rare diagnosis it can happen with bipolar it can happen with personality disorders it can happen with anxiety capital of depression it can happen with postpartum depression I think that's a great thing to talk about is that it can look like one thing but really if you provide connection like I was showing you guys earlier some connections things that we do with our little kids run and so if a child is acting out and they're pushing their friend just thinking through they're missing a skill they wanted to play with that toy but they didn't know how to ask or there's always a why they were they were knocking over things hoping that I would pay attention so let me come over to them before that even happens next time I know that they need connection first thing in the morning I know that they need a hug I know that they need eye contact I know that they need my presence with them lots of times we can be distracted by devices I know I think people are just deprived of connection and so specifically people who are experiencing mental illness and families who are a part of somebody's journey who's experiencing mental illness the connection can be really rare just knowing that people need people I think is a huge huge thing and knowing that you just we were not made to do it by ourselves so lots of times people will say how do you do their job how do you like how I don't you just ahead all the time I'm like well no like one of my mom started her a new job today and so part of what I did this morning was say you're gonna do great today you're gonna crush it they're gonna be so thankful that you're there and I'm a part of that like she lets me be a part of her life and a part of her kids lives and so I think that's

a really special role no I'm not sad all the time there's gonna be good days and bad days but the outweighs the bad I think oh and that's another misconception about mental illness is that it's always bad and that it's always sad always always a crisis yeah I mean that's just not always the case I mean so I don't you know I struggle with why are we so stigmatizing mental health because and maybe it's because I work here and I'm here every day and I'm in the back of it and I mean it doesn't bother me watching it bother other people but you know I still it's no different than a medical diagnosis you know we don't shame people for taking high blood pressure medication we don't shame people or we don't shame people for going through cancer treatment if anything we rally around them or if somebody I think we say have you talked to your doctor right yeah have you talked to your therapist about it yeah everybody's like oh you know I watch this really awesome I started commentary on Netflix this weekend it's called don't call me crazy have you seen that no oh my gosh it's amazing it's based out of the UK and it is an adolescent mental health institution it's a state facility so there I don't think they're always in the state custody but some of them are and so it's basically the series follows three young people through the course of their inpatient stay one of them has an eating disorder one of them sSED and think one of them is experienced psychosis but it's it's just really amazing to see their stories but there's a panorama of one of their rooms I think the young girl that has both CD and she has to get well cards all over her room and that just really like it kind of broke my heart because I got this camera you know we have an adolescent unit here at East Alabama Medical Center and I just got to thinking like you know they're shunned they parent someone they know that they're there yeah yeah but this girl she had probably 50 greeting cards and they also get well soon and that just was like like why can't we in America do that why do why is it still so stigmatized especially for our kiddos so that it's a really interesting documentary invites interested in mental health together it's very informative so I work with kids and adults which is pretty rare mental health there are specialized specialists and so part of it I think is that we see these kids and we say we have to fix them there's something that is broken and we need to fix it there's something that's broken in them we need to fix it and we're not taking into context like what's my role what have I set things up in my home that are maybe hard for this particular child just based on temperament based on their own specific needs for personality and that kind of thing and so parents will bring their children to family Children's Services and expect the child just to participate yeah fix it and so and my mom's do the same thing like oh I'm good but we need to talk about yeah okay well we need to talk about how you just screamed at them from the other room to do this thing and then you spanked them because they didn't follow through so we're gonna go over to them and we're gonna make eye contact and we're gonna touch them gently and we're gonna show them how to do it and so I think lots of times like we're thinking it's an instant fix we're America and we want it now and I expect this and I'm not stopping to think or my expectation do my expectations need to shift does my work schedule need to shift to meet this child's needs and then then we need to talk about work and say all right if people if companies and businesses are talking about family is so important family is so important and then the people who need time off are not able to get it right like think about my mom's who typically most of them have maybe a 10th grade education and then the jobs that they're expected to work are 12 hour shifts right and then there is not childcare that is opened net right midnight when they're getting off and they don't have been their kid needs to be at daycare at 5:30 and then their child is going to school like falling asleep at their desk so we need to be thinking about systemically where is it broken these are the black holes that we get into I just think it has community right we're gonna talk about anything that how we can fix anything we're it's gonna have to be together yeah and it's gonna have to be everybody at the table talking about how can we because mental health is a costly thing mm-

hm and so we serve people who are have Medicaid and we serve people who have no insurance at all and we provide those services for them but if we look to think about it it's very expensive to provide services sure it's very expensive but if we provide community first and we provide a community oriented work environment or schools were involved and they talked to the parents and the parents weren't afraid to talk to their kids teacher it would look very different and the cost would be very less right so it might be very extensive in the beginning to most people but then it would eventually cost less money in my mind I'm not a business person of it it makes sense to me

Kyle: at least if you took the call from the back end and towards the front this may sneak

East Alabama Mental Health: the same thing about teen pregnancy yeah same thing yeah so I haven't looked at the numbers recently but like it was in the billions of how much teen pregnancy cost in the United States yeah like we have one of the highest pregnancy rates in the industrial industrialized world and then think about that a parent that they're less likely to graduate from high school they're less likely to have the skills necessary to take care of a child and when the child is not taking care of his infant like birth to three that's the Primo for a number for a child and so if those things are not happening a child is less likely to be able to regulate themselves emotionally which leads to mental health diagnosis or which leads to behavior problems in school which leads to less likelihood that they're going to graduate and so if we think about how we can solve things before rather than just throwing services I think that because we will provide services all day long and we will work really hard to like in the field that we will work really hard to connect our families with resources but if the whole world and the whole community is not changing also we're basically just putting a band-aid right we're just kind of one prevention what it does is and so we look at the world as risk factors and protective factors so risk factors are things that are going to increase the likelihood of something happening protective factors are the things that are going to decrease the likelihood of something happening so for art for our world you know the risk factors are gonna increase the likelihood of them whether it's you know mental illness whether it's suicide whether it's pregnancy whatever it is you know perfect your protective batteries are gonna be things that are gonna reduce that so that's kind of that's as we look at our society and we identify what are the risk factors that are affecting our kids and how can we replace those risk factors and protective factors that's kind of the gist of what prevention does so we look at you know Lee County we have ease of access to alcohol and drugs they're everywhere you can get them anywhere you we have high rates especially in our rural pockets of communities there's not much engagement with kids so there's not much after school activities they're not involved in the whole thing there's not much to do on the weekends if you have those risk factors you're gonna have those problem behaviors but if you start to put those protective factors in place so having the safety of an adult being involved in a strict schedule like caroline was saying being involved with activities having a job any of those kind of things having a good set of friends you know even protective factors such as eating a healthy diet or going to bed at a decent time or not being on your phone 24/7 or those those are real simple protective factors that a lot people don't think of as being them but if we can try to bring those those risks down and bring those protective factors up then we'll start to kind of see a leveling off of some of these issues that we're seeing but but that's a long-term thing you know that's not a band-aid fix it's something that's got to happen over a year's time and it's also thinking about like why is it behavior happening so remember how we talked about if somebody's experiencing symptoms in the community and it's all about help me help me help me I'm having a panic attack there's something going on there's something wrong help me the same is true for anybody who's over indulging in anything right all of it is saying there's something

else going on there's a need that's not being met elsewhere and so I feel like I always keep going back to that but that's my spiel and I'm gonna stick to it but like if we have community and we are connected to people and we are able to stop take a deep breath before I swipe that debit card at Target or before I drink that back of the year by myself if we're able to stop ourselves before we do that and that is a skill that you have to learn from childhood yeah and that's a skill that it's hard for adults to learn after that without help without somebody in their lives saying I feel like this might be an issue right we need to talk about it yeah we need to find resources to help and we live in a very judgmental society so it's very your your publicly shamed or social media shamed for asking for help which I think goes back to that you know we're not gonna shame somebody for getting treatment for cancer why are we shaming people

Kyle: I've actually appreciated the rabbit holes that we've gone into you have been relevant yes

Keith: today we're but so today we're here to talk about suicide because it's September I think which is Suicide Prevention Month and so at the time with what's recording this could be about a couple of high-profile people lost to suicide I'm Anthony Bourdain and Kate Spade and so it's sort of top of mind at the moment yeah and it is it is a problem and so we for the school perspective you know what are some of those warning signs of self-harm or ideas about suicide and I know there's a whole vocabulary that we should be using to help destigmatize talking about it something and I've read it and I've read up on it I've tried I'm trying to try to do that so but if I'm if I say something wrong please do let me know because I want to be as sensitive on this topic as possible

East Alabama Mental Health: people always make mistakes so there's grace for that yeah yeah

Keith: but so what are some of the warning signs that parents and teachers and others even should be looking for

East Alabama Mental Health: um I think when it comes to suicide especially in our kids it's gonna look very different than it would in an adult because a lot of times in our adults we think of you know giving away their possessions well what are their possessions it's gonna be money it's gonna be their house their cars well kids don't have this right so you know the giving away the possessions think sometimes is those little things that as adults we wouldn't think of that important so you know their favorite sweatshirt or their favorite gaming system or their favorite game or you know we've heard some parents talk about their child gave them passwords to their phone passwords so their social media accounts you know any of those small gestures that we are good to have all the time yes we wouldn't really think much about but you know giving those possessions away is a big one and sudden mood changes right and that's kind of ambiguous because some kids have sudden moods it away um but the things that I like to tell parents and this is something that we talk about mental health first aid is the three L's they're living they're laughing and they're loving if whatever it is that is going on with them whether it's anxiety whether it's depression whether it's panic attack whether it's OCD whatever it may be if it's affecting their living they're laughing and they're loving more days than not there's something going on that when you start asking questions so if it's interfering with their schoolwork if there were suddenly making A's and now they're making C's or D's if they were suddenly really interested in football in the fall and then by Christmas they don't want to do football but they don't want to do anything else either he's always taken yeah yeah so you know with typical development we see that you know you may have a kid that wants to play trumpet in the fall they get to Christmas and there is not interested in band anymore but they want to pick up drama are they gonna pick up wrestling and they want to pick up baseball or whatever that's typical development we expect to see that because their

kids are trying especially teenagers are trying to figure out who am i right what is my role what am I going to do with my life what are my goals all those kind of things but when they stop doing those things that brought them joy or made them laugh and they're not replacing them with other things and that's when we're concerned as well if it's interfering with their day-to-day activity so they can't get out of bed as quick as they used to anymore or they can't get out of bed at all they become more secretive with things so an example that I use with some of my parents when we're doing first-aid training is it kiff likes me in the bathroom especially teenagers they love to be in the bathroom they want to look at themselves in the mirror they can put their makeup on and what I use all the Axe body spray and all that kind of stuff but when they're in the bathroom and the doors are locked and they're very quiet and when you try to go and talk to them they're shuffling things around or they're hiding things I mean you just have that sense of something's not right go at that sense trust your and trust your instincts I I always tell my parents I didn't even tell our high school kids because we do some school based classroom education if you have the instinct to ask a question the thought is already there I think a misconception about suicide prevention is if I ask somebody if they're having thoughts of killing themselves I'm gonna give them the idea yeah and that is 100% false are a lot of things yeah I that is something that I know to be true is that if I ask somebody if they're having thoughts of killing themselves and I use are you having thoughts of killing yourself um and some people say that that's kind of harsh and that why would you say it that way but you would be surprised the kids don't understand what suicide means they don't know what the definition of that word is if I ask somebody just point blank or you know you think you know pain yourself mm-hmm they there's no room for misinterpretation right even if I plan yeah even if I say are you having thoughts of hurting yourself they may say no because hurting and killing are two completely different there yeah so they may say no I don't have plans of hurting myself but they have thoughts of killing themselves so I just point like asking them and if you ever feel like you have to ask the question the thoughts already there so there's Kevin Hines is a great he's an advocate for mental health first aid but we use him as a training tool he is one of 34 people that have survived a suicide attempt at 19 he dropped jumped off the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco and he is one of only 34 people of those 34 people he is one of 5% that don't have it doesn't have any physical mobility issues so he and he tells a story and it's amazing and it gives you goosebumps and but he said if somebody had asked me have reached on their hand and said are you thinking of killing yourself I would have told him everything and I probably wouldn't have jumped off the bridge and so that's powerful yeah yeah because you know what Caroline was saying earlier we get so caught up and I don't want to doubt on them and best if they say yeah yeah I don't talk to them about it I'm just somebody else will help them what if somebody doesn't right I would rather be the one to ask them 20 times then to not ask them and be the only person that would have stopped a house right and I would rather than be mad at me sure then but there's still a lot and they're here to be mad at me yeah so and it's very difficult you know it's very difficult to ask so I've worked to promote help from a six years and it's every time that I have to ask somebody it's still difficult yeah I mean I don't think it ever gets easier I think what gets easier is your confidence and singing it hmm like there's a purpose yeah so why I'm asking I decided to keep you alive because the third I mean I remember the first time I was nervous my hands were sweating and I'm just thinking don't say yes but I mean you have to you have to be confident in yourself and if you approach it and say you're not thinking of killing yourself are you that already implies the answer right there right yeah um but here's what you're really saying is I can't handle it yeah we do say yes yeah I know yeah so just asking it just straight up are you thinking of killing yourself and you know Caroline made a good point too the next thing is do you have a plan right they say yes what is your plan have you thought about how you're gonna

do this well I'm gonna go home and I'm gonna my grandmother has xanax in her bathroom cabinet and I'm gonna take them all okay that is a solid plan you know how to get it you know where it is that's easy access the access you know that you can go home after school and nobody's gonna be there and we need to do some intervention now we need to talk this through we need to develop safety plan we need to call parent yeah mother whoever whatever it is and do something about it's important to think about who's gonna be able to do the asking so somebody who's thinking about killing themselves are even self harm like cutting themselves or there wasn't like a thing where kids were choking themselves and were yeah or like things like that right typically if they're not already in services they we're not gonna be their first stop right like their therapist is not gonna be the first person that they tell the people who are gonna know are their friends and their parents and teachers coaches anybody like that if you notice a difference you I think that's really important about what Chelsea is doing with the mental health first aid is teaching people not just in the middle health field but people who are with people outside of mental health and just if I ask what do I do next

Kyle: well yeah so that was my next question our next steps if yeah if you're a teacher or you're an administrator or parent or friend what are the next steps how do you

East Alabama Mental Health: call the family if you are a friend if you are a parent if you and you don't know they're like we're not the ones who need to know first their parents are the ones who need to know first the grandmother who has a xanax in the cabinet right available to that child or that teenager needs to know about it so that they can take necessary precautions and then the next step would be find resources so one resource is East Alabama mental health people Children Services you come to us there's tons of private practice therapists in the area if you're not wanting to do community mental health there's lots of resources on how to find a therapist I'm trained as a marriage and family therapist and so we take into contact of the whole family there there's a program at Auburn there's tons of us around there's this website called Psychology Today dot-com you can look that up you can look for a therapist and give them specific filters for who you're looking for so if you prefer a male it'll give you men if you prefer somebody who's Christian focus it'll give you that kind of stuff almost all licensing boards yeah we'll have a list of people in the area so whether it's marriage Family Therapist whether it's LPC's which are licensed professional counselors yeah whether it's masters level social workers whether it's psychologist psychiatrist any of this licensing boards you'd be able to see you'd be able to do a search to find resources in your area SAMHSA the substance abuse mental health services administration also also does they have a behavioral health locator system that does the entire United States and they search for not only mental illness resources but also substance abuse so if somebody is looking for a rehab facility if you're looking for outpatient treatment and patient care mean any of that stuff they include substance abuse and not as well so to break it down if you're talking to a child or a person who is experiencing thoughts of wanting to kill themselves or wanting to do self-harm call the family if they don't have family call the person they talk to the most if you're not that person right then if maybe you go with them you can call us for a crisis appointment we do cross these appointments where you can be seen that day and then we will help you make a plan together what is not helpful is if that person is seeking services by themselves um if there's nobody that they can trust to be involved that is a warning sign to me and so if there's nobody involved that is kind of a risk factor and lightning Chelsea was talking about and so it's important to involve family because if there's no other eyes on you what's gonna say that you won't do it as soon as you with my this right we also encourage not to leave them alone yeah so especially in the school setting so if teacher or coach or principal or whoever needs

to walk away to call the family somebody needs to come take their place because I mean yeah if the thoughts are there and the thoughts are strong enough the access to kill themselves can be found anywhere yeah so we really really really because the chances are they've already felt pretty alone run Dr. Brené Brown she is this really awesome social worker she's a researcher about belonging and things like that she does this really great illustration she has a really awesome TED talk that has a ton of views but she talks about vulnerability and shame but she gives this really great illustration about the difference between sympathy and empathy so you're in a hole and if I have sympathy for you I'm shouting down and saying are you okay do you need a sandwich what what can I get for you and empathy climbs down into the hole and says I don't have a fix for this I don't really know what to do but I'm here with you thanks for telling me thanks for telling me I'm here with you yeah it's very good and I think the other thing with that is to be willing to be inconvenienced to care about somebody that you love to take care of somebody that you love I'm willing to be vulnerable because that's what yeah they is all about right it's barek we are all born to be sympathetic it is very easy for us especially for us in the south to me point at somebody whatever just blossom right that's just terrible I wish I had time yeah but that empathy is looking at them and finding something within myself that will bring me to their level of pain and and that takes a lot for somebody because nobody wants to be in their feelings right nobody wants people over and it takes out of my schedule oh yeah makes me late for things and it costs something I'm like what else he was sending it it has a cost to me and so I think that as a people group I think that a lot of us need to be a little bit more willing to be inconvenienced so one of my very good friends she is a teacher in Texas she teaches in Austin and she has like a teacher team and so like every day they will swap and so they will say all right I need 15 minutes and so because they don't teach don't care break right they love their kids they go to recess with their kids they are with their kids more times often than not that's for their of their parents so they give each other a break so I think that's really important and to be able to say this job is hard this is hard and I think that I made a lot of mistakes today and I just need somebody to know somebody today this is hard I'm here with you because caring for people no matter what the job is it's hard and so I always goes back to community for me because if you have people I think that makes it a little bit easier but you're what I'm saying community people who know you wrote and who know hey you've been kind of MIA where are you what are you doing are you in your house by yourself haven't been by yourself all weekend what are you doing right and so just making sure that we give people permission to ask us

Keith: now are there always warning signs though I mean you know you hear a lot of the ask like and anything for dying everybody that was closed down was like I'm gonna ignore

East Alabama Mental Health: I'm gonna take a leap and say that there were very few people who actually knew them I feel like that is a hard one to judge but just because they're in the public eye yeah and they're you got really good at putting on a public face and yeah in my experience always always there's not small yeah

Keith: but like it so I mean but so people who are around them everyday would pick up somebody that you're not okay

East Alabama Mental Health: yeah um I think another another warning sign is when I was talking about that sudden mood change is also so a lot of times when we say sudden mood change we'll think of somebody that's real high energy that all of a sudden goes down real low but with young people are really even with everybody the opposite is also very important so if you know somebody that's been

very very low for a very long time and then all the sudden they're real high energy that is a huge red flag taking more risks because a lot of times that means I've been so low for so long I've come to terms with what I'm ready to do and I want people to remember me being high energy I want people to remember me being friendly to being kind I don't want them to remember me being sad so that wrote that flip from from low to high is also a really a really big red flag but yes what you're saying increasing risk taking and for kids that risk taking could be driving at high speeds it could be you know trespassing on abandoned property it can be any it doesn't always have to be these baby boys the idea that you know they can be rolled real subtle things but I think if you truly know somebody and you're with them all the time and you know their personality and know their their normal and I'm putting normal in quotes because I don't like normal their typical behaviors they're always going to be some type of some type of warning but that's assuming that people have people yeah right um and so I think that like with bullying and people who have been seen as outcasts I mean it there's been a lot of school shootings and so the people who have typically been the aggressors in those situations have typically been on the outskirts and so what we're working really hard with headstart and with our littles and with our women is that and with all everybody mental health hopefully but I know my program a little bit better and so just teaching them how to be a friend and how to include people and how to ask to play because if people don't learn those skills like well I want to play with them or I want to be a friend to them but I'm not quite sure how to go about it right thinking about making friends in adulthood it is weird so just thinking that remain friends are convenient so friends at work yeah make friends at church or we ain't friends that mm-hmm the soccer field I guess it's the place yeah but so just thinking through like raising kids who've seen kids who are having a hard time and including them because again it goes back to that is gonna cost me that is it could be a reputation thing it could be they might be super weird and they might would be really scary but they're scary and weird because they don't have people know and they haven't had people for a long time

Kyle: something that you just made me think of the school shooting thing you know they were having to walk out right and then someone on social media so that says I'm gonna walk out have a walk eris it in where you go find that kid who is yeah ostracize for the rest of the group talk with them yeah and I thought you know without getting political on any of that I'm like what a great gesture Jim have people yeah be kind yeah happy mind

East Alabama Mental Health: I think that's a skill that a lot of people take for granted especially in this hustle-and-bustle world that we live in right now and social media is not real life so even if you know somebody on social media you don't know you know that behind that screen when I'm talking to parents aren't talking to community members and you know they may get defiant about mental health or they may get frustrated about things well I just saw understand why people act this way they do these things but for people that have had people there for people that have had is our families and stable families and you always knew your next meal was coming from you always had the things that you wished or you always have that structure yeah the way that I explained it is you learned these skills when you didn't even realize you were learning them right because you had people in your life that were teaching you these things but for somebody that doesn't have that stability they never learned those skills they're living in a state of survival and so we have to take that survival hat off of them and put that thriving hat on them one of the things that she just said is super important it was very connected to brain development and so Daniel Siegel he is a psychiatrist he's really cool he wrote a couple of books called whole brain child there's another book called no drama discipline he's just very

cool he also has a TED talk about neuroplasticity which means that your brain can change right and so by using self like emotion regulation skills you can change the way that your brain is making connections and so he teaches the pain model the brain and so what she was talking about with survival state and so that's the brain stem are we were created to survive right and so some people can survive in really healthy ways like I was super involved at my school because I was like this is how I'm gonna get people to like me right and this is how I'm gonna make sure that nobody sees that my mom is struggling with mental illness right okay and so my survival skills were different than other people in my high school so when a child or when a person is in survival state they're seeking safety they're trying to say help me help me help me I need somebody to come and be with me right here and I need some a who is say and then you can move through like as soon as the tile has safety you can move to the limbic system which is emotional state and so you can saying you your face is telling me that you seem really sad or you seem mad your face is going like this you see man some of them must have happened right can you tell me about it or you were really wanting to play with that truck and you didn't get it or those girls were being really mean they said some really hurtful things and that is painful that's really hard just being with a minute and then you can teach them to problem-solve and so that's the frontal cortex and so he folds it over they cannot see me this isn't like they can't see me but then you fold it over he has a TED talk go watch it but yeah and then you can problem solve but you cannot problem-solve when somebody is in survival state and you cannot problem-solve when somebody's all in there feelings run you have got to wait and you've gotta wait until they're safe they're connected and then you can problem solve but we cannot teach anybody how to problem-solve or we cannot be safe for anybody else and we cannot connect with anybody else if we also don't feel safe right and so that's it goes back to self care so if I'm not taking care of myself there's no way that I can be this for somebody else yeah there are all kinds of skills and so you can have skills that are helpful to you and skills that are hurtful to you and so I have a couple of littles who when they're trying to get my attention they use curse words should I get my attention because they normally because it works and so what I've learned through the conscious discipline training that we've been doing with Head Start is that oh you wanted to get my attention you needed to ask me something and then they say yeah I'm kind of like what you're not even shown it and so that was a skill for them that they had learned this is how I get my mom's attention the best way so she might not pay attention to me when I'm just like mom mom mom mascara mascara I'm Scott she might not pay attention the first time when I'm asking that way but she will sure pay attention when I use the B word and so just learning how to take a deep breath for myself and say they were trying to get my attention just kind of put it on your love glasses right yeah this child is trying to get my attention they didn't know how I'm gonna teach them I have to teach them a skill right now and so just saying oh you wanted to get my attention but you didn't know how I was not listening we please forgive me for not listening and then you say you you wanted to ask me something you wanted to say can we listen to or can we watch or can we play or whatever and then practice with them that's a big thing and so for littles for adults for some moms who one of my mom really wanted me to do something for her and she was hope and I had something else to do before them and so I was running late to get to her and so she kind of got shouty ruined me and so she's missing a skill she's really trying to communicate to me but she is not sure how and so all I have to do is say you were hoping that I was gonna be on time and that is really hard and I'm really sorry that I was late I had these other things that kept me up I'm here now you wanted to let me know that you were upset with me you can just say Carolyn I wish that you would have been on time it made me really anxious that we were gonna be late and then I'm like all right let's practice it and so it seems really silly in the moment and she's like but then once we right then the next

time she's like okay we need to be here at this time I really need to be here at this time and so then I can play my schedule a little bit better Rhoda I use my own skills and play my schedule a little bit around you just have to see these moments like kids who are screaming are adults who are screaming they're missing a skill and they really are trying to tell me something that I'm missing it

Kyle: that's a great way to look at it because if they hear like you said earlier the human nature just to be like what you say right

East Alabama Mental Health: I do not have to take this yeah or I was talking to my my friend she works with the place where they provide housing and she was like people come in with an attitude immediately yeah and so when people's livelihood or their stability is at stake they go a mediator rule right and so we tried to talk about that just a little bit like how she could train her staff to talk about it with them and just recognize it is not you it has nothing to do with you right it is all about I have two kids uh-huh and this is my housing and what you're telling me is threatening that and you are the only person here that I can shout at right

Kyle: but I like that I'm gonna try to start using that in my day to day whenever I have a they're missing a skill and

East Alabama Mental Health: I am gonna be as helpful as I can right yeah

Kyle: jumping back to 30 years ago when a student's referred to you what sort of happens next

East Alabama Mental Health: that's a great question so the typical referral process - when a student is referred they are heard to call our outpatient facility and that is where they get set up with an intake appointment because outreach knows who's available win right yeah and so they get set up in an intake appointment and that just means we're just gonna ask some questions about what brings you here today mm-hmm and it can be kind of intimidating the first appointment and so I just want to encourage people if they're listening to this and they're kind thinking well I don't know if they're because they're gonna get all my business that's kind of the goal of therapy is to get into your business um but you tried really hard to do it in a way that is just trying to figure out where we can be helpful and so we get family history information because lots of times mental health is there's a history of it in the family it doesn't mean that it's it doesn't mean that it has to happen for you but it just makes a little bit more sense yeah we talked about medical history any incidents of being hospitalized before like we just kind of gained a little bit more it's kind of like going to the doctor for the first time right like don't know they're filling out the paperwork and then we do plan of care it's calm treatment plan but I always describe it as like a therapy checklist so like weird okay we've got this it sounds like you experienced some trauma when you were little or your parents just recently got divorced or you just lost your job or you're no longer with your partner whatever it is it sounds like those are some of the things that you're struggling with what are some goals that you would like to talk about to get to that if it's typical outpatient they're going to be seen for one hour a week if that if they're high-risk they might be seen more than that but typically we can talk for an hour and you go back out into your life and you have got to have a part in your goals you have to have our ownership or else it's just me telling you what to do right and that is no fun for anybody yeah but yeah that's typically what it looks like and so they get assigned to a therapist and then they schedule how often they feel as necessary

Keith: so after a student students but know anybody after they had some kind of crisis and they've come to treatment and they're going home or going back to school what are things that parents and teachers of faculty and even other students that might be friends with them what what are the types of things that they need to do to help smooth that transition back up in the back of the routine

East Alabama Mental Health: I think talk about it yeah

Keith: I mean you need to get pens of needles I mean

East Alabama Mental Health: I don't think so I mean I feel like just a spelling fear for caregivers is a big big thing people want to return to what's what's been new normal for teachers I would say acknowledge that they were gone and welcoming back because people have people know yeah right like people know as much as you try to hide it people know I mean as we get as big as Lee County is it is a small town yes especially with social media things like that I mean it's very quickly to information yeah um and so just communicate I mean it all goes back to community but it all goes back to clean me so if they know that hey you were gone and we missed you and there's no judgment here we just want to let you know hey we didn't know that what's going on with you and we just really want to be helpful there's a lot of grace for people who are just trying to be helpful if they're communicating that okay

Kyle: we've talked about this next question a little bit already but what are some ways we can improve how we discuss mental health

East Alabama Mental Health: yeah I think it feel like that's been our home yeah I think just talking about it I mean yeah yeah yeah I'm a very transparent person and sometimes I gets me in trouble but just if you don't talk about it it makes it like it's not happening and it's happening for it increases the fear about yeah and so just being an environment like if you're a parent just creating an environment where if you tell me something and it's really hard for you acknowledge that it was hard mm-hm if you're telling me that your friend is in trouble I want you to know that I'm gonna work really hard to keep that friends safe and that's my number one goal is safety but you can trust me I think that that isn't being present I mean is huge so conversations can't happen if you're never in the same room without anything else happening yeah oh my advice is always talk about hard things in the car because you don't really have to look at each other oh thanks to folks on the case they can't get out it's safe safety but yeah talking in the car for for my young boys it's easier to talk with them when we're doing something and so parents can start conversations about sex they can start conversations about a substance abuse they can talk about conversations about emotions and feelings and feeling scared and they can talk about all those things while they're playing Legos I mean you can do anything those we're going or swimming or going fishing like is there anything that you want to talk to me about here are some things that I've been worried about there's all these shootings going on what do you think about that mm-hmm just being able to open your mouth and open your ears and pay attention maybe also self educating but using appropriate resources resources to self-educate um not BuzzFeed yeah things that end in .org or .edu like this kind of the humbler yeah no dot coms but self education is key and because you know like I would say I mean I do watch a lot of documentaries and because I mean I work in mental health and people would think that I don't want to go home and watch more things up it'll help but I mean it's engaging and that's how I learned that's how I grow the Dunsey and I I think that's what makes us better people is we learn through experience sure and if you don't put yourself out there to have those experiences or honor don't put yourself out there to learn those things from reliable sources your

net that fear is always gonna be there and that fear is gonna grow yeah so if the only to make sure of anything is yeah if the only experience that you have is by watching Hollywood movies or watching TV shows or watch long yeah India background stuff for watching the news yeah that's not gonna any of your fear but you know go to trainings go and I mean that is a plug for monitoring because I think it's great for safe drinking there's train July August but I mean just even read credible articles read watch credible documentaries and if you don't know how to find those things yeah call us a new oh yeah are we happy to shoot stuff but I mean really the don't call me crazy one that I've been watching right now on Netflix is really good it's a three-part documentary they're 45 minutes apiece yeah and it's really good especially for young people if you have all young people in your life but just do some self education there is this TED talk by Nadine Burke Harris and she talks all about how trauma changes the brain and how so things like that so TED talks educational talks are super helpful the world is really big but we can make it really small and so I would just think just expand your circle just a little bit so try something you've never done before so talk to a person that you've never talked to you before people can teach you a lot of things so there's tons of stuff on you can use the internet for good yeah yeah well they're a great podcast um but there are great well I mean I use podcast to say I'm in the master's program I'll be done July 27th okay wait um but I use podcast to study for my licensure tests because there's such good educational information there so and then there's always May is Mental Health Awareness Month so we usually do stuff around May that try to get information out there April is alcohol prevention month and child abuse prevention month red ribbon weeks in October there you know so there's always these kind of national celebrations or rounds or comfort there's national recovery month I think it's in September as well so talk about it you know there I think there are a lot of people that are trying to propel those conversations so engage it and you know it's participate in those walls participate in those community activities because if we start participating in the community that community will grow yeah then it won't become so so taboo to talk yeah Auburn high school was doing something that was really cool yes they have some kind of student club but okay not really the name of it right now but if I say too scared around suicide prevention um Joyce Stanley was telling me about it at a United Way meeting they are awesome the dental program is at the part of United Way yeah programs that are funded but she was telling about the program so it's just if you're an adult and you're starting to think about this the chances are there are other people thinking about it too it's hard to be the initiator but that is an important first confidential Club confidential that's what it yeah so like if you're having an issue you come and you just kind of it's like a self-help group yeah the same at this podcast is community yeah mm-hmm so now because see yeah and so yeah just building community making a statement maybe we can't always have like character traits character trait of the month or whatever so maybe talk about that in your classroom think about like what does it look like to be a friend what does it look like to speak up for somebody what is an advocate even mean what does that even mean how can you be one how can we all be one

Keith: well I'm learning a lot and thank you so much for taking the time to chat with us

East Alabama Mental Health: now that we've taken 3 hours of your time this is like a nice change to my schedule that girls get tired of me sooner it out break your passion but I am and not everybody is passionate about it

Ukulele Music