

Ukulele Music

Keith: Welcome to the LeeCoSchools Edcast #25 with Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors from East Alabama Mental Health. They are my first repeat guests and I'm so thankful they agreed to come back on the edcast. I am chatting with them today because May is Mental Health Awareness Month. Mental health remains a greatly misunderstood topic and after the amazing chat with these ladies last year for Suicide Prevention Month, I knew they had tons of other things they wanted talk about and I wanted to learn more from them. We chat about mental health, common misconceptions, how to help children and adults process and recover from trauma such as natural disasters and much much more. So, after listening to this, if you have any questions, comments, complaints, criticisms, compliments, colloquialisms, conundrums, or concerns, you can find us on the web at www.lee.k12.al.us/EdCast, on Twitter and Instagram @LeeCoSchools, on Facebook at facebook.com/leecoschools, we have our own little icon on the Lee County App which you can find in Google Play or the Apple App Store. Finally, you can email us at edcast@lee.k12.al.us Without further ado....Allons-y!

Funky Transition Music

Keith: congratulations you are our first returning folks yes I was very when I was trying to figure out what what to do and I saw that may was Mental Health Awareness Month oh there was so many other things we wanted to talk about last time I knew that y'all had a lot of other things that you wanted to talk about so here we are um first of all last time we talked to you guys were doing the Mental Health First Aid and I hear that we made the connection with the Ruritan Club out in Smith station and they all had a great time out there and they

Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors: I actually did not teach a class but one of our staff did and she said that it was great and you know we went I guess about a month after that and spoke to the members of the club and we're very appreciative to have that resource oh yeah it went great yeah it's awesome to be able to do a class out in Smiths Station because it's just hard - mm-hm it's hard to find connections out there to offer services so those are really great

Keith: and I've heard that y'all have like access whenever you need it out there

Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors: yes

Keith: we're part of an organization called ALET which is Alabama leaders of educational technology our boss well I say our boss Kyle doesn't work as though but my boss was the president last year of it and so we went to the conference in September and Kyle and I did a session teaching about podcasting for school districts and so one of the pros of that was being able to make those kinds of connections like we did with you guys in the Ruritans yeah I'm glad that turned out well so uh so just for those who may not have listened to last the last episode y'all are in if you haven't shame on you just introduce introduce yourselves and give us a quick thumbnail sketch of your professional journey so we can think if we've got a lot of other ground we want to go

Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors: yeah so my name is Chelsea Neighbors I work full-time at you saw me the Medical Center doing assessments in the emergency room so I've been with mental health for about six and a half years I've been mental health professional for over seven what kind of assessments do you do at the hospital I do assessments for people that come into the emergency room that are having psychiatric crisis so they're suicidal experiencing some types of psychosis maybe drug overdose

or any of that kind of stuff and I assess them see what kind of services we can provide them see if they need to be admitted to the hospital and then I talk with psychiatrists and arrange that process to get them admitted or get them transferred to a different Hospital

Keith: I like this I'm gonna sit back and let y'all interview each other yeah

Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors: I'm Caroline May and I am a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist by trade I got my master's degree at Auburn and marriage of family therapy and so I started as an intern in Russell County as an intern therapist at the clinic there seeing adults and kids and their families and then once I graduated I got a job as an in-home therapist with the special deliveries team and so special deliveries is a grant funded program through Alabama Department of child abuse and neglect prevention United Way to provide in-home therapy parent education and family support to moms with young children and so our range of services can go anywhere from a mom who is pregnant until their youngest child goes to kindergarten and so the investment that we make in our families is pretty great yeah and then I moved into the program director role three years ago I think and so now I supervise the staff I supervise interns that are working with us clinically and then I supervise our contract with Head Start and so we're their mental health consultant for Lee County Chambers Tallapoosa County and Phenix City Head Start and just making sure that kiddos who are zero to five are getting primo child development and mental health consultations just to make sure that if once they transition to kindergarten that they're not those kiddos that are getting expelled yeah don't we just want to make sure that we yeah we just want to make sure that because children are the ones primarily the symptom bearers and what we call them so if there's disregulations in the family or disruption in the caregivers life and their ability to give care the child is gonna be the one who that starts acting out start tuning its friends has speech delay has issues like it just sits quietly in the corner and so those are the kids that were watching out for him we want to link their families to services and so that's what we're doing for a head start and then we also got funding from a department of early childhood education to provide parents as teachers in Russell and Lee County and so parents as teachers serves kids zero to five but in a educating the parent in the home providing really specific really intentional interventions for the parent targeting the goals that they have for their kids so that's what we're doing and if you're interested in parents as teachers where can they go oh yes and if they're interested in becoming a parent whose involvement parents as teachers you can email parentsasteachers@EAMHC.org and so we're enrolling families as we speak and we're really excited about this program it's evidence-based there's no charge to pay there's no charge yeah it's totally grant funded you don't have to have insurance you don't have to there's no income cap nothing like that you can stay in from zero to five or you can stay in for a year you can see in for six months but it's just really targeted intervention to help increase school readiness increase health and academic outcomes for kiddos and link to resources that maybe they wouldn't know about well the other thing that just started to and it's new to the state of Alabama through first five Alabama if you're interested you can go to a smart start Alabama their website has information about it but we were identified as a site for an infant and early childhood mental health consultant and so their job there are six in the state and ours will be covering most of our area and down south and a little bit north of us yeah just helping child care providers make their environments a little bit more into early childhood mental health friendly so the way that you speak to kids the way that you give direction the way that the environment is set up there's an increased safety or does it make kids feel afraid and so when kids feel afraid they act out and they're not able or they're just shut down and they're not able to explore their environment which is not what you want my early childhood

Keith: well that's very cool now y'all are busy oh yeah a lot of stuff is my stuff go on good dog that means no healthcare screw yeah well and that's and that's good too because you know there's a there's a stigma still about mental health um and I'll tell you what what-what help lifted that stigma for me was and as stupid as it sounds watching The Sopranos yeah you know Tony Soprano he still is going to see dr. Melfi every week

Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors: I never watched that but I'm in yeah

Keith: I mean you know there's obviously a lot more about it but that's still of area but the very first scene of the series is him sit in the waiting room waiting to see the waiting to see her so make me cringe sometimes survive it well I mean you know it's it's the classical talk therapy kind of thing like there was hbo's there's another HBO show called in treatment like as an Irish actor who you know he's he has this private practice in his home you know and each episode was just a session with one of the patients yeah and it went and it would cycle through over several weeks you would see the sessions with each patient every week the week kind of thing and so it was an interesting show took to binge if you and I'm sure that you'll just cringe watching that's not how it goes but those two shows sort of helped

Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors: makes you want question

Keith: square it away in my mind a little bit more and whether it's wrong or not it still may gets me to the point where I am okay with asking the question and so first of all let's just define mental health it's a huge thing well it's really up to you but just you know when people say mental health what are we talking about

Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors: most of the time when people are talking about mental health they're talking about somebody who's experiencing maybe a hardship in mental health so either experiencing psychosis or disturbances of like but hearing like voices things like that any difference up there kind of mindset or like emotional tendencies so mental health sometimes will instead of it being I'm taking care of my mental health it'll look like maybe the opposite when people are talking about it yeah but what our job is is to make sure that people are Airy or not just surviving but thriving that's what we tell our moms so like if you're surviving you're just going from day to day trying to make it through and you don't really have the mental capacity so the way that your brain works is that if you're in survival mode that means you can't learn new things that means you can't be creative that means you can't process through and learn from your mistakes and we want to make sure that people are getting to that that big part of their brain so getting to the executive function part I saw anything I remember last time so a great if you're just curious about mental health and want accurate information you can go there's a TED talk by Daniel Siegel I'm sure that I've talked about last time cuz I talked about it all the time that's okay but he talks about how our brains are neuroplastic and so what that means is that our brains can change so even in childhood like maybe if you don't have a caregiver that is supportive or meeting your needs basic needs or emotional needs or that's just not there at all or you grew up with foster care or you were abused neglected that kind of it doesn't mean that there is no chance for survival or thriving it just means that you need relationship so when most of the emotional injuries that we get are from relationship and so if damage is done in a relationship healing has to be done in relationship and so that is why I think that no health is so important and therapy is so important because you're building that relationship with another person and so maybe things that were spoken to you when when you were a kid you have time to process that in a safe place and so here a plastic-like our brains being neuroplastic means that they have a chance to grow back and so your brain develops from

bottom to top front back to front and side to side and so there are so many opportunities for new connections and so let's say like one connection doesn't form like that's one link which is harder to learn when you're an adult because yeah because that those pieces of the brain those connections weren't made really early and so that's why early intervention and so important that's why the first they call it the first thousand days of life are so important but just if those thousand days of life are not the best for you some of the ways that you can develop that is just being in the healthy relationship right and so that's what we want for our people because the majority of our moms and the majority of our adults that are seeking services at East Alabama mental health maybe they didn't have that right when they were kids and so if we can give them opportunities to do that either by talking with their therapist or being in a group are teaching them the skills in therapy so they can practice it outside it's possible yeah for people to be successful

Keith: okay so we were talking about children you know most of all of our people in Lee County Schools our students are children young adults and so how big is this issue of mental health with with them and is it growing is it getting worse or we're getting better about it

Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors: I think that they're I don't ever I don't want to speak for I think our heart we're gonna be a little bit biased because we do see those kids who are struggling yeah but their world is way different than ours when we were in middle school high school elementary school and parents maybe are not growing alongside of their kids when it comes to social media access internet access that kind of thing

Keith: how big of a factor is that and I think in affecting people's health

Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors: I think it is huge so when you're seeing middle school high school kids post on social media that they want to die yeah that is men and like nobody notices until a friend speaks up I think using social media for connection which I think that that is connection like when people are saying like please look at this like I'm putting it out there for the world please somebody connect with me about this and make sure that I'm okay so there's a behavior and there's need and so the behavior is always gonna be masking you need and so when it's really easy to see it as disobedience or willfulness or acting out that kind of thing but teens are just like our babies that we're taking care of and zero to five and we want to make sure that their caregivers are responding to those needs but sometimes the behavior looks so different in middle and high school that the behavior distracts us from the need that's there mm-hmm and the need for authentic relationship the need for a caregiver to meet and response and needs not just physical but emotional I think is huge and so they're showing us a lot more things and I think with their behaviors and we just have to get really good at interpreting that

Keith: like this phenomenon of you know the people carefully curating what they show like on Instagram and stuff and then especially then the other people who see that you know they perceive that as that's their whole life whenever they instead of realizing that's just a carefully curated thing and you know I've been reading that that can lead to depression and other people and stuff like that

Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors: if you think about it like when we were growing up our world when my world consisted of my family and the people within my zip code yeah now their world consists of their family the people in their zip code the people in the next County hmm and then the whole world whole world yeah so that it's libraries and celebrities like in their whole world and so which could increase connection but what I'm thinking that it is actually doing is creating these maybe just ideals of

what my life should look like right because that other person who has this total other life experience now look at

Keith: I look at people and I'm like how are you going to Thailand I can I can barely make it the end of the month exactly

Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors: yes I think the other thing that's really important to think about for parents and for teachers who is that you kids don't develop self talk and so until they're 9 or 10 years old and that's a typically-developing 9 or 10 year old

Keith: what is self talk

Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors: self talk is like oh I don't think I should do that oh I wonder if they think this about me okay they're having that inner voice anyways the only voice that they hear are the grown-ups in their lives

Keith: I still talk to myself out loud

Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors: yeah that's okay hopefully it's healthy self talk yeah but so just thinking about the things that we're saying to our kids on a daily basis behavior

Keith: um just to circle back to the social media thing for a second so I mean yes people whenever whatever the kids are even adults see the curated experiences that other people put up but then on the other hand then does that make it even more important when people like celebrities are open about whatever issues they're dealing with that people say on social media

Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors: sure I think social media is definitely is it influence or for sure and whether that's good or bad I think you know celebrities especially celebrities that kids pay attention to your kind of whether they want to be or not they're automatically role models yeah so now whether they're good role models bad role models that's completely up them but they naturally just have this platform to be able to provide more information like you know following Justin Bieber he and you know he is openly about his mental health and talked openly about I don't know how relevant he gets now for high school kids but now that was an older adult or an older adolescent but just the fact that he talks openly about going to therapy and then I take selfies in the therapy wedding leaving and you know I think that's huge but even looking at you know people like Selena Gomez or Amanda Bynes or Britney Spears who just checked into a mental health facility then we're talking about their journeys and talking about their experiences and showing that vulnerable side I think is crucial now what are those are celebrities that adolescent yeah I'm following I don't know exactly that would be an example so he's in that new but me Shazam oh the kid who like says she's am/fm speaker and so he was posting on his social media in the midst of like these premieres that he's going to and his life looks really good and in the comments he's like yes this is awesome and I'm really grateful but I'm also really grateful for those people who were there in the middle of maybe depression that I was you know Glee with thankful for the professionals who were there to help me learn new ways of coping yeah so I didn't can go back to that's right was it Tiffany yeah the closing monologue of SNL and said you know thank you to my social worker because without them I wouldn't be where I am and it's like yeah they had a

Keith: she's hilarious yeah not necessarily appropriate for smaller kids but she's still hilarious

Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors: but the fact that she on an open national platform yeah like what yes felt comfortable enough to talk about that and I think that kind of goes back to your question that you're asking is do you think that it's causing or do you think that mental health issues are more frequently than just getting better things like that and every sometimes I I just kind of feel like I don't know if it's necessary getting worse or that more people are being diagnosed with mental health issues or if people were spinning a culture that is making people feel more comfortable to talk about their they're facing and so then that just kind of looks like it makes it like what I really were but really how many of these yeah closed doors for so long and now they will you know so like they're like if you don't want to go to therapy there are all types of things that you can do on your own so yoga is a great one because it slows you down you slows you down and you're engaging your body and your mind so there's an app called meditations yes and meditation people like I love Jesus okay and you can call it prayer you can call it meditation you can call it having a meeting like the earth like I don't care what you call it but what it's doing is it's teaching your body to slow down and it's gonna bring your awareness to those pieces those parts of your body they're holding on to stress and holding on dang and holding on to fear yeah

Keith: yeah I'm Catholic and so we have the rosary yeah and so you know it's repeated Hail Marys and punctuated by our Father once in a while and it's you know if you're if you're if you allow yourself to just sort of just sit there everything's quiet and you just say and you're just saying the prayers you just sort of end of it you feel it oh yeah okay that feels better yeah and I think that's why every major world religion has some kind of set of prayers that involve counting on beads because that helps

Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors: yeah yeah and so one of the ways that maybe you can detect maybe this is not a safe thing for me to do right now or I need somebody to help me help walk me through this is when you can't and you can't slow your mind down yeah and so one of the things that we teach our kiddos cuz I also supervise our ABC program I'm the clinical supervisor for them and that's three to kindergarten and so they meet and individually and they mean groups and we're just preparing them kindergarten and so some of the things that we teach them are using your breath to calm yourself down and so we need to call it sniff the flower blow out the candle so you because if lots of time you won't be we're trying to do deep breathing they breathe like and they make themselves hyperventilate right and so sniff the flower blow out the candle

Keith: that's why I like coming to talk to y'all cuz I get the cool thing with the Main take away is don't listen to pop culture when it comes to ya know well for the most part

Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors: there I mean just think about what your filter is yeah so one of the things I would encourage parents and teachers themselves anybody who's around kids at all foster parent social work or whoever if some if a situation is coming up for them for like my kiddo who I'm taking care of a situation is coming up for them or I'm noticing like let's talk about snapchat or there was a friend at their school that like had to be hospitalized because they were threatening to hurt themselves not happening or they wanted this friend to hang out but they don't show that kind of thing if I find myself as the caregiver not wanting to speak into that kiddos life or not wanting to intervene or not wanting to connect with that baby emotionally I need to say is this about me versus about them right so like what is in me that's rising up because of this whole situation so sometimes you might find well I just don't wanna that's just too much like I don't want to talk about their emotions because it's too much and like they don't need to be sad about that or they don't need to be disappointed about that what I'm really communicating is I didn't feel like my needs got met and so this is overwhelming for me

mm-hmm I don't know how to communicate emotionally to my baby because I didn't feel like I was communicated with emotionally yeah you're rolling your eyes at me how dare you like how ungrateful or you go to the principal hmm what I'm really communicating is your behavior and you're need that I'm missing reminds me of my own need that didn't get met like my mom rolled my rolled her eyes at me when I was hurt and I decided I'm not ever gonna be treated like that again so that's why it's important to kind of be deciding what how your history is playing into the way that your caregiving yeah because if you are a teacher you are caregiving you see your babies eight hours a day their families might not see them like the morning when they leave for school who's taking care of them when they get home from school who's taking care of them yeah you are the maximum part of their day if your history is playing into the way that you're taking care of them you're missing the need and ice it's really important and what I think what people are what adults don't realize either is why why relationships in our early age are so important because these kids are going to become adults they're gonna become part of the workforce they're gonna become part of our military they're gonna become dads moms dads moms grandparents aunts sisters all that and if they're not taught these skills at a young age they're gonna become adults who don't have these skills and adults who don't have these skills are more likely to be involved in the criminal justice system they're more likely to be hospitalized they're more likely to have significant mental health issues they're more likely to not hold down full-time employment and so these issues don't go away if they're not identified as a child they just become bigger kids then we have to help them work through these things that they didn't get as ignore we have dealt with them in jail where they are going to read it over and over again oh

Keith: and so that you know because I've read that with the closure of most of the mental hospitals that it de facto has turned jails into replacement facilities

Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors: yeah so then how are we treating our people who are in jail not very good

Keith: yeah and I think Alabama just...

Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors: it's just in the news news about that yeah yeah yeah

Keith: we won't get on a soap box about it but I'm just saying that that is a thing that happened

Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors: when we see kids who are in quote bad we are typically declaring them as not worth our time yeah so like you have made this choice that is in my view like on my list of no no's and so now I'm going to send you to ISS or now I'm going to send you out of school suspension or I send them to a different school and so maybe where I could have fostered that relationship now I have said your needs are not gonna get met here yeah this is not a safe place for you to show me who you really are mm-hmm and I know sometimes there are behaviors that are absolutely unacceptable you bring a gun to school absolutely get out of here yeah like although we need to talk to your parent we need to figure out what's going on where did you get this you're bringing a weapon to school absolutely not because now I'm creating safety concerns for everybody right

Keith: so so so that brings me to my next point is if someone is aware enough to know that they're suffering emotionally what do they begin to get help what are they what

Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors: it's a great question I'm just gonna tell you there are lots of resources that maybe are not gonna be the most helpful so and then you have to think about insurance

concerns and that kind of thing so we can kind of talk about it separately if that's okay community mental health if you are a kid Oh our faith family and your 0 to 19 Family and Children Services would be the place to go for community mental health which is where we're at now which is where we're at now yeah so Family and Children Services is a part of East Alabama mental health because it's Family and Children Services outpatient and so here the child is our client but the family is our client and so if we are remember a child as a symptom bear of a greater need that's not being that and so when we're starting the child will really serve in the whole family and so that's what families need to know and that before they come here then we have our adult services which is for 19 and older if you're looking for if you're feeling like you might hurt yourself or hurt someone else then you can go to the ER where he would meet somebody like Chelsea and she would assess and tell you what the next steps would be to either be hospitalized at EAMC or there are different facilities around for children especially I'm not I'm not as familiar as with adult there's a lot less kids that there are adults there's more adult facilities but I think it's more I wanted to do for just a second about East Alabama mental health center because I don't think what a lot of people realize is we don't just have community mental health here in Lee County so yes oh yeah Lee Russell chambers and Tallapoosa but every county in the State of Alabama has it has a community mental health center like in mobile it's off the point yeah I'm not sure there's chi-ha mental health there which I think they just walked out bottom point there's Jefferson Blount Shelby mental health up in the Birmingham area there's Wellstone there I mean so every county in the state of Alabama is covered by a community mental health center okay and in community mental health center says you can seek services here whether you can pay for them or not yeah if you have a what if you have insurance awesome yeah if you don't if you don't come anyway right we are not gonna turn you away yeah not gonna turn you away

Keith: and I mean insurance doesn't cover mental or are they getting better about

Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors: it depends on what insurance provider you have your employer might also offer like because then you offer you go into that whole Employee Assistance Programs so that's a whole nother and then there's a limit on how many sessions you can have that kind of things right so if you're not interested in pursuing clinical mental health or that kind of thing you can try to find like a private practice clinician and so that can be anybody from like a psychiatrist a psychologist an LPC which is a licensed professional counselor if you see an L that means they're licensed which means they had to take a test they had to get a certain number of hours under their belt before they could practice hmm LMft which is what I am so a marriage and family therapist so we are trained to work with the entire system of the fame so we can see individuals families couples that kind of thing so if you want couples I would choose an MFT if you want family you could choose either the classes were just a little bit different for it mentees but there are LPC to see families and then you could also see an LCSW which is an licensed clinical social worker a psychologist yeah so psychologist a psychiatrist

Keith: what's the difference between the two

Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors: psychiatrist can provide meds psychologists cannot okay psychologist is more testing some of them of my practice therapy but a lot of the ones around here that I'm familiar with you go to for like a psychological evaluation a psychiatrist has gone as medical doctor when they are a medical doctor okay that a psychologist has PhD

Keith: okay so what how wrong is the classic image of you go in and you lay down and you talk about your problems and then 50 minutes later the doctor goes alright we're at the end of our time

Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors: there are probably practitioners who practice that way more private here I think I don't think that that is helpful it depends on what you're going for so if I you should be going to therapy to learn a new skill so picture yourself you have a bucket and so I call it skill bucket just for right now and so every relationship that I've had has given me a skill to put in my bucket every single person I've had in my life has put a skill in my bucket so it can be a helpful skill it can be a not helpful skill mm-hmm and so if it's not being helpful to me like lots of times like let's talk about our kids from kids from hard places and so they might have skills so they might be 11 but they could have the survival skills of a 35 year old mm-hmm so is this behavior like disobedience or is this just a survival skill and so in relationships is the same thing so I do whatever it takes to keep myself safe so if you're mad and you want to talk about your feelings all the time and in my house we didn't talk about feelings that's gonna push my button and so maybe if we're going to therapy together I would learn to stay instead of run away when you start talking about feelings and maybe you could learn to say hey I really want to talk to you about XYZ later but I wanted to give you time to prep hmm so that would be kind of the type of thing that you and learned like in couples they're your family therapy is there a couch involved maybe are you sitting laying you're more likely to talk about something uncomfortable if you're comfortable if you're comfortable so that's kind of I think where the thought process came from the couch like I said I think we only have one person here who has a couch in their office and I don't think they lay on it yeah um but I mean I mean we have therapists have beanbags in the offices beanbags pillows you can hold your toys like again if you little things that you can play with is there it'll music playing I don't know it depends on the therapist yeah I think there's kind of a wide variety of settings I mean there's there this would have had therapy sessions in their cars done that it just kind of depends on where the need arises um so I'm not gonna say therapy is easy because it for sure is not anything that is gonna bring up stuff that you have long-buried I think it's gonna be hard yeah but it's like cleaning out a closet that's how I describe it so like whatever I clean on a closet I take everything out because there's some stuff in there that I don't need anymore mm but I haven't used it in ten years or it's ugly and I hate it and I want it to be gone right and dumb and put it in a garbage bag and I'm gonna put it away

Keith: that's nice that's nice visual but realistically practically how are you going to you know if there's something in your head that is weighing you down how are you going to put that in the trash can trash bag and throw it away

Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors: so part of that you might not be able to throw it away but you can organize it you can sift through it and say is this true or is this a lie because the kids are the best recorders of information but the worst interpreter right so like I there's this conversation that I replayed was between me and my mom and my mom has passed away now and so I can't call her and be like hey did we talk yep but there's this phrase that she said to me don't depend on anybody else to take care of you don't depend on anybody else to take care of you what she meant was hey I want you to be independent and I want you to be able to provide for yourself because you're important and you deserve to have your needs met what I heard was don't ever ask for help right and so remember if her happens in really she has to be healed in relationship yeah and so I've been able to take that box out of my closet take out what I interpreted and say oh I don't think that was the right way to interpret that and then through a relationship with other people I've been able to say it is right how does this play out in our relationship like when you want to help me and I think oh no that impacts you mm-hmm and it keeps us from connecting and so then now I can take though out the Y and I can put in the truth and say you know what I think that she was wanting the best for me she really wanted me to learn some skills to be able to take care of myself and now I'm these other relationships with people I've been able to say oh

yes receiving help it doesn't actually say that I'm weak or I can't do it it just means I care more about their relations and I do about the yeah does that make sense yeah

Keith: so can someone with mental illness recover air quote-unquote recover or not

Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors: for sure yeah I mean remember the brain is plastic yeah okay I'm a pretty good example of that because I as a older adolescent in college I had a really bad bout with depression that I did not know was depression at the time I just real quick I came from a fisherman last pockets right but I'm sure there's a mental health first aid but I started off in nursing school and I'm very quickly realized nursing school is not for me I'm thankful that I did it because they can see into mental health and it taught me about psychiatry and all that kind of stuff and I and I love what I did I love my work so I'm very appreciative of it but that was a very dark time for me I was experiencing a lot of different things I had a lot of different risk factors going on at that time and so the depression and the anxiety started creeping in and so but I did not know what depression and anxiety were so I sought out care at my primary care physician because I didn't know where else to go I was 19 and and this is a really short version of the story but my breaking point was chicken salad and it because I was on a beach trip and I bought the stinkiest chickens I love me some chicken salad egg don't know but I bought the stinkiest kind of chicken salad well it stunk up the whole hotel room so my mom and my best friend at the time were just on me the whole time about it well for somebody that was living with depression but didn't know they were living with depression that ridicule quote broke me and I couldn't deal with it anymore and so my emotions all I mean I had been pushing him down for so long because I didn't know what was going on with me like the Pope who's been yeah and so it could all come it all just now and you know my mom had no idea what was going on cuz I just kind of kept it to myself I was not in school locally so I was away from home so you know she was distance from it and I only told her what I wanted to tell her because I mean that was I had control of that situation or so I thought but anyway so I came back home and I went to my primary care physician because that was all we knew and I was 19 and I walked out with two controlled substances an antidepressant with no follow-up appointment and for somebody and I'm not saying that I mean medication does wonders but for me I just I had no idea what's going on with myself so you got a fix but no yeah okay take to it easy yeah yeah and so I like I said to controlled substances of an antidepressant and no information on side effects of the antidepressant no information about the controlled substances and while I was while I was taking those medications I also felt out of nursing school and had to find a whole new program of study because I had no idea what to do thankfully because of the limited knowledge that I had with going through nursing school I started doing some research on my own about what Depression was and but once I changed my major once I moved out of my apartment I was thriving again I was making better grades I really enjoyed what I was doing I really enjoyed what I was learning I made crucial relationships with professors I made better friends I was able to come off the medication and I was to this day I'm not diagnosed with depression and I don't take medication and I don't go to therapy but I'm not diagnosed I don't take medication so my mental health challenge was strictly environmental now not to say that I don't experience bouts of depression here and there but I have better skills now that I can deal with it and I don't I don't it doesn't become a barrier for me anymore no now there are aspects of mental health that you can recover from but then there are aspects with mental health that you will have for the rest of your life but you can become asymptomatic or you can become stable or you can have this baseline functioning where you can still hold down a job you can still have satisfying relationships you can still work if you want to but there are gonna be some of your more severe mental illnesses I guess you could say where you would still always live with that diagnosis but you can be asymptomatic

Keith: is it kind of like where I hear you know I filter everything the pop culture so sorry that's just who I am

Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors: that's how you organize information and there's nothing wrong with that!

Keith: that IS how I organize information

Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors: validate those feelings

Keith: I appreciate that I'm gonna tell that to Kyle the next time he gives me a hard time about all the time the so you know on TV and stuff they show you know like people who finally go to AA you know alcoholics anonymous and there go I'll always be an addict but it's been 18 years since I've had a drink or whatever it's kind of to say is that kind of the same yeah

Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors: so I think the other thing is to not get caught up and this is my identity yeah because like my identity is not I'm a therapist my identity is not rest into that that's my career path that I've chosen mm-hmm my identity is I like to be a helper and I could do that as a therapist I could do that at McDonald's I could do that Target like it doesn't matter yeah but this in the same way like my mom struggle with mental illness but she was that was not her identity she was a mom she was a teacher she did not manage her mental health as well just because of the culture that she grew up in like you didn't talk about it you didn't seek out services that kind of thing no just dealt with it and way to treat to pass right best way to do things and so but that's not like I don't say this is my mom she is diagnosed with mental illness I say she taught me how to read she taught me how to be strong she taught me how to take care of myself and so that's an identity it's something that she struggles with sometimes but it's not every part of her character yeah people are not just defined by that and so that's what I would really encourage people

Keith: what are some of the key differences when we're treating mental health issues for between treating them for children and treating them for adults because I mean adults I would imagine have way more baggage they have to sort through and that kind of things whereas kids you're trying to get them on the right path to begin with and sorting through their parents baggage yeah there's somebody there's someone who's back if you're gonna deal with so

Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors: I would say one of the biggest differences is gonna be environmental factors because with kids you not only are you dealing with home life we're dealing with school life too so you're having you're having a lot of input from a lot of different venues that you may not have with adults because adults generally are not in school yeah so you're really only worried about their their personal environment you're not worried about you you know how they're doing to school or yes like that so that's a big difference and the reporters are different yeah so like if I have this kid in my office I can talk to their teacher just like what Chelsea is saying but like when you're talking with the adult you just actually it only have the adult in there right right I prefer to work with the family as a whole because you don't live in a bubble yeah so if I was working with an adult by themselves I would say who are your people in your life who do you call yeah because if they say no one then that is where I'm gonna start yeah because you need people yeah cuz if deep hurt happens in relationship healing can only happen in relationship

Keith: so just to switch gears a little bit we earlier in March for future listeners if it already March third we had the tornados that come through in 2019 that just a swath of destruction through Beauregard and Smith station and so Lee County Schools who I work for we were closed that whole week and so you know six days we lost because of it because

Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors: y'all did a great job taking care your family I will just say like Lee County Schools will take care of their people

Keith: yeah and and that was that was a big concern of ours was trying to make sure that because we got a map from the courthouse that had that had the the path and so then me and my boss and another guy in our office we took the data from our student information system and put it in and overlaid it into this so we could see who was in who was in the path so then we got that information out to our principals and said hey here are the people you vote you know take care of everybody but focus on these people what was important for our admin team was we wanted to get the kids back as soon as possible one because just getting them back to that routine is important but

Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors: routine builds safety

Keith: what we what we want it but what was important to us also was to make sure that we got all the staff together first and so probably we could have started school back on that Monday on the following Monday but because it took over the weekend to get the because all three Beauregard schools were being used by somebody Beauregard High for the media Sanford middle school was the stage more Elementary was for the power of a power staging area and stuff so we got everybody moved out Monday we got all the staff in everybody everybody got together to process amongst themselves to help them be prepared for when the kids yeah that was a very important extra day that we that

Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors: which shows the wisdom in y'all's leadership because I think that very easily y'all could have jumped right back in Oh which I think we have caused a lot of damage yeah because teachers had to be thinking which one of my babies is not coming back today all right yeah which one of my babies lost their parent yeah I'm just be thinking when harm happens in a community happened like that I mean it's a whole community suffers

Keith: and then we had admin when members of our admin team ride the buses that morning you know my boss didn't get back till after lunch

Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors: which was beautiful!

Keith: because he was out at Loachapoka and he was you know walking around and talking to the kids and you know there was a you know there's a kid who had lost a family member it's a you know got down you know they were drawing pictures and like one which are a tornado with a person being flown away and stuff so all of that is to ask after a natural disaster of that kind of that sort what are some ways for students and adults to be able to cope with that aftermath

Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors: you just talked about a lot of them I think one of the most damaging things you could do is ignore it and that is not what y'all did so I think one of the and I know that assess Community Health we were there we had staff members there on site to be helpful hmm Gina ivy also

Keith: she is amazing

Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors: wonderful getting just like what you described your your boss was doing like getting on kids level and not being like oh no we're not going to draw this picture of this tornado because that's too traumatic right we're gonna say man that must have been really scary yeah because you had kids like reporting that they saw the tornado but they didn't really yeah but they were just telling you this was really scary for me mm-hmm and everybody's talking about it I don't know how to process that without by myself yeah and so I think every single thing that we've talked about so far I think would be helpful have it people in your life to talk to it about talk with it about processing as it as a group and not being and I think the hardest thing about grief is that other people get back into routine and they forget but we don't forget because we see it every single day mm-hmm and so just continuing to just love those people that experienced it I think is the it's the biggest part yeah okay yeah grief is a very fickle thing and you know recognizing as an adult okay if I have a kid that comes to me in four months and so wants to talk about it hear them out and let's talk about it because maybe that Monday coming back to school they weren't ready to talk about it but in four months they aren't ready but not shutting them away and saying no we've already processed that we're not going to talk about it anymore it's already been done like today when I got the weather alert on my wfn say yeah that's that strong storms possible I was like okay yeah some people are gonna have a hard time with that and so people call them triggers like there might be certain triggers a year from now like a tornado might happen next year right because we know weather is weather

Keith: well I just Lee County EMA the following week that coming Wednesday they're like yeah do we just know we test the sirens or not yeah I think I think they went ahead actually did test the sirens just because it's important to know that they're working they're working but you know they had there was a thing it was that one of the press conferences I went to when the governor came you know she was asked about that weren't they were like she was like you know we we really strongly considered whether we should or not and we decided that it more important to make sure the sirens are working because yeah those

Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors: to build resiliency I mean I think that it just takes a lot of preparation so like hey buddy like there's gonna be a siren today and it's not anything scary they're just testing to make sure that they can keep us safe next time yeah so just talking to your kids and preparing them because kids thrive in state like and feel safe when there's routine mm-hmm and when there's structure right yeah and so just talking about it so if you see your kiddo like drawing tornadoes with people coming out of it just saying you know buddy I was really scared to know did you want to talk about it yeah were there questions that you had about what happened anything that you're remembering that maybe I didn't remember yeah I think everybody grieves in different ways but when do you realize that this grief is more than I can handle and being in tune with yourself and letting yourself know that it's okay I can't handle this on my own you know if you if it's been you know more than a month 24 weeks and you're still having nightmares or you're still having flashbacks to that night or you're still you feel like you can't move forward then it might be time to reach out for help I'm going to ask my to help us like that journey with you because it is going to be very difficult because I don't think you're ever going to go back to whatever normal man is but maybe we can learn to live a normal

Keith: a related point is survivor's guilt and so I tacked this on here not because of the tornado but because a week or two ago I had read about I think it was a second survivor of the Parkland shootings down in Florida was lost to suicide because and so that the theory was that it was survivor's guilt when I first heard of survivor's guilt in relation to soldiers at war but I understand that it can be in any situation

where you're the survivor of and somebody that you know didn't one how does that manifest itself and two how do you how do you try to get past it

Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors: it starts with you have experienced a trauma with somebody that they may or may not have survived but then you also are experiencing more likely probably depression so you a couple that trauma with that depression and I think you if if you're not if you're feel like you're going through it alone then that's where you can starting to have some of these these but I think mixed in there is grief yeah so and it's been how long since the Parkland shoot those you're a little over a year yeah so grief does crazy things yeah because I think one of the examples I think that you're talking about is the the mom and the dad of one of the victims and the dad is the one who okay killed himself that I was reading yeah in the body babe I was there were two that I'm reviewing and one was like a brother sister and they both survived in the brother but the dad and the mom of this girl who was killed in the Parkland shooting they started a foundation in her name so like you can do things like that then a year later like it just got too much for him and I think that mental health services being available for families like that disaster whether it's a tornado whether it's a mass shooting whether it's having a child die by suicide or having a loved one die by suicide I think our culture after after that an initial grief period whatever culture defines that initial period in the dating once we move past that emergency response or everybody is bringing in the casseroles or whatever it is once that period ends it's almost like our culture Foster's this thought process okay words never pretend like it didn't happen yet because if we talk about it it's gonna bring this right back you're not sorry again we're done with that the casseroles are yep we're done and but then you had those anniversaries no and people are there anymore and saying I'm not saying that claim on anybody but I'm just that's just the culture that we live in it's you know we take them the food and we say our piece and they grieve and then life somewhat goes back to normal and we just solve it yeah and then you know a year comes by and that person may or may not still be dealing with over there living there be normal but they have it still happened and so I think it's still important for us to talk about it because if we just pretend like it's not happening then that's just me saying I can't deal with it so I'm not gonna ask you how you're doing I'm just gonna hope that you're okay you're not presenting any so and then the person that's experienced that is learning I can't reach out and ask them for help or I can't if I'm struggling I don't have anybody to turn to and once again I mean that's nobody's fault it's just it's just the way that our culture and I think one of the things the way that we describe it is am i creating space to hold this for them so in the classroom am i creating space for my kids who are having a hard time so is there a time in our day where we can remember our friends is there a day where we can pull our friend our little kid outside and say hey I just want to let you know that I'm here if you want to talk about anything it doesn't actually about that it can be about your dog spider-man it could be about whatever then um talking to your friends and saying hey I just want to let you know that I have been thinking about ways that I can create space for you and can I hold this for you

Keith: ladies I really appreciate it yes great have nobody I think well I think we're gonna we're gonna end it there but actually

Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors: y'all stitch it together and make it sound really smart

Keith: y'all taking the time to chat with me again the first episode was great and this one I think is gonna be just as good and

Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors: do you track who has walked I mean like are teachers watching this or listen

Keith: my mom's listening to them I know that

Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors: hi mom!

Keith: so but yeah we're

Caroline May and Chelsea Neighbors: she's gonna be like I don't want you to talk to those therapists any more any time you talk to them they talk about like things do we needed to talk about from childhood

Keith: but I don't come back to her and go hey you know let's talk about this so we're good I was an only child she was a single mother

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