

Episode 201: You Make Today Better - WSPD Campaign Launch with Jamie Tworkowski

Please note: This transcript has been lightly edited to remove filler words or sounds.

JAMIE TWORKOWSKI: Hope involves the future and so we talk a lot about tomorrow. We believe in a tomorrow that feels different from today. We believe in a tomorrow that involves love and wonder, healing and sobriety, and whatever else you need. We believe in a tomorrow where your dreams are within reach. We hope beyond words that you will stay alive to see tomorrow, but we understand that you may need some answers now and so let's talk about today. You make today better. We believe that. Our friend Sierra DeMulder says it this way: "You, whose voice is someone's favorite voice, someone's favorite face to wake up to, nothing would be the same if you did not exist." We believe that too. Your friendship makes today better. Your love makes today better. You are loved, capable and deserving of love, even now. Life is worth living, even now.

JAMIE: You are already enough. Your story's already important. You are worth knowing in this moment, just as you are. You don't have to perform. You don't have to hustle or grind. You don't have to hide and you do not have to fake it. And you are invited to be honest. Your honest words give someone else permission to offer theirs. Your voice makes today better. Your ideas make today better. The way you love your favorite book and film and show and song, the way you love your favorite place, the way you share these things: it makes today better. You, the son or daughter make today better. You, the mother or father make today better. You, the sister or brother make today better. You, the cousin, you, the roommate, you, the neighbor: You are worth so much to so many. Your life adds so much to theirs. You make today better.

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LINDSAY KOLSCH: Welcome to the To Write Love on Her Arms podcast, a show about mental health and the things that make us human. Each episode we'll be discussing topics that can often feel hard to talk about, like depression, addiction, self-injury, and suicide. We'll be sharing stories and exploring big themes like hope, healing, and recovery. And welcome to Season 2. We're really excited to be back. This season, we'll continue to share one-on-one interviews like we did last season, but you're also going to hear some new things too. We can't wait to share some of these special episodes with you where we dive more in depth with one topic through a few different stories. No matter who you are and why you're listening, we want to thank you for being here. You're in good company.

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LINDSAY: [800,000 people](#) die by suicide every year. That's one person every 40 seconds. And for each death, there will be an additional 25 attempts. That's why every year To Write Love on Her Arms hosts an annual campaign in honor of World Suicide Prevention Day, which is September 10th. It's our chance to raise funds, start conversations, and push back against the stigma that says we can't talk about or maybe even prevent suicide. Yesterday we launched our

8th annual campaign with the message: You make today better. We wanted to take some time and record a special episode that will talk a bit about what we do every year—from offering our World Suicide Prevention Day pack in our Online Store to raising funds for treatment and recovery, as well as why we chose this phrase: You make today better.

LINDSAY: At the beginning of the episode, you heard TWLOHA founder Jamie Tworkowski sharing the heart behind this phrase and message. And on this episode, we're gonna talk a little more about the campaign and share how you can bring this message to your community. And before we get started, I just want to remind you: **You make today better.** No matter who you are, no matter what is going on in your life, we hope you know that we believe this for you.

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LINDSAY: This is Lindsay Kolsch, and I am joined today by Jamie Tworkowski, founder of To Write Love on Her Arms. Welcome Jamie.

JAMIE: Hello.

LINDSAY: Hey, we're really excited. Yesterday we launched the biggest campaign of To Write Love's year. One of our favorite seasons to be working in and working on. It's the World Suicide Prevention Day campaign. We're excited to share a little bit more about the You Make Today Better slogan, the campaign, how people can get involved. Before we do that though, I always like to kind of start back at the beginning like why this campaign, why is this important, and why are we here talking about it? So...

JAMIE: Yeah, you know, you and I were talking a moment ago and what did we say? 8th annual? 8th Annual World Suicide Prevention Day campaign. And we've learned that World Suicide Prevention Day always falls within National Suicide Prevention Week here in the states. And for us, going back to the very beginning, there were suicide attempts in the life of our friend Renee, who thankfully is still alive today. I lost a friend who was a coworker, my friend Zeke Sanders. We worked together at Hurley shortly before I met Renee. He died by suicide in early 2006, but then as Renee's story and the T-shirts kind of made their way out into the world, we began to hear from people, from families who were touched by this issue. We began to hear from people who were living with the pain of losing a loved one to suicide. We heard from people who were concerned that someone they cared about may be considering suicide. Certainly we've always heard from people dealing with depression, and we've learned that untreated depression is the leading cause of suicide.

JAMIE: And I think if you fast forward, this campaign really represents the work we do year round. But we love that it's kind of a moment to invite everyone who supports us to lend their voice, to lend their influence, to even lend their finances, and to participate not only in the conversation but in inviting their community into the conversation. And beyond the conversation, we also want to invest financially in people getting the help that they need.

LINDSAY: Yeah. So I think it's worth maybe kind of summarizing a little bit, just like the shape of the campaign. Like what is it? What are we doing over the next five, six weeks? We started yesterday and this campaign will run until the end of National Suicide Prevention Week here in America. But really it's, it boils down to these, these moments of conversation we're trying to start, right? We want people to feel comfortable to say, "I'm hurting." Or, "Hey, are you, are you okay?" These simple interactions that when we believe that we can't talk about suicide, it makes us quiet. It silences us. And so conversations are really key and critical to this campaign altogether.

LINDSAY: We're talking also, like, what can you do to prevent suicide? I think that might be one of the biggest myths that we encounter, that there's nothing you can do. And not to say that every death is on the people around them or can be known. But I certainly think that, and you've said it before, like we have to try. We don't know what's going to save a life. We do hear from people that a late night encouragement tweet meant that they had the strength to wake up tomorrow.

LINDSAY: There's also just educating people: Who is at risk? What are some risk factors for people who are in a difficult situation? And then like you mentioned, we're raising money for treatment and recovery. So we have a goal this year to raise \$150,000 for treatment and recovery and that means about 3,000 counseling sessions will be sponsored this year with those funds. In addition, it helps us with our FIND HELP Tool; connecting people to local mental health resources is huge. These are the pillars that the campaign stands on. But I feel like we should talk a little bit about some of the things that we're up against as far as those lies or stigma. Cause I do think it makes it hard for people to raise their voice or to share. So, what are some things that you feel like you've encountered on the road or just in the work that we've been doing?

JAMIE: I think stigma is the first thing that comes to mind, but I think that can be a confusing word for some people.

LINDSAY: Yeah.

JAMIE: And maybe one way to explain or define stigma is it is the lie that suggests that we can't talk about these things. And it may sound incredibly simple, but I've come to believe, and I think we've come to believe, that when people do the opposite of silence, when people speak up, speak openly in a way that's vulnerable, in a way that's honest about these issues and even today, specifically suicide, we give other people permission to do the same. And when we let someone else know they're not alone, there's hope in that. So often our pain causes us to isolate and lies do creep in, and we do begin to feel and believe that we are alone. And so I think over the years, over 13 plus years now, we've seen the power of the conversation and the conversation spreading. And as you said, I think we, we love these packs, not only as a

fundraising opportunity for the organization, but we love giving people simple, practical tools from a T-shirt to a poster to a keychain in hopes that those items can spark conversation.

JAMIE: We've heard so many stories over the years of two strangers interacting where the conversation began with, "Hey, that's a cool shirt. What does it mean?" And I think what we love is not that they end up talking about the organization. That's great and it helps us a lot, but hopefully that they end up talking about their own story and they end up talking about these issues that maybe a lot of us have come to wonder or come to believe: Are we allowed to talk about these things? And so I think I, I agree with you, you know, we want to see this conversation spread. We want to give people tools to have it, and we've come to believe that everyone has some kind of influence. This tends to be a time of year where a lot of our supporters who are more influential or recognizable participate and support us, and we're grateful for that. But it feels important to remind everyone, anyone, that they have influence. If you have—

LINDSAY: Yeah, exactly.

JAMIE: A family, if you have friends, a roommate, coworkers, anyone who follows you, anyone who listens to you: Your voice matters. And that is influence. And so we love the simple ways, the creative ways that people have prioritized this issue and want to point their friends, their family, their community to hope and help.

LINDSAY: So this year we're really excited about the campaign. It's called the You Make Today Better campaign. That slogan comes from a team member of ours. We spend a lot of time kind of in preparation for this campaign thinking about words that have resonated online, words that have hit our team, that feel true to what we're trying to accomplish. And so it was really cool this year, one of our design team members, Alex, actually came up with this phrase and it's been really interesting as we're working with You Make Today Better and figuring out how to create some opportunities for conversations, how it's different than any other statements we've done because often it's about tomorrow. I know you wrote a, a lot of words and lot of, you have some thoughts behind that kind of difference between the tomorrow and today. And I'm wondering if you want to kind of share a little bit about what you were thinking about when you heard the phrase and what it kind of meant to you?

JAMIE: Hmm. I think as years keep going by it, I think it is a healthy challenge for us cause we can look back at these statements that we really believed in, that were so well received. And then the challenge becomes, "Wow, how do we find another one?"

LINDSAY: Yeah.

JAMIE: And I think, you know, we had two statements in the past. One was We'll See You Tomorrow and then last year Tomorrow Needs You. And so I think oftentimes when you think about hope it, that means you're thinking and talking about the future. And so tomorrow is a

simple way to understand that. And yet, what about today? What about for the person alive right now? Struggling right now. As you said, wondering if they can make it through the night, if they can live another day, is life worth living? And so I think it became a healthy challenge for how do we talk about hope, not only as it relates to tomorrow but to today. And I love the idea, kind of this simple idea that the fact that you make today better makes life worth living. You know, to know that, and I'm using you as an example but you make today better for your husband, your son, your friends, your coworkers here. And those are all reasons to stay alive. And so I really love this year's statement for those reasons.

LINDSAY: I think to me it felt it brought some of the immediacy that I think we're trying to communicate when you do find yourself in a place where like you just don't believe that to be true. And it feels like we're trying to speak to the moment where, you know, you're up late and wondering that question and just wanting to feel like there was some value in what you've just gone through so that today, like where you are, that present moment, I think it can get kind of twisted. It can feel like it's not valuable. And I think that does lead to choices that we make that talk about what our future would be. You know, you kind of take what you're feeling in the moment and you project it onto the future. I can't imagine a tomorrow that would be any better than today.

LINDSAY: And so if today's not worth something, why, why tomorrow? So I do really love this year's. I'm really excited. I come back to that present moment and just realizing that however you find yourself, it still has value. It still matters that you're still here and still fighting for it. I think that's honorable. I think that's the hard part. I think that's the messy part. And we're just trying to cheer people on, you know, through it. So we can see...and it's okay that it's messy, right? Like that's the other side of this is it's OK that it's not great right now.

JAMIE: Yeah.

LINDSAY: It doesn't have to look polished and put together. Like, there's still so much value in you being here.

JAMIE: Yeah.

LINDSAY: And so I was trying to communicate that is...it feels pretty special this time around.

JAMIE: I think for me, the thought that we're all for change, healing, people fighting for those things, people fighting for sobriety. But I love that this statement, no matter where you are, no matter what your life looks like today, it's, it's already true. Like we are believing that you make today better and you don't have to do anything to earn that or you know?

LINDSAY: Yeah.

JAMIE: You don't have to clean yourself up in order for those words to be true. Like we believe that now in the present and we are all for, again, the changes that you want to make to be healthy, to be happy. But I think the idea that people don't have to qualify, they don't have to perform, they don't have to do anything special, but that we believe these words to be true for every person listening, for every person who somehow gets introduced to the campaign, I think feels significant as well.

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As we're talking about the #YouMakeTodayBetter campaign and what we can all do to help prevent suicide, we wanted to take a moment and share just a bit more about the World Suicide Prevention Day campaign packs and how they can be used in your community.

We're inviting people to purchase this special campaign pack as one of the main ways to get involved. Each pack comes with a campaign T-shirt and instructions on how to get active in your community in the days leading up to and on World Suicide Prevention Day, as well as National Suicide Prevention Week. We invite everyone to wear their shirts on September 10th and to be as visible as possible.

The pack is also gonna equip you with materials to post in your community, like our tear-away posters. These serve as a way to encourage people with the message You Make Today Better. Or our campaign post-it notes, which are really designed to give you space to write short messages to someone in your life or community why they make today better. We also give you a response cards to join the conversation online and reminders you can take with you throughout the year, like the You Make Today Better campaign keytags.

You can purchase your WSPD Campaign Pack today at the TWLOHA Online Store. To do that just visit store.twloha.com. And as a thank you for listening, we're giving our podcast family 20% off your pack until August 31. Use the code PODCAST20 at checkout.

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LINDSAY: So the campaign revolves around World Suicide Prevention Day, and this day is recognized around the world, obviously. I'm wondering if you could share a little bit more about kind of the scope or like the picture of what we're facing and what the world is facing as we talk about this issue.

JAMIE: Yeah. We've learned that every year worldwide 800,000 people are lost to suicide. That for every death there's another 25 attempts, which translates to 20 million suicide attempts worldwide each year. And we've learned that looking at that 800,000 number that translates to one death by suicide every 40 seconds.

LINDSAY: I think what is also kind of implied in those numbers is the ripple effect of what happens when there is 800,000 people who are lost. We're talking about family members who are asking a lot of questions, who are confused and hurting and have a serious loss in their life. We're also talking about 20 million people who are maybe feeling alone and not sure... And I think that there's just so much pain wrapped up in all of those scenarios and questions. And so we talk about the, those who have been lost. But in the same instance, we're also kind of wanting to recognize the multifaceted kind of issue that this is.

LINDSAY: I want to hit on a couple of things specifically that we kind of touched on earlier. It's this idea of things that we can do to help prevent suicide. We talked about that being a myth: You can't prevent suicide if someone wants to do it. They're gonna do it. They're gonna find a way. And actually research shows this is just not true. 50% of deaths are by firearms and so one of the things that you can be aware of is when you know someone's hurting, helping them remove access, actually they call it means, so it's any means to die by suicide. Removing those in a time where someone's in deep pain can help. It's not to limit their freedom or their free will. It's to help them move from that moment where things are not clear as to what is the next step.

LINDSAY: And so that's one thing that's just even, you know, as we get into National Suicide Prevention Week, and maybe it's easier to summarize it this way, every day we're going to have an action step. They're things that you can do right then and there or that week to just understand and to be aware of people in your life. But then also what could you do if you're in that situation, when you find yourself in that situation, it's better to kind of go in knowing a little bit more about what you can do to help than to feel completely paralyzed by just kind of the uncertainty and the fear.

LINDSAY: So that's one thing that's really great that's going to be coming up in National Suicide Prevention Week, which starts the 8th. But there's other things that we can do. I think, I keep coming back to the phrase you say about you just never know what's going to save a life. So the question to someone you think might be hurting or the conversation, I'm wondering if you have any thoughts of like moments where it surprised you to hear that thing meant so much, whether it was a song they came across or a blog that you wrote. I mean, I feel like you've gotten that before.

JAMIE: Yeah, I, I was even thinking in my own life, this was the story I told a bunch early on, but not, not so much in recent years, but I remember having dinner with a friend, Nathan Chapman. I think we both know him. And we were just getting to know each other. This was years ago; I guess it would've been maybe shortly before To Write Love. And I was going through a breakup. I was really sad and, and I remember I started to cry at dinner and it, and it was really awkward. You know, I felt embarrassed because I didn't really know him. And he said to me, "I want you to know that I'm not afraid of your pain." And that was such a powerful statement, and I hope it's worth sharing. And if I think it maybe is, it's because I think we all need to hear that.

JAMIE: And I joke it would have been cheap if he got up to go to the bathroom and never came back. But I think what he was saying in that moment is, "Hey, if, if you'll have me, I would be willing to walk through some of this with you. I would be willing to listen, I'd be willing to know you." And that was, you know, 14 years ago. And that statement somehow has stayed with me. So I, I often like to tell people, if you don't know what to say, maybe start by saying that. I think so often people feel like if they don't have the right words, they just don't want to screw it up.

LINDSAY: Yeah.

JAMIE: And certainly we want to encourage people to learn, to learn about the issues, to learn about ways to have the conversations, but I think if you want to express your love and compassion and concern for someone, that's good.

JAMIE: And we want to encourage people. Because a lot of times what folks are looking for is, is not the perfect speech. It's presence. It's...at times someone to sit and listen or sit and cry. And then I think there is so much value in telling people the truth and pointing to hope and help, specifically professional help, when people are maybe in such a dark place that they can't see that for themselves. And I think it, it goes back to what we touched on earlier and stuff we talk about all the time around here where we dream of a world without stigma, where it's totally normal, it's totally acceptable to talk about our mental health. And I use these simple examples like, you know, if someone's car is giving them trouble, there's no shame in saying I need to get to a mechanic because they know how to fix cars.

JAMIE: Or if someone breaks their arm, we got to go to the hospital because they specialize in fixing broken arms. And we can approach this conversation and even suicide in the same way, 'Hey, we gotta get you some help.' And luckily, thankfully, there are people that know how to help and it's totally OK to talk about it and we need to talk about it because that's what saves lives.

LINDSAY: Yeah, so do you think in that moment, like putting yourself on the other side of the conversation, the moment of like not knowing what to say or maybe it's that fear, "I'll make it worse." Do you think that has something to do with it for folks kind of wondering?

JAMIE: Yeah, I definitely think we hear that. You know, something that another mutual friend of ours, Aaron Moore, said that has stayed with me. I've heard him just talk about the need to balance honesty and compassion. And compassion means making sure the person you're concerned about knows and feels that you love them. But then honesty is being willing to ask the hard question, to say the hard thing, to express concern. And so he kind of talked about it being sort of this delicate balance or dance where we live in the tension of both. And I thought that was really helpful. So if you're concerned about someone who you feel is struggling and you want to help...the idea that if you can deliver a mix of honesty and compassion, that that is powerful.

LINDSAY: Yeah.

JAMIE: But I think, I think you're right. I think a lot of times, yeah, people, there are so many reasons that people are afraid to go there and maybe we feel like someone is struggling and has been struggling and we don't want to remind them or we don't want to make it worse.

LINDSAY: As if they don't know that they're already there. Yeah.

JAMIE: But I think, again, we can't control the response that we're ever met with, but we can control our actions and our words and we can keep checking in. We can keep loving people and we can keep encouraging people to get help.

LINDSAY: Yeah. I really love the tool that we get to share. And we'll, we'll talk again about this tool in National Suicide Prevention Week. But it's simply that whole day is focused on how do you ask the question? I think what you mentioned is a great place. Even if you're not comfortable asking the question, just, you know, how you're doing or tell me like what's going on. But the question is, "Have you thought about hurting yourself?" And it's open ended. It actually doesn't assume any shame towards it. I think the, "You're not thinking of killing yourself, are you?" implies the only answer should be no. And I think if we're willing to hear, "Yeah, I've thought about this. I have thought about this." It opens the doorway to actually be honest about it. You know, I've, I've had to ask that question of my own family members and you, you hope, you pray that that's not a yes, but if it is, you know then maybe there's something in that moment that will give them something to hold onto that someone else knows how they're feeling.

LINDSAY: And then knowing the resources of the next step. So, OK, well what does that look like for me to help you see someone? You know, like you said, hope or help? Those are all real, we have friends at Crisis Text Line; they're easy, someone you can text. But it's saying, I'll be a part of this journey with you if you have me. And I think that's a really powerful message and it's incredibly difficult to do, but it's incredibly important to do. And if we are all showing up for each other, then no one has to be alone in it. And so I don't know, I just keep kind of going back to what stops us from asking, I mean, has there ever been a moment where you've not asked something and then kind of thought, "Why didn't I ask?" or what, you know, I'm just curious.

JAMIE: Yeah, I mean I feel like I, I have a friend who for months now has really been struggling and, and I've tried to be a good friend throughout that process, and it can be challenging to talk about the same things over and over.

LINDSAY: Yeah.

JAMIE: And also just knowing that sometimes this person might not want to have the conversation. Sometimes they might be in a bad mood, they might be really down, they might be angry. But knowing that no matter what, I still want to keep showing up even when it's not easy, even if I might get shut down or it might be awkward. But certainly I think having to wrestle

with kind of those two things Aaron talked about: “Am I willing to try to show back up today and to be compassionate and also to be honest?” And that honesty piece can be really hard, you know, especially if you're asking practical questions cause it's one thing to listen and to sit with someone as they talk about their pain. But as we try to maybe make a plan to move beyond that or to move toward healing or even professional help that, that can mean some, you know, some challenging next steps. But I, I think I have to fall back on that. That's what it means and hopefully looks like to love this person is to walk alongside them as they hopefully move from this pain and shame and isolation to a place of healing and community.

LINDSAY: I had a thought and you probably remember this story. It was a couple of years ago when we were in San Diego. We did a tour called HEAVY AND LIGHT Tour and after that event, we learned something about someone. Do you remember this story?

JAMIE: I do. Yeah.

LINDSAY: I was wondering if you'd want to share that.

JAMIE: Yeah. So, was it 2013 we did the, I think it was, cause I believe we, we won the grant from the American Giving Awards December 2011, and I believe we were able to do the tour in the spring of 2013 and one of the first stops, I think it was actually the second stop, was in San Diego at the House of Blues. And Noah Gunderson was the opener that night. And I think we heard from someone who came knowing very little about the show and maybe even caring very little about the show because they shared that they just came to see Noah. And they didn't know anything about the other artists or the other speakers or the poet. And what they shared was that they had made a plan to die by suicide shortly after that night. But they came and they saw Noah, they stayed for not only his set, but for the rest of the event. And were so moved that they decided not only to stay alive but to get help. And yeah, I think that's a story I'll remember forever. And I think any of us who encountered that, you know, that, that's one of those that where we just go, wow, that's, that's the goal. That's the dream. And we never could have known that that person was in the room. We couldn't have known—

LINDSAY: They had bought a firearm that week.

JAMIE: Yes.

LINDSAY: Yeah.

JAMIE: So they, they felt like their days were numbered and this was something they wanted to do, you know? And so it was just incredible to think that somehow, whether it was a moment or a combination of moments that spoke to them and kind of broke through that darkness and, and invited this person to keep going and to believe that life could be worth living. So yeah, that, that's such a beautiful story that we're, I don't even want to say proud of, I think just grateful for it.

LINDSAY: Yeah. And I remember thinking about that story because when we're talking about this campaign, this message we're hoping shows up in, like, just the unexpected places and spaces, as many as possible. We talk about equipping people with things, just talk about online. But more so also in their community. There are pieces of the pack that can be kind of spread out, spread far and wide, I guess, would be one way to say it, whether it's info cards or bracelets or posters. But beyond that, we love hearing from supporters who say, you know, maybe you work at a venue or maybe you work with an artist or maybe you are an artist. Maybe you have an open mic night at your coffee shop, like, wherever it is that you can reach people, we're really inviting people with this campaign to make moments that could lead to more moments like that.

LINDSAY: We want people to think about the possibility that sharing this could interact with someone's story at the moment that they need it. And also as that kind of ripples out, you start to hear from, you know, nurses who were just doing their job but wearing the bracelet and people ask, "Well, what does that statement mean?" So just kind of whether it's in your every day or it's a special place that you kind of pursue your passions and talents like this is kind of an all call.

JAMIE: Yeah.

LINDSAY: If you want to participate, if this speaks to you, if you want to be a messenger sort of for, for hope in this campaign, this is, this is the time. The campaign is live. We're encouraging people to dream about, 'well, what does that look like in my community or in my life?' Maybe you love being online and that's, that's great. Let's do that. Or it's like I said, just in a coffee shop or it's on your high school campus, your college campus, your business place in the break room. There's so many ways that this campaign could kind of creep into every day, but also to try to make a splash. So, I'm curious if you've come across anything from years past that could of help spark some ideas or if people are thinking about ways they might bring the campaign to their community.

JAMIE: Yeah, I think I like to tell people we, we want to go where people go, but that's also not limited to us, meaning staff or interns or former interns. Like right now that we, as you said, is an invitation to whoever's listening, you know, to whoever wants to participate. And I think we like to talk about the surprising doors that have opened here over the years, even in recent years. The US Women's National Soccer Team, our friend Chris Sullivan who plays Toby on *This Is Us*, you know, other athletes, certainly so many musicians over the years. But then, you know, people who aren't as visible publicly, uh, high school students, college students, junior high students, teachers, you know, you touched on nurses, we hear from people who work as professional counselors. Uh, so just knowing that you have influence and you encounter people wherever you are, and as you said, that can be online or offline, that could, for some people they get so excited about social media and for other people, you think about the place you work, the place you go to school, the church that you're a part of, whatever it may be.

JAMIE: So I think we just want to cheer people on to be creative. And I think I always loved the fact that every campaign we do hopefully serves as a platform for people to share their story in a way that's vulnerable, that's honest, and that can invite someone else to do the same. So my hope is not just this awesome campaign that we did a good job with, but that this campaign becomes a vehicle for someone to talk about their journey, what they've been through, what they're struggling with, what healing has looked like, and the hope being that it gives someone else permission to believe that change can happen in their life, that healing can happen in their life and more than anything, that life itself is worth living. And so there's no audience, there's no influence too big or too small. You know, we don't want to limit this in any way. Like wherever you go, whoever you care about, whoever you interact with, if you want to share this statement, if you want to share this campaign, these ideas, if you want to have this conversation, we are all for it and we are cheering you on.

LINDSAY: There are so many ways to get involved. You mentioned the pack, the WSPD pack. There's the fundraising aspect, which we've actually found a lot of people find space to share their story in that regard. Sometimes hearing from people who are giving and saying, 'I didn't know that this was part of your story.' It could be family members, but we also hear them saying, my aunt shared that she has dealt with this for years and they never knew. And so it's just a really neat way to kind of approach the conversation where you normally aren't just posting these things on, you know, like it's just not as normal to just put it out there.

JAMIE: Sure.

LINDSAY: So I would hate to say it's an excuse, but it's a really great excuse to like you said, just be honest. Our world would look very different if that was the case for a lot of, in a lot of places. So there's fundraising and like I had mentioned earlier, those funds are going to help us provide almost 3,000 counseling sessions. So these are people who have that financial barrier, who say, "I would like to get help and I don't actually have the means, the financial means, to do so." Whether they're uninsured or underinsured, it allows us to say, "Here's your chance to sit with a counselor." And I think that's something we're incredibly grateful to be able to do, very proud of being able to do.

LINDSAY: So another really cool thing that this campaign has is kind of a question. It's the statement, but we also flip that and say it's a question. So we're inviting people to start the conversation by also simply responding: "I make today better...dot dot dot."

JAMIE: You finish the sentence.

LINDSAY: Yeah. So there's a response card with the packs. There's also a digital download of that. And then we need your help actually. We want to hear your response in a video. We are putting together an awesome video for National Suicide Prevention Week. And so if you're listening and you say, I would like to do that. We've got some instructions on how you can send

us your response in a video and we hope to kind of build a collection of those for people to see and so if people are answering this: "I make today better...blank." I'm kind of curious if you've thought about how you would answer that question, Jamie.

JAMIE: I think it starts small. It starts with the people I see the most and talk to the most, matter to the most. You know, in the other room, my mom is watching my puppy right now, and I think about them. I think about my dad, my sisters, my nephews. You know, my closest friends, the people here in this office that I get to work with. So I want to believe that all of those people are reasons to stay alive, are reasons to keep going. And specifically, I want to believe that I make today better for these people I'm connected to. And that alone is plenty of reason to live, to keep going, and to try to be healthy, to keep going to counseling, to keep taking my antidepressant, and to try to be the happiest, healthiest version of me because my life is not only my own, but because my life matters and is connected to other people. How about you?

LINDSAY: I like kind of how you ended that because I feel that may be more and more as I get older. I make today better by being present to my son, August, by being a partner to my husband, by using anything and everything I've ever been given, like as far as talents or time, to try to make other people see that they have value and worth and that their life is actually connected to mine even though I've never met them. I think we, not to be too woo woo, but I do think that the connectivity of, of people is what is so heartbreaking about suicide is the loss. And when you see it, when you see the, the ripple effect, when you see the break in the fabric of, of people and connection, it takes a long time to mend that and it maybe never does. So I just see this picture of connection being really important. And so my presence here matters.

JAMIE: Definitely. These people love you and know you and want to love you and know you not only tomorrow and for years to come, but for today as well.

LINDSAY: Yeah. And I, I've been learning or feeling for a while that like the real value in life is, is the interchange between, you know, between people. So I think that's, um, that's, that's kind of how I feel I make today better.

JAMIE: Yeah. No, that's beautiful. I think we've used this language and, and maybe I have over the years, but kind of just this simple starting point that however we find ourselves here, we're here to love and be loved and know and be known by other people. And even though we don't pretend to know the story of each person listening, we believe that those things are true for you right now. That you are loved and worthy of love and capable of love and you have a story and a life worth knowing and you deserve to know other people and that those things are true for you today. And that's part of why you make today better.

LINDSAY: I think that's a good note to end on. I don't know what else could be said. We're really excited for the next couple of weeks just watching the campaign unfold. As you all are tweeting and participating, posting on Instagram, Facebook, sending us what you're doing in your community, it gets us really excited to see how this campaign is being taken beyond these

walls into your community, into your home, into your, the places you work. And then to just watch those ripples kind of, like you said, love and connection and purpose for people to stay. So we're really excited. We're going to be sharing more about ways you can be involved on our website. Looking out toward National Suicide Prevention Week. We'll have another special episode on World Suicide Prevention Day, but there are lots of ways for people to get involved and we can't wait to see what, what's next.

JAMIE: And we, we want to hear from you. We want to hear from you on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, all the places. We love seeing your photos. We love reading your tweets and comments. So as Lindsay said, we're so excited. We are grateful for your support. We are amazed that we get to keep doing this, that we're coming up on 14 years of To Write Love on Her Arms and that this is our 8th Annual World Suicide Prevention Day campaign. I tell people all the time, it's our biggest day of the year. It's the biggest thing we do. It's the biggest campaign for us. And so, you are invited. We, we need your help and uh, we're really excited and excited to see what it looks like this year and just excited to hear your stories again, see your photos, videos, your thoughts, and we thank you so much. Thanks for listening and thanks for being a part of this thing with us.

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LINDSAY: Thanks so much for listening to this episode about the You Make Today Better campaign in honor of World Suicide Prevention Day. You can learn more about the campaign at youmaketodaybetter.com. There you'll find links to create your own fundraising page and to purchase your WSPD pack, as well as other ways to get involved. Thank you again for joining us, and thank you in advance for bringing this message into your community.

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LINDSAY: We hope each episode is a reminder that your story is important, you matter, and you're not alone. We understand that so many of you listening might be struggling or know someone who is struggling with the issues that we've been talking about. We believe that help exists. Part of our mission is to connect people to the help they need and deserve. You can find local mental health resources at our website: twloha.com. Click the FIND HELP at the top of the page. Or if you need to talk to someone right now, you can always connect with our friends at Crisis Text Line. You simply text the word TWLOHA —that's T-W-L-O-H-A—to 741741 and you'll be connected to a trained crisis counselor. It's free, confidential, and available 24/7.

LINDSAY: If you enjoyed this episode and want to hear more, we hope you'll subscribe on iTunes or wherever you get this podcast. And, if you can do us a favor, we'd really love for you to write us a review. It'll help more people find this podcast and the mission of TWLOHA. If you have any feedback or questions, please send us an email to podcast@twloha.com.

LINDSAY: A big thank you to our friends at Copeland for the original music on this episode. This episode was produced by Mark Codgen, with editorial support by Claire Biggs and Becky Ebert. Music assistance was provided by James Likeness and Ben Tichenor. I'm Lindsay Kolsch. Thank you so much for listening.

LINDSAY: To Write Love on Her Arms is a nonprofit movement dedicated to presenting hope and finding help for people struggling with depression, addiction, self-injury, and suicide. TWLOHA exists to encourage, inform, inspire, and also to invest directly into treatment and recovery. You can find more information about TWLOHA at twloha.com.

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