

Bonus Episode: "Noah Gundersen: On Showing Up, Therapy, And Being Vulnerable"
Please note: This transcript has been lightly edited to remove filler words or sounds.

NOAH GUNDERSEN: I think that's a really interesting thing about depression and about anxiety is this like need to justify why we have it. I appreciate the space that we're in culturally now where it's like it's we don't. You don't need to justify how you feel all the time. It's okay to just feel what you feel.

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LINDSAY KOLSCH: You're listening to the To Write Love on Her Arms Podcast, a show about mental health and the things that make us human. Each episode we bring you conversations about the things that can feel hard to talk about, like depression, addiction, self-injury, and suicide. We share stories and explore big themes like hope, healing, and recovery.

LINDSAY: Hey, podcast family, welcome to the new year. As you probably know, we've been on a break for the past few weeks working on a special series of conversations will be releasing this May for Mental Health Month. And we know that sounds probably pretty far away. So periodically, you might get a few surprise episodes from us in your podcast feed, especially when we record conversations like the one we have for you today with artist and musician Noah Gundersen. Now before we get into today's episode, we wanted to share that we will be hosting our annual Valentine's Day Doesn't Have to Suck Twitter chat on Friday, February 14 at 8 p.m. We know Valentine's Day for so many people can be lonely, or a reminder of what's missing, and maybe just brings a whole mess of expectations and disappointments to you. Don't get us wrong. We love love. We believe it's the most powerful force on the planet. But we know that this day is complicated. So regardless of how you feel about Valentine's Day, we want to invite you to join us and the conversation on Twitter by using the hashtag #TWLOHAVDay.

LINDSAY: Okay, so today we've got a really great conversation we're going to be sharing with you. Noah is a longtime friend of the organization. If you're familiar with Noah and his music, you probably know he released a new album this past fall and has been on tour. Noah invited Jamie and TWLOHA to be a part of several of those US dates. And as the new year started TWLOHA crossed the pond with Noah and his crew for a few more of the UK dates. Jamie sat down with Noah to hear about his own mental health experience and how that comes out in his music. You're going to hear more about Noah's journey of finding a therapist, what it looked like to prioritize his own mental health and why being vulnerable on and off stage has mattered in his story. I think you're really going to enjoy this conversation. And my last update is to our Florida friends. We're excited to share that you can catch TWLOHA at Noah's Florida tour dates starting February 20. Jamie will be speaking from stage, will be selling merge and connecting people to local mental health resources at the Tampa, Orlando, Jacksonville and Gainesville dates. To find out more about those events, check out twloha.com/events. That's twloha.com/events. Okay, now here's Noah and Jamie.

JAMIE TWORKOWSKI: How are you and how were your holidays?

NOAH: I'm doing well. I like this time of year, the changing of the year and kind of an opportunity to reset and reflect on the past year. And, you know, what I want to accomplish and pursue in the new year. And it's also, as cheesy as it is, and I know it's the thing that everybody does, but just kind of detoxing and trying to get back to a healthy kind of ground zero place physically and mentally. So that's been good. Back in the studio. We started working on the new record this week. And then I leave for Europe with you next week, which is very exciting. I just ordered some lightweight running shoes and a jump rope.

JAMIE: Okay, cool. So we'll go back to the beginning. And I tend to ask everyone this, but I just, I wonder if you could kind of paint a picture of what life was like growing up. I feel like you had a unique family situation just growing up with a bunch of siblings. You guys are so talented. You grew up around music. I know faith was part of growing up and I wonder if you could just kind of talk about being a kid. And I know you don't live too far from where you grew up.

NOAH: Yeah, everything you just said, my family was really important. It was really prioritized. Closeness and communication. My folks were really intentional about establishing a certain climate in our house. Which, like most things in our childhood, has positive things to it and also some negative repercussions. But just a lot of value on the family unit. I started playing music at a young age. I took piano lessons as a kid and taught myself how to play guitar later on. We were homeschooled. There was a bit of an isolation to my childhood because of being homeschooled, because of some of my parents' values.

JAMIE: Where did you grow up, and how many siblings?

NOAH: I grew up in Centralia, Washington, which is a town of like 50-60,000 people. And I have four blood siblings and three adopted siblings.

JAMIE: So you're growing up, family's a priority, you start playing music, and I wonder, relative to To Write Love and every conversation we try to have with this podcast, I wonder, where does mental health enter the picture in terms of you even having any understanding or awareness of mental health, of whether it's your own or in the life of someone you care about.

NOAH: I think that's easier to address than the broad sweeping summation of my childhood. I think my first interaction with, I guess, just the awareness of mental health, or mental unhealth, even though that wasn't the language that I put to it, was just being in middle school and having depression. Not having even that word for it. But I think in hindsight, I can look back and I just have memories of spending the days under this unexplainable, heavy cloud, or blanket or whatever you want to call it, that didn't make any sense. You know, I think as a kid, there was this frustration of "What is this from?" Like, "There has to be a reason because, why am I just sad?" So I think this was frustrating and complicated to me. Because, especially when you couple religion with that, there becomes this kind of obsessive compulsive need to put an impetus to your depression. So like, you know if my spirit feels heavy then I must be failing in my "walk" in some way. Especially in that time when you're going through hormonal changes, it's a lot to put on a kid. I don't think it was my parents intent. I think that

they were just doing the best they could. And it wasn't just them, it was the whole system of Christianity. Or at least the version of it that I was brought up in. But that was my first run-in with mental health but not really having language for it. Just, "I was sad. And for no reason."

NOAH: And then I think I found an outlet in art to express the abstraction of my anxiety and depression. Because it wasn't necessarily circumstantial. It was just this thing that came on that I had really no control over and no language for in conversation, and no way to define it or explain it or justify it. And I think that's a really interesting thing about depression and about anxiety, this need to justify why we have it. I appreciate this space that we're in culturally now where it's like you don't need to justify how you feel all the time. It's okay to just feel what you feel. But at that time, I had no idea about any of that. So playing music was a way to put language, or at least intention, to these feelings that I didn't really have shapes for. And then also at the same time, I think it was a form of meditation. Which I've realized now as I've started to meditate in the last couple of years, there's a focusing of the mind and a quieting of other things that I find in meditation that is very similar to the creative process. So part of my anxiety as a kid was that my brain wouldn't shut off. And I would spiral. And I think playing music and writing songs was a way to be really present and focus on what was right in front of me. So it was twofold.

JAMIE: I know today, being your friend and knowing you, that you have tools and practices beyond music. You just touched on meditation, but I wonder, at what point did you feel like you began to have language and maybe were introduced to the idea of therapy as you grew up?

NOAH: Later than I wish. I started going to therapy, well, I just started going to therapy a couple years ago, and it was not very productive. And I think that that's a good thing to remind people of when they're looking for a therapist, that not any therapist is going to actually be helpful. I think finding a therapist that you intuitively trust and that you feel a connection to is essential. The person that I went to, I just kind of felt like I was being analyzed by, and having never been in therapy before, you have all these kind of preconceived ideas about what it's supposed to look like, from movies or books or conversations with people. And so your first therapist you kind of, or at least for me, I was like, "Well, this is just what therapy is. And this sucks." But I'm like, "It must be, you know, this is the work and I guess the work sucks, but hopefully it's going to help me and something." But yeah, the person I went to, I just felt like I was being analyzed by and it just wasn't a good fit, ultimately. So I found a referral service here in Seattle a couple years later, that paired me up with several different therapists. I got to interview several different people, and for me, the decision really just came down to, "Who do I feel most comfortable baring my soul to?" I found a therapist like that about a year ago. We started meeting every week. I think the biggest thing right off the bat was for me to just realize that my feelings were valid on their own. That I didn't need to justify them or have a reason. It was like, it's okay to feel what I was feeling, just for the feeling's sake. Does that make any sense?

JAMIE: Yeah, definitely. How would you describe what you have found in that counseling relationship? What do you appreciate about it?

NOAH: I think I like a space to just slow down and examine my responses. There's family stuff. There's previous relational things, tendencies that I have. I don't deal with the same anxiety as much as I did when I was a kid. But in the moments that I do, I've actually found meditation to be almost more helpful than therapy. Because, the overwhelming anxiety, it's difficult to talk through because it's so abstract and not circumstantial. It's just like, I have this wave of just unexplainable heaviness or it's like existential panic that kind of comes over me and, you know, I don't have any reasons for it. I mean, it might be triggered by something. Honestly, sometimes when I've traveled in Europe, I get it. There's this kind of loneliness that I experience. I get really bad jet lag. And I think the mind-body connection is really underestimated.

NOAH: So for that side of mental health, I think there's several different things that I try to utilize. And that's just simple things like getting enough sleep and drinking enough water and exercising and meditating and remembering to not over-connect with my feelings is kind of Eckhart Tolle kind of thing. But then as far as what therapy has done for me, I think it's allowed me to examine my responses in a more graceful way. Instead of being like, "Well, this response is right or wrong," instead, "These are my feelings, and they're valid." What I do with them, I have choices and I have agency. If I feel a sense of anger towards someone or a response of panic, those feelings are valid. I'm not a weak or bad person for having those responses. But then, I have choices about how I react to them.

JAMIE: I know for me when I was introduced to your music, which was over 10 years ago, obviously, I connected with the songs you know, connected with your talent. But I've always known that I connected with your honesty and your vulnerability and your willingness to say things that a lot of people aren't sure if they're allowed to say. Or even specifically, to ask questions that maybe a lot of people feel but don't know or aren't sure they can express them out loud. And I mean, I feel like you, even as a teenager, you were willing to go there in your lyrics and I wonder if that always came naturally. Was that scary? Was that a process?

NOAH: I think it came naturally because of my intentions behind writing music, which was to try to put shape to this kind of formless thing inside of me. So for me writing songs was always a journey into the self and into self-exploration. That requires a kind of unflinching honesty in order for real and true discovery. So I was just kind of airing my own excavation process. Whatever inner monologue was going on, in the moments where it was true. There's also some level of posturing that happens in songwriting, or can happen. And I think that's definitely sprinkled through my stuff.

JAMIE: What do you mean by that?

NOAH: When we consume art and we consume music, we, or I think as an artist, you absolutely transmute some of that into your own work. I hear a Neil Young song or something, and there's like certain cadences or certain like phrases or a kind of persona that is true to him, that, because of its truth feels appealing. And so I think there's a tendency as a younger artist, and even sometimes now to kind of mimic. That's what I mean by posturing. I think that if you can couch the truth in that, then awesome, but not all of my work is 100% or just 100% pure. Like I think there are songs and moments

in songs that I'm like, "Oh yeah, sick. The conduit between my mind palace and the page was very short in this song." So it feels very true. But then there's other songs where it's like, "Oh, the conduit felt a little longer." And I think some of the truth maybe got filtered out by wanting to sound a certain way or wanting to emulate someone that I respected. But in the course of doing so, something kind of got lost.

JAMIE: Can you name something Mind Palace?

NOAH: Um, I think as an example...

JAMIE: No, no I just want you to have a band called Mind Palace. [laughs] It's a good title.

NOAH: [laughs] Yeah. To give an example of what that kind of looks like, I think the song that was a part of our connection was Jesus, Jesus, which I wrote when I was like 16. That felt very true to that moment, to that perspective, where I was at. Now, obviously, I'm 15 years older than that, or 14 years older than that now, so I wouldn't write that same song. But the truth of that moment, I think, came through relatively unfiltered, which is cool. I think that's what I try to work towards now. I think that's just having a personal bullshit detector when you're like, "Ah, I'm kind of like fronting here a little bit." To just roll it back and listen to whatever that internal intuition is that's telling you, "Okay, you're speaking your truth," or, "You're speaking half your truth, but the other half is you just trying to be Dylan."

JAMIE: I think something I've wrestled with over time has been being publicly vulnerable, whether it's in speaking or writing and getting a good response to that. Then learning that, to actually be known as a person and to be vulnerable throughout my life and in relationships, is an entirely different thing. I wonder if you relate to that. I wonder what that process has been like. Because I know that people connect with your talent, but even specifically with your honesty and your willingness to express difficult or even dark or hard things. I wonder how you've made your way through that.

NOAH: Yeah. Before answering that, I think it's interesting that your job, and the way that you communicate your truth is... you don't have a song, you just have to get up there and talk. We were kind of talking at the beginning of the thing, that there's like that switch in your mind that, when you're talking to more people, you start to construct something more. And I think that's to keep vulnerability while having an awareness of, "I'm in front of however many people," or, "I have an audience of however many people that are just reading my words." That seems like that would be a tricky balancing act to maintain. You're not just gonna stream of consciousness, get up there and say the first thing that comes to your mind all the time. How do you kind of strike that balance of obviously constructing something, but keeping a sense of openness and vulnerability throughout it?

JAMIE: I think going back to maybe the way I phrased the question. It's just one thing to share something with people, whether it's speaking or writing. But when I'm up there, no one's really talking back to me. No one's asking follow up questions. If I write an epic Instagram caption, it's me choosing to share something. And I think I've just come to realize that, or come to believe that, actually being in

relationship on a smaller scale is what I need. I'm grateful to have the outlets and the platforms that I do. If I get five minutes before you go on to talk to your audience, I really want to do it well. I want to try to move people and encourage people. I think I've just realized that for me as an individual and as a human being, there can almost be this like vulnerability as performance, you know? I'm sure you relate to that. I think I just had some years where I felt like I was able to perform this honesty, but I didn't have real friends. I didn't have people who really knew me, and I didn't have people that knew how I was doing or what I was struggling with. So I think, as I've gotten older, I just realize the need for..one way I've explained it is trying to live out or take the advice that I get up and share with people. I get up on stage and say that people need other people. Well, that sounds really nice. But you know, I need people. And even therapy as an example. I love encouraging people to get help. I think I years ago, I was comfortable telling everyone else to get help before I had taken some of those steps in my own life.

NOAH: Right. It's like you're in the airplane that's going down and you gotta put your own oxygen mask on before you put on the kid's.

JAMIE: Yeah, and I think I'm thankful because it's caused me to slow down and just think about my own life in seemingly small ways. Getting coffee with a friend, or being out on the road with you, or prioritizing therapy. It can't be about only things that have hundreds or thousands of people paying attention.

NOAH: There's an interesting phenomenon, when you're selling vulnerability. It's almost like you walk off stage, you're like, "Okay, my work is done. My work of vulnerability is done. Because I was just vulnerable in front of X amount of people. Now I don't need to be vulnerable in front of anybody else." And that's an isolating place to get to. And part of that is, people have a limited scope of who you are. And though that scope might be really true, it's still really limited. In a sense, you almost have to be even more intentional about being vulnerable with the people that you actually take the time to do that with. I know for me, because of how much internal garbage I'm just always tilling up, I feel like I've been approached by people who have this sense that they know me. Which, they don't. They know a part of me. They know a dramatized version of intense moments in my life, but human experience is made up mostly of simple, boring moments. They're not actually boring, but boring in the sense that they're not a John Hughes movie. I think that's where relationship and real connection and vulnerability lies. In the small moments that we choose to share with people intentionally. I'm learning to make myself more available for that, but also intentionally choosing who to expel that energy on or with. Because that's precious, you know? Time is precious and your energy is precious, and you only have so much of it to give, especially if you're giving this large chunk of it out, in a in a particular way, to people on stage.

JAMIE: That's well said. I was kind of reflecting on my time on the road with you recently. And even Aaron, my friend Aaron from our team, who did the first three shows with me, we just drove away feeling so good and so grateful. Not just to be in the room with the music every night, but to be around the rest of your band and Tim, your tour manager and Ryan, your manager. I think we just felt introduced to this really special community. I know when people think of tour, maybe imagine you

being on tour, it's like they picture the stage and the show and you know, that's for you maybe an hour, a little over an hour a night. But I wonder how that relates to what you were just talking about. Because I feel like you and I talked about it in the car one day. Just how special those relationships are. And I know it can't be...in a way, maybe you were impressed or surprised at times with just surrounding yourself with people you genuinely care about and people who genuinely care about you. I know that's different than your day to day community in Seattle, but just kind of what you found helps you feel healthy and feel supported on the road.

NOAH: Going out on that tour in particular, I felt like I had a much better emotional and mental awareness of myself and of those around me than I had on previous tours. And yeah, I just thought the importance of the unit and the importance that you're surrounded by a group of people pretty much 24/7 for, in that case, two months. I think for me as a band leader, I'm just trying to find this balance of, "Okay, I gotta take care of myself, I have a limited amount of energy that I can give every day. Otherwise, I'm going to become exhausted and cranky, and an asshole." And there were definitely those moments. But I think I had a better sense of awareness of that this time around than maybe I had on previous tours. So there's that and then there's also just wanting to take care of, or just be at least aware of, the people around me, and how their mental health is, but also not with the mentality that I can fix anyone. I had this mentality for a long time of thinking that I could just control every situation that I was in if I had enough will and was smart enough. I would have the answer that would fix it. And I think the thing with mental health is that you can't fix other people's mental health. But you can show up for them and make yourself available and just listen.

NOAH: In turn, my people were there for me in those moments. That required me to come down off of my own little self-made pedestal and be like, "I'm having a hard time today. And just because I'm technically the boss doesn't mean that I can't be vulnerable." And in a sense, those moments that I did do that, I found it was actually... Because I was in this position of leading or being in charge or whatever, and yet could make myself vulnerable, it fostered a stronger sense of community. Which was really hard for me to do. I want to make sure everyone feels safe and comfortable and taken care of and in good hands. But I think that it's a bit of an ego illusion, that you're like George Washington or something. [laughs] So vulnerability, in that sense, was really just kind of crucial for connecting. I think making ourselves vulnerable and showing up for each other just really strengthened our unit. So that when times were more difficult, and people were tired, we were able to have empathy for each other and to you just recognize that we all have good and bad days. I think if you're showing up with vulnerability, you're more empathetic to others' vulnerability as well.

JAMIE: Definitely. That's good. I know I asked you this near the end of the tour, but I feel like maybe it's cool to talk about here, even briefly. What is that transition like? Transitioning off of a tour, and then even now where you're a few days away, and in this case, you're going overseas. I've heard a lot of artists talk about it being a challenging transition. And obviously most people who listen to this aren't in a band or aren't on tour for music, but I think everyone can relate to sort of coming home from an epic experience or life transitions and the challenges and so I wonder what you've learned or what works for you as you navigate that.

NOAH: I wish I had a better understanding of how to transition. I mean, I've been touring for almost 15 years now and I still don't really have it figured out. I think, for me, I'm very much made aware of how limited our capacity is after a certain amount of time, and that constantly transitioning spaces and constantly giving a certain amount of emotional energy to people within a varying radius is exhausting in an emotional and physical way. So I think, for me, it was hard coming home and then transitioning straight into the holidays, which are their own bag of worms, or can of worms. However you want to, you know, contain your worms. [laughs] I feel like I'm just now starting to get back to a creative space. That, I think, is always my anchor. Getting back into some kind of creative habit and routine. And that also has to be coupled with a physical regimen and health. I think that more and more I'm convinced of the importance of physically taking care of myself and how that directly impacts my mental health. So, this week, I've had a routine of getting up much earlier than I normally do. I do a boxing class in the morning, and then I go to the studio. I've been trying to do a little bit at the gym at the end of the day. I haven't been drinking. I'm just trying to pay attention to all that stuff. I'm not at the place where I want to be like, "Well, I need to do this all the time. I'm never going to drink and blah blah." And although that's my extremist impulse, I've spent enough time in my own brain to know that that's probably not a reality for me right now. That's the cool thing about putting yourself in an extreme situation is, you do it, you take note of how you feel, of what your responses are, and when you're outside of that, or in a different place, you can remember, "Oh man, if I want to get back to center, I have the tools to do it. It just takes some discipline, but it directly impacts my mental health."

JAMIE: So when you settle into the routine, even hearing you talk about this week, when you know you have to leave in a couple of days to head to the UK and then to Europe, is that exciting? Does that feel good? Does that feel hard?

NOAH: It's a bit like a battery recharge. I know I'm just hitting it really hard this week. And then I'm going to leave on tour and hopefully have a full battery. Then the battery is going to slowly drain and by the time I get back, I'm gonna be wiped out. But I guess one thing I have gotten good at is building in time to rest and being easier on myself when I do come home from a tour. Just recognizing and knowing that I am depleted and that that's normal and it's okay. It's a lot about just having grace for yourself. I do think I'm excited. It's nice to have this mental reset. Especially going into a tour overseas, which is difficult for me, typically, to just have a clear mental space to just prepare and to put together the tools that will make me feel more grounded as much as possible. And for me, that's prepping what reading material I'm going to bring and making sure that I'm bringing stuff that's fun and easy, along with something that's a little more inspiring and then some nonfiction. I also I mentally feel a lot lighter if I've packed lighter. So having the time to mentally organize what I'm going to bring so I don't feel like I'm bogged down by a bunch of crap that I don't actually need. [laughs] This is kind of a funny thing, but I realized that touring itself has so much inconsistency to it. You're in a different city every day and, especially overseas where it's foreign and you feel far from home, I realized like I need something that can kind of center me every day. So I got a little hand coffee grinder and I got my Aeropress and I'm gonna bring some of my favorite coffee. I've got my Yeti mug and every day I'm just gonna make my own coffee. Which is a simple little thing, but I'm kind of curious to see how that helps ground me. You know, that's an intended coffee pot. You would know because of Nashville.

JAMIE: Yeah, yeah. I dig that. I had one other thought. I knew coming into this I wanted to ask you. I remember, I think it was in an Instagram post after the the last US tour. You were just kind of expressing gratitude and sort of reflecting on the whole thing. I think you also shared that it was probably too long. I think you just mentioned it briefly, but that you felt like you wouldn't do it exactly the same. So I wondered what you could share because I thought it was...I mean, in a way, there's vulnerability in saying, "Hey, this was awesome, I appreciate it. And I also need to do it differently next time."

NOAH: I grew up doing music in a very DIY sort of way. It was a bit of a punk rock thing where you book your own tour, you travel in a van, you sleep on people's couches, and you just have to be able to put up with a lot of hardship and grin and bear it because you're doing what you love, at least an hour out of the day. That has kind of shaped a lot of my mentality and the way I go into touring and in the way I go into, or have gone into, touring and the way I have gone into making music. You work really hard. You don't bitch about it, and you just keep going. I think that was necessary for me at that time, but I'm also not 20 anymore, and thankfully I've been fortunate enough to have a career that's sort of more stable now. So I don't have to have that same mentality. Just having the awareness of, "Oh man, two months is too much. Too much stress, too much for me right at this point in my life. And it's okay. It doesn't make me weak or something to just recognize that." Maybe that speaks to a larger recognition of limitations. That's an interesting balance to look at because, I think it's important for us to push ourselves and that's essential for growth, but at the same time, it's okay to have limitations, and it's okay to recognize them. I think I'm at this place where that much time on the road consecutively is not something I really want to do. I don't find it enjoyable at a certain point. I would like this career to always be something I enjoy doing. Even though there's obvious moments of work, I don't want to just get stuck in traditional patterns of how things are done, or traditionally the way that I've done them.

JAMIE: So we're getting toward the end. There's a couple questions we like to ask each guest. The first is, what would you say to your younger self? Maybe we'll say, what would you say, whether it's advice or empathy or sympathy, what comes to mind if you could talk to 20-year-old Noah?

NOAH: My initial impulse would be to say, "What you're doing is enough, it's okay. You don't need to pretend to be anyone else." But at the same time, I think the exploration of other ways of being that I did throughout my twenties were what brought me to the perspective that I have now. Which is why you never fuck with time travel. You're gonna screw up your current self. But I would also say, "Hey, no one else knows what they're doing either. So don't worry about it too much. We're all on this journey of discovery." Also, "No one is paying as much attention to you as you think they are." Not like, "No one cares about you," but I think, especially in our twenties, we're all so self-conscious. Then you reach this point where you're like, "Oh, man, everybody else, they're too wrapped up in their own insecurities to really be paying that much attention to the stuff that I think they're paying attention to about me that I'm self-conscious about."

JAMIE: I know we're like broken records with the vulnerability thing, but I think part of what's so cool about it is we realize that other people aren't sure how to be twenty or thirty or forty, and how to have

a career, and how to have a family. Like you said, everyone's figuring it out. And we can have grace for each other. I feel like that just becomes so much easier when when we're willing to be honest and not to pretend to have it all together all the time. Last question: for someone listening right now, maybe they're a fan of your music, maybe not yet. But if someone is listening and they're struggling, whether that's depression, addiction, anxiety, I wonder what words you might offer someone who's hurting.

NOAH: To start, I would say that your feelings are valid, but also, you are not just your feelings. Which may sound like a contradiction, but I think when people suffer from depression or anxiety, they end up feeling bad about suffering from depression or anxiety. I would say that it's okay. There's nothing wrong with you. It's just who you are and it's difficult. Don't beat yourself up about something that is just a response. On the other side, though, I would say, something that has caused me to spiral is to make my feelings my entire identity. I think Eckhart Tolle is, at times, kind of cheesy, but there's some truth in what he talks about in *The Power of Now*, which is that there's a view that is outside of whatever's happening emotionally. Your emotions come and go, but there's a "you" that can be outside of that. There's some Zen and Buddhist teachings that talk about this as well, where you can be a watcher of your own emotional experience while not drowning in the river of your own feelings. I think meditation can be really helpful in learning how to do that. I'd say, also, finding a good therapist. Not just any therapist. Finding resources to find a therapist that's a good fit for you. And then, also, finding people that you can be vulnerable with. That's not going to be just anybody. You're not going to just go up to somebody on the street and be like, "These are all my problems," because they're going to look at you weird. Maybe that's something that is done more when you're not completely under the blanket of your own anxiety or depression. But when you can get out from underneath that, I think being intentional about fostering community with people that are willing to show up for you and make space for you, and can actually listen, that takes time and work. It requires vulnerability, but it's super valuable.

JAMIE: Well, thank you, man. Thank you for your time. Hopefully I've expressed this outside of public places, but it's been such a highlight for me in recent months and over the last year to reconnect and to feel close to you, to get to spend time, to be in the room with your songs every night. But also just to get to be around you. I'm really pumped that we get to do that again in a few days.

NOAH: Yeah, man, thank you. I think for me, it's been cool for me to have a renewed respect for your work and in the importance of your work. In finding a productive and impactful way for us to come alongside each other and hopefully be impactful in people's lives. I'm grateful, and ultimately just grateful for your friendship, and that we've been able to hang out and stay buds for so long.

[music playing]

LINDSAY: We want to thank Noah Gunderson for this conversation. We hope you'll check out his new album "Lover," and also see where you can find him on tour at his website noahgundersen.com. A big thanks to Jamie again for hosting and connecting with Noah. We'd love it, if you're in Central Florida, if you can come and check out TWLOHA at the Noah Gunderson shows. You can find more information

and details at twloha.com/events. If you're not in Florida, check out the calendar anyway. See when TWLOHA might be coming to a town near you.

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 on our website twloha.com, that's 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 to TWLOHA, that's TWLOHA, to 741741, and you'll be connected to a trained Crisis Counselor. It's free, confidential, and available 24/7.

If you've enjoyed this episode and you want to hear more, we really hope you'll subscribe on iTunes or wherever you get this podcast. And if you can do us a favor, we'd really like 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.

A big thank you to our friends at Copeland for the original music on this episode. The To Write Love on Her Arms podcast is produced by Mark Codgen, with editorial support by Claire Biggs and Rebecca Ebert. Music assistance was provided by James Likeness and Ben Tichenor. I'm Lindsay Kolsch. Thank you so much for listening.

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 To Write Love on Her Arms at twloha.com.