

Episode 205: World Suicide Prevention Day Livestream

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

JAMIE TWORKOWSKI: The whole campaign is for you, that we believe the words on our shirts: you make today better. That, uh, that you're not an exception to that, that these words are yours.

[music playing]

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'll be talking about the things 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.

LINDSAY: We hope you will connect to these episodes in a meaningful way. And maybe by listening, you're going to find it's a little easier for you to talk about your own experience with the people in your life. So maybe you struggle. Or you love someone who is struggling. Maybe you just want to learn more and hear from people who are generously sharing their stories with us. 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: September 10th was World Suicide Prevention Day and on that day, as part of the You Make Today Better campaign, we thought it would make a lot of sense to widen this conversation that we've been having the past few weeks and to include your questions and voice. So we decided to do a one-hour live stream conversation on Facebook, Twitch, and Youtube. People also joined us on Twitter by submitting their questions via the #youmaketodaybetter hashtag. In this live recording, you're going to hear us talk about the action steps we encourage people to take every day during National Suicide Prevention Week, which ends this Saturday, September 14th. These are simple but important steps we can all take to help educate ourselves and those around us. They remind us what we can do to help prevent suicide and reach people who are struggling. They also help raise life-saving funds for people who need treatment but can't afford it.

LINDSAY: Those action steps are still available on our website: youmaketodaybetter.com. Our conversation also covered some of the lies we tend to

believe about suicide. This was really important for us to include because when you're trying to change an issue, ultimately what people in our communities believe about suicide changes everything. It changes how we fight for access to resources, the policies we put in place, and what we do when someone we love is struggling or what we do when we're struggling with suicidal thoughts. The conversation you're going to hear on this episode is from that live recording, where I was joined by TWLOHA founder Jamie Tworkowski and licensed mental health counselor Denny Kolsch. We're excited to share this conversation with you.

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LINDSAY: Hey, welcome everybody. My name is Lindsay Kolsch and I am TWLOHA's Co-Executive Director and I am joined now on the livestream with uh, TWLOHA's founder Jamie Tworkowski. Welcome, Jamie.

JAMIE: Hello. Super happy to be here.

LINDSAY: Yeah, we are doing a live stream in honor of World Suicide Prevention Day. We're going to be joined in just a little bit also by a special guest, Denny Kolsch. He is a licensed mental health counselor. But today is World Suicide Prevention Day. And we really wanted to create a space where we could have an ongoing conversation about suicide, suicide prevention, and what we can be doing as a community and individuals. And so today really represents that. There are people across the globe activating, lifting their voices, talking about this issue, sharing their stories. And so, uh, that's what today's going to be. We're going to get to talk and answer some of your questions.

LINDSAY: We're going to be having conversations about some of the myths and lies about stigma that keep us from talking about suicide. Before we get too far into the conversation, for people who are not familiar with this campaign or maybe even this day that honors, um, the people we've lost and also the work we're doing to prevent suicide, I wonder, Jamie, if you could kind of just talk a little bit about what is World Suicide Prevention Day? What is this campaign that we're doing, the You Make Today Better campaign? And let's just start there. Cause I think that's kind of like a nice way to catch people up if you haven't been with us on these last five to six weeks that we've been leading up to this very day.

JAMIE: Yeah. So, yeah, so I think we just read that 2003 was the first ever World Suicide Prevention Day. For us, I think this is our eighth year in a row.

LINDSAY: Yeah.

JAMIE: Recognizing and honoring and participating in both World Suicide Prevention Day, which is today. And then here in the US, National Suicide Prevention Week. And I tell people all the time, especially lately, this is the biggest day of the year. This has really become, September 10th has become the day that our year revolves around. And obviously as Lindsay said, the, the weeks leading up to this; it's become the, not only the day, but the campaign that means the most to us throughout the year. And today in the midst of all the busy-ness and all the things, it's been so cool to try to keep up with, uh, social media and to see so many friends and partners and supporters that are, as you said, lending their voice and participating.

JAMIE: If it's sharing our video, if it's, uh, wearing the t-shirt, and maybe the thing we love the most, just people being vulnerable and talking about why this day, this conversation, this work means something. So I think it's really the one day that honors the work that we do year round and just really prioritizes at a national and international level, this conversation. And, and for us it's, I think it's been so special to somehow see it grow year after year, campaign after campaign and uh, to see the fundraising goal go up, uh, to see more and more people buy the packs and wear the t-shirts. And it's just neat that this day that, you know, probably when we started eight or nine years ago, the average person hadn't heard of it. And I think more and more people are now familiar with this day.

LINDSAY: Yeah. So let's talk a little bit about the statement this year. Our statement this year's a little different than it has been in, um, prior campaigns, which of course we're trying to always bring something new to the conversation that still captures the heart of our mission and what we're trying to accomplish. But this year the statement is You Make Today Better. I wonder if you could share just a little bit about how we arrived at this statement and then, and what it says this year, what message we're trying to really kind of drive home and communicate while we're asking people to think about it and answer that. I would love if you talk about that.

JAMIE: Yeah. I, as you were talking, I first I want to give a shout out to a former staff member of ours who's, who remains a dear friend: Chloe Grabanski.

LINDSAY: Yeah, Chloe.

JAMIE: It was Chloe who came to us actually probably nine years ago and said, hey, there's this thing called World Suicide Prevention Day, National Suicide Prevention

Week. We need to be a part of this. And at first it was just a white t-shirt with our logo, our title logo in orange. Every year since then it's been a statement, as you touched on. And I think it's been a really healthy challenge because we have all these statements that we love and I think that it keeps raising the bar where it's like, *man, how do we come up with the next one?* I remember a few years back, it was, No One Else Can Play Your Part. And I remember thinking, man, how could we top that? And we've had a couple that mentioned tomorrow.

LINDSAY: Yep. Yeah.

JAMIE: You know, so much of hope is synonymous with the future and tomorrow. And it was Alex Jones, who's a designer of ours, who had this year's idea: You Make Today Better. And, and to me it was another healthy challenge to, to think how do you talk about hope? How do you talk about suicide prevention? Not only in the future but, but reframing it and looking at today and looking at the present and kind of this simple idea that we want people to believe these words are true, uh, for the person wearing the shirt, for the other people that encounter this message. And to invite people, uh, to be a bit vulnerable, even to be a bit proud, and talk about how is this word true?

JAMIE: Finish the sentence: I make today better by or for...when we were working on the video, I remember filming with a few friends and they talked about it being a bit of a challenge and also being just different, uh, because it feels almost a bit selfish, like to kind of brag and especially we are with some people that, you know, they have bands that are successful or, or acting careers. But to me there's something, there's something really powerful about inviting people. And I, and I tried to reframe it for them. Why is life worth living? Because I think with every statement every year, that's ultimately what we're getting at is exactly what is it that makes this life worth staying for. And what is it in your present and your future that you want to be around for it?

LINDSAY: Yeah. Can I put you on the spot and ask you, um, why you make today better?

JAMIE: Oh yeah.

LINDSAY: I'm going to do it right up top. We're going to get there.

JAMIE: No, I wrote mine and shared it on Instagram the other day. So I think I start with my family and friends. I make today better for my parents. My parents were told they would never get to be parents, so that has always stayed with me. My two sisters,

Jessica and Emily, I'm now a puppy dad as everyone around here knows it. So I, I make today better for this little dog named Gracie and she makes my day better. And then friends and, and then certainly there's a, uh, work and purpose aspect of I, I want to try to make the day better for other people by communicating, by speaking and writing, by offering words of hope. I try to be honest and share my experience just as a person on this planet and hope that can be helpful to people. What about you?

LINDSAY: Oh, I knew you were going to do that. Um, I actually wrote like three or four different responses.

JAMIE: Wait, was it Levi? Did you see Levi wrote 20 pages?

LINDSAY: Oh, nope. See I didn't do that. Um, but I did write three or four different ones and I, like, you were saying, it's a challenge to really, I dunno, to, to figure out or to think about what has the most meaning in your life. And I did come back to kind of the same categories that you would, um, that you had mentioned. My son. Um, I'm a wife, I'm a sister, I'm a twin sister. Um, I'm a beekeeper, so I hope that matters. Uh, I believe in this work that we're doing, and I think I have to remind myself, even now, after 9 or 10 years, that I have something to say and add to this conversation. So believing that empowers me, it empowers me to talk about my, like you said, my own experience with anxiety and postpartum depression. And then the hard stuff of just being like a human, you know? Like it's just hard. Um, I think we have a mutual friend Byron who said life is hard for most people most of the time.

JAIME: Yeah.

LINDSAY: And I love that because it just gives you permission to walk through life knowing that it's a struggle, but knowing that it's so worth it. So that's how I would probably answer that one. I think that's the one I ended up posting.

JAMIE: I love it.

LINDSAY: Yeah. Um, so we, today is World Suicide Prevention Day and you mentioned that it is also falling within National Suicide Prevention Week, which started in America on Sunday, this past Sunday. Um, it was cool this morning to wake up and see people from Australia, the UK, on the hashtag talking about just what they're doing and their efforts, getting a sense that this is really a global fight.

LINDSAY: You know, we talk about it from our perspective because we are in America. But it's not just America. It's not just these issues that we'll get into a little bit more, but issues like depression, they affect people worldwide. And so if that's the number one leading cause of suicide, you're going to see that worldwide. And of course there's different things that impact us and impact the rate of suicide in America that we'll get into and we'll talk a little bit about, but I just wanted to kind of mention if you are following along on the conversation, please look at the hashtag, look at what's going on. Like, you adding your voice today matters because this is a global conversation, a global issue. Um, and we're just really proud and excited to be creating this space right now for it.

JAMIE: Just to echo that I, I woke up in the first, the first thing I saw was a post from a guy who's a hero and sort of a mentor and friend, Bob Hurley, who is actually in Indonesia, I believe, on a surf trip. And he did a World Suicide Prevention Day post. And because of the time difference, he -

LINDSAY: Yeah.

JAMIE: He had already posted. And so it was really neat again, to kind of get that global perspective. And as Lindsay said, I think going back to our beginning, people especially early on wanted to pigeonhole or some people did, oh, this is an issue, this is about teenage girls, or this is about young people, or this is people who go to the Warped Tour. And it's always felt important, I think to us, to push back and say these issues, depression, mental health, addiction, suicide, these things touch the lives of people young and old around the world, people whose lives might look very different, they listen to different music. Uh, they vote differently. They, they, their faith is different. Uh, this is part of being a person on this planet. And, and I feel like today is such a good day to recognize that.

LINDSAY: You ran through these a little quick at the beginning. I want to come back to them. On this day, we've been talking for the past five weeks. What, what is it that we're asking people to do? Kind of like if you're just joining us, what are things we're encouraging folks to do?

JAMIE: I think definitely to check out the website, to check out specifically the campaign website: youmaketodaybetter.com.

LINDSAY: Youmaketodaybetter.com.

JAMIE: There are so many ways big and small that you can get involved. And I think the two that come to mind, you can chime in if I miss anything. Uh, the World Suicide Prevention Day packs, which I think are still relevant even if you order yours today, it's still relevant moving forward. It's a t-shirt and it's also other tools and items that will allow you to bring this conversation to your community, to your campus, to your workplace. And then there's also a really significant fundraising piece where we're trying to raise \$150,000, which will translate to 3,000 counseling sessions. And I believe that goal has gone up every year.

LINDSAY: Yup. It has. We are, right now. So we had a goal this year to raise \$150,000. We are currently at \$112,000, which is awesome. So many people fundraising, it's not too late to sign up and be a fundraiser or to give. What we use these funds for each year is to actually provide a treatment and recovery scholarship. So, uh, with that money we would be able to provide 3,000 counseling sessions. These are people, many of which, who have extreme financial barriers to sit with a counselor. They're people who've never sat with the counselor before. This is the access to the hope and help that we talk about. And so it's, it's key to what we do every year. It's really important, and it also helps us fund our Find Help Tool, which we launched actually one year ago today. We launched our Find Help tool, which is a tool on our website where you put in your zip code and what level of care you're looking for, whether it's counseling or a support group, and you put your zip code in and then it will pull up searches for or results for things that are close by you that are free or reduced-cost services.

LINDSAY: You could filter the results. But really we talk about being a bridge to help. We needed to be a bridge to help better. And so this is where we've invested to make sure that that's accessible for people. And now that's a tool within the US but since it launched, we have seen 56,000 searches. So we know that when we show up to a music festival or when we post about this online, people are looking for help. They don't know where to find it. This is our answer. Here are, here's a great place to start. We also have a staff member who can help people walk through what options they do find if they're not quite sure. We've got FAQs about it. We really want to equip people and walk along them, walk a lot, walk along with them on this journey because we know it's hard, like, you grow up going to the doctor, getting checks and wellness checks, but you don't grow up checking in on how you're doing mentally or how your mental health is. And so that's kind of an intimidating process for people. So we want to take out some of those barriers and make it possible for people.

JAMIE: You know, prior to a year ago we listed major cities and so for any given state, there might be three or four, five or six cities. But obviously people live in places in between. People live in smaller cities and towns and rural areas. And I think there's a lot of pride on our team and satisfaction knowing that starting with here in the US that no matter where you live, no matter how big or small, we can help you connect to mental health resources.

LINDSAY: I want to welcome a friend of the organization: Denny Kolsch. Denny is joining us. You want to go ahead and just introduce yourself to folks?

DENNY KOLSCH: I am a, a licensed mental health counselor and I work in a treatment center that I started a couple of years ago called Peace Club. We're a dual diagnosis treatment center and historically I've worked with people struggling with addictions and mood disorders and I specialize in trauma therapy.

JAMIE: I would like to point out in this spirit of honest conversations that they are more than friends. These two -

LINDSAY: Oh my god.

DENNY: We're married.

LINDSAY: Yes, we're married.

JAMIE: I'm biased, but one of my favorite couples.

LINDSAY: Um, great. So thank you, Denny. Thank you for joining us. I, when I thought about this conversation, um, we wanted to bring in a voice that we value and that we trust and, and obviously we thought about you, so thank you for joining us.

LINDSAY: We wanted to highlight some of the awesome things that this community is doing, uh, in their community not only online, but we've got people from Upper Moreland High School in Pennsylvania. They are inviting their students to share those response cards that came in from that WSPD pack. They're putting them up within the school. I think that's such a cool opportunity for students to share.

LINDSAY: I mean, we talk about suicide being now, uh, one of the leading causes of death for people between the ages of 15 and 29. There are movements now for people to start talking about mental health in schools and we're going to continue in that effort.

But it's just really cool to see this campaign make its way into the halls. We've got sports teams standing with us today. I'm thinking of the US Women's National Team players that we'll get to announce something special at the end of this live stream. Um, the Chicago Bandits, thank you. Uh, we also have really cool communities, people doing creative stuff like Good Type Tuesday that I believe is on Instagram, where they are taking this phrase and really making it their own.

LINDSAY: But we do want to get a little bit now into some of the questions. Um, we wanted this to be a dialogue between our supporters and our team. So this question is coming from Rebecca on Twitter. What advice would you have for someone who has never been to a counselor and is nervous to go? Um, I, I'm looking at, we're all pointing at Denny, but I would say I've been to a counselor. You've been to a counselor, so we'll chime in, but, um, we get this question a lot. We actually talked a little bit about this on our find help, um, or sorry, our FAQ episode on the podcast, the To Write Love on Her Arms podcast. But it's, it's one that a lot of people seem to have. And so I think it's totally worth answering now. So I'm going to start with you, Denny. Is it super scary and terrible?

DENNY: Um, I would say, to start, it's normal to feel anxious and worried about it.

LINDSAY: Yeah.

DENNY: Um, and afraid. I think our society hasn't really helped us to feel secure and I'm comfortable with, with reaching out for help and stepping into a counselor's office. So, um, so it's okay to feel anxious and worried about the experience, but beyond that I would say that it can be helpful to reach out to a friend that maybe has gone through counseling to gain some familiarity with it and what, somewhat to expect. Um, but overall, yeah, I think it's okay to feel that way. Um, and it's, uh, and it's, you can't stay where you're at. There's a reason that you feel this desire and are having thoughts to reach out and step into counseling and you should follow that.

LINDSAY: Yeah, and I, I would say just even on a practical standpoint, like showing up a little early to fill out the paperwork because there's paperwork involved. Um, knowing that maybe the first session you sit down with, you're going to be getting to know each other. You know, you're not expected to reveal the deepest, darkest, hardest parts of your story right off the bat. It's a relationship. So I wonder if you could speak a little bit just to like the counseling approach that's common in America. I mean, there's so many different types of treatment and therapies, but what you see often is that outpatient counseling.

DENNY: Yeah. So it's going to, counseling should start off pretty slow. So they start by getting the paperwork. There's a bunch of legalise that has to happen, um, in every state. But some states have different requirements. So a lot of it's some of that up front and then just getting to know you, um, and most counselors will take it at your pace, um, up front and really try to develop what we call rapport. So, um, it's very relational up front and it should be driven by the client. Um, so it should be the person going in and, and being able to largely direct which way it goes. Um, and then I would say if it doesn't feel like a good fit even after the first session.

LINDSAY: Yeah.

DENNY: Cause sometimes you can just tell intuitively that this is not really clicking. It's okay to not go back.

LINDSAY: Yeah. Right. You haven't signed your -

JAMIE: So what you don't mean give up on counseling?

DENNY: No, sorry, You don't have to go back to that counselor. I encourage you to try other counselors there.

LINDSAY: You're done. You're good.

JAMIE: I already went!

DENNY: Yeah. So there are counselors out there that are going to fit better with your personality, with the way that you, um, grow as a person.

JAMIE: Hmm. Yeah. I love to tell people, like if you had a weird experience with a plumber, hopefully you don't give up on plumbing, you just find a different plumber or dentists. Like the, you know, that we can approach it the same way. Yeah. Like, I get asked some version of that and I love to tell people or just invite people too, to be honest. Yeah. And I love that Denny talked about, it's okay. It makes sense to be anxious, you know? Any...I think life is made up of so many firsts. Like, even ones we don't remember the first time I went swimming, the first time I was on an airplane. Like, it's okay that you might be, we might be intimidated by this. I went away for a week of therapy a couple summers ago at a place called Onsite. And their motto that we heard over and over was trust the process. And I love to offer that to people, even if it's as

simple as walking into your first counseling appointment, but to trust that you're in good hands and to, to really step into that process. And, and, uh, as much as you know, you get to play a part to allow these folks to do what they do incredibly well and to lead you through it.

LINDSAY: Yeah. And I would also mention just to Rebecca, if you're nervous, um, I would hope you have somebody that you can tell you're nervous. Like tell a friend, Hey, I've got my first appointment coming up. Um, I'm a little nervous. Do you mind if I text you while I'm in the waiting room? Or if I text you right when I get out, you know, think about your support system because the counselor is going to help you with a new perspective on what's going on with a new kind of guide forward, um, and, and treatment. But your friends, the people who are in your circles, they're the ones who are, who are, already know you and can provide comfort or help you, kind of reassure you. Um, and I would always say, you know, if there's somebody in your life that you trust, please, please share that with, because we, it's a privilege in a, in a sense to encourage our friends towards wellness. And towards health. So yeah...

JAMIE: We are, we are rooting for you.

LINDSAY: Yes, we are rooting for you, Rebecca. You can also, if you're looking for a counselor, we would encourage you to check out that FIND HELP Tool on our website. If you go to twloha.com/find-help or just in the right top corner of the website, it's a little blue button. We would love for you to, uh, check that out and look for a counselor if you're still searching. This question is from Rosie. She also submitted this on Twitter. Uh, what's one very important thing you want people to know about therapy?

DENNY: That it works

LINDSAY: Okay, that's a good one.

DENNY: It works better than, than doing nothing. I mean, bottom line. So, and it's the most, so we, we know some of the things that work to help people with mental health struggles and um, to grow and change from those and therapy, psychotherapy is one of those. Um, medication is another one of those. So be hopeful and, and know that there is strong evidence in my own personal life, but on paper, in research that it works.

LINDSAY: Yeah. And I think it's important, we've talked a lot about this before is just even when you're looking for a counselor in different seasons of your life, like there are different therapy options that a lot of people aren't aware about. So there's kind of like

the normal talk therapy sort of option, but there's treatment for trauma. There is equine therapy. There's so many different options. Like, I just want people to kind of know that it's not necessarily what sometimes gets portrayed in movies where you're on a, you're, you know, laying down on a couch and just talking about your dreams or something like that. I mean, of course there's maybe a place for that, but it does look very different depending on what you're looking for, what your needs are. So I think that's worth talking about.

DENNY: Yeah. And, um, it's the process of finding the right therapist is, it's pretty daunting to know that you're like, you have the right therapist who's going to be able to treat what it is that you're struggling with. So even that is, it's, it can be difficult. So often people will just think that they're with the right therapist, but, um, that therapist actually isn't fully competent in treating whatever they're going through.

LINDSAY: So, a speciality?

DENNY: Yeah, a specialty. So yeah, if, for example, if you struggle with, um, trauma issues, then you should get fit with a, um, therapist who has some kind of specialty with trauma, PTSD. Otherwise, sometimes there can be more damage. Right? So, you want to go with people that know what they're doing in that area.

JAMIE: I think it comes back to that honesty thing. I, I've had, I've been with my counselor, actually thanks to you guys. You are the one that suggested her, uh, she's wonderful. I guess a couple of years now. I think I realized I was holding back at times because I wanted her to like me.

LINDSAY: Okay.

JAMIE: And just realizing kind of the irony of that, that this is the place to bring the hard stuff. This is the place to be super honest and sort of recognizing the absurdity of if I'm not willing to talk about it here, like what's the point? And so I think, again, just coming back to that. It's a space to unpack the hard stuff and to know that, you know, say there's shame involved in that. For me, that my counselor is going to help me process that and help me walk through that in a healthy way. And I think that's been really, really good to be willing to do the work, you know? To, to say, okay, it might not be easy. It might be hard to get the words out, but this is the place to, to talk about those hard things.

LINDSAY: That's awesome. Thanks for sharing that, Jamie. I wanted to talk a little bit more now about National Suicide Prevention Week. Um, when we talk about our campaign, often we talk about World Suicide Prevention Day, but in America it does fall on this week-long, um, activities or things that can be done in America. So we're going to get a little bit more specific here with some of the things that we want to share with you guys that are watching.

JAMIE: I was just gonna add and if you, you can do these elsewhere.

LINDSAY: Yeah, totally. Yeah, yeah, yeah. They're totally applicable, but we just happened to line them up on the dates that are in America. Um, but they are 100% applicable. I appreciate you saying that. We started this week off with one of the most important parts of suicide prevention, um, and it's knowing the signs and asking the questions. All of these action steps, by the way, can be found on our website at youmaketodaybetter.com. There's days listed. And so you just click on one of those days and check out what's in that content. Um, on Sunday we worked with American Foundation for Suicide Prevention to talk a little bit more about what are some of the signs that someone might be displaying or kind of showing if they are considering suicide or having suicidal thoughts or are having a mental health crisis. And so I want to talk a little bit about that.

LINDSAY: We encourage you to check out that link. We'll put some in our comments if we can so that you can find that easily as well as in our show notes on the podcast recording. But I want to just talk about that a little bit. Um, and before we talk about maybe the warning signs, I want to put like a little, very important like pin at the top of this conversation and say that we realize that when you talk about suicide prevention, we are standing among and with people who are survivors of suicide. And so when we talk about what we can do to prevent suicide, we do really want to just take a moment and, and acknowledge the weight and the pain that comes with suicide. Um, people have experienced the loss of a loved one by suicide and said, "I didn't see any of these signs."

LINDSAY: And so we want to acknowledge that that's, that's real. We hope that by these conversations being more vocal that people will not be silenced and that the signs could be because a lot of the signs are, you know, some of the top ones are talking about thinking of dying by suicide or hurting themselves. And so like, just as we get into that, I just really want to say like, we acknowledge that. It fuels us to want to reach more people. Yeah. Um, and, and yeah. So I want to just talk a little bit more now about kind of what would be some signs, um, and Denny, I thought maybe you could help us

understand like someone in a suicidal crisis or considering suicide, what would be some signs to be watching for?

DENNY: I think there's two ways to go about it. There's people that are in active suicidal ideation and then there's people that would be more passively suicidal.

LINDSAY: Okay.

DENNY: And so sometimes it looks as explicit and apparent, as somebody saying, "I don't want to be here anymore."

LINDSAY: Okay. And then talking about suicide.

DENNY: Yeah. Um, withdrawing significantly in a major state of depression um -

LINDSAY: Giving away cherished possessions. Giving away -

DENNY: Yeah, giving away items. And even as far as finding, you know, like obviously more intentional indicators like notes or, or, or something written. So, um, so that there's active suicidal ideation, but then there's passive and passive is more of the, um, you know, uh, *everyone would be better off without me*.

LINDSAY: Okay.

DENNY: So it's not really directly like *I want to kill myself* or *I want to die*. But underneath that is a, um, a disposition of despair.

LINDSAY: Okay.

DENNY: That we have.

JAMIE: Hopelessness.

DENNY: Hopelessness, despair, yeah.

LINDSAY: Lack of regard for their own wellbeing, that kind of thing. And then behavior-wise, I guess this could be an either case, passive or kind of actively suicidal would be, like you said, um, withdrawing from activities or things they love. Calling and saying goodbye to people. Um, let's see. There's giving away the prized possessions or

even just actively looking, researching suicide methods online, which sometimes you know, as people have shared devices or whatever, they can come across, you know, Google searches and things. Um, and then the other one which you touched on is just this underlying mental illness, right? Mood, mood changing. Um, I've actually heard and what's really interesting when you go through some of these suicide prevention trainings is sometimes actually someone who's been in a very down mood and then suddenly is in a very positive mood. That actually happened with a friend of ours, um, who all of the sudden it seemed like things were really turning around and it was because the relief that they felt from having a plan to die by suicide actually buoyed their mood in the interim.

LINDSAY: And it was, um, it was shocking and it was heartbreaking. Um, but that's one that can also happen. So there's things like anxiety, uh, lack of interest or just crises. Um, but as we talk about the symptoms, I think, or the warning signs, the most important thing in my mind is to not figure it out, but to take any of these as moments and opportunities to ask that person that you love and that you care about: Are you okay? Or maybe even more directly, are you thinking of hurting yourself or are you thinking of killing yourself? Like we have to at some point have, kind of, the difficult conversation and know that it's okay because there are things you can do, there are resources you can point them to, there's treatment. So, so knowing that that question is really important. What would you kind of guide people in saying would be that next step? So I'm having a conversation with my friend Jamie and we, and he's been, he's just shared that he has thought about dying by suicide. What would be kind of a next, best step for me and him at that stage?

DENNY: Probably the, the most difficult part about the, uh, reality of suicide is that there's so much stigma there that's preventing people from talking about it.

LINDSAY: Yeah.

DENNY: So the antidote to it often is the opposite of it. So what, what that looks like is facing it head on. So it's being direct. And as therapists, like one of the first things that we have to learn in our master's program or whatever program is, um, risk assessment and how to talk about self-harm and harm to others. And, uh, when you're trained to talk about those things, you have to be very direct. You're taught to be direct. So there's a way to be direct with, with a friend or loved one, um, and do it in a compassionate way. But nonetheless, asking directly, are you having thoughts about hurting yourself? Or are you having thoughts of suicide? Are you having thoughts of killing yourself? It's okay to say those things and be direct about it.

LINDSAY: Yeah, and I would say early on, um, one of the things I learned about that question, and I love that you talk about compassion because we have to, and we, you and I talked about this. Um, on one of our launch episodes for the season was the idea that framing the question, um, kind of open-ended so they can say, *I am thinking about it* and not implying. I think you often hear maybe in pop culture, like *you're not thinking of killing yourself, are you?* Yeah. Because the only answer to that of course is no, you know? That's not, that doesn't give you permission to be honest like what you're saying. And so we do really hope and encourage people to ask it directly, ask it so that they can answer truthfully and then meet them in that moment. Meet them with compassion, with care, but know that there are resources immediately available.

LINDSAY: We point to 1-800-273-TALK, which is the national lifeline. Our friends at Crisis Text Line. Knowing that you can go to the ER or there are now more behavioral health places that say, *Hey, you know what? There are people who can help you. Can I, can I go with you? Can I take you? Can I make sure that you don't sit by yourself isolated in this experience? Let's go find the people who can help you.* Um, I think that can be really reassuring to somebody. Um, and, and you know, obviously you, you want to of course meet them with compassion and make sure that you follow up with them. Maybe they, that next step is calling it a hotline or getting in with their counselor cause they already have a counselor or making that counseling appointment, but then following back up and saying, *Hey, how are you doing? Like, yeah, that was really hard. I'm still thinking about you...* Knowing that they're not in this on their own. I think that's, that's a goal of ours that people would know how to kind of have that, um, that support system around them in those moments.

JAMIE: You alluded to it. I always quote Aaron Moore and he just shared it years ago. I don't even remember the setting, but just talked about the need when we're the concerned person who's trying to figure out how to help a loved one who's struggling. that for us to remember to bring both compassion and honesty. And so compassion and number one, making sure we show up in love and we make it known to that other person that we're with them, we're for them, we're going to keep showing up. But honesty, as you guys talked about, being willing to, to express concern, to ask the hard question to, to say those difficult words but to kind of try to live in the tension of representing both and, and then to continue to represent both.

LINDSAY: Yeah. No, I always love that point. Thank you for sharing that. So that was one of our action steps on the website that you can still find, you can read some more information from our friends at American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. There are

assets that you can download, images you can download and put on your social media so you can share that information. I want to get to a couple more questions from people who have submitted. There's a couple on YouTube and one on Twitter. So we've got Jules from YouTube. She says, *Friends and family, besides my husband and adult kids don't understand my depression. Do you have any advice?*

DENNY: There's a need for, whether you are in treatment for addiction, mood disorders, trauma, eating disorders, for the whole family to be a part of that process often. Sometimes that's not realistic or it's not even something that's maybe appropriate based on the family dynamics, but often the family is a key component to change and the family needs to be educated in those areas. Uh, so personally what I do as a therapist when people are voicing this concern is, um, if it seems appropriate, I will ask them to bring their spouse or their family in.

LINDSAY: OK.

DENNY: And actually have what we call a psychoeducation session where I just educate them on these issues. And by doing that it ends up, uh, changing the conversation from a moral accusation, whether the person is struggling with depression and can't get out of bed, it's no longer, uh, they're just lazy and ungrateful. It's, wow, this person has a biochemical deficit going on that's

LINDSAY: A serious mental health illness.

DENNY: Quite literally causing them to not be able to move. Right? So it shifts the language on it. So I would, I would suggest if you are in counseling to talk to your counselor about perhaps bringing in some of the family and starting there. Um, another avenue is NAMI. So there's, there are support groups for family members of those who are struggling with mental health issues. So...

JAMIE: Do you think on the kind of the friendship side, just that I think we want to encourage people to find a few people. You hope that people could start with one person, uh, that gets it, that that can help us feel supported. And I think we wish there was a resource for that or we wish it was more simple. But I love to tell people that it's worth fighting for. It's worth believing that you deserve it. And even, I think the nature of this question, and we did a Reddit AMA and it came up yesterday, just, we oftentimes like there are people we love who just don't understand. And so I think just believing that you deserve a few folks who do.

LINDSAY: Yeah. Yeah. And I would say, you know, part of the work that we do throughout the year, is to share stories. And sometimes people can understand depression through others' experiences or when it's not so close to them when it doesn't impact their life. So we would encourage you, Jules, um, again, you know, to look, to look at the resources and to share as you can. And, um, we're grateful that you do have people in your life that can kind of support you. I want to get to another question. This one is Feel the Burn. Thank you. On YouTube, you submitted, Um, and said, "I am a suicide attempt survivor, but I am having a lot of trouble adjusting to life after. I can't afford therapy and have no family. Any tips or ideas?"

LINDSAY: One, I want to just say, uh, we're really grateful and thankful that you are alive. We are, this whole campaign is to remind you, if just not you, that your life does matter and it may be hard to see that, but we are holding onto that hope for you. And we believe that there are resources that can kind of come around you. Um, the FIND HELP Tool, I mentioned actually, if you can't afford therapy, there are actually free and reduced mental health services that are available in there. It helps share all of the state, local, federal programs. Um, so we would encourage you to really look at those because we do hear a lot, '*I can't afford therapy*,' and so people wonder what are my options. But, uh, don't give up yet on those because there are a lot of options. Um, there are support groups. Um, there are, we're not sure if you're a student—there are often counseling student centers available that are usually little to no fees. We want to encourage you to just to not give up because we, we believe that you do matter.

JAMIE: I agree with the encouragement just in the idea that the whole campaign is for you, that we believe the words on our shirts: you make today better. That, uh, that you're not an exception to that, that these words are yours. And for people who are curious about the counseling that we'll be funding, how could they apply to be a part of?

LINDSAY: Yeah, that's a great question. Um, we have on the Find Help page, there's an email, um, it's findhelp@twloha.com. We would love for you to just send us an email and tell us a little bit about what's going on and we can either help you, one, connect to the resources that are available, whether they're free and reduced already available or work with you to, to make that available. We hope to, like we said, the funds that we're raising \$150,000 this year, we're hoping to be able to sponsor 3,000 counseling sessions. We want to do as much good as we can with those funds, but we do encourage you to just send us an email.

DENNY: I'll just add that, uh, you're not literally not alone in this experience. Our, our healthcare system is pretty broken in a lot of ways. Leaving people like yourself in that

position of vulnerability where, where it appears there's very limited resources. Um, but there are some creative ways to, um, to experience the change that you're looking for. Sometimes it doesn't even start with therapy. Sometimes it starts with maybe going to a local, a community health center in meeting with the PA or an ARNP and getting, you know, trying an antidepressant for the first time that can jumpstart that. Yeah so it can look different for each person and it doesn't always have to start with the therapist. Yeah.

JAMIE: We talk a lot about self care as well, and certainly not as a substitute or replacement for professional help, but in, in addition, you know, I even think about my own life. I go to counseling one hour a week, sometimes two hours if it's a tough week, but there are all these other hours to fill in. And only in the last few years I feel like have I, I started to really think seriously about kind of this buffet of good things. Everything from exercise to sleep, to prioritizing relationships, to now having a puppy, hobbies that I've reconnected with, like all these good things that will look different for each of us. Uh, but to believe in the context of your mental health, of a season of struggle, that there's a place and there's value on those things as well.

LINDSAY: Yeah.

JAMIE: I mean, my, my counselor, we talk about things as simple as what would it look like to join a kickball league? Like literally just how do I find connection? How do I, how can I live a healthy life and be with other people? And, and so many of those are things that don't cost money.

LINDSAY: Yeah, no, that's really important. One of the action steps that we encouraged people on Monday, was to talk about some of the myths or lies that we believe about suicide. And for me as I was thinking about this, I think about what are some of the challenges that we're up against when we want to change those statistics, when we want to see not 800,000 people dying by suicide every year. What can we be doing? Um, you know, the suicide rates for, um, older adult males is going up. Um, it's going up for younger people, like we have got to continue to fight with everything we have. And so to me, the most important underlying factor of this conversation is what do we believe about suicide?

LINDSAY: Because if what we believe about suicide is something like you, there's nothing you can do to prevent or stop someone. If they want to die by suicide; they will. That type of mentality can kind of make helpless and make us not active and not fighting for our voices to be heard, not fighting for smart legislation and policy, not

fighting for more resources. And so I want to tackle that one. To me it's one I feel really strongly about. We posted this, and, and this was kind of the way we framed it was that, you know, if somebody wants to die by suicide, they will find a way and there's nothing you can do to prevent it. And then the truth of that, which while certainly I do want to put a caveat on this is that not every death by suicide is going to be explained or preventable.

LINDSAY: But we have to try. And what research has shown us is that when people have reduced access to lethal means, and when we say lethal means we're talking guns, firearms, um, or, or stockpiles of pills, things that are, are lethal when enacted, they are going to be less likely to act on their thoughts. So if you don't have access to a firearm, you are less likely to act on that thought. And if they do act, they will less, they're less likely to die. But approximately, this is some research that our friends at Everytown have done when they've looked at, um, guns and, and the deaths by guns specifically around suicide. Approximately 85% of people who attempted suicide with a gun will die. But in contrast, 95% of people who attempt suicide with another means, they will live and they will be unlikely to attempt suicide again.

LINDSAY: We know that firearms are incredibly lethal and so what we're trying to do with this conversation is to just talk about the reality that if you know somebody or you're concerned about someone that they are in a suicidal crisis, and it's been made aware of that, that you know, that they are to think about, do you, do you have a firearm? Do you have a gun access? Asking that question and then knowing what you can do about that to help that be not an option could save their life. It could help them get into treatment. It could help them get into a hospital. It could help them stay safe while they are treated for either mental health or whatever crisis they're dealing with. I think, I think our hope in this is to not say moment of stress. Um, we want people to stay.

LINDSAY: And I think that's one thing that we need to share that it's really does impact this conversation in a pretty significant way. Um, and so yeah, I just want to reiterate, um, suicide by suicide attempts by firearms are almost always fatal while attempts by other methods, um, are less likely to result in death. And so we want to encourage people to think about that when they're interacting with people they love and care about. Um, I don't know if you guys have anything else you want to kind of think about in that regard.

DENNY: And so, we call it access to mean.

LINDSAY: Yes.

DENNY: Part of the suicide assessment includes, um, assessing the access to means and often for myself and those counselors, um, access to means can really be the difference between a stabilization, involuntary or voluntary stabilization, and just continuing on, um, in the outpatient settings. So really that can be a critical, it is a critical factor. So we've seen some, um, strategies in certain cities where barriers on bridges have been, have been, um, built and that has shown to reduce deaths at those bridges. And those people, um, people have even been followed afterwards and they have not had an attempt after.

LINDSAY: Yeah. They didn't find another way.

DENNY: Yeah, exactly. Yeah. So it's, it's uh, it's been proven that, uh, reducing access to means can and often does save a life. Yeah.

JAMIE: I think I just would encourage people to not be afraid of the topic. I think a lot of people say mental health, I'm with you, addiction, self-injury, anxiety, suicide. But when you bring up guns, it sounds political and we can't go there. And just to encourage people to, to learn the facts, uh, to learn the facts the same way that we are, uh, to really dig into this. And, I think what we're trying to say is access to means, access especially to firearms changes everything. And you don't have to take our word for it. Like, we, we want to continue to learn, we want to invite you to learn. And I think the average person doesn't realize that there are more deaths by suicide than homicide when it comes to, you know, firearm-related incidents.

LINDSAY: Yeah.

JAMIE: And we just want to be willing to have the conversation and, and to invite other people into the conversation.

LINDSAY: This was another one I really wanted to, um, follow up this conversation we were having about access to means. It kind of talks a little bit more about what happens when someone does lose a loved one or a friend to suicide. There is a lie that says losing to losing someone you care about to suicide is your fault. Um, we know that for every suicide death there will be six people who will be called "survivors of suicide." These are the people that are impacted by suicide and we often hear, um, because it's a process of grief, it's, it's traumatic, it's painful. *'Um, well is it my fault? What should I have done more?'* And the process of understanding, there are questions that naturally we won't ever try to answer for any one person in this position, but we just want to let

people know that it's not your fault. Um, 90% of people who die by suicide at the time of their death will have a medically diagnosable mental health illness. Depression impacts their ability to make choices. And, and so I don't know if you got cancer, if someone would, would blame themselves for you getting cancer.

LINDSAY: So we have to kind of look at it a little bit and say, while of course we want to do anything and everything we could possibly think of because we love these people. It's really harmful to say that it's your fault because I think it just, it's, it's too much for one person to carry the weight of. And so I just wonder if we could talk a little bit about, um, just some of the causes of like suicide. And there is research, Dr. Thomas Joiner who works at Florida State University and is a leading researcher in suicidology, talks about this experience that a suicidal person has a burdensomeness that they feel like they are a burden to those around them. He also talks about alienation. Um, and so I think it's really important to kind of understand that mindset. It's, it's important because it is not always necessarily and is very rarely a reflection on the people who love and care and who are fighting for people who are fighting this really hard battle. So I don't, I don't know if you guys want to kind of speak about that experience of survivors and what we can help point them to, to kind of process and to feel supported as well as they ask and deal with these difficult questions.

DENNY: Yeah, I would echo what you're saying and what Thomas Joiner has said as well. He refers to suicide as a force of nature and he says that to really, um, push against the misconception that it's just this like kind of moral failure or um, choice or selfish act or whatever it is. Um, and so calling it a force of nature really puts it into perspective in terms of how powerful this thing is and how many variables there are to this thing. So for it to be one person's fault or a community's fault could never be true. Um, there are so many components to this, uh, from everything from the lethality component to the mood disorder component that make this extremely complicated, but survivable issue.

LINDSAY: I think that touches a little bit on the lie that we talked about, which is suicide is a purely selfish act or is the easy way out. Because the truth is that many people experiencing depression or having suicidal ideation are going through extreme mental and physical pain.

DENNY: Yeah.

LINDSAY: Um, I think about Matt Haig who is an author and he, um, actually inspired one of our campaigns. Um, and he talked about that moment where he was standing on

the next to the edge of a cliff and he was hurting so deeply that he had to do everything he could to not to not die by suicide reasons to stay alive. Is that correct? Um, and so that gave me a really a powerful window into what we would call the suicidal mind. Um, and, and how people in that place perceive their life and their value and their story.

LINDSAY: Um, and so that is, if you perceive yourself as a burden, you also perceive that your death is worth more than your life. And so in, in effect, that means you're, you're not seeing this as selfish. You're seeing this as the way to relieve your friends and family of what you perceive yourself to be. And I think we have to remind ourselves that our minds, if we're not in a suicidal crisis, are working very differently than one that is. Um, and so the rationale looks completely different, but they arrive at different conclusions. Um, and it requires compassion for us to see that. Uh, and I would just encourage people when we do talk about suicide, and I want to bring back to the issue of how we talk about suicide.

LINDSAY: When we talk about it as the easy way out or we diminish people who have died by suicide, I think it creates a stigma that says you shouldn't tell someone. If you're thinking about it, you can't talk about it. And so it, it, it brings in an element of shame. Um, I want to kick that over to you real quick because one of the other myths that I think we'll, we'd like to tackle today is just how we talk about suicide. The lie that how we talk about suicide doesn't matter because the truth is it does. Um, so I want to maybe have you talk a little bit about this, cause this is even, you know, something that's come up just as we're talking in our conversations, I'm being intentional about with the language that we use. And I feel like you had some, um, experiences with that this week.

JAMIE: Yeah. I mean, even something as simple as just the wording, uh, we saw, or even in my own experience, a couple of different moments of, of someone just using the phrase committed suicide versus we've learned, I didn't, I didn't know this when it all began, but we've, we've come to learn that, uh, experts agree that it's better to say died by suicide because committed frames it like a crime. Um, and the average person wouldn't know that or probably wouldn't have a reason to know that. We saw a prominent politician post it. And I think we were grateful for the post, but it, it, it sort of showed or highlighted the reality that, that we don't, a lot of people don't know what words to use. And, and the cool thing is there are resources that exist in terms of the tools and the information to learn what language is helpful and how and why this language matters. And, and I had a friend do it this morning. I have a friend who was posting, you know, heart in the right place, wearing our shirt, highlighting today and just, and I was able to say, *Hey, thank you so much, uh, and, and just kinda share, hey, I've, I've actually learned this about the phrasing.* And she immediately took it down and

redid it. And, but it's, it's, I think there's grace, but there's also wanting people to learn to use language that that's comfortable. That's helpful.

LINDSAY: Yeah. And humanizes them and the struggle and the pain that is associated with the suicidal mind. And the person who is experiencing suicide, suicidal thoughts. Um, I think that's really important for us to talk about. All right, so this question is going to come from Jensen from Twitter, and they ask, "*What would you say to someone who doesn't know how or why they make today better?*"

JAMIE: So I'm not, I'm not gonna pretend that I know Jensen, but I've, I've come to believe that all of us, every single person, Jensen, you included, are designed or somehow find ourselves here to be loved, to be known, and to have the privilege of knowing and loving other people. And another way to say that is we are here for connection. Um, and you deserve that and you're capable of that. And, you know, I think a lot of people, we, we kind of go down this simple list of, I make today better for my family; I make today better for my friends. And, and we hope some of those feel true for you, Jensen. And, and I think we kind of touched on the difference between today and tomorrow and, and so even I think if some of those things feel like challenges today, we want to believe in surprises.

JAMIE: We want to believe that hope can show up as a surprise that you, that you should stay, uh, to be surprised by some eventual today where you have those things. You have relationships that make you smile. You have people who walk this road of life with you. Um, you can get to a place where, uh, you find joy in, in things that come with this experience, even if it's something as simple as, as a hobby or reading a book or things that you love. But, uh, I believe Jensen that you make today better for other people.

DENNY: Well said. I would say you have to start with, even if you don't, um, feel it, fully believe it, you have to start from this place of, of, of hopefulness, believing that there might be a different, better life and it's okay to, it's okay to not have those answers right now. It's okay to not, uh, feel the way that you want to feel. It's OK to not have the, a response to that, to that statement. So, so that's where I'd encourage, uh, people to continue to press in, to be brave and courageous even if you don't understand it. To talk with people, to reach out, to continue to move forward and, um, and be surprised at what you find.

JAMIE: I think too, it, it maybe makes a case for some of what we've already talked about and specifically counseling. It's such a big question and it could be such a good

question to process with a mental health professional. And obviously there are so many questions and layers within that, but we're taking a moment here on this live stream, but I wonder what would it look like to process that question, to wrestle with that question—certainly with loved ones, hopefully with, with friends, with family, but also with, with a counselor, with a professional.

LINDSAY: This is from, sorry if I get the name wrong, Daniella Aubrey on Facebook, she mentions, *“I've been suicidal since I was 11 and I still struggle with that and self-harm at 21. I thought I'd be able to stop after my teen years because that's a teen thing, right? But it's not, and I've been doing, I've been doing better recently, but I'm still not quite there yet.”* Um, I, I would just want to say Daniela, um, that you're not alone and it's actually not necessarily just a teen thing. Um, what you're dealing with are issues that often do come onset, often for people around the teenage years. But we hear from people, you know, year-round that say, I'm, you know, 30 and I'm dealing with this, but is it a teen thing that? You know, so it's just a bit of a misconception that it's, that, that, uh, you should maybe have it all figured out at the moment.

LINDSAY: We do want you to know that, that you're not alone in this experience. We're also really glad that you're still here and you're still fighting for it. Um, it's great to hear that, um, you've been doing a little bit better. I think that's worth celebrating. I think that's worth acknowledging and, and not just saying, I'm doing a little better, if you're doing, even if you're surviving to, to the next day, you know, if you're making it a week, a month or a year, like we hope you celebrate that. I think that's one of the things I love about, uh, Facebook birthdays. People are donating their birthday to us. And we often hear, I didn't think I was gonna make it to this birthday. Uh, our team member, Chad has a birthday coming up and he did that and he said, *I didn't think I was gonna make it to 34.*

LINDSAY: I believe he's turning. Um, so could we raise, you know, \$340. But the point being is you are not alone in that experience or in that thought. Um, we love to hear that people say, I'm still here. I didn't think I was going to be here. But the flip side of that is it can still be hard. Life can still be a struggle. Like a counselor would be someone we would probably encourage you to talk to. If it's self-harm specifically, we talked about finding the right counselor. So, we work with a counselor, Michelle Moore, out of Orlando and she specializes in self-harm or self-injury and, and there are specific ways to address that behavior, um, but also the underlying mood disorders and issues that are causing the suicidal ideations, um, and kind of just part of that. So I don't know if you guys want to chime in there on that one.

DENNY: I would say just to be patient with yourself and to show, even when you don't feel like it, to show yourself compassion, um, because the change process doesn't look often how we expect it or want it to. We want change to be this dramatic, like, shift where it all just comes together. But often that's not how it happens. Change happens in retrospect when you're like, *wow, there was that, that, that and that and incrementally got better*. So I would say the fact that you are identifying some, um, some aspect that has gotten better is a huge indicator that, that you're moving in the right direction and that there's a reason to be hopeful.

JAMIE: As you were talking, I was thinking about support groups and even, uh, 12-step meetings specific to self-injury. Uh, so just knowing there's a place for connection, there's a, again, a place for professional help that you, you know, her question didn't indicate that professional help piece. And so I think as I even heard you read the question, I think part of me wondered, 'Hey, do you have, Daniela, do you have the support that you deserve?' Yeah.

LINDSAY: I think this'll be one of our last questions. And then we want to give you guys some updates about things that are happening even tonight, later this week, um, and in the weeks to come. So, okay, this last question, um, comes from Rachel on YouTube: *I know I need help with my addiction and depression, but I just can't bring myself to find help or even talk about it. Any advice?* Um, I want to ask you to answer this because I think you might have felt this way in your life at one point and wondered if you could share a little bit about that.

DENNY: Yeah, so the common experience that people have in that state usually is shame, feeling ashamed, um, maybe feeling alienated from family. And, um, friends, um, burning bridges, um, and, and secrecy drives that. So like, I would, I would just really encourage to reach out to one person, uh, to talk to them, to move towards getting that help that you need because it can't, it can't change alone. Um, and maybe it's honestly, it could just be, as scary as it, this can be stepping into um, an NA meeting or an AA meeting, sometimes that for some people can be a better approach cause they don't really know anyone perhaps. So, but the key ingredient there is you have to move towards people um, and out of the shame, especially early on where the shame is gonna be the strongest. Um, yeah.

LINDSAY: Yeah. And I would say Crisis Text Line, they're actually participating in this part of this live stream. They're a great resource because, um, they're just a text message away. You can send, you know, uh to 741741 just the word or the keyword TWLOHA, t-w-l-o-h-a. And maybe start there, start sharing with someone who you don't

know. But if that's the first kind of the opening of the faucet, the opening of the conversation and you can get more comfortable there, that's a great place to start. Um, they can point you again to these resources. I think posting this question, uh, is also part of this process for you, Rachel. Like you actually are talking about it. You are sharing and we're, we're grateful that you're a part of this conversation and this community. Um, so yeah, so thank you for that.

JAMIE: I just want to, you know, it's short, but just say that we believe it's worth it. You know, Denny talked about kind of the simple place to start with professional help as we believe it works. You know, at the time he was talking about counseling, but we believe it's worth it to get help. Not that it's easy, not that it's not intimidating or scary, but that ultimately you deserve better. You deserve healing, you deserve sobriety. And there are people in places you can turn to that want to help. It could be as simple as starting with that text to Crisis Text Line and it may end up with you stepping into a treatment center or sitting with a counselor. And we just, we've come to believe and really come to know over the years that it's worth it. It's worth it to take that step. And as Lindsey touched on, maybe you're already doing it without realizing, maybe by being so vulnerable as to ask a question that can be part of your process.

LINDSAY: Man, there's still some good questions coming in. I think we have to do one more. Is that okay? Yeah. Okay. Um, this person, um, didn't have a name, but they said, *"I recently spoke to my doctor about getting help for my depression. She put me on antidepressants and I don't feel like it's helping and I'm not sure if I want to continue with the medication. Any advice?"* Just a quick warning. We are not medical professionals. Denny is a licensed mental health counselor who does not prescribe medication but has worked with clients in conjunction to medical professionals. So with that, this is kind of first-person experience. Um, we do recommend you talk to your doctor about this question, but if you have something you want to kind of encourage them, what they can maybe share with their doctor or counselor.

DENNY: Yeah. So rarely does the first, uh, attempt at using an antidepressant work. Um, a lot of that is because genetically we're all different. So, um, so I would encourage deeper exploration with your doctor, um, on some different antidepressant options. Um, and then if, if your doctor, uh, maybe the doctor doesn't specialize in it, maybe they're not a psychiatrist. Uh, sometimes it can benefit to actually go to a psychiatrist who might know more than nuances of it cause they specialize in it. Um, there's all sorts of things like genetic testing to determine what antidepressants are best for your, uh, biochemistry. So there's, there's a lot of hope, um, don't give up. And it definitely can be a little bit of a process of finding the nice balance between effectiveness and low side

effects. That's kind of what you're going for. So sometimes that can take a few different, you know, trials.

JAMIE: That was my experience, started off with one and didn't seem perfect and, uh, talked to my psychiatrist and then switched and have been on something else ever since. And, and so I, it's, I think hopefully it's reassuring to know that that is very common and it's okay. And, and kinda as we sorta half-joked about, don't, don't give up after your first session. Like, don't give up on, on meds or getting better or healing altogether. Like, like be willing to see it through and know that, you know, a psychiatrist, a good psychiatrist can help you navigate that uncertainty. Yeah.

LINDSAY: As we're kind of concluding some of the questions from our supporters, please continue to put them in the comment sections. We will continue to respond and answer. We also have our info, um, our email account, which is info@twloha.com We will continue to respond. Um, we want the conversation to keep going. So we are continuing to fundraise. We have a goal to raise \$150,000 for treatment and recovery. We are, um, we're over that \$100,000 threshold. We're at \$112,000. Continuing to fundraise. Um, you can find those campaigns on the landing page. We also, I want to give a shout out to our friends on Twitch.

LINDSAY: We have a great and wonderful group of live streamers, streamers, people who are um, talking about this on Twitch, which we're really excited about. So we wanna just share again the impact of the funds that we're raising. We are hoping to be able to provide 3,000 counseling sessions this year as well as fund our FIND HELP Tool, which is connecting thousands of people to those resources that we talk about, that bridge to help, um, the free and reduced mental health services that are in communities and making them accessible because people can now find them. And it's amazing. We could do a whole hour on this tool, but talking about, um, you can add filters to your search. So how close is it? Can you, you know, um, what kind of specialist are you looking for?

LINDSAY: What can you afford? Are you looking? There's so many different things you can do, but there's also ways to book an appointment right through that tool so you can call the therapist and make that appointment. Um, and we've been seeing people do that and it's amazing to just know that they are that much closer and connected to help, um, which is often very challenging to find. Um, I wanted to read a couple of these, um, quotes that we've had. We've been sharing these on social media, but it feels really important to just talk about the impact of the dollars that you all are raising and why it matters. Um, this was a quote that we received: "*I was previously planning to end my*

story prior to going to counseling. Receiving this scholarship that my story gets to continue.” Um, we've got another one that said, “The TWLOHA FIND HELP page helped me find a therapist I could afford so I could get the help that I needed.”

LINDSAY: Um, that's like, that's what we're here to do. That is, that's our mission. Um, and then finally, this is another, uh, scholarship recipient: *“This scholarship has helped me more than you know. I am alive, I am recovering, and I am starting to see what life looks like without the constant cloud of mental illness. I cannot thank you enough.”* So those words, those are for you guys. Those are the recipients of the, um, scholarship funds that we are raising through this campaign. Um, we're grateful, so grateful to every person who has joined the campaign. Um, even raising \$10, \$20, \$50, donating \$5, it all adds up and it's all going to help people get the help that they need and that they deserve. Um, I wanted to just highlight a couple more things. Um, we've got some fun events happening, um, throughout the rest of this week and even tonight.

LINDSAY: So if you are in Milwaukee, if you are in Milwaukee, we have um, two events coming up there, um, at the same location. You can find them one tonight, one tomorrow. Check out our events calendar. We'll put some links down in the comments where you can find out, um, some really cool stuff that, uh, that's happening at Stone Creek. So, uh, check out the locations, go be participating in that. Um, those are free events to attend I believe. And our, um, our friend and coworker, Chad is going to be speaking there. There will be artist, uh, Whitney Fenimore is lending her voice to those evenings. Um, we will also have a team at Riot Fest Chicago this weekend. Um, continuing this conversation. It's not over yet. We want to keep going. Um, and then we have something else very special coming up that we want to share with you guys. Jamie, can I have you do the plug for this one?

JAMIE: So Saturday, September 21st at the House of Blues, it's our annual event, flagship event, favorite night of the year. It's called HEAVY & LIGHT, I don't know how many years, but a whole bunch in a row. We started at the social in downtown Orlando and then we graduated to the House of Blues where we've been ever since. And it's a night of music. So we have four musical acts, Jon Foreman from Switchfoot will be back to headline, our friend Anthony from Bayside, Dessa, who is a new face, a new friend of the organization, uh, and a band called SWIMM. They're actually from here in Central Florida and now live in Los Angeles. We'll have Morgan Harper Nichols and her sister, Jamie Grace. Morgan is by far the most popular person involved. You may know Morgan from Instagram, from beautiful, inspiring, encouraging—

LINDSAY: And a podcast episode, recently. Go listen, they're all there.

JAMIE: Morgan and Jamie will be speaking. You can find tickets on our website. There are a few tickets left in our Online Store, but you can also find them through our website, through Live Nation, House of Blues, kind of anywhere you would typically find tickets.

LINDSAY: There's a buy one, get one happening. So time is now people. if you love a BOGO deal.

JAMIE: Yep. So instead of \$22, you can get, uh, tickets for \$11, two for 22. We'll just keep going. Uh, but it's, it's a night that we hope more than anything, not just entertaining people, but really leaving people encouraged. And, uh, we love connecting people to local resources and, and thankfully through our website now we, we can do that not just in central Florida, but, uh we also love that it's a night where people come from all over. People take road trips, people get on airplanes. And, uh, it's such a neat thing to see people travel even year after year to make a tradition out of being there. And, uh, I think one of the most powerful stories we've ever heard there, there was, and it really relates to today, but one year after we won a significant grant, we were able to, to do a nationwide tour of HEAVY & LIGHT and, and it was a night in San Diego and a young person came only to see Noah Gunderson who was, I believe the opener or one of the early acts on, on that tour.

JAMIE: Didn't know really anything about the night, about the show, but came to see Noah. Stayed. And Noah found out after the fact, uh, this person had decided that they would die by suicide soon after. That, that they had made a plan, I believe they had purchased a gun. And so they decided this would be one of their final outings and they were going to come see a night of music and they ended up staying for the show. And as a result of somehow what they experienced in the room that night, decided to get help, decided to keep going, decided to stay alive.

LINDSAY: Tell their parent, I remember, they said.

JAMIE: And so to me that's always, that's the dream. That's the goal. I mean that's why we do everything. But even specific to HEAVY & LIGHT, like that's the hope that there might be someone in the room that is in a dark place, that is struggling, and they could walk out of that show believing that life is worth living. And, and I love to even challenge the artists who show up to say, *'Hey, what are the songs you would choose to play for someone in that place?'* And, and so it's, it's something we love that we get to keep

doing it. And so we would love for you to be with us in the room again at the House of Blues, Orlando, Saturday, September 21st.

LINDSAY: Yeah, it's a great night. So we do, we hope you come out and join us. Um, it is World Suicide Prevention Day. We are wrapping up our World Suicide Prevention Day livestream. But we want you to use your voice. We want you to add your story. Um, there are things you can be doing. We have two videos actually this year. There's the, the short story kind of video and then the video that we launched on Sunday, which is our World Suicide Prevention Day video. Please share that. That's a very easy way for people to be introduced to the campaign, to this statement, and, and to what we're trying to accomplish. We're raising money for treatment and recovery.

LINDSAY: So we are trying to hit that \$150,000 goal by Sunday evening, Saturday evening. Um, and then there are action steps. So we, we want to make this, um, really tangible for people every day. This week during National Suicide Prevention Week in America, we have given you some things that you can either learn about, um, things you can share, um, things you can be doing. On Thursday we are going to be talking specifically more about those FIND HELP resources. What mental health resources do you have? How can you make them readily available for people in your life or for yourself? And then on Friday we are going to be talking a little bit about, um, how to create a self care and safety plan.

LINDSAY: So you know how to best care for yourself. If you experience depression or you're having suicidal thoughts or others, we encourage people to carry this on them. We did this during Mental Health Month, which was in May and it was awesome to see people really thinking about, like you said, what's my self-care, who do, who can I call if I'm really hurting? Who, who can I talk to if I need to talk to a counselor or Crisis Text Line. So those are things we're going to encourage you guys to do. And then on Saturday we're going to leave you with ways to continue talking about mental health, about suicide prevention. Because while the conversation kind of ramps up right now, it doesn't end. We want to keep it going. And so we would encourage you to, um, to join us for every day this week. Um, and then we're excited to announce this other fun thing. So I'm gonna let you do that.

JAMIE: Yeah, we were so excited that we get to do this again. I think as of a couple of days ago, we didn't, we didn't expect this. Uh, but we have four friends from the United States Women's National Soccer Team who are donating their game jerseys to us once again. So autographed game jerseys from Ashlyn Harris, Alex Morgan, Christen Press,

and Tobin Heath. And actually those are the same four folks who did this a year ago. A year ago, we raised \$40,000 through these four jerseys.

LINDSAY: Yeah, 44.

JAMIE: And yeah, so we are, we're so pumped. It, it really just came together in the last couple of days.

LINDSAY: So if you are one of those fans, if you love those wonderful players and their jerseys, you can donate and receive some entries for that and we'll be pulling that, um, officially at the end of October, but it's going to end, it's going to be a short kind of campaign so you have until Sunday night to get your entries in and we'll be launching that. We'll be sharing that. They'll be talking about it. Um, it's all of those funds are going to go toward our campaign um, that \$150,000 that we are hoping to raise and it's going to go help people get the help that they need and deserve. So we're really grateful and thankful to those women.

JAMIE: I just wanted to give credit to Ashlyn. We get asked all the time like how did you get to know all of the soccer players? And so all of that gets traced back to Ashlyn. Harris. Ashlyn is from Brevard County, from Central Florida. Her and I were a few years apart in age, but we went to the same high school, to Satellite High School. And so I've known Ashlyn before all of this, before the To Write Love on Her Arms story and organization and we've remained friends, kinda reconnected once this got started and she's just become such a vocal supporter. And so through Ashlynn we've gotten to know Alex and Kristen and Tobin and, uh, women that play at the US level. So many different women who play for the NWSL club teams. You should go watch them. But we're super grateful and I love to acknowledge Ashlyn's special place in our history.

LINDSAY: Yeah. Um, any, There's one final closing thought we were asked from Becky on Facebook: "*What made you smile today?*" What made you smile today, Denny?

DENNY: Uh, waking up in seeing my son.

LINDSAY: Okay. Now you took my answer. Great. Thank you. (laughs)

DENNY: That's why I went first.

LINDSAY: How about you, Jamie?

JAMIE: Oh, it's a very similar answer. I'm going to add a bonus part, but, uh, I woke up with my puppy, Gracie. And I, I think I may have said this out loud, but I, knowing what today was, I told my puppy that she makes today better.

LINDSAY: Aw, that's great.

JAMIE: Um, my mom reminds me that I make today better for Gracie, but then also I did a radio interview earlier at a stat- at the station here in town and I had trouble finding parking and I, and it was hot and it was stressful. And I showed up like with just a few minutes and I walk in a bit stressed and there are three kittens that are a month old and so I could not help but smile at these kittens.

LINDSAY: That's great. Um, I would say to not duplicate Denny's answer, we have a son together named August who's also wonderful. But, uh, this morning I just walked in and I was coming into work, pulled into the parking lot. I think the first person I saw was Ben, he works in our warehouse. He was wearing this shirt and I said, "*Ben, you make today better.*" And he just had this huge smile and it made me smile and it was really good. And I've had some texts from people who are sharing what this campaign meant and it's, um, it's meant a lot to hear what it means to others. To me.

JAMIE: Yeah. I think maybe on behalf of our team, like just, we, we feel honored that we get to do this work year round, that we get to do it today, uh, that we get to create and invite people into this campaign. And it really is such an extraordinary day for us to see the support from, from friends, from folks all over, people across the country, people outside of the US, it's such a special thing. And to see so many people want to participate in this conversation, to see people posting photos in, in this You Make Today Better t-shirt. And I also, I want to, uh, give, do people still do shout outs?

LINDSAY: Yeah, that's cool.

JAMIE: I'm 39. Uh, I just, just want to highlight our team. So you know, there's a couple of us sitting here that, that have the privilege of being on the microphone, but, uh, just our team has been working hard for weeks and weeks to make this campaign happen, uh, from our designers to folks working in the warehouse, interns who just got here, people working on the fundraising. Uh, so many details that have to happen and be taken care of for weeks and weeks, uh, to make this campaign what it is. So I want to say a special thanks to our staff, our interns, former interns, monthly givers, the TWLOHA Blue folks, uh, just people fundraising, people donating. It, this is a day I think

where we just feel like we get to be a part of something so much bigger than us, bigger than this building, bigger than our team. And it's really humbling.

[music playing]

LINDSAY: Thank you to Jamie Tworkowski and Denny Kolsch for joining me in this livestream conversation on World Suicide Prevention Day. As we mentioned, if you're listening to this conversation, it's not too late to get involved. Visit YouMakeTodayBetter.com to find those action steps that you can take every day during National Suicide Prevention Week and even in the days after. And on that page you can also donate to help support treatment and recovery. Every dollar matters. Thank you for believing in hope.

LINDSAY: Denny Kolsch is a licensed mental health counselor and cofounder of Peace Club, an opioid recovery community and treatment center based in Cocoa Beach, Florida. To find out more about Denny or Peace Club, visit www.peace.club. And Jamie Tworkowski is the founder of To Write Love on Her Arms, a speaker, and a New York Times bestselling author. You can connect with Jamie on social media with his handle [@JamieTworkowski](https://twitter.com/JamieTworkowski). And finally, another quick announcement. We're going to be taking a short break. We're still working on some awesome episodes and we can't wait to share those with you for the second half of Season Two. Thank you for listening and thank you for believing in these conversations.

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 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 t w l o h a dot 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 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.

LINDSAY: A big thank you to our friends at Copeland for the original music on this episode. The TWLOHA 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.

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.