

01:00:09:07 - 01:00:19:12

Heather

Welcome to Braaaains, a podcast exploring the inner workings of our brains. Mental health and disabilities and health. Film and television portray them. Hosted by me, writer director Heather Taylor.

01:00:19:14 - 01:00:37:13

Sarah

And by me film and TV editor Sara Taylor. Before we begin, we want to acknowledge that the lands for which we recorded this podcast and from where you are listening are part of territories that have long served as a gathering place for diverse Indigenous peoples. And we are thankful as guests on this land to be able to live, work and gather here together.

01:00:37:14 - 01:00:41:18

Sarah

We continue to learn about the history that came before us and encourage you to do the same.

01:00:41:20 - 01:00:55:02

Heather

This is episode one of our three part series. You are Not Alone. Navigating Life with Mental Illness, which we created for Mental Illness Awareness Week 2023. It explores mental illness and the barriers that can block your journey to good mental health.

01:00:55:06 - 01:01:07:04

Sarah

Today's episode is about how stigma hurts everyone. Our guest, Amie Archibald Varley is a nurse health equity specialist and co-host of the Gritty Nurse Podcast. Amongst other things, she's truly amazing.

01:01:07:09 - 01:01:21:20

Heather

Amie joins us to talk about stigma, where it comes from, how it leads to discrimination and how mental health is represented on film and TV. This episode will also inform you on how to prevent and address stigmas as well as how to be a good ally.

01:01:22:00 - 01:01:36:13

Sarah

Quick reminder to our listeners that this interview should not be taken as medical advice, and it is for informational purposes only because everyone's brain is different. Please consult your health care professional if you have any questions. And now, Amie.

01:01:36:15 - 01:01:40:11

Heather

Hello, Amie. Thank you so much for joining us today on Braaaains.

01:01:40:13 - 01:01:42:02

Amie

I'm so excited to be here.

01:01:42:03 - 01:01:48:07

Heather

Well, we're going to start with our biggest question. Tell us, please, a little bit about yourself and the work that you do.

01:01:48:09 - 01:02:03:17

Amie

Oh, my goodness. It's always such a big question. And I kind of pause and hesitate whenever I have to answer this question. It always makes me anxious to talk about myself. But in terms of some of the work that I'm doing, first and foremost, I'm a nurse, so yay nursing.

01:02:03:19 - 01:02:04:07

Sarah

Thank you. Thank you.

01:02:04:07 - 01:02:36:21

Amie

Thank you. Yeah, Thank you. And so I'm a nurse. I'm a health equity specialist. That's my current role. But I also wear many, many hats. So I'm also an upcoming author of the book *The Wisdom of Nurses* with Harper Collins. I'm a mental health and health equity advocate, and I'm also a CBC freelance journalist. I also do radio column with Newstalk 1010 every once in a while, and I'm also a podcaster, so I also am the co-host of the Good Year podcast, So Multifactorial, doing various different things.

01:02:36:21 - 01:02:43:14

Amie

And I just really want to inspire people to have courageous conversations. And you know, talk about their truth.

01:02:43:14 - 01:03:01:02

Sarah

Wow, that's a great list. And I thank you for all the work you do. You're changing people's lives, and I think that's amazing. So thank you. So today we're going to talk about stigma. And then it's a broad topic and it's, you know, can be complicated. But let's start first with where does stigma come from?

01:03:01:05 - 01:03:24:11

Amie

Yeah, you know, stigma really comes from, I would say, from a place of misunderstanding or a lack of understanding of mental health or mental illness. And really, I would say this is kind of like an ignorance surrounding this misinformation. And we could talk about misinformation for forever because we've seen how misinformation can really make people behave and act in a certain way.

01:03:24:13 - 01:03:40:03

Amie

And, you know, usually because the stigma arises from these kind of negative attitudes, negative perceptions are beliefs about mental illness towards people. So it creates that prejudice, that bias. And then again, it can lead to discrimination of folks who have mental illness.

01:03:40:06 - 01:03:52:00

Heather

And that's exactly our next question. How does stigma lead to discrimination? Like how do our beliefs in guided and in this capacity, how do they lead to discrimination of people with mental illness?

01:03:52:01 - 01:04:10:06

Amie

Well, maybe I'll even back it up a little bit further just to kind of talk about again, we're kind of come from and then how does it lead to discrimination? And I always point to the media. So the media really plays a huge part in the way that we think about other people. And I think this is where we have to really be cognizant about what is put out in the media.

01:04:10:11 - 01:04:31:05

Amie

You've probably heard of this definition or this I should say, statement where the I can't remember who said it because I don't want to mess it up, but it essentially is who whoever controls the media controls the mind. And I think that when we think about the way that we think about others and we see the images, media can really play a role in reinforcing stigma.

01:04:31:06 - 01:04:59:22

Amie

So it can portray inaccurate stereotypes about people with mental illnesses. It can sensationalize various different situations through unwarranted references to mental illness using demeaning or hostile forms of language. And, you know, sometimes people and we've seen this where the the media can kind of juxtapose those mental health, mental illness with violence. And this promotes this myth that people that might have a mental illness could be dangerous.

01:05:00:00 - 01:05:27:06

Amie

In fact, we know that there's a lot of research that states that people with mental illnesses are more likely to be victims than perpetrators of violence. So I think this is where I can kind of round the question back to like how to estimate how the stigma leads to discrimination, seeing that these negative viewpoints can reinforce things that are inaccurate and not true about an individual and then, you know, it really harms that individual harms the way that we treat and we think about people who have mental illnesses.

01:05:27:08 - 01:05:44:12

Amie

And it really reduces the ability for folks to get help because if you feel that, you know, you're going to be demonized, you're going to be you're going to be, you know, talked about in a certain light, you might be less likely to actually reach out and actually acknowledge that you might be suffering from a mental illness. Mhm.

01:05:44:13 - 01:06:01:09

Sarah

Yeah. This is why we do this podcast to talk about how we are represented on screen. But you know, we've heard this idea that mental health isn't simply the absence of mental illness, but living with a mental illness doesn't mean you can't have good mental health. So. Right. Can you explain the difference between mental health and mental illness?

01:06:01:09 - 01:06:05:08

Sarah

And then there's likely how does stigmas come and form around that?

01:06:05:10 - 01:06:29:14

Amie

Right. I think that people use these terms synonymously and interchangeably, and they do mean different things. So, you know, mental health, I've taken this definition from camp, so mental illnesses are described as disturbances in thoughts, feelings, perceptions that are severe enough to affect day to day functioning. And some examples are anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, mood disorders such as major depressive disorders and bipolar disorder.

01:06:29:20 - 01:06:52:10

Amie

Whereas mental health, however, is a state of well-being and something that we all have. So just like we have a state of physical health, we also have a state of mental health. And I think this is where for me super important to see what those disparities are, what the difference is between mental illnesses and mental health, because it's really a way of thinking about your physical health and the way that you operate throughout your day.

01:06:52:10 - 01:07:13:18

Amie

And I think the two are actually equivalent. I think this is where some people don't see that your physical health is just as important as your mental health. And I really want people to really start thinking about it this way because I always give this example. So as a health care provider, when we talk about, you know, let's say you go off on a mental health leave or you go off on some form of leave, let's start.

01:07:13:19 - 01:07:35:04

Amie

Let's say you broke your leg. There are prescribed treatments. There are, you know, you might need a leg brace there. It might take about 6 to 8 weeks for your leg to adjust. We have all these very concrete things that we can do for a physical illness. But when it comes to mental health, it's so individualized. It has to be we have to be very careful about how we go about doing the treatment.

01:07:35:04 - 01:07:52:00

Amie

And and one size doesn't fit all. And I think the thing is, it's just as important. So if you, you know, just if your leg is broken, if your mind is broken, it's just as important. It stops you from going to work. It stops you from being able to do the things that you love, the things that you want to do in life.

01:07:52:01 - 01:07:55:16

Amie

We need to look at it as important as physical health.

01:07:55:18 - 01:08:12:15

Sarah

Mm hmm. I had this one therapist, which I thought really gave me a great perspective, is when I have generalized anxiety disorder. And then so I was in a moment of high anxiety and I was trying to, like, make all these decisions and do all these things. And then she was like, if you had a cold, you would rest, right?

01:08:12:16 - 01:08:28:22

Sarah

So you physically weren't feeling well. You would take a rest, give your mind a little rest. And it just made me realize, Oh yeah, I'm allowed to take care of my mental health. And I never had anybody else kind of refer to it that way. Comparing still just like how you did now it just isn't really good or.

01:08:28:22 - 01:08:47:12

Heather

Making those changes at that time. You're like, I know these things will help me. So like exercise and eating well and things can still it can affect your mental health and physical health because they are intertwined. But you can't make if, let's say, your social supports aren't there for you, you can't then also have no social supports and change how you're eating and change how your.

01:08:47:12 - 01:08:57:00

Sarah

Mood and do all the things at once like that was always a big thing. When I'd have a high anxiety moment, I'd be like, Well, I got to get this book to read it and learn how to be mindful. I got to.

01:08:57:00 - 01:08:57:10

Amie

Write.

01:08:57:11 - 01:09:12:07

Sarah

Make sure I eat more salads. I should cut out my coffee intake, I should go running around the block 18 times like and that wasn't going to help me. But continuing through therapy and understanding anxiety, when I'm in those moments, I'm not putting myself in that spot anymore to try to fix it.

01:09:12:07 - 01:09:31:00

Heather

I feel like society is telling us like to have good mental health. We have to do all those things that we write. How do we find the right fit for us? Like how do we not fall into that? Because I think that is also misinformation of like if you you have to do all these things, if suddenly you're having, you know, having difficulty with your mental health, that you now have to do all these things.

01:09:31:05 - 01:09:32:22

Heather

So like how to balance that.

01:09:33:00 - 01:10:00:14

Amie

Yeah, it almost boils back to, again, social media. These perceptions that people create of themselves of, you know, I'm okay or, you know, I think on social media, people show the best sides of themselves, right? Here's me. I'm a mom. I'm carrying all these burdens and I'm perfect. Or, you know, look at this perfect body. And this is this is how society views beauty or, you know, sexuality or these various different things or, you know, people always put their best foot forward.

01:10:00:14 - 01:10:23:16

Amie

But the thing is, at the end of the day, we know that that's not based in reality. We know that everybody struggles. I think it's one in five individuals will suffer from a mental health crisis. And I think these are the things that we need to start talking about. Right. So it's not just about you know, showing that we have these channel challenges, but it's also talking about them really humanizing ourselves and really changing the way that we think about mental health.

01:10:23:16 - 01:10:47:21

Amie

I think when I think back to even some of my own instances, so I also have anxiety and depression. I'm I was diagnosed with high functioning depression. So like, I can do a lot of different things as you as I listed at the top of the episode, I'm doing a thousand things, but it doesn't mean that deep down that I don't have fears about some of the things I'm doing that I don't have doubt that creeps in, that I don't have crippling anxiety just even this year.

01:10:48:01 - 01:11:02:17

Amie

I'll share this with you. Just this year, I actually had very different speaking engagements. So the other thing is I didn't even mention I'm a national speaker. I think it was like three or four lined up in the month. And, you know, I really have an idea of what I need to talk about because I am the expert on myself.

01:11:02:18 - 01:11:27:06

Amie

And for whatever reason, I had a technical glitch. So running a podcast and have a speaking engagement and my tech doesn't work and they're all like, It's fine, it's fine. Everything will be great. We get off without a hitch, and about about 10 minutes later I'm going through this, and then I feel the sweat. I feel my heart racing and I feel like impending doom.

01:11:27:07 - 01:11:54:19

Amie

I'm looking on like there's still like 30 minutes left for this speaking engagement. So I do finish it, but I end up knowing that I was starting to have a panic attack. The world was just closing in on me. And then after that, every single speaking engagement, I felt I was going to continue to have a panic attack and I kind of self-actualize where at the next engagement I did have another panic attack and I was like, okay, this is a sign that I need help.

01:11:54:21 - 01:12:14:11

Amie

What is the underlying reason why I was having these issues? But again, I also felt compelled to talk about it, to say, Hey, you know what? I'm doing all this stuff. But at the end of the day, I still

have these challenges and the other pieces. So we talk about all the different things like, Oh, you know, you need to read, you need to eat, you need to get exercise.

01:12:14:11 - 01:12:31:20

Amie

But sometimes it's like I need to just stop and say like I need help and whatever that may look like for me, whether it's, you know, taking a break from social media, whether it's, you know, going for a walk or just getting out of bed, because sometimes that's it, too, right? It's like it's overwhelming. I just need to move.

01:12:31:22 - 01:12:51:05

Amie

Yeah. And it's recognized that. And I think that's the hardest piece to recognize that you need that help. And I was able to do that. And the other piece is medication. Like we don't talk about that piece nearly enough. There's so much stigma around talking about using medication to help support people. But again, if you broke your leg and you needed pain medication, you would take it, right?

01:12:51:05 - 01:12:59:04

Amie

You're like, oh my God, my legs killing me. I need to take this to support my pain. It's no different for your brain. None whatsoever. Mm.

01:12:59:06 - 01:13:01:07

Sarah

Yes. Yep. I'm a.

01:13:01:09 - 01:13:05:14

Heather

Big advocate of medication as well, and I said.

01:13:05:16 - 01:13:07:06

Sarah

That.

01:13:07:08 - 01:13:18:11

Amie

It's a lifesaver. It really is. It really changes the game because we have to think about our brains, just as are other physical ailments where, you know, there are chemical imbalances and these medications help.

01:13:18:13 - 01:13:28:05

Heather

Yep. Yep. I my brain doesn't like to make dopamine, and it just needs some. It just needs some. And then it makes my life better.

01:13:28:07 - 01:13:29:06

Amie

Absolutely.

01:13:29:08 - 01:13:38:20

Heather

You know, kind of going off of that, that idea of like, you know, talking about things, I think this really feeds into that question of how do you prevent and address stigma?

01:13:38:22 - 01:13:59:05

Amie

Mm hmm. You know, I think the first part is having conversations like this, right? Really understanding and opening up the dialog to say, you know what, it's okay to not be okay and to talk about mental health, talk about these these instances where, you know, our lives aren't perfect. We aren't, you know, we aren't living in this like Golden Palace and everything's okay.

01:13:59:05 - 01:14:17:23

Amie

It's okay to say, you know what, Things are really friggin hard. Things are really difficult and I'm not okay and I need a little bit of help. So I think the first part is actually opening the conversation to make it make it a safe place that we could have these conversations. And then just educating yourself like it wouldn't take much out of your day to say, hey, you know, I don't really understand what this person might be going through.

01:14:17:23 - 01:14:39:15

Amie

Why don't I educate myself? Get, get that information, know the facts about mental health, mental illness, And also this includes looking at addictions. I think people shy away from having talks about, you know, substance issues and addictions. And we need to realize that that is also a mental illness as well, being aware of our biases and our prejudices.

01:14:39:15 - 01:15:01:16

Amie

So it's kind of like, you know, checking yourself, being aware of those attitudes and where and where they might came from. You know, again, I mentioned at the top of the episode how social media and the media really influences the way that we think about people. This could be in the form of news articles, it could be in the form of film and television and really examine our own judgmental thinking and and our own upbringing.

01:15:01:17 - 01:15:21:13

Amie

Like, I think about my parents are from the Caribbean. They had not the greatest ideas about or the way they treated folks who had mental illnesses and really thinking about why that might be and then changing the way I think about it. MM Again, cute words have power rates using the way that we talk about mental illness and mental health is hugely important as well.

01:15:21:15 - 01:15:45:07

Amie

Again, I'm a nurse. I've seen that stigmatizing language and written in charts and will color the way that that patient is treated. We need to think about the way that we talk about these folks and talk about folks who have mental illnesses and change the way that we talk about them as well. And again, you know, pass on the positive effects and things that we see about mental illness, like we're all talking here about our own struggles, but we have wins, too.

01:15:45:07 - 01:16:09:21

Amie

Like we have times where we're like, you know what? That was a really tough time. But I came out on top. Here's what I did, or even to say, you know what, things will get better. And I think reinforcing those positive aspects of mental health and mental illness are also important as well. And then again, it's just really supporting your friends and families and folks who might be suffering or might be, you know, having these challenges and reaching out.

01:16:09:21 - 01:16:30:14

Amie

I think, you know, sometimes it's easy for someone to say, oh, you know, if you're struggling, you should reach out. But sometimes it's hard, like it's it's hard to be the one to be like, oh, I'm struggling, but I'm going to make that extra conscious effort to reach out. Maybe it's for that family member or that friend who's recognizing those signs and symptoms that, you know, I'm I'm not wanting to go out with them anymore.

01:16:30:14 - 01:16:45:15

Amie

You know, I'm I'm inside all the time. Maybe for them to be to say, hey, let me come over and have a conversation with you, because it's not just like a phone calls. Okay. But sometimes it's good to actually physically go in and check on your friends and families. And I think it's also just about respect and dignity.

01:16:45:15 - 01:17:09:00

Amie

Like, I can't speak more about the way that we treat each other. We've been seeing the this change of the climate, right? People are just angry. People are feeling, you know, lonely. The pandemic has really changed the way that people have been viewing and interacting with each other. I always talk about treating people with compassion. How do we get back to that space

where we just look at people and treat people as people?

01:17:09:00 - 01:17:28:20

Amie

It's been really challenging and I think that we just need to really go back to the basics of how do we treat people with compassion and empathy. What does that look like? Right. And I think that so empathy is again, yes, putting yourself in one shoes, but compassionate takes it that one step further, which is not only putting yourself in their shoes, but trying to alleviate their suffering.

01:17:28:20 - 01:17:52:10

Amie

I think that's so hugely important, and I think that's an extra step that folks can make and then include everyone. This is a conversation that involves everyone. So again, wherever you might be, the conversation of mental health shouldn't have to stop at, you know, behind corporate doors or behind in your therapist's office. It can be in film, it could be in television, it could be in the media, it could be conversations like this.

01:17:52:15 - 01:17:56:22

Amie

We need to continue having the conversation and to include it in all facets of our life.

01:17:57:00 - 01:18:05:04

Sarah

Going off of all these amazing examples you just gave us, how do you be a good ally and how can we fight all of the isms, so many isms.

01:18:05:06 - 01:18:32:03

Amie

I have my three principles. One is listening. Listening is so, so important. And I think that we don't do a very good job of listening. There's so many times where, you know, you're listening to respond versus listening to understand and acknowledge what someone's going through. And I think that we really need to start honing our listening skills. Listening is, I would say, probably one of the most powerful things to understanding and being a really good ally.

01:18:32:03 - 01:18:51:18

Amie

You can't if you don't listen and you don't understand, you don't. They you know, this is what I've heard and I'm going to take this back and see what I can do with it. You're not going you're going to miss the point. So listening, I think I would say for allyship in any of the isms, whether it's racism, sexism, any any of them, it's so important to just listen.

01:18:51:18 - 01:19:14:05

Amie

And sometimes we know that there's various forum personalities. So there's folks that are like they they like to really speak or there might be some more quiet people. I think that in this role where, you know, you're you're partaking, you're listening. Take that time to just pause. I know it's hard for some folks pause in to say, you know, let me reflect on that a little bit and say nothing.

01:19:14:10 - 01:19:33:23

Amie

And then you can come back with another part of the conversation. But listening is so integral and important learning again. So we kind of tapped, talked about it at the top to say, you know, we need to learn more about mental illness and mental health and what does that actually look like for each individual person? And then also just speaking up and speaking up also means advocacy.

01:19:33:23 - 01:19:54:08

Amie

So we didn't kind of touch on this, but I think speaking up is also being saying like, what is your role in talking and advocating about mental health? Where can you see yourself in that space? And I think that for every individual might look different. So for me it could be advocating when I have an opportunity to go on CBC or when I have an opportunity to, you know, be in the media.

01:19:54:08 - 01:20:14:00

Amie

But it also could be, you know, talking to your constituents, your MPP, your your local party folks about mental health, asking, hey, what do you have as a policy in relation to mental health or having those conversations at work? I think those are so important and small things that we can all do to continue to advocate for mental health.

01:20:14:00 - 01:20:28:18

Amie

Again, I don't know what your set, your services look like from your workplaces, but mine were abysmal. So how do we ensure that we're pushing our policymakers to to make sure that mental health is seen as health care? So again, that's that advocacy piece and speaking up as well.

01:20:28:19 - 01:20:48:16

Heather

Yeah, And I think creating a workplace where it feels safe to be like again, like I can take leave for my mental health is no different than I broke my leg and I need to take leave for work. And 100% feeling like, okay, it's okay to disclose what it is and not feel that your path and work could be affected, which I think a lot of people feel like.

01:20:48:16 - 01:21:06:02

Heather

I don't want to admit this because if I do that, I'm not going to maintain my role or I'm not going to be able to elevate. I'm not going to be able to move to the next level in my work. And I think we need to figure out it's not we kind of joke. It's not just one day a year, like when we have like Bell Media and they're like, Let's talk day.

01:21:06:02 - 01:21:10:00

Heather

I'm like, Great, But we have to talk about this. Every every day is one day.

01:21:10:01 - 01:21:27:19

Amie

100%. And I think that, you know, workplaces are integral to have these conversations. And I think that in my own personal experience, again, when I went off on my mental health leave, I remember my workplace distinctly giving me a form. So it's like you need to take this form to your doctor and fill it out. And I looked and it was all physical.

01:21:27:19 - 01:21:45:02

Amie

Oh, how much can you lift? How much can you bend, How much can you twist? And I gave this form to a psychologist and she was like, This is garbage. Like, this literally doesn't reflect the fact that mental health is seen as health care. We should be not just talking about physical limitations, but talking about what the mental limitations might be of the work.

01:21:45:02 - 01:22:03:18

Amie

And again, I'm I'm very cognizant of the stigma around even sharing that you might have a mental illness at work and what that what the implications might be for that. And again, we have we still have a long way to go for folks to really understand what that might look like. Again, I think this is where we continue to listen.

01:22:03:20 - 01:22:07:07

Amie

We continue to learn. We continue to speak up and advocate for mental health.

01:22:07:09 - 01:22:25:03

Heather

Amazing. Yeah, I think that there's something that I've learned to ask is, do you want me to listen or do you want help? That's actually a very good question to ask someone so that you know that they want to just talk right now or they actually are asking you to come up with solutions for them? Because I think a lot of people are like, I'm going to fix this.

01:22:25:03 - 01:22:29:16

Heather

I'll get you some solutions right now. And the thing that the person needs is, listen.

01:22:29:16 - 01:22:43:15

Sarah

Heather's very good at solutions, but as her sister who who has dealt with many of moments of life where my mental illness was hard, sometimes I just needed that conversation. And it's a good thing to realize for everybody I have to do it myself as well.

01:22:43:17 - 01:22:44:18

Heather

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

01:22:44:19 - 01:23:04:06

Amie

I think sometimes that sometimes that's all we want. We want to be able to say, Hey, you know what? Like it's been hard and, and we just want someone to listen. And then, of course, there are other times where we might be asking for help or we've reached past the point where we might not be able to ask and you might be recognizing those signs of symptoms.

01:23:04:06 - 01:23:21:18

Amie

And this is where I say, you know what? It's actually okay to to involve a primary care provider. There's only so many so far we can do as friends and as support people if we don't have that expertise in that knowledge. So it's always good to say, hey, you know, I think I think this might be some additional help and let's get on the phone and we'll call them together.

01:23:21:21 - 01:23:38:00

Heather

Or like sometimes it's like, I will go with you. I will drive you. Yes. Why did you want to sit with you in the doctor's office? Do you want to sit with you with the doctors? And then I can help give my reflection of what's happening to if you want. Like, I think that's really important for people who feel like, really scared.

01:23:38:00 - 01:23:50:05

Heather

And it's a new path, especially people who've never reached out for help with mental health before. They are like, No, I need someone there to support me who may understand what this is more than I have experienced in my life.

01:23:50:07 - 01:24:10:10

Sarah

And for me, like that happened. Like I took myself to the E.R. once because I are suicidal. And I called my mom and she sat with me and came to all the appointments and like, didn't come in to

the therapy room, but like, just knowing she was in the waiting room. I do know that, you guys, it really makes a difference having and I had one of my best friends, just like I said, I'm at the Yards.

01:24:10:10 - 01:24:30:06

Sarah

You just showed up. Didn't even ask her. She just showed up. So those things made a huge difference in that state that I was in. But I was going to ask you also, was, you know, I found when I struggled, sometimes I felt like I was a burden as a burden to my family to be, like still dealing with the same problem and to come to them be like I'm still having this issue.

01:24:30:08 - 01:24:38:14

Sarah

Is there anything you can any tips or advice you could give somebody who's in that state where the like it's happening again? And I've I feel like I'm a broken record.

01:24:38:16 - 01:24:58:15

Amie

Yeah. You know, thank you for that question. And, you know, it's okay to show emotion. I think it's so important for us to show that, you know, these things do affect us. And thank you, Sarah, for showing your emotions today. And I think that, you know, I've had that feeling to feeling that, you know, I'm being a burden or, you know, I'm I'm making things much more hard for my family.

01:24:58:17 - 01:25:15:01

Amie

And I think this is where it's so important for our family members to say to us, hey, you know, no, this is hard. This is this is really hard. And and they show that in their actions, like like your mom did and your friend by just showing up. Right. Being in that space, not even necessarily saying anything, but being in that space.

01:25:15:01 - 01:25:35:14

Amie

And I think it really helps us as individuals when we are going through the situations that we feel that we're not alone. It's it's so important that we don't feel that we're alone because that's where we do feel like we're burdened, where we feel that we've been removed from, you know, having those resources and support that that we feel that, you know, we are a burden, but we are not.

01:25:35:16 - 01:25:57:06

Amie

And our family members love us so much and they want the best for sometimes they might not know what that looks like, but just that presence. And again, if you're listening, I think just being there, showing that sign of support, you might not have the right words. Again, this is where it's helpful to educate yourself. But I think just that presence to say, you know what, you don't have

to say much other than to say I'm here to be with you.

01:25:57:07 - 01:26:08:11

Amie

No matter what. We're going to figure this out and we're going to figure this out together. So I think those are probably the the the most important things for me, when I was feeling like I was a burden as well.

01:26:08:13 - 01:26:25:11

Heather

I feel like some of that burden comes from the idea of burden comes from the films and television that we watch when it comes to mental health for you, what are some the best representations of like fighting against these stigmas or, you know, you know, accurate representation on film and television?

01:26:25:17 - 01:26:48:20

Amie

Yeah. So I'm going to give one because I had many. In other case, I dragged back the time. But there's one that I found was really powerful. And to this day, every time I watch the scene, it always makes me cry. So I don't know if you've seen this, but it's a show called Atlanta with Donald Glover. This particular episode, it's going with his character Earn, and he's addressing his mental health.

01:26:48:20 - 01:27:14:12

Amie

So again, really thinking about, you know, like even racialized folks, black folks don't tend to actually openly talk about this in particularly as a man. I found it very, very empowering to watch. So essentially, it starts with him being in his therapist's office. He's he's angry. And, you know, his therapist is talking to him and he does end up breaking down, has his therapist says to him, you know, like I understand what you might be going through.

01:27:14:12 - 01:27:50:05

Amie

And he gets upset. He he actually cries during this episode and it's right at the top of the episode. And it was very it's it's very powerful because we don't see ourselves sometimes even in these situations where we're trying to reach out for help and we know how difficult it is, and particularly for even men to speak out in relation to mental health, I found I found that to be such a powerful representation of saying it's okay to get help, it's okay to show your emotions and it's okay to be, you know, that vulnerable vulnerability is hugely important in mental health.

01:27:50:07 - 01:28:09:09

Amie

Having that trust is hugely important, but it's important that, you know, we see these images

where we see men going to therapists, we see emotions, we see vulnerability, we see that rawness and that that being so visceral. And I think that'll help people say, you know what, I've been there and I can I can muster up to do this as well.

01:28:09:12 - 01:28:19:12

Heather

Mm That's great. Yeah. The idea of just by seeing it, it means that we feel like we can see ourselves and we can do that too. So I love that. Is there any other ways that you would like.

01:28:19:12 - 01:28:19:17

Amie

To.

01:28:19:17 - 01:28:25:04

Heather

See it represented that you may not be seeing right now? Like from your perspective?

01:28:25:09 - 01:28:43:00

Amie

I always go back to the advocacy piece, right? I think that a lot of folks are doing a lot of talking. And again, there is some inherent privilege when we see, you know, celebrities talking about, you know, mental health. Right. We were able to see like Justin Bieber and, you know, Shawn Mendez take off huge periods of time to focus on their mental health.

01:28:43:00 - 01:29:05:04

Amie

And we know that that's not the reality of the situation for everybody. Right. You know, not everybody has that liquidity or even just right now the way that we look at mental health and we think about it within our own Canadian health care system, it's actually not funded the way that we think it is. So again, mental health services aren't covered and why is that?

01:29:05:04 - 01:29:33:00

Amie

Why do we not have funded services for mental health? Why do we have to have, you know, additional insurance to pay for these resources if we think it's as important and we know it's as important, why are we not putting our policies and and structuring our systems around that importance? So I think this is where I think I pressure and have these conversations with other people say, well, if we say that it's important, we say that mental health is health, then we need to put our money where our mouth is.

01:29:33:00 - 01:29:54:19

Amie

We need to put our policies where our ideas are. And again, just really pressuring many

organizations, folks who are out there talking about mental health to make sure that we resource it appropriately. I think about whether people would rather put money on the table or or, you know, deal with their mental health. And we've seen that these are unconscionable decisions that we're making people make.

01:29:54:19 - 01:30:14:07

Amie

Right. You know, can I eat or serve my mental health? And I think these are we shouldn't have to be either or we should be able to do both. And this is where I think we need to have those conversations to say, hey, what are we really doing in society here when it comes to mental health? Are we are we are we just saying these things are reaction to do something about it?

01:30:14:07 - 01:30:34:19

Amie

So that's kind of where I want to see a little bit more action, where we see that it's important, but we need to make sure that we're doing things to show that it is important, whether that's through policy, more resources so people can actually afford to see to seek out mental health services and then making it really a part of our universal health care structure, because right now it actually isn't.

01:30:35:00 - 01:30:53:23

Heather

Yeah, I think I'll say as someone who also lives in the States part of the time, they too have difficulty with all sorts of things like it's wild that you could go to a therapist for or get a certain medication and then have your insurance decide that you don't they don't think that you should be having it. And it can be like very it feels very arbitrary.

01:30:54:01 - 01:31:30:06

Heather

I think there are some places that thankfully state run facilities, like there is a counseling place in New York that I'd go to that would look at your income and then it would scale accordingly, which is fantastic. But again, those are really hard. Like it takes time to get into places and it takes time. And so sometimes it's an emergency and money is a is a big part of the barrier, especially as you know, we start to we see in the media whenever, like you said, whenever there's a violent act is put towards mental health, then when people are doing policy and all they hear about as mental health equals violence, why would they're like,

01:31:30:06 - 01:31:49:07

Heather

well, why are we helping someone who's violent? Like there's this disconnection. So I think you're right with advocacy and talking about it and saying like, this isn't actually this is very this is a kind of a false narrative. I think that you can start to make more positive changes for us, and that's starting by breaking the stigmas.

01:31:49:09 - 01:32:14:00

Amie

There's definitely a huge over criminalization of folks with mental health and the system does treat folks with mental health more harshly. Again, from my own standpoint. So I have many people in my family with mental health. I like my my son has autism, my other son has ADHD, my husband has autism and ADHD. So again, I come from a family understanding the importance of having these conversations.

01:32:14:00 - 01:32:35:08

Amie

Again, I guess if we talk about intersectionality as my children are racialized. So another added pressure and thing to worry about when it comes to mental health and how they might interact with various different services, whether it's the police, whether it's in health care, wherever it might be. And I think it's important that we do address this hyperkalemia ization because the the narrative doesn't actually fit the facts.

01:32:35:08 - 01:32:56:09

Amie

And if we are talking about fact based things, then we need to ensure that the facts actually fit the story and they don't right now. So we need to change the dialog on that as well. I think this is where we we need to ask for and push for stronger policies and procedures in relation to this. Continue to advocate for better services and access and then really change those those visual perceptions.

01:32:56:09 - 01:33:15:08

Amie

We need to see more accurate perceptions of mental health in film and television. On social media. We need to really start having these more accurate, more nuanced, more real perceptions. And I think, again, it should be done by people who are experiencing these things. They should be playing a huge part in how this content is developed and how it is portrayed.

01:33:15:08 - 01:33:32:18

Amie

Because again, at the end of the day, we are our own experts, right? And I think that's where sometimes you see those those situations where it's it's inaccurate, it's not depicted accurately. And I think that if we can be a part of those solutions that are also changing the game, the narrative and how people view mental health and mental illness.

01:33:32:19 - 01:33:34:11

Heather

Yeah, exactly.

01:33:34:13 - 01:33:42:06

Sarah

Do you have any resources you'd recommend our listeners to engage with when they're, you know, thinking about how we can end mental health stigma?

01:33:42:07 - 01:33:59:21

Amie

Yeah, You know, I think when I think about resources, I'm kind of thinking about like, what is it that we're seeing right now? And kind of in this day and age? Because again, as time changes, everybody uses various different forms of media to engage. And I would say, you know, podcasts like yourself are really, really important to actually listen to, to engage with.

01:33:59:21 - 01:34:17:21

Amie

And I also think that finding evidence based podcasts or various tools are also important. There's lots of great tips and things out there that folks can kind of turn to. And in that, you know, like I said, kind of at the top of this, there's so much misinformation and it's so hard to kind of weave through all of that.

01:34:17:21 - 01:34:40:00

Amie

But it's so important to make sure that whatever we're we're taking in that it is evidence based, is informed. I'm not going to name certain podcasts that I don't like and I would not recommend, but there are some folks that have a huge platforms that are not saying the right things when it comes to mental health. And I'm very weary of, I think other people should be wary of where folks are getting their information from again.

01:34:40:00 - 01:35:05:21

Amie

So using those evidence based tools, using evidence informed podcast, listening to folks like yourself, I think those resources or any types of resources that you know, I think there's like mental health America, there's Cam H here in Canada as well, finding those evidence based resources can also help. And then looking in your community what's available just around the your doorstep in terms of mental health resources, I think community hubs are super important.

01:35:06:03 - 01:35:22:07

Amie

They help you feel connected, they help you, you know, see yourself and other people. And I think that those resources are important too. So again, making sure that you you really and I can't stress this enough, find evidence based resources to help support mental health needs.

01:35:22:12 - 01:35:28:02

Heather

Where can people find out more about you following you online? Keep up with all the wonderful things that.

01:35:28:02 - 01:35:29:15

Sarah

So many good things.

01:35:29:17 - 01:35:49:06

Amie

Yeah. Oh my goodness I help website so it's WW W dot Amie Vallely dot com or you could go to Amie Archibald WorldCom that's where you can pretty much find me You can reach out to me through there and of course I'm on social media. It's not called Twitter anymore. I was just about to say, you can find me on Twitter.

01:35:49:08 - 01:36:09:15

Amie

It's actually I just I just cringe. They all it's it just seems so wrong. You could find me on X at Amie Vallely. I'm also on Instagram. Not as much because I'm not a visual kind of person, but you can find me on Instagram at 80 Vallely as well. But I'd say most likely through, you know, through my website is probably the best place to reach me.

01:36:09:15 - 01:36:14:01

Amie

I am available on LinkedIn and through the National School Board as well.

01:36:14:01 - 01:36:21:21

Sarah

Amazing. I do have one last thing. Is there anything else that you might we might have missed that you want to say? One last nugget.

01:36:21:23 - 01:36:43:01

Amie

If I could add just is a verbal place to say I need help and I acknowledge how difficult that is. I've been there. You've all have been there as well. And I think that it's it's that small step to do one of two things, either to say, to see and recognize that someone might need help and to try to help and then just say, you know what, things are different for me.

01:36:43:01 - 01:37:04:10

Amie

Maybe, maybe I will try something different or maybe I will reach out to that care provider to say, I just haven't been feeling well, because sometimes that might be the language. I think there's generational gap too, in terms of how we talk about mental health and and maybe that's how it sounds. But I think just starting that initial conversation, I think that's so important and it can

really change your life.

01:37:04:10 - 01:37:17:08

Amie

I can't speak highly of the opportunity to say, you know what, I think I need to do things differently and I do need a little bit of help. There's not there's no shame in saying I need help. I think it's perfectly fine to do that.

01:37:17:11 - 01:37:24:11

Sarah

Amazing. Well, thank you so much for all of this wisdom you shared with us today. I'm going to go out there and fight those isms and thank you so much.

01:37:24:15 - 01:37:27:13

Amie

Thank you so much for having me today.

01:37:27:15 - 01:37:36:10

Heather

Thank you for listening to the first part of our three part special on navigating life with mental illness. Please come back tomorrow for episode two about the journey to Diagnosis.

01:37:36:10 - 01:37:45:05

Sarah

Braaains is hosted and produced by Heather and Sara Taylor and mixed and mastered by Tony Bowe. Our theme song is by our little brother Depeche and our graphics were created by perpetual motion.

01:37:45:05 - 01:38:04:12

Heather

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01:38:04:16 - 01:38:06:20

Sarah

Until next time. I'm your host, Sara, and.

01:38:06:20 - 01:38:09:12

Heather

I'm your host Heather by.

