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## Am I Normal? Episode 5 – Anxiety

So, I have a really bad story from when I was in high school. Before a football game I thought I was just going to play music from my ipod, before it started; and I was in the booth with another friend- and they came up to me and said: "We don't have someone to sing the 'Star-Spangled Banner,'" and being the only theatre-person in the booth, they all looked to me...

\*Am I Normal Intro Plays\*

Welcome back to "Am I Normal," I'm Jonah!

And I'm Shiloh!

And I'm Kimberly!

Yes, we also have Kimberly with us; so they all looked to you Kim. Were you the hero? Did you save the day?

The "Star-Spangled Banner" is the one song you never mess up- I was not the hero, I was the villain. And so, I, I was the only person, I was so nervous, and then- I couldn't do it. I was like, shaking, my voice was cracking; before I even started. And my friend looks at me, and she says, "I'll do it with you." And so, we get on the little mic and we start...and we, the first line is: "Oh say can you see...." We sounded terrible, and we both laughed! During the song! And we kept going in and out of laughing and singing it, and then at one point we were both just so nervous we just stopped and, like, walked away from the mic and one of the gentlemen in the booth took the mic very seriously and then spoke the rest and finished out the song. He didn't sing it; he just said the words. "Whose broad stripes and bright stars, through the perilous night...." And we were freaking out, we were just in there like, "Oh my gosh, we just did that in front of, like, all these people." In walks our principal, he slams the door and reams us. Again, "Star-Spangled Banner" is the one song you don't mess up, and we were humiliated because our nerves just took over us, and it was so bad, this was a memory that I've tried to forget 'cause this is not a highlight of my high school career.

Oh man, ah what I remember is when Fergie messed up the "Star-Spangled Banner," and she, like, literally tried to make it her own. Yeah, don't mess up the "Star-Spangled Banner." That is that is not something you mess up, (Kim: Nope!) but so many people have, and I love watching videos of "Star-Spangled Banner" fails. Alright, now let's get into the news! Uhm, well today we, on the podcast we are talking about anxiety and what we can do to reduce our own stress. As well as, what the CDC says to reduce our own stress and who it can affect.



So, it's important to remember that, uh, everyone reacts differently to stressful situations, and how you can respond to this outbreak of COVID-19 can depend on your background, and things that make you different from other people. So, people that may respond very strongly to this crisis are older people with chronic diseases, children, teens, parents who are helping respond to the COVID-19 crisis, doctors, healthcare providers, and first responders. People who have mental health conditions, including problems with substance use. During this time, you know, there's going to be a lot of fear and worry about peoples' own health. Changes in sleeping patterns and eating patterns. Difficulty sleeping or concentrating and focusing on tasks; and there could be worsening in chronic health problems due to stress. So, just some ways that the CDC says you can support yourself is: taking breaks from watching or reading or listening to news stories. Also, including in that, social media as we talked about last time. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be really upsetting, so be sure to take care of your body. Take deep breaths, stretch, meditate, go out for a walk, and take that time to really unwind from all the information that you're receiving. And, try to do some other activities you may enjoy, like, maybe puzzles or being sure to connect with others and making sure that your friends and family are okay can also help deal with the stress. So, Kim, how do you deal with stress?

Well especially during this time, I am a busy bee, and I need to have things to do, and have lists, and have structure in my daily life. And so, with working from home and sheltering in place, I've made it a point really to make my bed, have breakfast, get dressed, and do things that I could check off a list and feel productive while I'm staying at home all day.

So, staying at home and being productive is really helping you?

Exactly, like being able to make a to-do list and check off things, that's a really good way for me at least to de-stress and for me to feel less funky(?) during the shelter in place.

I'm definitely the different type! Productivity is something that doesn't help me to de-stress at all. I need to be able to clear my mind, uh, when it comes to stressful situations, and if that means, ah, taking a pause really quickly with whatever I'm doing, that can be a really great way for me to just reorient myself and reset in a stressful situation. So, absolutely to that point you were talking about earlier Jonah, this time can absolutely be a, a m-, a magnifying glass, excuse me, for these kinds of stressors and things that might be going on in peoples' lives. Being aware of that is really important.

Yeah Shiloh, thank you for even adding that idea, because I think there's a lot of ways we can deal with stress; and it's not just being productive. For some people that might work. As well as, just relaxing, maybe even just laying in bed and processing what's happening also can be a, a really good way to de-stress. It's really knowing yourself and trying to figure out what works best for you. So, like, what things do each of you do that represent those tactics of dealing with stress?

I like to cook a lot! And even just making a breakfast every day; I'm always someone that eats, like, a granola bar, but actually being able to, like, make toast and eggs and stuff, and structuring my way- my day that way has really helped me. And then, for dinner too. I really like cooking, 'cause it's a good way to de-stress and you get to eat after. So, it's awesome!



For me, something that helps me when I'm feeling overwhelmed is doing something very, um, mindful I would say. Ah, like taking a hot shower or just laying in my room, turning the lights off, maybe putting the fan on for some white noise and just closing my eyes for a second can be very relaxing.

Those are both great ways to, um, I've also been cooking a lot lately! I feel like I've cooked literally every meal since the shelter in place happened. Ooh, rosemary and potatoes, like, rosemary, potatoes, (Kim: Uhh, yeah!) salt, garlic powder, olive oil! Oooh! Tastes so good!

Yep, I've been cooking rice!

\*Laughter\*

Nice!

Remember, Shiloh isn't productive, he, he meditates!

That's true, that's true.

He photosynthesizes during this time!

I listen to, I listen to the rumbling of my stomach...

Hey, yo rice is, but rice is a very hearty food! I mean, there's, there's a lot of things that come with rice; rice and beans is a full protein, you know? So, like, I think rice is great. I use rice almost with every meal!

I've been eating a lot of bread; like, I've been eating so much, and I've been trying to stay active. I went for a run yesterday for like the first time in a while and I did some, like, squats and stuff. Now my, like, thighs and butt are really sore.

\*Laughter\*

Yeah Shiloh, I get Shiloh, that cooking's not your thing, but you said you've been playing video games a lot more last podcast. And, so have I, actually and you know this COVID-19 thing can be a major stressor for many different people as we were talking about earlier. And, I was playing a game last night and over my headset two kids were talking about how it scared them a lot.

Yeah, and I can understand why people are feeling scared. Our news is completely flooded by the news of COVID-19, and it's a constant thought. And, I just want to take a moment and talk a little bit about fear, and like, the ways our body reacts; anxiety, as I was mentioning earlier with my story about having to sing and how nervous I was. Just to define anxiety, that's just describing feelings of stress and worry.



And, a lot of us are feeling anxiety during this time. Also, how our body reacts: Our brain reacts the same way to real danger and unreal danger. Which is why, say, when we have a nightmare we wake up and we're sweating, and our heart's pounding. Or I remember, there's a story- is, I went to "Halloween Horror Nights" at a local theme park and this person came up to us and scared us and got right in our faces! And, I ran, and my friends stayed back and, like, screamed at the person. And yelled at them for scaring us. And that's what's called "fight or flight." It's kind of the surge of adrenaline when we're in danger. Either you run or you stay and try to fight. That's part of what's called, also, our survival brain. And survival's really important! These reactions that we have, this heart-pounding, this running away, this urge to fight...this is something that is really important for us, like, as human beings because if we didn't have this instinct and if we didn't have these reactions, then we wouldn't be here today because our ancestors needed these things to survive in the past.

Yeah, I mean, I think our bodies are meant to survive. And, um, any fear we have is meant for a positive reason, right? I got to talk to people who went to this "de-stressing workshop," and what they talked about is, "How do you reframe your ideas about stress?" And whether that be anxiety, whether that be anything kind of surrounding that. One of the- his main points was, "How do you re-frame your stress?" Everything that you stress out about, there's actually a positive reason behind it. For example, you're stressed about schoolwork. Let's just say you're now back in school, it's now an internet-school and you're stressed out that you're not going to get done and you're not going to be able to get good grades. But what you are stressing about is the fact that you want to do quality work, you want to represent yourself well, and you don't want to disappoint anybody or yourself. And when you recognize that that's a positive way to look at the fact that you're stressed out about schoolwork, that can maybe motivate you to actually do that good work that you really want to do. And it gives you that opportunity to see what you can actually accomplish.

Yeah, learning how to manage our stress is so important. We have natural responses when we're stressed, and a lot of times the things we're stressed about aren't these scary monsters or whatever things our ancestors had to survive. Our stresses are school, and we aren't able to release the energy that our body naturally reacts with. And so, learning how to use stress as a way to motivate us during this time is really, really important.

And it's also important to recognize what kind of stresses you do have at this time, and if you do feel like it's overwhelming or too much to deal with, you can always call the California Youth Crisis Line. Which is- 1(800) 843-5200, and they're there to talk to you about whatever you need to talk about. It could be something positive if you just want to be, like, "I did this!" and, "I really want to tell someone, and I don't feel like I can tell anyone at home because they won't listen to me." Or it could be something where you really, really need support. And whether that be, like, coming out to your parents or talking about literally, anything. Anything that's stressing you out. It could be talking about what's going on in the world today. And so, just know that there is someone to support you, and that's the California Youth Crisis Line which is, again, 1(800) 843-5200. With everything that is going on in the world, it can be very, very hard, and very stressful, and like Kim said it's very good to know yourself and how you can deal and cope with those stresses, and that anxiety. And, with all that going on in the world it's always good to spread a little joy! In a smile, a laugh, and a good story. So Shiloh, what's going on that's good in the world?



Yeah, so I actually have a fun story that I'd like to share, uh, in that regard. Ah, apparently, hand sanitizer and toilet paper aren't the only shortages that are going on. The strangest shortage that is currently going on probably has to be shelter pets! Dogs and cats who are now being adopted at, uh, just really quickly because people want to have that company. And that is really nice to hear. A lot of those pets are finding homes. A lot of families are finding comfort with that, and ah, I think that's a really great way to help with feelings of stress or anxiety; is just having, ah, that little bit of company there. So, I thought that was really sweet (Kim: That's awesome!) and I wanted to share that with you all.

That's great, and I'm kind of jealous right now because I really want a puppy, and where I live I cannot have a puppy.

Same, same.

What kind of puppy would you want?

Any puppy! I went to the SPCA when we were with Nightmare down in Fresno, and they have a great SPCA. There are so many dogs, I hope a lot of those dogs found a home. Especially during this time, it's really important that we have that emotional support from either our friends and family or our furry friends.

\*Transition Music Plays\*

Just to recap: in the news just be aware of who could be stressed out by what's going on, and be able to support them in the way that they need. As well as, support yourself! Right? We learned that about each other. It's like, we need to support ourselves the way that we need to support ourselves, whether that be being super-productive or not being productive. And being able to process what's going on. As well as, what is anxiety? Right? We talked about what that is, and what anxiety is- just the definition real quick, is just the feeling of worry or nervousness or uneasiness typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome. And so, it's completely normal to have those feelings, especially in a time like today. And thank you Shiloh for bringing in the end there, with a happy story of pets being adopted; and it is great that pets are being adopted, and it's great that people are getting the emotional help that they need.

Well again, thank you for joining us on this episode of "Am I Normal?" And you can follow us for more updates on our website which is [kp.org/et/ncal](http://kp.org/et/ncal).

And, if you want to keep up with us on social media, you can follow our twitter at @kpetncal.

And that's all we have for you today, thanks again for joining us, my name's Shiloh!

I'm Kimberly!



And I'm Jonah, and "Am I Normal?" That's what I'm wondering...catch you later!

\*Outro Plays\*

This has been the "Am I Normal" podcast by Kaiser Permanente Educational Theatre.

*Note: Please share your feedback about any content ideas for future episodes with Jared Randolph, [jared.randolph@kp.org](mailto:jared.randolph@kp.org), Nightmare on Puberty St. program coordinator.*

