**ANXIOUS NATION**

**TRANSCRIPT – 2.21.23**

**RABBI ALEXIS BERK** [00:00:28] We're so happy to be in this beautiful sanctuary to celebrate the bat mitzvah of the one and only Sevey. You're not an adult right now. We know that. You're not paying a mortgage. You're not you know; you're not getting a job and supporting yourself. You're on the brink of it.

**LAURA MORTON** [00:00:45] My darling Sevey, what an honor and privilege it is to be your mom and to stand here before you today to witness you become a bat mitzvah. I'm very proud of you.

**LAURA MORTON (VO)** [00:00:57] I can't believe I have a daughter who is 13.

**LAURA MORTON** [00:01:02] Love you more than unicorns. That's a lot of love.

**LAURA MORTON (VO)** [00:01:12] People always say how quickly the time goes with our kids. But for us, each day, month, year has been a journey and not always an easy one.

**SEVEY MORTON** [00:01:24] The lessons I've learned in the past year while studying this Torah portion and everything about it is to stand up for its right and only look forward because the past is in the past.

**LAURA MORTON (VO)** [00:01:34] While Sevey appears so confident and self-possessed in public, getting to this day has not been easy for her. Because since she was a baby, she's had an extremely anxious existence.

**SEVEY MORTON** [00:01:50] Anxiety like hurts my bones. I don't know how to say that... Like it hurts my bones tonight. It feels like a little piece of my heart rips off every time.

**LAURA MORTON (VO)** [00:02:03] It's become almost a daily thing in our house for Sevey to have a colossal meltdown where she lands on the ground, can't catch your breath, and can't move.

**SEVEY MORTON** [00:02:16] I start getting this like gut feeling to just start crying and start, like, hysterically melting down. It feels like a giant person is just going like this to my head. It just makes my body just like, stop everything that it is doing and just breakdown.

**LAURA MORTON (VO)** [00:02:42] Sevey's anxiety has left me feeling powerless as her mother, and I know we're not alone. The pressures our kids feel, the complexities of the world, and their ability to cope with it has made anxiety impact our kids on a level we've never seen before. So I set out to make this film to understand what our kids are going through.

**GC CORRIS** [00:03:06] It gets very hard to breathe, and my head's pounding, and I can't exactly think straight.

**NAIYA OSIYEMI** [00:03:13] It became unbearable. Every day I dreaded going to school.

**NORA VASCONCELLOS** [00:03:20] This like, storm of just negativity.

**JONAH BURNS** [00:03:25] Suddenly, you start breathing really hard. And you can't think straight, and you start screaming and getting angry for no reason.

**KAMERON JOHNSON** [00:03:34] Anxiety is like worrying about your shadow.

**LAURA MORTON** [00:03:44] Anxiety in kids and teens is a national crisis, and it's time we talk about it.

[00:03:50] **ANXIOUS NATION (TITLE).**

[00:03:50] **(TEXT) Three decades ago, the gravest public health threats to teenagers in the United States came from binge drinking, teenage pregnancy, and smoking. These have since fallen sharply, replaced by a new public health concern: soaring rates of mental health disorders. - The New York Times, April 23, 2022**

**MALE VOICE-OVER** [00:04:25] The real joy, as well as the responsibility of parenthood, begins the day the mother and father bring the baby home from the hospital.

**HEATHER CUMMINGS** [00:04:39] Yes. Noah is our oldest child. And so as first-time parents, we just assumed that, you know, crying 23 out of 24 hours a day was normal.

**DAVE CUMMINGS** [00:04:59] I think it was actually when he first went to school that we probably noticed it was an issue. We would drop him off. They would assure us that it was going to be fine.

**DAVE CUMMINGS** [00:05:21] And then he would go to the other side of the building outside for early recess and we would hear him screaming as we walked away from the building. It was just awful.

**NOAH CUMMINGS** [00:05:34] The first real memory I have of being very anxious going to school... I was clinging to the seat when my dad was trying to pull me out of the car, and it almost became a sense of panic when I was feeling anxious. And I would all of a sudden start to feel a little bit sick and then my mind would start racing. I would get really nervous looking for a place to go, maybe biting my nails and think, "Okay, I'm going to throw up soon. Something bad is going to happen to me. I won't be able to handle it."

**HEATHER CUMMINGS** [00:06:13] And he would call and say, "My stomach hurts. I think I'm going to throw up." And it started as one phone call and then it became four or five, six phone calls. And ending each day with Noah was a process. It would take up to two or three hours a night to put him to bed. That was our routine. And there was one night I said to him, "Why are you so afraid to go to sleep?" And he said, "Because tomorrow I'm going to wake up and it's going to start all over again."

**JACKIE RAMSEY** [00:06:59] Good girl, Cooper say hello. Cooper, honey, be careful of the big kids.

**JACKIE RAMSEY** [00:07:16] I wasn't really sure what it was, but when she was four and we were applying to kindergarten, she started to have some motor ticks. She was doing a very aggressive flinching of the arm. No, no, you don't have to demonstrate.

**COOPER RAMSEY** [00:07:35] It was like I would go like this like constantly.

**JACKIE RAMSEY** [00:07:37] And it was really painful to watch them. We took her to the pediatrician just to tell her what was going on. And the pediatrician said, "Do you have any idea how anxious your child is about all this kindergarten nonsense, these interviews, these playdates?" And I said, "Oh, I don't really think she's anxious." And he said, "Yeah, I think she's really anxious.".

**COOPER RAMSEY** [00:08:07] For me, I feel like it's just kind of something that can really come in big, and it can last. And sometimes it makes you think about all the bad possibilities. It's just sometimes it feels like you can't control it.

**COOPER RAMSEY** [00:08:22] When I go to bed, I have a lot of things beside me, like Chapstick and hair ties and Vaseline and tissues. And so that's just where I keep all that. And then I get in bed. I make sure my sheets are tucked. That's just the way of comfort. And then I organize all my things and organize my things, and I put them like in the middle.

**COOPER RAMSEY** [00:08:42] Sometimes I just feel really overwhelmed with it, like, Oh my God, Like, sometimes I'll just have a minute and I'll be like, "I need to get that thought out of my brain.".

**COOPER RAMSEY** [00:08:53] When I first started having anxiety, it did start off with the stuffed animals and the bedtime routine. I was having an extremely difficult time sleeping. I couldn't stop straightening things and closing things and making sure things were exactly how I wanted them. Some nights I would just I would sit there, and I say, "I can't stop. I think I'm going to die.".

**JACKIE RAMSEY** [00:09:23] That was really when we knew anxiety was something that was definitely a part of everything and probably a part of the ticking when she was, you know, four.

**NORA VASCONCELLOS** [00:09:44] It's crazy to think about being a kid and having episodes like panic attack level episodes. Like there was one instance where I couldn't find where my mom was in the house and there was a locked door to my dad's studio, and he wasn't home. And at five or six I punched my hand through like a full pane glass door because I was so frantic that she was on the other side and like needed me and that, you know, she needed help or something. It was just a whole -- the way it escalated was probably in 30 seconds. And she had just been on the phone upstairs.

**MIKE SNEIDEMAN** [00:10:24] Well, Jonah, if you need to take a nap, that's fine. But, you know, we got to read the book. There's nothing we can do. You said that just the one page is boring. It's, you know...

**JONAH BURNS** [00:10:35] It is. It's so stupid!

**JONAH BURNS** [00:10:40] If it happens, like I'll just kind of feel maybe a little bit sick. For the most part, I just want to scream and being really upset and you just kind of start spiraling.

**JONAH BURNS** [00:10:54] It's basically just when I have a bunch of stuff, like I guess a bunch of information like coming in at once or like a bunch of things that people are telling me to do, that's really what triggers me.

**MIKE SNEIDEMAN** [00:11:09] When he's actually in the middle of anxiety issues, it can be a little scary sometimes. Yeah.. it’s what I would describe. She says heartbreaking. I say scary. It's kind of the same thing.

**MERDITH BURNS** [00:11:25] The thought that goes through my mind, "What do I have to do?” You know, I pray about it. I think about it. I'm like, "What can I do to do this? What can I do? What's the next solution? What's the next strategy? How can I help him?" I can't foresee him being like this his whole life. It's just torture.

**NAIYA OSIYEMI** [00:11:50] I just had all these feelings in my gut. All these gut problems where I just was feeling sick all the time and it was like, I'm embarrassed to be in class because my stomach is rumbling or I'm having to run to the restroom. So it became more embarrassment. I was in elementary school, you know, fifth grade around all these other kids who seemed to be so carefree and who I didn't know, maybe some of them were dealing with some of the similar things I was, but no one was talking about it. I didn't think anyone else was having the same issues I was having, and I didn't want to be judged. I began going to the doctor just trying to figure out, you know, what it was that I was dealing with. They really didn't know what to do for me. And I tried everything, everything under the sun. And it was never a cure.

**NORA VASCONCELLOS** [00:12:51] It was always like going to the doctor and the doctor saying, "Oh, it's like a phase she's going through." But what happens is, like you can say it's a phase, but I think with anxiety, a huge factor of it is how it changes. You tend to find new triggers. You find things that -- like it goes through, it does go through phases, but it's not a phase. Yeah.

**HEATHER CUMMINGS** [00:13:18] I remember one day, Noah coming home from school and sitting on the bottom step, and he said, "No one understands me. What's wrong with me? Why don't I feel normal?" And that's a terrible question to get when you're talking to your child in bed at night, saying, "Why aren't I normal?"

**LYNN LYONS** [00:13:41] I travel around the country. I have been talking for a few years about what's going on with our kids anxiety, the issues that we're dealing with, stress. When I talk to parents, I do a lot of parenting workshops and conferences and that kind of stuff. And I say to parents at the beginning jokingly, "Okay, so here's the deal. If it's nature, it's you, if it's nurture, it's you. And then everybody sort of laughs nervously. But really, it's a combination. There is a genetic component. Temperament plays a part in it. If you have several kids, you may have one child... You say, "Gosh, he's so laid back." And then we've got other kids with different temperaments, more introverted, more sensitive, just generally more fearful of the world. So there is that huge nature component. What do we do with that is the nurture. And if we have a kid who we know is at risk because of trauma, because of their personality, because of the way that their family handles the world. That's when we have to step in and say, "How do we nurture through the nature?"

**HAROLD KOPLEWICZ** [00:14:51] In the same way that sometimes your kid has a musical ear and sometimes they have a gift for math... Sometimes they're going to be more anxious or more inattentive than the average child. And basically we're talking about DNA roulette.

**DAN SIEGEL** [00:15:06] When you have children, you get this whole set of networks inside of you, of ancient, ancient history... as a mammal and as a human being to protect that baby. That's like your number one thing. I'm going to keep that baby safe. So, of course, even in you, it can create an incredible anxiety. What am I supposed to do so that my child won't get depressed, won't get anxious, won't get into trouble, won't experience trauma, won't feel despair in their life, that they can have a good, solid life. They can be kind, they can be caring, they can be empathic, and they can feel good about who they are.

**KENYA HAMEED** [00:15:47] Our environment plays such a strong role as to those who go on to develop anxiety disorders. And so I kind of like to think about it as genetics being the gun and the environment being the trigger.

**DR. SHEFALI** [00:16:14] I believe the parent/child relationship is the most profound relationship because the child is bathed and surrounded by the parents' energy more than anyone else. And those early years is when the child is the most absorbent, the most sponge-like. So it's very important for the parent to be in a state of wholeness.

**LYNN LYONS** [00:16:36] Nobody comes into my office and says, "You know, I really wanted to make my kid a worrier like I am." But what we know about kids that are anxious, that are raised in worried environments is that they perceive the world as a more dangerous place. Anxiety is generally fueled by thoughts about things that haven't happened yet. It's called catastrophic thinking. Anxious parents talk a lot about the dangers of the world. They catastrophize. So instead of saying, "Hey, pay attention when you ride your bike." They say, "Look, there are people on the way to school that could steal you and you could get hit by a car." And they talk about all the things that could happen. Now, think about the way that worry and anxiety work. They're all about what-iffing. Thinking about what could happen. And anxious parents tend to do that in front of their children, not just about what's going on with their children, but in their own lives, too.

**HEATHER CUMMINGS** [00:17:38] Noah would go out and want to ride his bike in the driveway without his helmet. I would say things like, "You can't go out without your helmet. Do you know what would happen? You fall off your bike, you crack your skull, you know, you'll have brain damage." And then, you know, I would give every worst-case scenario. And I did that to my kids.

**JEFFREY ZEIG** [00:17:55] Anxiety depends a lot on your upbringing. There's a family feeling. And this family feeling is an heirloom dating back generations that's just transmitted around the dinner table that helps people to shape what it is that they'll feel.

**DR. SHEFALI** [00:18:14] And each one of us comes with a legacy from our own childhoods. And those early childhood experiences create imprints within us, a script, a mental movie we make of who we are, how we relate with others, and how the world is. You know, how our parents were around love, around challenges, around race, color, sexuality. All of that has created a script within us that creates our life story upon which we now base our entire existence. Unless we awaken to these patterns, unless we realize how we are living a pattern, we will unconsciously project these patterns onto our children.

**JACKIE RAMSEY** [00:19:08] I was always an anxious kid I think, even if my parents or friends didn't realize it. I was always worried about something. I was worried about money or worried about how I looked, worried about friends, worried about what people thought. It was unsettling.

**JACKIE RAMSEY** [00:19:33] When I was a kid, did you find me to be anxious?

**JACKIE'S MOTHER** [00:19:41] I don't know that I would have said it was anxious. You had a well, you had a lot of ticks.

**JACKIE RAMSEY** [00:19:46] What sort of ticks? Physical ticks?

**JACKIE'S MOTHER** [00:19:49] Physical ticks, like Cooper. But your father did also, so it didn't bother me.

**TIM RAMSEY** [00:19:56] I could see where people would literally be thinking dark thoughts like "This is on the DNA of your family, and then, you know, you're to blame." But I don't think we've gone down that path.

**JACKIE RAMSEY** [00:20:14] If you look at the closet, every shirt has to be laying on the hanger, facing the same way. The hangers are virtually the same distance apart. And he's meticulous about it. Shoes in plastic containers. I've never seen tie hung so neatly, almost color coordinated. He is impeccably organized, neat. And it's just sort of the way he is with all his stuff.

**TIM RAMSEY** [00:20:42] I'm certainly a neat-nick, fussy, regimented. It's just a way of, I think, imposing order on a chaotic world. And so I'm going to put myself in the category of definitely hyper regimented, but not, you know, to the point of... What's the word I'm searching for?

**JACKIE RAMSEY** [00:21:12] Dysfunction.

**TIM RAMSEY** [00:21:13] Yeah.

**MEREDITH BURNS** [00:21:17] I knew there was something off about me. I was a very depressed teenager. I knew that that wasn't normal, and I was looking for solutions for myself.

**MIKE SNEIDEMAN** [00:21:31] Yeah. I've had a lifelong struggle with mental illness. And Jonah certainly has inherited some of my brain chemistry. He's got to deal with his dad, who has major anxiety issues himself. So it's a challenge for the poor kid, you know. Because I have problems and I can't... I try to remember back to when I was a kid and when he is having a bad day, I feel like it was much more intense than anything I experienced at his age.

**KENYA HAMEED** [00:22:08] So if a parent hasn't coped with their own mental health concerns, it makes it very difficult for them to be able to try and address a child's concerns. Kids are always going to need you, and when you don't have the resources to just be present and to kind of manage your own experiences and your own thoughts, it makes it incredibly difficult to take care of somebody else.

**NAIYA OSIYEMI** [00:22:48] I thought I would just show you guys some of my pictures from when I was growing up. So just watch the camera... My mom, dad and I. I think with my anxiety, it's a bit of a mixture of nature and nurture. It's hard to tell, you know, the exact balance. But I think given that my mom and my grandmother and probably her mother have all suffered from anxiety, that there's definitely a strong genetic component to it. But I think the nurture part of it is also a huge role. This is my parents' wedding photo. I keep this in my scrapbook because, I mean, they're divorced now, so I don't think either one of them wanted this picture anymore. But I keep it.

[00:23:42] Yeah. So my parents were, you know, we're fighting a lot. Ended up getting a divorce. I mean, it made me grow up very quickly. I kind of felt like I was taking care of my sister and making sure she was okay. I'm very protective over her. I think my parents kind of look to me to, you know, it's like, "What does your sister want to eat? You know, how is she feeling?" They look to me to kind of give those updates. And that can also be really stressful.

[00:24:14] You know, my mom and my dad didn't know how to deal with my anxiety. They would say, "You know, it's all in your head. It's fine." And I think that caused a lot of loneliness because I was feeling these things, but I didn't have a name to put on it at the time. So I kind of was like, "Something's wrong with me, but I don't know what it is, and I don't know if I'll get any help any time soon."

**HAROLD KOPLEWICZ** [00:24:47] On average, depending on the diagnosis, parents wait anywhere from 2 to 8 years from the onset of symptoms till they go to a mental health professional. The reason I find that so chilling is that we treat everything else with more seriousness, with more respect. If someone gets a rash, by the time I'm done speaking, they've gone to the drugstore to get some cortisone. And if it's not gone in two days, within two weeks, they're in a dermatologist's office. And yet we do not give the same concern to our children's mental health.

**KENYA HAMEED** [00:25:28] It's also something that you can't physically see. Like a broken bone, there on display. Everyone can see it. Because it's something that not everybody is experiencing, it's very easy to chalk it up to just kind of being weak.

**DR. SHEFALI** [00:25:45] There's been so much shame around any sort of mental ill health that families have typically suppressed it. And that's why I think in today's generation we're seeing it more clearly. But it's always been there.

**MEREDITH BURNS** [00:26:03] I've observed anxiety in my parents. Definitely. It's not something that everyone's really comfortable talking about. It's a different generation. There's not as much willingness to talk about that it's okay and that we shouldn't have it stigmatized. So it's kind of a little embarrassing.

**KENYA HAMEED** [00:26:22] It's also very difficult for parents to identify problems within their child if they're having so much difficulty themselves. I think that potentially they may have blinders on.

**JACKIE RAMSEY** [00:26:37] I'm here in Cooper's room. With Cooper's OCD, she wants everything to be really symmetrical, which I totally get. So when we're making her bed -- and this is kind of a new thing, she didn't really care too much about this, but recently, it's a thing. So I have two-fold each side. And she wants to know that each side of the bed is tucked in really tightly. So I go to the other side, and I do the same thing.

**LYNN LYONS** [00:27:08] I talk a lot about anxiety as the cult leader. The cult leader says, "These are the rules we're going to follow." Families listen because they've just got to get through the day. So you got to get to your job. You want your kid to sleep in his own bed. You want them to go to school. You don't want the chaos that happens when you disobey the cult leader. So you start listening to the cult leader. And the problem is, is that the more you listen to the cult leader, the stronger this thing gets. That's how cult leaders work. So people become beholden, and they will say, "Oh, everything's going great." So people will come to see me, and I'll say, "Well, what have you learned about managing anxiety in your family?" "Well, as long as we..." Fill in the blank.

**JACKIE RAMSEY** [00:27:55] Like if I were to leave the bed like this, I don't know if you can see it, but it's just uneven and not tucked tightly enough. She would not be happy. So I have to take it down, tuck it in. And if it's not tucked on both sides, she really can't go to sleep. And it just causes her some anxiety and it causes her to have to do another fixing of the bed before. So I'm happy to do it and it only takes a few minutes.

**LYNN LYONS** [00:28:31] As long as we put the cult leader in charge, as long as everybody falls in line, things will go great. The problem is, how do you pull that off? Worlds get smaller. I've had kids where the child determines what restaurant the family is allowed to eat at, that the child determines that the parents have to go to bed at the same time as the child. Nobody's allowed to be in certain rooms of the house and they're not doing it on purpose and they're not trying to be controlling. But the cult leader says, "Listen to what I'm saying, or there's going to be a price to pay." And they don't want to pay the price, understandably. And it gets stronger and stronger. And you start avoiding more. You start changing your routines. You start demanding of other people that they follow your cult leader, too. And pretty soon, the anxiety is what is determining what everybody does and what everybody experiences. And it happens fast.

**DAVE CUMMINGS** [00:29:27] There was a day in particular when I went to school with Noah to sit in the classroom with Noah just to reassure him. I just watched him and occasionally would go over and kind of rub his neck and say, "It's okay." And all the while we were sort of building on team worry, you know, building on his anxiety.

**LYNN LYONS** [00:29:49] Are you working to create certainty and to create comfort in the absence of skill building? So an example of that may be... So you've got a child who's having difficulty going into school, so the school and the parents work together, and they come up with a plan that everything goes in a certain order.

**MAN ON VIDEO** [00:30:09] Backfield shifts to the right, the right and take the defensive tackle in...

**LYNN LYONS** [00:30:14] So everybody works really hard to make sure that everything goes as planned. The anxiety disorder says, "This is exactly what I need." The more you do the disorder, the stronger it gets, the more that everybody steps in to make sure that anxiety gets what it wants, the stronger this thing gets. So I use that phrase all the time... "Are you doing the disorder?"

**NOAH CUMMINGS** [00:30:36] I remember feeling better for that day, but then I don't think there was a long-term plan in effect there because you couldn't come to school every day. So I felt better for one day and then went right back to the same routine, the next one.

**LYNN LYONS** [00:30:58] And then there are parents who have the tough love approach. Basically what they're saying to me is that, "We're working for the cult leader and it's not working because the problem's getting worse." So they're not totally off base. But the tough love approach is simply based on a lack of understanding and a lack of talking about skills. They just don't know what to do instead. So they move far in the other direction. What happens with families when you've got one that believes in tough love and one that's working for the cult leader is they stake out their territory and then they get farther and farther apart. The more the parent says, the more that you do tough love, the more I'm going to compensate over here. The more that you work for the cult leader, the more that I'm going to resist that. So we need to pull them together so that we're talking about skill building.

**MAN ON VIDEO** [00:32:08] Excellent, Nora.

**LYNN LYONS** [00:32:10] Anxiety doesn't have a lot of tricks in its toolbox. It does the same thing over and over and over again. It shows up in it says, "What if?" And you start imagining bad things happening. You start imagining these bad things happening. You are playing a little movie in your head. Your alarm system... Your amygdala... Your body responds to this narrative as if you are in danger. It fires up the system through your adrenal glands. It gets your body going, fills you with all of the chemicals -- the norepinephrine, the epinephrine -- that are designed to get your body going for a fight or flight and sometimes freeze. If in that moment you say, "What's going on? Oh my God, it's happening again. I've got to get out of here. I've got to get rid of these feelings. I've got to get rid of these thoughts. I can't stand this." You are doing the disorder.

[00:33:10] What happens if we begin to recognize it when it shows up? So a huge skill is being able to step into the situation, have that response and know what to do with it. So we want to name it. We want to normalize it. We want to say, "Okay, so worry is named Fred. When Fred shows up, this is what Fred says, this is what Fred demands and this is how we're going to respond to Fred.".

[00:33:51] How do we help them recognize the thoughts, the emotions, the sensations show up... That's very empowering. Because now we're talking about how this thing works rather than trying to rearrange the world in order to accommodate it.

**NOAH CUMMINGS** [00:34:06] When I was younger, I think that I just didn't understand that I could get through it. It was just something that was completely just out of reach for me.

**DAVE CUMMINGS** [00:34:19] We felt that the message we were sending was, "We love you, we care for you, and we will always be there for you." When in fact it was more, "We don't think you can handle this." I think that's probably the message that was received that, you know, somewhere in the back of his mind was, "Oh, they don't believe I can handle this. I probably can't handle this."

**HEATHER CUMMINGS ON VIDEO** [00:34:37] That's a lot of stairs for a little guy.

**DR. SHEFALI** [00:34:42] If we don't pay attention to how our caring for our children is really a mask of our own anxiety, then we'll keep doing it and keep blaming and fixing and contouring our children, puppeteering them into greater and greater inner disconnection and not even realize that we are. And in doing so, the child grows up kind of feeling disconnected to who it is they are. They have to meet the needs of the parent versus meet their own needs.

**KARL PALENKAS** [00:35:09] My dad has been in the military for 40 plus years. He recently retired. I think that that kind of gave him a more hardened outlook and perception of life. He's very much a "my way or the highway" kind of person. He doesn't take into account that the world that he grew up in, and the world that I'm in now are two different places. I mean, I'm not out to him. As far as he knows, I am your typical straight, white conservative like red blooded American. But the truth is, I'm everything that he rails against on the daily. He's not doing any of this because he hates me. He's not doing any of this because he has any malice, any ill intent. I genuinely feel that he wants what's best for me.

[00:36:12] It's just what he thinks is best for me is not me. There was the conversation of like, "Oh, like if Karl were to come out as gay one day, like, could you love him?" And like, obviously my mom was immediately just like, "Well, duh. Like, that's my child." But the words that ring in my head was from my dad saying, "I don't know." Those three words. And honestly, I honestly would have preferred if he just said "no."

**LYNN LYONS** [00:36:58] When a child is not allowed to discover who they are, is not allowed to develop autonomy, figure out their own identity, their own choices, the likelihood of that young person developing an anxiety disorder is pretty significant.

**JACKIE RAMSEY** [00:37:19] My quote in my high school yearbook was "to hear the applause." That's what I dreamed of when I graduated high school. I love being the center of attention. You get that from me. You know, it says a lot about me. And I get that you have a lot of that in you. But I'm telling you, I'm always proud of you. I think you do a lot of things that make me proud. I think you try your hardest. That makes us proud.

**COOPER RAMSEY** [00:37:51] Okay. Yeah. I just don't know. I mean, I just I don't know like, what I do.

**JACKIE RAMSEY** [00:37:58] When are you proud of me?

**COOPER RAMSEY** [00:38:00] When you're not mean.

**JACKIE RAMSEY** [00:38:01] That's not fair.

**COOPER RAMSEY** [00:38:03] I'm kidding.

**JACKIE RAMSEY** [00:38:03] What do you mean, mean?

**COOPER RAMSEY** [00:38:07] When I'm scared of you.

**JACKIE RAMSEY** [00:38:08] Are you really ever scared of me?

**COOPER RAMSEY** [00:38:11] Well, sometimes I'm afraid you'll get mad. Like when I did bad on that audition. You're just like, "Cooper, I'm done! I'm sick of it.".

**JACKIE RAMSEY** [00:38:22] And, well, I think I lose my temper more easily because... especially when it comes to singing. I know what you're capable of. Well, I think a couple of things happen... I worry that it's a reflection on me. I also kind of feel that I would nail every audition. They seem really easy to me, so I don't understand why you can't nail them. I mean, I sound crazy admitting it, but I'm like, "Why can't you say this line the way it's meant to be said?"

[00:39:01] You know what made me so angry about that one, Cooper? Here I am spending all the time and the energy and the financial commitment on therapy and this... And I'm like, "Oh, my gosh! Like, you let your anxiety win." I just want you to have that confidence. And I didn't have it. But I realize how so much of the anxiety I had over being judged at an audition really held me back. If I could audition... If I had an agent right now and I could go back and audition for everything I auditioned for...

**COOPER RAMSEY** [00:39:39] I would do it differently.

**JACKIE RAMSEY** [00:39:40] No, no, I wouldn't be booking every job.

**KENYA HAMEED** [00:39:46] Kids can develop just kind of a sense of inadequacy of never being able to meet that standard that parents have set for them as well as it can also impact just their own personal identity. Because they're not being given the chance of developing that sense of self and who they are. And they're becoming heavily reliant on just becoming the person that somebody else wants them to be.

**JEFFREY ZEIG** [00:40:16] Tell me about some of those pressures that are coming at you so quickly.

**SEVEY MORTON** [00:40:25] Well parental pressures.

**JEFFREY ZEIG** [00:40:29] To do what?

**SEVEY MORTON** [00:40:30] Just be good and like kind of act like an adult even though I'm not an adult yet.

[00:40:37] This is so stupid. It brought me into the wrong mindset!

**LAURA MORTON** [00:40:44] Okay, honey. Tell me what I can do to help you get into the right mindset.

**SEVEY MORTON** [00:40:50] You just put a whole other layer of stress on me! You just messed me all up!

**LAURA MORTON (VO)** [00:40:56] There were so many things I thought I was doing as a good parent that just made Sadie's anxieties worse. While I don't always know the right thing to do because I don't know what anxiety feels like for her.

**LAURA MORTON** [00:41:12] Take a deep breath. Look at Mama. Take a deep breath.

**LAURA MORTON (VO)** [00:41:16] My empathy for Sevey is significant, but I've never walked in her shoes. And now that she's 13, what makes her anxious has changed. And it's become even more difficult to navigate.

**SEVEY MORTON** [00:41:27] Feeling like I'm going to disappoint makes me very anxious. Having my mom being mad at me makes me anxious. Having one of my friends being mad at me makes me anxious.

**LYNN LYONS** [00:41:42] If you look at it, it's interesting developmentally, the things that kids become aware of are the things that worry then grabs on to. So middle school kids will be worried about social stuff. They start worrying about achievement, They start worrying about how are they going to live separate from their parents.

**DAN SIEGEL** [00:42:01] As a child leaves elementary school and moves into middle school, the first thing that generally happens is a remodeling of the brain and how an adolescent experiences life. There's more intense emotions that happen. It can get overwhelming. Your emotions get so big. Then there's social engagement. For this adolescent to survive, she must have belonging to at least one other adolescent. That's been true for many, many mammals, where you see that if you don't have an association with other adolescents, you will die. You will be somebody's lunch.

[00:42:47] So the reason your adolescent says, "Oh my God, I need to have that kind of boot or that kind of shoe or that kind of jacket or whatever." You know, they're not just being superficial. They have an evolutionary history to wanting to be socially connected. Belonging for the mind is like breathing for the body.

**NAIYA OSIYEMI** [00:43:11] I remember in middle school; it was even rougher than elementary school for me. I grew up in South Florida, very predominantly white areas, you know, went to a private school from kindergarten through fifth grade, where I was literally -- not exaggerating -- one of like three or four black kids in the entire school. I don't know. I just wasn't myself. I don't think I was my best self then because I was so anxious all the time and hiding that part of me.

**GC CORRIS** [00:43:40] When I was around 14, I felt like I was being bullied and it was really hard for me. I couldn’t really understand why not everyone would like me. Like for some reason I just had to have everybody like me, and everybody be cool with me. And I just remember trying to do everything I could to get people to like me. And I just remember my mind, like almost tricking me and being like, "Oh yeah, like you weren't invited to that because they don't like you." Or "Oh, you're being annoying." Or "Oh, you need to calm down." Or "Oh, you're doing too much.".

[00:44:06] And it was just back and forth and back and forth. And I just remember that's when I really started like having days where I'd just be home crying and not exactly knowing why.

**KARL PALENKAS** [00:44:18] Where I went to middle school, the typical thing for people was like, "Oh, that's gay." Like calling people that slur. When you're only real exposure to it is the fact that everybody else is using it as an insult made me feel awful, subhuman. When it started really conflicting with this idea of who I was, you just shut down completely and utterly. Your emotions are heightened, and your physical abilities are lowered. It just gets overwhelming.

**NICOLE COCHRANE** [00:45:06] This morning, I woke up to my mom sending me a picture of when I was in eighth grade. And it was interesting because. I wanted to cringe when I saw it and I was bigger. I was definitely -- I'm 5'10" and I was like 5'8" in eighth grade. And I remember that moment where that's really when my depression and anxiety started.

**NOAH CUMMINGS** [00:45:28] The body image stuff is -- it probably is hard for a lot of people to kind of grasp when you -- when you don't -- when you haven't felt it. It's kind of like a panic attack in that way.

**NICOLE COCHRANE** [00:45:40] I remember feeling uncomfortable in my skin. I remember the anxious thoughts. I remember feeling like I just wasn't good enough. And that was weird for somebody that's just about to be 13 years old.

**NOAH CUMMINGS** [00:45:54] I've always just felt like, man, I need -- I need a little more. Like I need -- I need to be a little more muscular or I'm too skinny right now. And it's that -- that same negative self-talk, like you're not good enough.

**DR. SHEFALI** [00:46:06] When we don't allow our children to own their authentic voice and to feel comfortable in their own skin, then they grow up constantly foraging, scavenging the earth for an inner sense of self, and they look outward.

**NICOLE COCHRANE** [00:46:20] I sought external validation because I feel like that is what I was taught. I think we live in a world now where you pick up your phone, it's Instagram, it's Twitter, it's TikTok. You're looking and comparing yourself to everything. And you also see the way that people idolize those people that are "winning" in this social media industry.

**GC CORRIS** [00:46:42] I downloaded Tik Tok, and I made a couple of videos. I was just like, "Hey, it'd be cool to get Tik Tok famous." And then I made like three videos that week and they all blew up. So I really never expected to get any followers or even grow as much as I did. Currently, I have about 280,000 followers, I think. There definitely is a danger when it comes to spending a lot of time on social media. It definitely has the potential to become this environment of judgment and pressure. I remember there's one point in my life where I was just on social media scrolling and scrolling and scrolling, and it just took a toll on me and it was like, "Wow, why can't I look like that? Why is this going on?" Like, I need to, like, do better for myself.

**NICOLE COCHRANE** [00:47:29] Now I'm just comparing everything. I'm comparing my body; I'm comparing sometimes even my character. I shouldn't have done this. I've made too many mistakes. I regret this. And all of a sudden it's like it's not even just the way that I look. It's the way that I feel. It's the way that I carry myself. I don't walk straight. I don't stand up straight. I don't do all these things that I see in, like, a really short clip.

**SEVEY MORTON** [00:47:53] I had so incredibly tough on myself about looking a certain way, like basically looking like an Instagram model, which is such an unfair standard. It's definitely one of my biggest triggers right now. I was having a look at myself in the mirror and say, "Oh my gosh, you need to lose weight. You look too fat. Your waist isn't perfect. Like, how are you going to fit into that dress? How you are you going to fit into that bathing suit?" And like that's a normal activity for me. Like, it's sad to say, but it is.

[00:48:28] I can't get away from the trap. Everything that I love is on my phone. How many hours did I spend on my phone? Oh, my God. Yesterday it was ten.

[00:48:40] To be able to post on TikTok or to be able to post on Instagram is super important to me, and the amount of followers I have is important to me. Why am I losing followers? Do I not look good in a certain picture? Do I need to change something?

**KARL PALENKAS** [00:48:56] I can have hundreds of comments that are so nice and so uplifting. And all it takes is just one video to flop or like one negative comment, and it just overshadows the rest. It's almost as if it feels like the rest just isn't real, that the rest is just some sort of -- sort of mirage. People just being nice to me. And then if someone notices like bad parts, if someone notices flaws, it's like, "Well, they're right, they exist."

**NICOLE COCHRANE** [00:49:27] The other token of that is the validation that you do receive once you've been deprived of it for so long, is satisfying. It's addicting. And that's why we go back to it every single time. But it's fleeting. It doesn't fill anything. We have an empty void. So in that world of comparison that I was living in, it felt like I didn't just have anxiety, I was living in it. The loneliness almost crept in more, and that kind of loneliness is the most debilitating thing that you can feel because you get just enough to keep you going. But nothing that's actually real or true.

**GC CORRIS** [00:50:04] It was definitely super overwhelming. And I just remember waking up and like feeling dead and drained and driving to school and then getting in the parking lot and doing nothing but just crying. And I just remember calling my mom and being like, "I can't do this. I can't go to school. I can't do this. Like, I just feel like I just want to stop everything."

**LYNN LYONS** [00:50:27] Anxiety thrives in isolation because it's an internal process. People think that anxiety is all about what goes on out here, but the way it really gets its power is how we interpret in here what's going on out here. And so if you are alone, if you are in your room by yourself, if you're looking at your smartphone, the stories that you tell, the internal focus that we have with anxiety is something we really need to pay attention to.

[00:50:59] When you are left alone with your thoughts, when you are in there telling stories, worrying, feeling all of these feelings by yourself, it is no surprise at all that those kids move toward depression.

**DR. SHEFALI** [00:51:15] They're being bombarded by messages that who it is they are is not good enough. That's why you and I are anxious, because if we fall prey to the message that who you are is still not good enough -- you need to be that and you need to be more and you need to be skinnier and wider and lovelier and cleverer. I mean, that's what our children are bombarded by -- a standard of beauty, a standard of intellect, a standard of perfectionism that is out of reach.

**FRANCIS HAUGEN TESTIMONY** [00:51:46] My name is Francis Haugen. I used to work at Facebook. The documents I have provided to Congress prove that Facebook has repeatedly misled the public about what its own research reveals about the safety of children. The company's leadership knows how to make Facebook and Instagram safer but won't make the necessary changes because they have put their astronomical profits before people.

**DR. SHEFALI** [00:52:09] You have culture that wants to be capitalistic and predating on children because culture makes a quick buck on it. But they need to be told -- our children -- that what you're seeing is fantasy. You have the child, you know, at that intersection of a culture that's desiring of greatness and a cultural pressure that's desiring of capitalism, really. You have the poor child who's just mercilessly thrown around in the winds of this craze.

**LYNN LYONS** [00:52:46] When we think about whether or not kids are more anxious today than they were in the past, the answer is yes. The statistics show it in terms of the numbers rising. Kids are more anxious today because they are constantly being put into situations, not all of them bad, where they're being evaluated. There's an enormous amount of information.

**JEFFREY ZEIG** [00:53:09] We are being bombarded by too much stimulation. This is another route to anxiety. Too much stimulation and people will have a meltdown because of the limited bandwidth that they have to be able to process the bombardment of sounds and images that are coming at them.

**LYNN LYONS** [00:53:30] The ability to know everything all the time is really causing the anxiety to really explode in a way that's pretty unprecedented.

**NAIYA OSIYEMI** [00:53:41] There's a lot of cultural unrest happening right now, and it's very scary. Things feel very uncertain.

**SEVEY MORTON** [00:53:50] So I was in the bathroom washing my face, and they were out here watching their show. And I was just in there washing my face. And then a helicopter flew over and it started like saying stuff off like the loudspeaker. I couldn't really understand what they were saying, but all I could understand was something, something 9-1-1. And I got really scared and I didn't know what it was, and we didn't know what it was. Every time a helicopter flies over like that, it's really scary for me because I don't know what's going to happen because like all the stories that I've heard in the past like school shootings, mall shootings... Anything that happens with like really dangerous situations, that's my worst fear. I never want to be caught up in that.

**NAIYA OSIYEMI** [00:54:48] We're living in very scary times. I see a lot of hate being displayed. I'm sure, you know, some of these people always had these feelings, but it just wasn't in your face like that. And we're just living in very divisive times. It's scary.

**GC CORRIS** [00:55:06] Recently I've been hearing a lot about the state of our nation, and there's been a lot going on when it comes to racial injustices and stuff. I worry a lot because of my racial background, because you can tell I'm not exactly white. And so there is definitely a lot of certain systemic issues that I face. And so I pretty much worry every time I go to the street, every time a cop car passes me and -- it's just things where I fear for my life, and I just worry, and I just get worried that I'd never see my parents or friends again because if something were to happen to me. I don't know.

**NAIYA OSIYEMI** [00:55:55] I remember I was pulled over once when I was in high school, and I remember being terrified. I didn't even hadn't realized that I was even doing anything wrong. And I remember being afraid that I could lose my life. And I was actually crying. I remember calling my parents and they said, "Look, just stay calm. You'll be fine."

**KENYA HAMEED** [00:56:19] It's an extra layer of anxiety for black and brown families just dealing with racism, that's something that white people don't have to deal with... that sort of experience of just constantly feeling afraid.

**KAMERON JOHNSON** [00:56:34] Anxiety to me. It might have been when I was around eight or nine years old, coming home with my dad and pulling into the driveway, turning the car off to step out and seeing just the whole world turning red and blue. And having the first interaction with the police in that sense. And from the flashlights with the guns drawn -- the flashlights on the assault rifles pointed at me -- and my father from both windows... Finding out my brother had passed away from drugs, sadly, and seeing him and his body that same day. I ended up being institutionalized in St. Luke's Psychiatric Hospital when I was like six years old. And in there about three months, but that first day was the hardest, and the one I live with the most was being held down by those staff and seeing my mom just walk away through those double doors.

**LAURA MORTON (VO)** [00:57:51] So is it that where you were?

**KAMERON JOHNSON** [00:57:54] Yeah, in the -- right up there. They ended up putting, you know, put a needle in my rear end and put me to sleep. I don't remember like after, like, the first week. Three months of that.

[00:58:13] Even as a child I saw with my own eyes that only a few get the luxury to live, while the rest had to scramble just to survive. There's something I want to change. I think that's the unrest and why I feel that I can't rest. Because survival is a part of life. But it isn't life. I'd say people are upset when every day is like on the brink of not seeing tomorrow or if there will be tomorrow. I'm living like that every single day, seeing my mother like that, and seeing my father for a long time like that. I've seen family members have to overcome that. And as it grows continually, it gets more heavy to where it's almost like you want to reach inside and just throw it out, you know?

**LYNN LYONS** [00:59:07] The system doesn't serve every child well. Kids get lost. They get over diagnosed. They get overmedicated. There are times when people are treating them who don't have the expertise that's needed to handle some of the complexities of being a child in a world that is so complicated.

[00:59:30] It is not a surprise at all to me how frequently we are seeing kids with long histories of anxiety. And by the time that they hit college, the ability for these kids to move on with their lives really becomes impaired. And it was a long time in the making, unfortunately.

**GC CORRIS** [00:59:53] Today, I worry about a lot of things, honestly. It all falls into worrying about the future and the uncertainty of it all. Currently, I'm worried about college.

**NOAH CUMMINGS** [01:00:05] When I got to college, I basically was just shell shocked. All the things that I didn't expect to be hard were... just the constant grind and basically just all the same thoughts from my anxiety all came back into my life. When I tried to go see a counselor on campus, it was three weeks before I could even get an intake to discuss what was going on. And I remember thinking at that time, "Man, I've dealt with this for so long that I know how to deal with it. But imagine if this was a kid that didn't know what they were doing with anxiety or depression or anything, and they had to wait three weeks going through whatever they were going through to get an intake, not even -- not even the help that they needed."

**JESSICA KOLBE** [01:00:52] My first panic attack was when I was 18, my freshman year of college. It was during a calculus exam. I suddenly couldn't breathe, and my hands were shaking. I couldn't even write on the test. Like, I literally had to just walk out and leave because I thought like something was happening to me. Like I thought I was dying. I called my mom, and I was like, "Mom" -- like I was, like, hyperventilating. I was like, "I can't breathe, and I don't know what is going on." And she was like, "I think you're having a panic attack.".

[01:01:25] I didn't have a therapist yet. I waited like a month to get in, and then I only got five sessions and they kicked me out. So I finally got close with the therapist there and they are like, "Oh, sorry. You, like, ran out of appointments." So then I had to find somebody else who ended up not taking my insurance and then found somebody else who ended up just being really terrible. And so I just kept going through all these different therapists after I had found the one that was helping me, and then she could no longer see me. It doesn't make any sense at all how they work.

**HAROLD KOPLEWICZ** [01:01:59] College campuses have to recognize that their consumer, their client, is more likely to have mental health disorders. It's not because of college, it's because that's the time the brain has those changes if you're genetically predisposed to getting those disorders. You talk to any president of college and he's going to say or she's going to say, "This is a problem. Where am I supposed to find the funds?" Well, you're going to have to reallocate. You just have to because this problem is not going away.

**JESSICA KOLBE** [01:02:29] I was having cycling panic attacks. Just like went through panic attack after panic attack. It was like an elephant was sitting on my chest. Like it was tight, and I couldn't breathe. And I also just felt like a hollow emptiness inside. Like I wasn't even like, I feel like I was disassociating. I wasn't even like a person. Like I was just this, like, crumpled up piece of paper type thing. And I just couldn't function anymore. And I knew I couldn't keep living like that. And I started having a panic attack and I took a Klonopin to help, and it didn't help. And so I took another Klonopin, and it didn't help, took another Klonopin and it didn't help.

[01:03:17] And I had already written a suicide note. So I was just like, "I can't do this anymore. Like, this is my end.".

**NICOLE COCHRANE** [01:03:33] It felt like I was supposed to feel better. I knew that I had it better than others. And it was like, not only was I taking the hammer of all the things that I had done wrong. I was also taking on this huge hammer of, "Well, I'm supposed to feel better, do better, look better, think better, but for whatever reason, I'm not. And that's my fault. And that's me." I looked at myself in the mirror and I thought, "I hate the person that I see in front of me.".

[01:04:04] I remember, you know, pulling up to this bridge. I stood at that ledge, and I thought of all the people you know, that I loved and that loved me back. But the painful thing about what I think depression and anxiety does is you also have, like, the enemy and the ego in your head reminding you of why the choice that you think you're about to make is the right one. And I was taking that all in, and I didn't realize that my dad had my location and he noticed, like, I've been gone for 4 hours. Where is she? And he saw me driving around, I guess, all over. And he pulled up finally. He was probably going like 90, and he pulled up. And I remember him walking around my car and his eyes and he was a paramedic. So he looks at me and he's like, "What are you doing?" Like, calm and centered. And I was like, "I don't know. I don't know what I'm doing."

**HAROLD KOPLEWICZ** [01:05:16] I would say that in the richest country in the world, we are truly failing our young people. The message is loud and clear. We don't think this is important and then we pay later.

**FEMALE VO** [01:05:34] Some disturbing findings about suicides in this country and how the rate has continued to climb for more than 15 years.

**MALE VO** [01:05:42] The mental health of teenagers is a major cause for concern. Kids are a frequent sight in hospital emergency departments.

**DR. VIVEK MURTHY TESTIMONY** [01:05:52] The obstacles this generation of young people face are unprecedented and uniquely hard to navigate, and the impact that's having on their mental health is devastating.

**MALE VO** [01:06:02] The coronavirus pandemic has fueled a mental health crisis in the United States.

**FEMALE VO** [01:06:07] Recent reports warns that kids and teens may develop serious mental health conditions because of the pandemic.

**HAROLD KOPLEWICZ** [01:06:15] It took COVID to finally put child mental health at the front of the agenda, because COVID is such a remarkable equalizer that everyone is feeling the stress of this global pandemic. Since there is a high percentage of people in the United States, particularly under the age of 18, who are struggling, they look more symptomatic than ever before.

**LAURA MORTON (VO)** [01:06:42] The unknown is so challenging for an anxious child, and that made COVID one of the hardest times for us because Sevey wanted assurances that everything would be okay and wanted certainty that I just couldn't give her.

**SEVEY MORTON** [01:06:58] For school, I have to keep a journal about quarantine and what our feelings are. Me and my mom had to quarantine, but instead of having it to be two weeks, it became unknown. It's changed so much and some things I just don't want it to change are changing. I want life to go back to normal.

**JONAH BURNS (EMOTIONAL OUTBURST)** [01:07:18] No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. I will do the stuff for today. I'm not doing this stuff for yesterday. Because if it cannot fit on one page when you can just make this font smaller, I'm not going to do it. Because I didn't see it. So we're not going to do it.

**MEREDITH BURNS** [01:07:31] Just the other day, I took him back to the psychiatrist and he prescribed an antidepressant which I'm on the fence about. But Mike and I both agree we got to try something else because screaming and the panic attacks, I mean, it's not getting better. It's getting worse. Just simple things like doing homework--.

**MIKE SNEIDEMAN** [01:07:50] Or transitioning.

**MEREDITH BURNS** [01:07:52] Transitions are really hard.

**MIKE SNEIDEMAN** [01:07:53] ...from anything to homework.

**MEREDITH BURNS** [01:07:55] Yeah, it's really hard. It's like he feels almost like a self-hatred when he's in that moment, like he is freaking out and screaming and like, "I'm so stupid." Like, he broke an iPad on his forehead and really scared me.

**NAIYA OSIYEMI** [01:08:12] Lockdown was really strange. I've been home in Florida with my parents for about five months. It's more stressful than I anticipated. I miss my friends. I miss my freedom. I'm nervous. Today I was very antsy. I couldn't stay still. I had a hard time focusing during my online classes today, my live sessions. And it was just really, really tough. I'm just trying to do whatever it is that will take my mind off of things.

**GC CORRIS** [01:08:57] When everything just kind of shutdown around the beginning of COVID, my dreams about the future were just, like, stopped and, like, crushed. And the future is just so uncertain. I definitely hit a very low point. I basically shut out my friends. I shut out my family. I physically was feeling sick. I would just feel very almost woozy. And it was almost like I couldn't exactly, like, have like control on reality. It wasn't like a silence of emotions. It was almost like an emptiness. It was like being sucked out. Then I just remember sitting there feeling like there was no future.

**LYNN LYONS (INTERVIEW WITH NOAH)** [01:09:41] All right. So tell me what's been going on. Tell me what's...

**NOAH CUMMINGS** [01:09:44] Yeah, So I think at first I was doing all right. And then like a little while in, I just started getting like a lot more panic attacks and I just started to feel those, like, coming on at all times. And then, like, when I'm not having a panic attack, I'm worrying that one's coming.

**LYNN LYONS (INTERVIEW WITH NOAH)** [01:10:10] So I think the most important thing for you to hear from me right now is that this is okay. And I know you're just like, "Oh, God." You know, you're just frustrated with it. Yeah, but, you know we're in a global pandemic.

**NOAH CUMMINGS** [01:10:26] Yeah.

**LYNN LYONS (INTERVIEW WITH NOAH)** [01:10:28] Right. I mean, it is sort of like if this were a novel about a little boy who worries about death and uncertainty and then when he's in college, then there's a global pandemic that shuts down the world. And then, you know, there's a death to somebody close to him that's unexpected... I mean, people would look at this and you'd probably send it off to the to your editor and the editor and be like, "Really? This is a little..Don't you think this is a little much? You got this little kid who worries about death and uncertainty and then we throw him into a pandemic. I mean, who's going to believe that?"

**NOAH CUMMINGS** [01:10:58] Right?

**LYNN LYONS (INTERVIEW WITH NOAH)** [01:10:59] This is just another part of your story -- to say, "This is me on this path and this is me figuring me out."

**HAROLD KOPLEWICZ** [01:11:09] It takes these kind of crises for us to rethink and be innovative. It's maybe the only silver lining for the pandemic, and I think America is still having trouble wrapping its head around the fact that the most common illnesses of childhood and adolescence are mental health disorders. I think we still have so much stigma related to it.

**NICOLE COCHRANE** [01:11:32] There's an illusion that we think people with depression, anxiety, and these very, you know, deep emotions, that they're not strong. But I actually think that they're incredibly strong, you know, so strong that they're pushing through these things that normally, you know, other people maybe wouldn't -- they would take the time to heal from them.

**NORA VASCONCELLOS** [01:12:05] When I was in my early twenties, I started taking an antidepressant. And I noticed within like two weeks for me it was just like I really could just start saying "yes" to everything. I was really in like a super, super good place. And I had a boyfriend. He's like, "Oh, so you're cheating?" I was like, "I'm sorry. What?" "Because you're happy all the time. Like, you're always in a good mood." And it's just like, "Yeah, I am. That's just who I am. And if I am not chemically balanced right, I can't be like that because I'm like internally suffering at a level that you can't even comprehend with your reptile brain." And I had not really ever seen it. I had never been exposed to somebody who said something like that. And so it was just super... It was just such a bummer. You know.

**TIM STOREY** [01:13:06] I'd like to see many things changed on the state of mental health. And part of it is it's okay to be undone. There are people that have asthma. They have lupus. They have other illnesses from childhood, but if they have anxiety -- that that's terrible? If they need to see a psychologist, that's terrible? No. But I do believe that there are a lot of advocates that are rising up and saying, "Hey, like it's okay to admit you have a mental health problem."

**TASHA P. HENSON** [01:13:48] We in the African-American community, we don't deal with mental health issues. We don't even talk about it. We've been taught to pray our problems away. We've been demonized for coming out, saying we have issues. And we have trust issues.

**SELENA GOMEZ** [01:14:06] Just to throw in a little bit of my journey. I felt like once I found out what was going on mentally, I found that it was there was more freedom for me to be okay with what I had because I was learning about it.

**FOOTBALL PLAYER NEWS REPORT** [01:14:21] People have called me brave, but to me it just felt like not dying. And I felt like being honest. And maybe bravery is just being honest when it would be easier not to. And if that's bravery then so be it. But I've just been really grateful to one, receive the help I have and then two, to have learned some things that I can share with others.

**DR. SHEFALI** [01:14:42] So what needs to change is something systemic -- is not to blame the anxiety and not to blame the one who is experiencing the anxiety. We should take away all labels, all judgment, all shame. It's not the child's fault. We need to understand what's happening systemically.

**TIM STOREY** [01:15:09] It's not that the system is broke. It's it was never right. It's not a broke system. It's not a woke system. You know, we never woke up and created the proper system.

**KENYA HAMEED** [01:15:25] Families are making a daily decision on how to prioritize their bills. And I think that mental health falls at the bottom of the pole. Because it's not something that's an immediate need, like housing or food. And so families have to make really tough decisions about priorities and what's going to be feasible. Then those services are overwhelmed because there's a lot of people that are asking for the exact same thing at the exact same time.

**HAROLD KOPLEWICZ** [01:15:56] We have to be able to make sure that insurance companies treat mental health the way they treat physical health. That they don't discount it, they don't limit the number of sessions. They don't do things that they would never consider doing when a kid has a seizure, or a child has a series of headaches that they can't figure out what's going on. They don't say that you only have five sessions, or you only have ten sessions. They decide on the relief that the child gets, and when the kid is better, that's when the treatment ends.

**DR. ASHWIN VASAN** [01:16:26] Our children are hurting. Mental health supports for children are too hard to navigate and too scarce in supply. This results in emergency rooms and hospitals providing care that is best delivered in homes, communities, and schools. A better system to support children, youth and families means, for starters, a stronger and more stable school nursing workforce, one capable of identifying and screening for mental health issues, providing immediate counseling, de-escalation, and relief, and able to make referrals to next level care.

**HAROLD KOPLEWICZ** [01:17:03] In child mental health the greatest advances we've made in the last 20 years tend not to be for medications. They tend to be from psychosocial interventions that are evidence based. We have to help parents, teachers and the public recognize how real, common, and treatable these disorders are.

**JESSICA KOLBE** [01:17:26] I was in dialectical behavior therapy the summer between my freshman and sophomore year, so I learned like a lot of coping mechanisms. I was always afraid of my anxiety, so when I would get anxious, I'd be anxious about being anxious. You know how that goes, and then it just escalates. So I really learned to just, like, radically accept it. Like when my heart rate was 115 a couple weeks ago, I, like, noticed it and I was like, "Okay, I'm going to make sure I don't get into a panic attack.".

[01:17:55] But I was making sure to, like, accept the anxiety and not be, like, angry at myself that I was feeling anxious again or like, scared that a panic attack is going to happen. It took me literally years to like work on the radical acceptance skill, but it's really helped. I think I'm on a good medication regimen. I think with anxiety, like, sure, it's rough, but I'm at a point in my life where I'm like, "Okay, hello anxiety. You're here. This is cool. Could you back off a little bit?" But like, I can sit there in my anxiety and not like, spiral into a panic attack anymore.

**LYNN LYONS** [01:18:34] One of the things that is key that we need to make sure that we are doing, particularly with teenagers around their mental wellness, is that we make sure we are not talking about this in a way that makes it permanent. When we use the language of permanence -- this is who you are, that you will have to deal with this for the rest of your life... We take away hope, and when you've got a teenager who is anxious, depressed, isolated in their own head... When we take away hope, that's when we put them at risk.

**NOAH CUMMINGS** [01:19:08] Anxiety isn't something that you can find a fix for, and it completely goes away. You always have that little thought in your head or that little thought pattern. It's come back over and over, and it gets really good. And then all of a sudden I'm in the darkest place ever. You basically just need to say, "I've seen this before and it's going to be the same story as always.".

[01:19:33] One of the main things that I learned through therapy was that you have to focus on not the content of the anxiety, but the anxiety as a whole. So that's something when whenever I start to feel that anxious feeling coming on, I'm just able to recognize that immediately and know, "Okay, this is anxiety and it's something that I've been dealing with my whole life and I'm able to deal with it again."

**JEFFREY ZEIG** [01:20:00] We are always confronted with adversity in some way, and we need to find ways in which we can transcend the adversities and make our intention something that propels us into having a good life.

**LYNN LYONS** [01:20:16] It is inevitable that you're going to be disappointed. It's inevitable that you are going to feel distress. And if we say to kids, we are going to work on creating a world in which you know everything, in which we can make things predictable, we are going to give you a certainty device that's going to make sure that you know exactly what's going to happen at exactly what time... When that falls apart -- which inevitably it will -- they are ill equipped.

[01:20:47] The more that we send our children into the world, emotionally ill-equipped to handle sadness, disappointment, stress, uncertainty, the more that that they are falling apart in front of our eyes. They're not equipped. And then they say, "I can't do it." And they bail out. So resilience is the ability not to throw kids into situations in which they're suffering, but to support them through their distress.

**DR. SHEFALI** [01:21:20] The child is not wrong to be anxious and the child shouldn't be shamed. Anxiety is a natural response to this insanity. All of us are anxious. We're just not realizing it.

[01:21:37] We need a more serene approach to life where you go inward rather than outward, where you connect more to the heart rather than to the mind. Because as much as we want our children to succeed, we also want to teach them that they don't have to do anything other than be who it is they are to be successful.

**GC CORRIS** [01:21:59] I tell myself to breathe, take deep breaths, and I'll call myself from that very elevated state and I'll do this thing. It's like five-five rules, so I'll be like, "Name five things I can see. Name five things I can smell, five things I can hear. Five things I can taste." And it'll just keep me more grounded to where I'm at instead of being in that crazy high level.

[01:22:25] Then I like to remind myself that this is just a moment and that the moment will pass, and you will get through this. And that it is okay to experience it and it is okay to sit in that anxiousness. Just reminding to show love to yourself and just offering nothing but positive energy really just counteracts that.

**JESSICA KOLBE** [01:22:46] I would tell myself to keep going and to not let my anxiety weigh me down, because right now I still have anxiety. But life gets better. You have to be brave enough to keep switching therapies, therapists, and just keep pushing forward until you find what works for you. Because there is something that works for you. There's something that works for everybody out there.

**NORA VASCONCELLOS** [01:23:30] You can do all the work, but if you don't go out into the real world and apply it, you're not getting anywhere. And that's what a lot of the healing and a lot of the progress was about -- was me getting out of my comfort zone. And you always have fallbacks. You always have setbacks. But I'd rather take three steps forward and two steps back than just stand in one place.

**KENYA HAMEED** [01:23:54] What we've learned is that anxiety is just energy. And what's most important is how we use it. And we know just from a biological standpoint, how beneficial exercise can be with respect to lowering stress hormones and boosting mood.

**NORA VASCONCELLOS** [01:24:24] You can take any energy and flip it the right way and make it work for you. In a lot of cases, that just comes with like taking care of myself. I know when I'm burnt out or if I'm exhausted or feeling overwhelmed, that's when I get triggered more. So a lot of the time I try to space things out in my life. I try to take care of my body. I really focus on the really basic things because I know in the long run how quickly they spiral into an anxious episode.

**KAMERON JOHNSON** [01:24:59] I worry most about my overthinking is what kills me, and it is not being able to figure out if what I want to do with myself or the future, what I want to do in this life. I see the stars, and I don't see just the moon. What I do with anxiety now is just trying to stay positive because anxiety is part of your mental health and so good mental health can try to decrease on that. And as my stress -- eating right, exercising.

**KAMERON JOHNSON** [01:25:39] I found music. I have a passion for it. I enjoy it as a way of being able to write and be personal about it and to get rid of that bottled up energy.

**NAIYA OSIYEMI (SINGING)** [01:25:55] Run, run, run, run away.

**NAIYA OSIYEMI** [01:26:02] I've learned to channel all that anxious energy that I have into music, so when I'm feeling anxious, just, you know, basically repurposing that in a way to create something, something beautiful that I can be proud of and, you know, share with others.

**JEFFREY ZEIG** [01:26:25] Stress is not the problem. The problem is focusing on something meaningful. Now, if you think about a karate master who has the job of breaking a board, the focus of the Karate Master is not to see the board. The focus of the Karate Master is where you're going to wind up. So the idea is not to focus on stress, but to focus on what is meaningful.

**GC CORRIS** [01:26:55] Me and my friend Hannah are both definitely active when it comes to wanting to instill change in our communities and our country. And so will go to protests and will sign petitions and stuff, whether that's for racial injustices or environmental issues.

**DAN SIEGEL** [01:27:14] Relationships are incredibly important. Let's just call that "connecting time." Relationships with people and the planet. And what happens with that as you say, I see the way to be happy is actually be of service to other people, be of service to nature. And then when I stop living as if all I am is a separate self, things start to get better.

**NOAH CUMMINGS** [01:27:48] The confidence that I've built... I think it started with basketball and being able to get a base for my confidence from there. So I do a lot of coaching now. It's really cool for me to be able to teach other kids what I've worked on my whole life, and it's all the experiences that I went through that are making me able to be a good coach to kids that are like me.

[01:28:15] Basketball is something that I love and that I'm good at and that I can get better at. And I carried it over to my struggle with anxiety. And then once I started getting through the anxiety, that built another layer of confidence that I didn't know that I had.

**TIM STOREY** [01:28:37] We are built for connection. You are never created to be singular. You're not best singular. You’re best plural. So I think in a world that we've been challenged by so much like never before, we've got to get out of this place of isolation. And get back to plural.

**DAN SIEGEL** [01:29:01] People with tremendous amounts of anxiety, that may in part be due to this false view of a separate self. When that dissolves, when they realize, yes, they do have a body, of course, but they're also an identity as a relational being... there is a feeling of calm and belonging that arises.

**GC CORRIS** [01:29:26] A friend of mine who also experiences excited and depression... And I remember just one day sitting with her and we were laying on the floor and it was pitch black. The lights were off, and I was just telling her everything. And she made me aware that what I was feeling is valid and that there are ways to get through it.

**NAIYA OSIYEMI** [01:29:50] Now that I'm older, you know, I think there's less of a stigma about talking about mental health. You know, I have friends that deal with all sorts of things. And, you know, we have that open dialogue, which I think is very helpful. Because when you're able to talk about that and not feel like people are judging you, it's really helpful. I'm going into medicine and I'm really passionate about psychiatry, which there aren't a lot of black people in psychiatry and especially black women. So I think it's really important for me to, you know, really look into that field and hopefully, you know, make a change.

**KARL PALENKAS** [01:30:31] When I went to college like freshman year, it was honestly one of the greatest years of my life just because, like, I was out of the house for the first time ever. Living authentically when I'm away from home... It's everything. It's freedom. It's just me being me.

**NICOLE COCHRANE** [01:30:52] I know the depth of pain that I felt when I was in eighth grade and ninth grade in 10th grade and all the way up to probably a couple of years ago, a year ago. And I have the answer. I do have the answer. We all do. It's in us. I was really angry with God, but I mostly -- it wasn't that I was just angry. I also felt I wasn't worthy of his love. Like I had made too many mistakes. But I know now that God created me for a purpose, to be joyful and to laugh and to love and be loved.

**TIM STOREY** [01:31:36] We talk about this idea of it takes a village. It does. So if you're an aunt, if you're an uncle, if you're a brother or sister, if you're a friend, we need to start paying attention to somebody who is struggling because sometimes they don't need just professional advice, but they need somebody that just walks with them. There needs to be a connection between young people and people that are their leaders, their tutors, their mentors, their pastors, their parents... So we can connect and communicate.

**CARTOON** [01:32:26] It's too late.

**CARTOON** [01:32:29] It's never too late.

**JONAH BURNS** [01:32:40] The advice that I would give to parents who have anxious kids... Sometimes they really do, just the kids just really do, just need your help and you really just need to be there and just give them a big hug or just ask them what's wrong. And I think you can probably figure it out from there and just kind of just goes without saying. You just need to be there for them if they're really upset about something.

**DR. SHEFALI** [01:33:03] My mission is not to be the perfect parent. My mission is to be an awakened one. And part of being awakened is looking in that mirror and seeing that shadow aspect. And parents don't want to look, but we have to look. We have to be brave for our children. This is not about being perfect parents. This is about being awakened. You know, parents feel shame and guilt. And I go, "But that's your opportunity. Look at it as the turning point. Look at it as the invitation, and then let's course correct."

**JACKIE RAMSEY** [01:33:32] A lesson for me has been sort of understanding that these things don't just come out of thin air. And, you know, the way that I am is a product of who my parents were and who my family is. And the way that Cooper reacts to a situation and exists in the world is, you know, it's not about blaming, but it's about recognizing yourself in them so that you can be better, and you can help them be better.

**HEATHER CUMMINGS** [01:34:10] I felt this need to be the perfect parent. And what I've learned through it all is I'm perfectly imperfect and still figuring things out, too. And I think that's important. I think as parents, we can put a lot of pressure on ourselves, and it doesn't help our kids.

**MIKE SNEIDEMAN** [01:34:27] I would advise parents to prepare for the long haul as well. It is not something that can be dealt with right away, right?

**MEREDITH BURNS** [01:34:33] Mm hmm. It doesn't end right away. I mean, it may go on for a long time.

**LAURA MORTON** [01:34:43] One of the things that I'll carry with me as I move forward in my parenting is to give Sevey more space to be who Sevey is. I think maybe I put a lot of pressure on Sevey to be a certain way, and if I could go back and allow things to just be and unfold, I think it would have been a lot healthier for both of us.

[01:35:07] I think that I have a much better understanding of what it might feel like to walk in Sevey's shoes. I think it's really important to see anxiety through her eyes, not mine.

[01:35:22] Sevey, what do you think you need to do?

**SEVEY MORTON** [01:35:25] I think I definitely need to learn to cope with much better than I am. Because I'm not coping with it right now if I'm going to be honest. I don't know how.

**LAURA MORTON (VO)** [01:35:38] In our family story, there is no magic ending to Sevey's anxiety. She still struggles and I still find it challenging as her mom. And I see that it's a really scary world for these kids. They're walking a path that we've never walked.

[01:35:54] But it doesn't have to be debilitating. It's our job as parents, as friends and as family to walk alongside them and give them all the resources they need so they know they're not alone.