# A Shared Experience In Crisis: We Are Not Alone In This

# Episode 110

# 00:00:00 **Ginger**

# Listening to stories from other people to normalize your experience, you are not alone in what is going on, especially right now. But for those of you who were maybe struggling before all of this, and then this just added to it, you're also not alone either.

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# 00:00:20 **Christina**

# Hi, I'm Christina Barsi.

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# 00:00:21 **Sun**

# And I'm Sun Ezzell, and you're listening to the Magic Mountie Podcast.

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# 00:00:25 **Christina**

# Our mission is to find ways to keep your ear to the ground, so to speak - by bringing to you the activities and events you may not have time to attend, the resources on campus you might want to know more about, the interesting things your colleagues are creating, and the many ways we can continue to better help and guide our students.

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# 00:00:42 **Sun**

# We bring to you the voices of Mt. SAC, from the classroom to completion.

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# 00:00:46 **Speaker 1**

# And I know I'm going to achieve my goals, and I know people here are going to help me to do it.

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# 00:00:55 **Speaker 2**

# She is a sociology major and she's transferring to Cal Poly, Pamona. Psychology major, English major ...

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# 00:00:58 **Sun**

# From transforming part-time into full- time-

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# 00:01:00 **Speaker 1**

# I really liked the time that we spent with Julie about how to write a CV and cover letter.

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# 00:01:07 **Christina**

# Or just finding time to soak in the campus.

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# 00:01:09 **Speaker 1**

# To think of the natural environment around us as a library.

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# 00:01:13 **Christina**

# We want to keep you informed and connected to all things Mt. SAC. But most importantly, we want to keep you connected with each other. I'm Christina Barsi, Mt. SAC alumni, and producer of this podcast.

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# 00:01:23 **Sun**

# And I'm Sun Ezzell, Learning Assistance Faculty and Professional Learning Academy Coordinator.

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# 00:01:28 **Christina**

# And this is the Magic Mountie Podcast.

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# 00:01:31 **Christina**

# It has now been almost a year since COVID-19 has been recognized in the United States, and the country joined the rest of the world in shut-downs. We've been experiencing life in a way that has somehow connected our lived experience by COVID-19's global impact in ways we've never before seen in history.

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# 00:01:52 **Christina**

# Yet, it has also pulled us apart; figuratively through racial divides, digital divides, and political unrest, to name a few, as well as physically divided us through mandatory orders of isolation. It's now 2021, and we are still in it.

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# 00:02:09 **Christina**

# Sun Ezzell talks with psychology professor and psychology department chair, Stacy Bacigalupi, and psychology professor, Ginger Klee, about what it is exactly that we are experiencing; what we can be aware of about ourselves and our own experience, and how we can realize that we may be separate in many ways right now, but we are surely not alone.

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# 00:02:37 **Sun**

# Well, Stacy and Ginger, thank you so much for joining me today on the Magic Mountie Podcast, to talk a little bit about what we've been experiencing in the world for almost a year. I really appreciate your expertise, Ginger Klee, and Stacy Bacigalupi - Mt. SAC psychology professors. Welcome to the podcast.

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# 00:03:00 **Stacy**

# Thank you for having us, Sun. And we're happy to share anything that we can to hopefully help people get through this difficult time.

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# 00:03:08 **Ginger**

# Yes, I'm very, very happy to be here and always happy to share what I can because you know, in my profession, aside from teaching at Mt. SAC, I live and breathe this kind of work.

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# 00:03:21 **Sun**

# Well, thank you so much for joining us to share your expertise. And I was wondering to start out, could you just introduce yourselves? Tell a little bit about your background in psychology and a little bit about the work that you do at Mt. SAC?

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# 00:03:34 **Stacy**

# Yeah, I'll go first. So, I am Stacy Bacigalupi. I am a full-time professor in the psychology department. I've been here for 14 and a half years as a full-time instructor. And I am also a co-department chair, and I have been doing that for the last 10 and a half years.

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# 00:03:53 **Stacy**

# I am also one of the co-advisors of the psychology club in Psi Beta Chapter. And I've done a bunch of other things as well. I primarily teach research methods these days, but I've also taught psychology of women in this ... some of the stuff that we'll talk about today are things that we talk about in that class. Also in intro psych, it sometimes comes up. I teach intro psych, I teach child psych, I teach lifespan development as well.

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# 00:04:18 **Stacy**

# So, those are sort of the things that - what I do. I've also done a lot of things on campus as well, but that's basically who I am.

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# 00:04:25 **Ginger**

# So, my name is Ginger Klee. I am an adjunct psychology professor at Mt. SAC. I've been here for going on four years, and I predominantly teach psychology of women and gender, psychology, sexuality, and lifespan development, which really actually pairs well with what I do as a therapist.

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# 00:04:48 **Ginger**

# So, I'm also a licensed marriage family therapist, and licensed professional clinical counselor. I've been in private practice for five and a half years. And even before being in private practice, I worked at a crisis youth shelter. So, even the foundation of my being a therapist was based in trauma.

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# 00:05:11 **Ginger**

# So, that specialty carried over into my private practice, where I treat PTSD, complex PTSD, people with cooperative stress, identity issues, the LGBTQ plus community, teens, families, and adults. And I've been working in mental health though, in general, for about 10 years as well.

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# 00:05:35 **Sun**

# You both have such a wealth of experience and knowledge to share with us today, I'm so grateful. I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about what we have been experiencing in our country and in the world over almost the past year, and a little bit about the impact that that might be having on everyone.

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# 00:05:58 **Ginger**

# So, I mean, where do you even start? 2020, I don't think any of us could have predicted what 2020 brought. And even now that we're in 2021, it's not like ... it would have been nice if the clock struck midnight and everything just went back to normal, but that's not what happened and it's not going to happen.

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# 00:06:17 **Ginger**

# The pandemic has definitely, I think been the ... I don't honestly, see the pandemic as almost a straw that broke the camel's back in a lot of ways. That's I think what increased the racial tensions in this country. We've had riots - I mean, the riot at the Capitol. The pandemic itself brought on a lot of food scarcity, more so than before. It made all of us, I think, a little more on edge. Our boiling point essentially went down. It took a lot less to agitate and for people to be agitated, and reactive.

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# 00:06:57 **Ginger**

# And I think that that just really made all the other issues that came up last year worse, with the election and political tensions and division that exists and has existed for a long time, really in this country. But they all became like the perfect storm.

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# 00:07:15 **Ginger**

# And we're not out of it. We're not out of virtually any of it. I mean, with the vaccine coming out and everything, there's a light at the end of the tunnel that's more visible than before. But the systemic racism that people are now paying more attention to, isn't going to go away when this pandemic ends.

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# 00:07:38 **Stacy**

# I agree. And I think this might be something that comes up in a little bit, but I think that all of the things that Ginger has mentioned are the things that are going on in our world, but then even what we're experiencing sort of internally.

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# 00:07:52 **Stacy**

# So, when I heard you ask this question, I was thinking both externally and the world around us, but internally inside, it could range anything from a complete shutdown to a panic, to not seemingly affected. So, I think what we're experiencing is a full range. And so, one, there's not like a one size fits all sort of way to handle because we're all dealing with things a little bit differently.

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# 00:08:19 **Stacy**

# So, I think one of the things Ginger said before, and she can correct me if I'm saying this sort of incorrectly, but it's sort of like we're all maybe in the same boat, but we don't all experience the boat the same, It's something to that effect.

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# 00:08:32 **Stacy**

# And I think I've seen it on social media even where it's like, you're in a boat, but there's different size people. And so, it's like, yeah, we're all experiencing the same thing. The short person would say like a child or me, would maybe completely underwater. Whereas you've got somebody who's maybe a little taller who's at their waist or something.

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# 00:08:50 **Stacy**

# And so, to me, I guess that imagery of really understanding that what we're experiencing, even though we're all experiencing the same external experience, how we experience it internally, it's a bit different.

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# 00:09:02 **Stacy**

# And I think that goes for, obviously, like the racial tensions and the political is like, I'm going to experience the racial tensions and the systemic racism much differently than say, Ginger, or some of my other colleagues, or even some people who are listening as well.

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# 00:09:22 **Sun**

# It seems like one of the challenges is not knowing when the end is, right? Like both of you were saying that we have some things to be hopeful about, but we know that it's not going to be over yet. And like if I'm at the dentist and it's painful and it's just going on and on and I don't know how long it's going to last, that's a really different experience than if the dentist says to me, "Okay, this is going to be five minutes and you'll be finished."

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# 00:09:45 **Sun**

# And then I can kind of pace myself and I can look forward to the fact that yes, there is going to be an end and something will shift. So, can you talk a little bit about kind of that ... I'm not even sure but like the cascading crises or that kind of the impact of having one new stressor on top of another, without any of them seeming to recede.

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# 00:10:06 **Ginger**

# So, there's a few different elements at play there. When we look at trauma, generally, when we think about trauma, we think about what EMDR therapists call big T trauma. So, being physically assaulted, sexually assaulted, being in war and witnessing death, being a part of death, basically living on edge.

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# 00:10:29 **Ginger**

# But little T traumas is what many more of us have been experiencing in this last year. And as Stacy was saying, when we look at intersectionality, depending on your identities and your past experiences and present ones, you can really change what degree you experience what's been going on. And so, little T traumas are that it's harder to identify.

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# 00:10:56 **Ginger**

# So, it's something as small as the intense anxiety and fear you might be experiencing going to the grocery store, hearing someone cough in your vicinity, not knowing when things are going to end or what that end is going to look like. This level of uncertainty and living with that level of uncertainty every single day, which we've now done for almost a year, and we're going to continue to experience this past year.

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# 00:11:26 **Ginger**

# So, that's the other factor that makes little T traumas more powerful, the longer we experience them. And what tends to be a pretty consistent symptom or factor that makes it traumatizing or makes it more likely to be traumatizing, is living feeling like you're walking on eggshells. Living like you need to almost hold your breath and not knowing when the end is going to happen.

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# 00:11:56 **Ginger**

# One thing as you were saying, yeah, if you know that you need to put up with something really inconvenient or painful for a short amount of time, we can mentally prepare ourselves and use our resources. But when there's not an end in sight, or you think it's there, right? We opened up, we closed again. And then there's this weird mixed messages of, "Oh, things have closed, and stay home, but support small businesses and the malls are open" and a lot of really confusing, mixed messages from our government, unfortunately, has also made this worse.

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# 00:12:29 **Ginger**

# Who do we believe? What's to believe and who's right? That's just created, again, more uncertainty, more fear. And that living in fear of something we can't see - we cannot see COVID. We can't see who's positive for COVID or not. And that makes it so much worse because there's so much ambiguity. We're left with just our assumptions and this fear of everything, or we can develop a fear of everything and everyone.

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# 00:12:58 **Ginger**

# The other thing that's made this also more challenging is our access to resources, and generally, what we would do for self-care has become much more limited. In some people, more limited than before. If your self-care used to be going to the movies, going to Disneyland, spending time with friends; those are all virtually gone or very limited, or there's a risk, an extra risk involved that didn't exist before.

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# 00:13:29 **Ginger**

# As a therapist, that's been part of my challenge, is how do I help my clients come up with new ways to take care of themselves? And also, the clients that I had who were already struggling with isolation and feeling alone or lack of support, I'm trying to help them build somewhat of a support network when everything is more virtual. But that's just a whole another layer of complication and difficulty.

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# 00:13:59 **Ginger**

# And not to say that it's all negative. I do actually have one client who, because of the pandemic who was struggling with isolation before this started, they finally got to a place where they're like, "You know what? I finally now realize how important socialization is because literally the choice to isolate has been taken from them, because they're forced to isolate."

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# 00:14:22 **Ginger**

# So, now, finally, they've come to this breakthrough; "Oh, I finally really do want this." So, not everything's bad, but it's still a challenge. And that challenge isn't going away either.

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# 00:14:35 **Stacy**

# I think that the whole idea of not knowing when it's going to end is really important too. And then also, I know Ginger didn't speak to it just now directly, but she's talked previously at length about something called complex PTSD. And not that we're all experiencing PTSD or CPTSD, but there's feelings of it at the least. And I'll let her talk a little bit more about that if she wants to.

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# 00:15:00 **Stacy**

# But it's this idea that it's sort of almost never-ending. It's like you've gone through it for so long. It's not an isolated incident, these little Ts that she was talking about. And I think that that's one of the things that really hits home for me, is that we are still in it. We haven't even had a chance to kind of go back to it in a sense to have like these flashbacks that we often think of with PTSD, but we're still living in this and not knowing when it's going to end.

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# 00:15:27 **Stacy**

# And even when it does, we could have some lasting difficulties and hopefully, we don't. And again, a lot of that is about building up resiliency and finding ways to cope like she's talking about with her clients.

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# 00:15:39 **Stacy**

# So, I think that's probably one of the difficult things, is that we don't know when it's going to end. And not just the pandemic, but even the racism in our country, the political divide, the racial divide, all of that stuff - I mean, we're seeing it with not just in politics and not just in our workplaces and not just ... it's everywhere. And even COVID seems to identify it.

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# 00:16:06 **Stacy**

# We know that Latino and black individuals are being hit much harder than other groups. And it's just another reminder that we are divided and that is unsettling as well when we're really yearning for this social connection, that we're finding that we're even more divided than we maybe realized at least some of us maybe realized.

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# 00:16:30 **Ginger**

# The risk of burnout is so high. So, even if you're not at risk of developing CPTSD, most of us are probably, have already gotten to a point of burnout and then kind of recovered and then can be at risk of it again. I can certainly differentiate what PTSD is versus PTSD.

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# 00:16:52 **Ginger**

# Unfortunately, complex PTSD is just not talked about enough. It's getting more exposure and more attention. Even the VA acknowledges CPTSD, which is great. But as Stacy was saying, basically, PTSD is generally associated with a single isolated event. And that's not to minimize that single isolated event. It's usually a terrible single isolated event.

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# 00:17:17 **Ginger**

# Like the fires that we experienced, that some people more directly experienced than others last year. CPTSD can be a combination of big Ts and little Ts. And generally, it lasts a long time. It's repetitive and it goes on for months or years.

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# 00:17:40 **Ginger**

# So, all of us, and unfortunately, because of what we're going through, can develop this CPTSD because of how long this has been going on and how many different things have been going on, on top of each other with no break. And one thing that makes CPTSD different in symptomology that's not as associated with PTSD would be an emotional flashback, which is harder to identify.

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# 00:18:08 **Ginger**

# We think of visual and auditory flashbacks often with PTSD. You'll generally ... if you've ever seen a movie or TV show that features PTSD, you'll generally see a scene about that. But an emotional flashback is re-experiencing a feeling.

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# 00:18:25 **Ginger**

# Essentially, you can say that you're triggered - but you're triggered in the point where you're ... triggered is like, okay, I'm reacting to something from my past, I'm reacting to something I'm sensitive to. But an emotional flashback is I'm reacting, but I'm reliving the same exact feeling.

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# 00:18:45 **Ginger**

# If we think about childhood trauma, I'm an adult, but I'm suddenly feeling like a scared 10-year-old girl again. And if you can develop that awareness, it can really help you heal versus just feeling so silly or shaming yourself for reacting in such a way when your body's trying to survive, your brain's trying to survive; what's going on. And it's reminding you what you're trying to survive from.

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# 00:19:15 **Ginger**

# Self-awareness is generally the first key to healing and working through things. And what can prevent or decrease the likelihood of developing something like CPTSD or some other trauma disorder, is to acknowledge what you're feeling and talk to someone about what you're feeling and experiencing. It doesn't have to be a therapist -I mean, I'm biased, but therapists are great.

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# 00:19:42 **Ginger**

# But it can also be a trusted friend, family member, colleague as well. We need to get out what we're thinking and feeling. If you don't, it generally, does spiral into something toxic, something disordered, mental or physical.

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# 00:20:04 **Sun**

# And can you talk a little bit more about burnout as well? How might somebody be feeling or what might they find themselves thinking if they are experiencing burnout?

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# 00:20:17 **Ginger**

# So, burnout symptoms can be similar to trauma symptoms. So, for any of you listening right now, you're like, "Oh my gosh, I think I have PTSD," you might not. It could be burnout, which is a little easier to treat. Basically, you're more likely to be forgetful, harder to sleep. Even if you are sleeping for a long time, maybe you feel like the quality of sleep has gone down.

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# 00:20:41 **Ginger**

# You're more likely to be reactive with the poor emotion regulation. So, does everything just seem to bother you? Does any little thing seem to set you off? A really good self-asssessment question could be; what number would I give my present stressor on a scale of 1 to 10? And let's say it's a three. But is my emotional reactivity a three? Is my emotional response to the stressor matching?

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# 00:21:13 **Ginger**

# If my emotional response is instead like a six, seven, or eight, something else is going on. Whether it's something from your past or whether your express tolerance has just gone so low, that everything just suddenly feels like a 10.

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# 00:21:30 **Ginger**

# Also, level of compassion and care. If suddenly, you don't care about your job when you loved your job, or suddenly, you're thinking the negative about everyone ... so, if you put this in the sense of the school - like suddenly, you just think that all these students are just so lazy, and unappreciative and bad, then there's likely something else going on when your level of care for yourself and others has just really been depleted; then you're not burning out, you are burned out.

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# 00:22:09 **Sun**

# I feel like I hear people saying "I have to " a lot. Like, "I don't have a choice. I have to do these things." And so I'm wondering if you can talk a little bit about that feeling of "I have to do my job. I have to take care of my kids. I have to support my elderly parents," whatever it is that people have going on. They feel like they don't have a choice.

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# 00:22:34 **Sun**

# That, plus maybe some burnout or some CPTSD, what then? Like what's the way forward?

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# 00:22:50 **Stacy**

# I think that really is something that resonates with me because I am one of those people. I am a "have to" or "should." And my therapist will always tell me stop that basically.

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# 00:23:00 **Stacy**

# But I think what it comes down to, and it can be very difficult. I think we're all high-achieving successful individuals. And we got there for being a particular way, and probably many of us have type-A personalities where we got to get it done, it has to be done right. Again, high-achieving.

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# 00:23:19 **Stacy**

# And there's a reason that we're where we are. But really, when it comes down to it - and I'm channeling the younger me who said, "I don't have to do anything" when my mom told me I had to do things. So, I would say, "I don't have to go to school, I'm choosing to go to school. I don't have to have a job, I'm choosing to."

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# 00:23:40 **Stacy**

# And I think a little bit of that is reframing just the way you say it when you say you have to do something. And again, I am going to put a disclaimer, I am not a therapist. I am not trained in this particular area. This is from my own personal experience and also understanding psychology.

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# 00:23:58 **Stacy**

# When you have to do something, when you feel like you have to, it's somebody is putting (and in this case, it's yourself) - but it might be external factors that people are putting things on you that you have to do. And we have a natural feeling of ... I don't know, maybe I'm just speaking just about myself, I'm projecting here on to everybody. But that I have to please other people or that it's the rule I have to follow.

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# 00:24:24 **Stacy**

# But when it comes down to it, I don't really have to do anything except for take care of my child, maybe. But if I reframe it as I'm choosing to do this - so I'm choosing to put in my work time right now, or I'm choosing to take care of myself right now, I'm choosing to take care of my child. I'm actually choosing like today, actually, I chose not to work. I chose a self-care activity on purpose.

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# 00:24:54 **Stacy**

# And yeah, do I have work to do? Absolutely, I have work to do. And is there a voice in the back of my head that's telling me, "Hey, you have to do this?" Sure. But what's the worst-case scenario? And that's another thing I've heard from therapists over the years, like what will happen if you don't?

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# 00:25:10 **Stacy**

# And at first, my answer, everything will end, the world is over, but really, is it? And so, I've really sort of challenged those thoughts because they're really not reality. The reality is ... this makes me sad, but it's also helpful; things will continue if you're not there. If you're not doing it, it will get done. And if it doesn't, not the end of the world.

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# 00:25:38 **Stacy**

# And so, for me, that's been really helpful. And just saying like, again, as soon as I reframe I'm choosing to do this, and I make a list out and I'm, "Okay, what do I choose to do right now?" And as soon as I change that wording, it brings a lot of the pressure off.

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# 00:25:55 **Stacy**

# And sometimes, that's hard some days, it's a lot harder to do if I have lack of sleep or if I'm feeling triggered - if I do feel like there's a lot on my plate, one thing though that I'm getting (I shouldn't say I'm getting good at) - I'm getting better at is saying, "No, I can't do that." Or "I can't do that right now, I'll do that later" because I tend to be personally. And I know many of us are; I want to do things for people.

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# 00:26:23 **Stacy**

# If you say, "Hey, can you do this? Can you take this on?" I'm going to say, "Yes," I don't even think about it because I just want to help. I mean, that's part of being a psychologist, I guess, but we want to help. And we want to do things for people. And so, I say yes, without even considering my own mental health and my own physical health. And so, for me to say no ... and I have very uncomfortable feelings with saying no.

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# 00:26:48 **Stacy**

# But to say ... even for me, it helps to say "Not right now, you can do that later." And then to schedule it in and to even - Ginger's talked about this lots of times, and I hear her voice a lot of times - to schedule that time for myself, but I can also schedule time for other people. I don't have to do it right now. To me, I think that's one of the most important things.

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# 00:27:12 **Ginger**

# Yeah, so, as a therapist, we tend to point out language like that. As Stacy was saying, we tend to remind our clients, "There's not really much you have to do." If we have so many responsibilities, though, it can feel like I have to because we don't want to lose our children. We don't want our parents that if we're taking care of our parents or our grandparents, for them to fall ill, and we want to keep our jobs. We want to be able to feed ourselves and whoever we're taking care of.

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# 00:27:43 **Ginger**

# So, they can feel like " have-tos" when they are choices. When we have so many choices, it can feel overwhelming if you have to choose between one or another. Well, Stacy is saying, we can really look at what we want to do, what our responsibilities are. And sometimes, we need to reprioritize them.

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# 00:28:05 **Ginger**

# And also, we can use that as an opportunity to not shame ourselves for not being able to do them all or not being able to do them all at 100%.

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# 00:28:12 **Ginger**

# There's a theory I really love that was created by someone who I believe has chronic illness like fibromyalgia or something like that. But the mental health community has also really embraced it called Spoon Theory. Essentially, all of us are running lower on spoons than before.

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# 00:28:33 **Ginger**

# So, what this means is she said like, for instance, take your day, and if you have some sort of issue, whether it's a physical illness and mental illness or both, or you're living under tremendous amounts of stress more so than before (which is everyone right now), without all of those things, you can have almost an unlimited amount of spoons. If you don't have any physical illness or mental illness, and there isn't a chronic stress going on in your life, you probably have an unlimited amount of spoons.

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# 00:28:59 **Ginger**

# I don't know what that's like because I lived with CPTSD myself, so I don't have an unlimited amount of spoons. I haven't for a very long time. Because I know that, I need to look at my day and everything can take a spoon. Getting ready in the morning is a spoon, making food is a spoon. Taking care of my students is probably multiple spoons. Grading, prepping for class, driving to work when that was a thing - taking care of my clients, also multiple spoons; taking care of myself, right?

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# 00:29:32 **Ginger**

# So, if I'm not feeling particularly well that day, I'm going to have less spoons than before even. So, then I need to be like, "Alright, well, this is how many spoons I feel like I have, what needs to wait until tomorrow or this weekend?" And the way to help not shame yourself about having less spoons and to really visualize what you can do.

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# 00:29:56 **Ginger**

# And also, a nice way to normalize the fact that most of us have less spoons than before. And for those of us who do have some sort of chronic illness, whether it's invisible or not, worry impacts it even more so. Right back to again, diversity of experience. And sometimes, it might be even be helpful to like talk to someone about it. Be like I can tell my girlfriend, "I have less spoons today." That's also a way you can ask for support."

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# 00:30:27 **Ginger**

# You know, if I have less spoons that day, then maybe she can make dinner for the both of us, or she can assure me, "You know what, Ginger, that can wait until this weekend or another time." So, it's a way to help yourself, but also a way for you to help others and for others to help you.

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# 00:30:45 **Stacy**

# I love the spoon thing, because I feel like it represents what's really going on in life too, because I literally am running out of spoons. I don't know where they go. If they go in the trash or what's happening to my spoons, but it's almost like life is emulating this theory and like how much I have to actually give.

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# 00:31:03 **Stacy**

# Like my silverware drawer is feeling the same as me right now. So, I love the spoons, but it's also a physical thing. Like a lot of times when I'm teaching, I'll hold things up and I'm like, "This represents this, and this represents this." You have to see it because without seeing it, sometimes it's hard to grasp. I love the spoons. So, thank you for reminding me about the spoon.

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# 00:31:25 **Ginger**

# You're welcome. And for those of you that want to read more about it, Spoon Theory was created by Christine Miserandino. I'm hoping I'm saying her last name correctly. So, she's the one that came up with this idea and I use it for myself, I use it for my clients.

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# 00:31:40 **Ginger**

# Another blogger and author, an advocate, I love that I read; her name is Jenny Lawson. She also actually has a chapter in one of her books about Spoon Theory. And she's very open about her struggles with both chronic illness and mental health. And what I love about her is she does so with lots of humor, and she's very blunt about it, which I love. And she has a really great chapter in one of her books called Furiously Happy, which is also just a great title.

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# 00:32:17 **Ginger**

# Actually, it goes back to choices with that one. She's like, "You know what? I struggle with mental illness and chronic illness, and so, depression is really hard, but I want to choose to be furiously happy despite my depression" is some perspective, which I've really loved for myself and for my clients.

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# 00:32:37 **Ginger**

# So, that's something else that can help with all of this, is listening to stories from other people to normalize your experience. You're not alone in what is going on, especially right now. But for those of you who were maybe struggling before all of this, and then this is just added to it, you're also not alone either.

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# 00:33:01 **Ginger**

# Now, hopefully, another thing to normalize - I have some clients who feel bad that they're not struggling that much. And in fact, they like being at home a lot and aren't looking forward to things going back to normal or whatever that will be. That's okay too, if you've actually been having a pretty good time despite what's going on. That's another thing that's been coming up sometimes in my ... not as often, but it's absolutely still something going on.

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# 00:33:32 **Sun**

# I know we're almost out of time, but I was wondering if you could talk a little bit more about maybe some self-care measures. You mentioned that some of the things that people might have relied on before the pandemic are off-limits now. So, what are some things that you're seeing people do within the structure of our lives right now that seem to be working really well?

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# 00:33:58 **Ginger**

# For some of my clients and myself, it's been trying out new things or using a coping mechanism that you just didn't use that often before. I've gotten back into knitting, like I used to knit when I was a teenager, and like, oh yeah, this is something I enjoy that I can do safely from home.

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# 00:34:14 **Ginger**

# I think we're trying to be creative. We've been doing more virtual board games. So, that's also been a lot of fun. Not the same as in-person, of course. But there's also this idea that's been trending on social media for any one of you who hopefully have one or two, at least, people in your little quarantine bubble - even if you have only one other person, you rock, paper, scissors - who chooses the appetizer, the drink, the main course, and the dessert. And you go to four different places for each thing. It's a nice way to support small businesses while also just going on an adventure. So, that's something I actually plan to do myself.

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# 00:34:58 **Ginger**

# Vertical urbanization is also something we can take advantage of, which has existed for a long time, but has become more important now. Social media definitely has its downsides. And from being burned out, from being on a computer, staring at a screen, is also an issue at the same time. It's a source of trying to connect to people and there's more and more support groups and different outlets online than before.

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# 00:35:30 **Ginger**

# For instance, NAMI, the National Alliance for Mental Illness, they have free support groups in Los Angeles and Orange County, and they're all virtual right now. So, that's another thing that's been kind of, one of the bad things with this pandemic, is client scheduling for me, has really changed. And people are like, "Yeah, my meeting ends at five, so I could have our session at five." I'm like, "Great!"

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# 00:35:55 **Ginger**

# You know, so, if you were able to commute to a support group before, you don't need to now, because they're virtual. And honestly, I can't speak for all mental health resources, but I think that virtual meetings is not going to go away once this pandemic is over. I think that I'll probably always see some clients virtually for the rest of my career. And that's okay. I would hope and like for most of my clients to return back into my office eventually, but I will probably always offer virtual sessions from now on.

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# 00:36:28 **Ginger**

# So, looking and seeing what's out there; again, and just to try it out. I know that a lot of people, including a lot of my clients, just the idea of virtual therapy, the idea of a virtual support group just sounded so off-putting. Like, no, that's not going to help." It's like, "Well, you can at least try it and see," or, yeah, it's not as good as in-person for some - some of my clients, even if they could drive here, might not want to do it ever again because they like the virtual aspect, but it's better than nothing.

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# 00:37:01 **Ginger**

# So, that's something to keep in mind. I think Reddit's also really great, personally. Reddit has a lot of subreddits and you can be a part of a community, even if you don't know their real name. I'm a part of a ... I think it's called like Quarantine Cooking or something - or COVID Cookery, I don't know. There's some sort of ( I'm a big foodie).

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# 00:37:23 **Ginger**

# So, there's some sort of subred that I joined that's specifically about people who have either re-embraced cooking, become more creative with cooking, or are finally cooking for the first time in their lives because of COVID. And it's been really cool to just see what people come up with and trying out new recipes was already a hobby of mine, but I have more time and means to try out new stuff.

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# 00:37:51 **Ginger**

# Or I don't know if I have more time, but because I'm not eating out as often, I have more motivation, I guess, to choose to try out new recipes more often or more challenging ones. So, that's been something I've been doing. I don't know if Stacy, there's been anything that you've added on to your repertoire during this time?

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# 00:38:14 **Stacy**

# I haven't added a whole lot and I think this is where I struggle just in general. And so, I think talking about it reminds me, oh yeah, that's why I need to do this. And I actually have been struggling quite a bit and I think it's because I haven't been doing some of these things. But the things that have helped when I'm feeling good is really connection. I really need connection.

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# 00:38:36 **Stacy**

# It's very interesting, I'm an introvert. So, you would think that being alone and being away would be good, but I'm an introvert who really likes to be with my people a lot, if that makes sense. So, I don't want to be in crowds, I don't really enjoy going to big parties, but I need my people. And so, that's been really hard, but I think even though sometimes I get zoomed out, scheduling Zoom time with a group of friends is one of the best things.

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# 00:39:03 **Stacy**

# I have group text messages just to vent or whatever. And I feel like these are people who are here that I didn't have this as regularly as before. But for me, I think one of the things - and this sounds really like odd, I feel like, but to show compassion to others has actually helped me a lot. Because I think I just feel good when I do this. And so, I've noticed a big difference in my classes with my students. Instead of being all business - I'm very business, by the way.

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# 00:39:37 **Stacy**

# In fact, one of my therapists recently said, "We need to soften you." I was like, "Oh, okay, smooth off the rough edges." But it's really actually been helpful to me to remind myself, to talk to myself in similar ways, but also to acknowledge that people are struggling. And these are people who are just like me. And it helps me to ask for help and it helps for me to like ... I tend to be somebody who thinks, "Oh, people just don't want to spend time with me."

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# 00:40:08 **Stacy**

# But if I'm realizing I'm doing this to other people and they're appreciating it, then that probably means that they want to do this for me as well. And so, really for me, it's the connections that have made a difference; whether it's me reaching out to show compassion towards others or me asking for this time.

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# 00:40:28 **Stacy**

# I don't ask for compassion because that feels weird, but I'm like, "I need time from you. Can we please schedule something? I need this."

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# 00:40:35 **Stacy**

# I have to be careful who I ask for it from, because not everybody's willing or able. But that's the main thing; I haven't picked up any new hobbies. I haven't done anything since ... I mean, I've cooked some exciting meals, but I was always doing the same thing. So, nothing, I don't have any fancy skills. I don't play instruments, I don't sing and dance. I don't do anything like that. But I also have a four-year-old. So, for me, it's just the connection.

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# 00:40:59 **Ginger**

# I think that's a good reminder too, of you don't need to do new things per se. Sometimes, it's about remembering the old or just sticking with what you have. Again, even if it's not in the same way that you were before. And yeah, I can't emphasize enough how important connection is at the end of the day.

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# 00:41:15 **Ginger**

# One app I've become a big fan of is Marco Polo. It's a free app. What I like about it is ... it's not for everyone. One of my closest friends is like, "No, I don't want to use it," and that's fine. But it meets in between a text message and a phone call, because you can send short video messages, do whatever you want. And they don't have to be short. One of my friends left me a 45-minute Marco Polo once, which I listened to while I was on a nice walk outside.

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# 00:41:43 **Ginger**

# So, if you're not a fan of sending videos or anything, that's okay. But I've really enjoyed it because I can see them, I can hear them, we can show each other stuff and they can watch it whenever they want. So, that's an app I've been recommending to some of my clients for connection in a different way than a scheduled Zoom or anything like that. You can connect whenever you want.

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# 00:42:05 **Ginger**

# I think the other thing I'd say is it's okay to be struggling right now, and it doesn't make you weaker. That's one of my pet peeves. Honestly, it's human to struggle, and what's been going on has just literally been one thing after another. And so, once you feel like you're experiencing depression and anxiety for the first time in your life, it's not ... I know this might sound cliche, but it doesn't make you a bad person or a worse person or a weak person. It's a part of the human experience.

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# 00:42:44 **Ginger**

# And also, depression and anxiety are states of being. They're not mental illnesses in themselves. Just because you're experiencing depression and anxiety doesn't mean that you're going to be living with a mental illness the rest of your life. And it's still something to take care of. And hopefully, you're not going through it alone. You deserve support through this, even though we're all going through it. There's power in numbers.

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# 00:43:11 **Sun**

# Well, Stacy and Ginger, I want to thank you both so much for joining me today for the podcast to talk about all of these really important things that we're experiencing to one degree or another. I so appreciate your time and your expertise, and thank you for doing the good work to support students and folks in the Mt. SAC community and just our world community at large. I really appreciate you and admire the work that you're doing.

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# 00:43:37 **Stacy**

# Thank you, Sun. We appreciate you having us on and being able to talk about these things as well.

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# 00:43:43 **Ginger**

# Thank you, yeah. Very happy to be here and share and talk.

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# 00:43:51 **Christina**

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# 00:44:04 **Christina**

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