EDITED Mt SAC Being Positive During Chaotic Times

00:00:00 **Gary**

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00:00:23 **Gary**

There's mental health professionals, there's medical professionals, to help you in areas not only so they can help you, but so they can refer you to the appropriate areas that you may need some guidance or help.

00:00:37 **Christina**

Hi, I'm Christina Barsi.

00:00:38 **Sun**

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

00:00:42 **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.

00:00:59 **Sun**

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

00:01:03 **Speaker 2**

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

00:01:12 **Speaker 1**

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

00:01:14 **Christina**

From transforming part-time into full-time-

00:01:17 **Speaker 2**

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

00:01:23 **Christina**

Or just finding time to soak in the campus.

00:01:26 **Speaker 2**

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

00:01:30 **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.

00:01:41 **Sun**

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

00:01:46 **Christina**

And this is the Magic Mountie Podcast.

00:01:52 **Christina**

Hi, this is Christina. And today, we have Gary Vasquez, a licensed clinical social worker, and Diana Chou with a background in clinical psychology, who both work with the Student Health Center with us today. And they share with us explanations as to what we might be experiencing during this chaotic time, and how we can be mindful of what our needs are. Here is Sun, to get us started.

00:02:19 **Sun**

Well, good morning, Diana and Gary, welcome to the Magic Mountie Podcast, thank you for joining us.

00:02:25 **Diana**

Hi, Sun, thank you for inviting us. My name is Diana Chou and I work with Gary over at the student health services. My background is a clinical psychologist, and I see students with various issues. It could be as minor as relationship adjustment issues to maybe some of the common disorders that you've heard, like depression, anxiety, and so forth.

00:02:52 **Gary**

Hi, Sun, my name's Gary Vasquez, I'm a licensed clinical social worker. I work part-time with the Student Health Center and work with students who come in for any type of help or assistance in regards to needing maybe resources or being connected or brief therapy, and I'm so glad to be here today.

00:03:12 **Sun**

Well, thank you both so much for your important work on campus. And thank you for joining the podcast today to talk a little bit more about health and wellness during this time, and I'm going to turn it over to you.

00:03:24 **Diana**

Alright. So Gary, can you tell us about the purpose of this topic and give us some examples?

00:03:30 **Gary**

Sure, in light of everything that's going on, the purpose of this topic is to be able to focus on areas of our life that we can control in order to find balance and positivity. Sometimes, having balance and being positive helps us navigate our ever-changing lives.

00:03:48 **Gary**

And in times like this that we're in, there are four areas that I've noticed, or I've heard that have increased or decreased, one being screen time. There's a lot more time spent given the news and politics. And screen time definitely has increased with watching the news, going on social media.

00:04:13 **Gary**

And the second one is in personal social connecting. This is an example of connecting with others in person. I think that now, we're in an environment where we use a lot of Zoom for meetings, for work, and school. And this area has decreased - in person, interpersonal social connecting has definitely decreased.

00:04:34 **Gary**

Also, in light of everything that's going on, there has been some confusion. Confusion and change that happens in our daily activities, our daily roles as parents, as a student, as a friend, as a professional, working remotely, how we fit all that on, we can get confused.

00:04:57 **Gary**

Our emotions and feelings is the fourth one. When we're confused, when there's increase in awareness of things going around us that are chaotic, our emotions and feelings can fluctuate, and they can go up and down during these given times for several different reasons; there's some anger, there's embodied energy, there's frustration. And at times feelings of maybe hopelessness, where things are going.

00:05:26 **Diana**

So Gary, how can chaotic life events alter how you approach your daily life?

00:05:32 **Gary**

Where we are today, given the pandemic, what was once a kind of a routine thing with daily chores can now make me maybe feel overwhelming because life has sped up. It can lead to maybe frustrations within ourselves because we're having a difficult time organizing and scheduling, maybe school-related functions with kids, with our partners, with our friends.

00:05:57 **Gary**

And it can get overwhelming with this increase in speed at our home environment. And when you're looking at the future and you're wanting to hurry up and end this pandemic or end the things that are happening that are causing negativity, it builds on the anxiety. It can compound some of the anxiety that's already there that we're currently experiencing in present time. So, this forward-looking, future-looking way of thinking is definitely altered by chaotic life events.

00:06:28 **Gary**

We talked a little bit about relationships when we're interpersonally connecting with others. The work relationships have changed in the sense where, when it's time to speak with and process something with our colleagues or coworkers and staff around us that we once were presently in front of - those relationships now have changed.

00:06:52 **Gary**

Everyone's taken on so many different roles now that you don't have that extra time; when there's downtime, when you're at work or when you're at school and you have a student, or you have a friend or a colleague or worker that you can lean on to be able to talk about things, work relationships can definitely be altered.

00:07:11 **Gary**

Also, other relationships outside of home relationships. Where in the past we were once engaging in maybe weekly or monthly times away from home when we went out to dinner or went to visit close family or relatives that you don't see every day, you're able to talk about events and key things - you don't do that in person anymore. There's more barriers and it definitely has been altered.

00:07:39 **Diana**

Speaking of relationships, how do we re-engage with others during this time?

00:07:44 **Gary**

A great question. And one of the quotes I pulled out of a book, it's called Using Our Minds to Change Our Brains and Why Therapy Works by neuroscience of human relationship psychologist (he studies neuroscience), Louis Cozolino. And the quote I pulled out of it is that "Relationships are fundamental and necessary condition for the existence of the contemporary human brain".

00:08:08 **Gary**

Re-engaging with others is extremely important during difficult times, during chaotic times, because sometimes we need to connect in order to find some balance to help process what's going on and to talk about what you feel about what's going on.

00:08:29 **Gary**

We want to focus on the importance of a positive bond and a positive energy. When we can bond with someone positively and find that positive energy, not only will it help us continue to re-engage with that individual, but it'll give us more energy to reach out to others. When we're connecting with others and re-engaging with others, our brains will learn to grow while we're connecting.

00:08:58 **Gary**

So, I wanted to touch back on the importance of positive bonding. Although, in-person communication can bring about a different level or a different level of energy, brain connection; connecting with others, and re-engaging others can help us not necessarily gain or change our perspective, but focus in on the importance of being able to open up and open up our mind about the knowledge and experience we share with the other person. Therefore, it is important to continue to re-engage with others during this time.

00:09:34 **Diana**

Gary, what about physical activities? What can we do to become physically active daily?

00:09:40 **Gary**

Being physically active, a lot of us have heard the importance of being physically active and how healthy it can be for us. And there's different forms and ways of becoming physically active. Of course, walking, continuing to stay active outside, play with children, whether it be nieces, your own children, and it's in a safe environment - gardening, bicycling around the community. These are different things that we can do and it definitely can be beneficial. And I just wanted to shine light on the importance of really continuing to engage in physical activities.

00:10:15 **Diana**

So, after talking about physical activities, Gary, do you have any exercises that you recommend can help us tune into ourselves?

00:10:24 **Gary**

Oh, yes. Tuning into yourself is an area, especially when our lives are extremely busy, that we tend to forget. We tend to forget how to tune in with ourselves. I want to share with you that comes from a book about working in mindfulness with children called The Mindful Child by Susan Kaiser Greenland. The quote states, "We don't have any control over our genetic dispositions, but there's a whole lot we can do about how we live."

00:10:52 **Gary**

We have the ability of tuning in with ourselves if we make the time to do it, and we choose to. I believe breathing exercises can really be helpful. When we slow our breathing, we can slow our mind and control our perspectives on things. And as we mentioned earlier, we can help open up areas of thinking when we communicate with different relationships or understanding of other people's perspectives.

00:11:21 **Gary**

A good approach is maybe don't blame others or don't blame yourself; taking a look at the big picture. Again, opening your heart with the least amount of judgment so that your mind can control your perspective, and it can lead us down a positive path.

00:11:37 **Gary**

Again, when we're busy, sometimes, the little things can be difficult. Taking breaks, whether you're a student taking a full-time load or a student working part-time, whenever there's time, taking breaks when you feel exhausted or you're feeling fatigued.

00:11:55 **Gary**

The other area I feel is setting boundaries. Setting boundaries is important when it comes to tuning into yourself. Sometimes, you don't need that social interaction, the social connection. It's okay to let people know that today it's time for me to spend time with myself and do what's needed to be able to help provide the self-care that I need.

00:12:16 **Diana**

Gary, in one of your earlier points, you mentioned the confusion and you were more referring to how us as parents, students, professionals, our work schedule is kind of combining with our home schedule. So, it creates a lot of that confusion in terms of our daily schedule. So, what role does time management play in social connections, physical activities, and self-care?

00:12:45 **Gary**

Time management is probably the key piece to tie everything together when it comes to finding balance. But I feel like having purpose in how you're managing your time is probably the most important thing to be able to find the balance. You've got to find purpose. What's your purpose and why we need to manage this time. It's to provide self-care, to help keep my body strong, to connect. Time management is important when it comes to tying all that together.

00:13:15 **Gary**

We need to start with evaluating where your time is spent. I think this is key with finding balance and purpose; evaluate where the time is currently spent. Whether you're a working professional, a student, we all have different variables and dynamics that are ongoing every day and ever-changing. Whether it'd be work, family, friends, relatives, and self-care; those areas are areas that maybe you can start to really fine-tune and look at. And so, you can stay organized and you can stay on track to be able to get through your workday or your school day or your week.

00:13:55 **Diana**

So, Gary, what are some professional options available if, and when we may need help during chaotic times?

00:14:03 **Gary**

I really feel that although we have an innate ability to tune into ourselves in our daily lives, and that we're able to be resilient and find the options to help cope through really difficult times and understand what's really going on with others and amongst ourselves - but having resources and having an understanding that they're out there to be able to help you like our Student Health Center, for one.

00:14:26 **Gary**

There's mental health professionals, there's medical professionals to help you in areas not only so they can help you, but so they can refer you to the appropriate areas that you may need some guidance or help to be able to find some coping, to help you manage during these times.

00:14:44 **Gary**

There's mental health providers available in the community. You can always go to your local County websites depending on the County that you live in. Every County is different, but every County has the resource. And you can always go on Google and look for that.

00:14:59 **Gary**

The last is there's applications. If you have access to a phone or a computer where you can find mobile applications. One, in particular, is Headspace where there's mindfulness, there's meditation, there's breathing exercises that help you in different areas, depending on what it is that you need a specific type of technique for when it comes to breathing or positive thinking.

00:15:25 **Gary**

So, it's important to know that if ever you need anything, you can reach out and know that there's someone there to help you through times like we're going through now.

00:15:35 **Diana**

Thank you, Gary. Thank you for providing and sharing with us your wealth of knowledge on this very much-needed topic. And I think we all, no matter you're a student or professional, a parent - we all have learned something from what you shared, having that balanced lifestyle and staying connected for yourself. I think that's a very good reminder for all of us. Thank you for your time today, Gary.

00:16:03 **Gary**

Thank you, Diana, thank you.

00:16:05 **Sun**

That's great, thank you. And I thought it was really great how you mentioned the places where maybe we've become disconnected over the last couple of months to look to those places for possibilities to reconnect. And that really spoke to me.

00:16:19 **Sun**

When we're stressed and we're overwhelmed and we feel like we just can't keep up and maybe we don't feel that great, it's hard to maintain those connections, right?

00:16:29 **Gary**

Absolutely.

00:16:29 **Sun**

And then in terms of helping folks connect with the support that's available at the health center, do either of you have any recommendations about ways to do that? I know faculty, we can make announcements to our classes, our post on Canvas that the health center's available, but beyond that-

00:16:50 **Diana**

Certainly; for students right now, everything is online. So, we would recommend student calling the Student Health Center number, is (909) 274-4400. And you will be connected with one of our front desk staff. And they will ask you questions to kind of direct you to schedule an appointment. The process is so easy. We don't have a waitlist right now. So, you would probably be seen by one of the mental health professionals within a week if our schedule works. So, it's a very easy process.

00:17:27 **Diana**

I also want to mention that on our website, if you go to the mtsac.edu/studenthealthcenter, you can also see a bunch of prerecorded clips. And these are clips that either are teaching you stress less or activities you could do, how to de-stress - there are some really cool tips online that you could watch. And this is free access, you have it, but you could watch it anytime you want, student or a staff.

00:18:01 **Sun**

Thank you so much. Well, I just want to thank you both for the incredible work that you're doing to support students and to support the Mt. SAC community at this time, and to transition your services to online when you yourselves also are experiencing great changes in your work lives, in your daily lives. So, thank you so much. Your work is so appreciated.

00:18:23 **Gary**

Thank you, Sun. Thank you.

00:18:24 **Diana**

Thank you so much.

00:18:28 **Christina**

Thank you for listening to the Magic Mountie Podcast. Remember to subscribe on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or wherever you like to get your podcasts, so you can listen in the car, in your office, or however you like to listen.

00:18:42 **Christina**

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