



EPISODE 82: MASKING MY MENTAL HEALTH

- Speaker 1: [00:00](#) What's up real quick. I have to give a medical disclaimer. The information in this program is not intended or implied to be a substitute for medical diagnosis, treatment or advice. You are encouraged to confirm any information obtained from this program or through this program regarding any medical condition or any treatments with your physician, never disregard professional medical advice or delay seeking treatment because of something you have heard or accessed through this program. You're listening to the bipolar now podcast episode 82. Hey there, welcome to the show today. We're going to go straight into the topic that is this ongoing mental health conversation that you and I have been having on this very show. We're talking the good conversations, the bad and the awkward.
- Speaker 2: [00:56](#) Much awkward.
- Speaker 1: [01:00](#) I know this firsthand because I shot an experimental video for the listeners who joined over on the podcast group on Facebook shot a video of my buddy, Jonah, Jonah, the barber giving me a haircut. And it was 30 minutes of awkward. We were both wearing masks. He was masked up. I was masked up. We were, we were having the mental health conversation in the midst of a haircut. It was so awkward and I freaking
- Speaker 2: [01:28](#) Love it.
- Speaker 1: [01:30](#) Hey, we're just going to jump straight in today. I am taking heavy fire this week and I don't want to dwell too much on that. And I actually have a ton that I need to get going still today. And so, um, heavy fire, heavy fire. It's like a fire hose with this new job of mine. It's like the fire hose is either all the way on, or it's just a trickle. And right now it's all the way on. There are jobs coming at me left and right. So this is going to be probably an ugly, messy episode for you and I both, but it's okay. One of the things that I just have to keep in mind, like, so all day long, I'm in a management style, right? I'm trying to manage and mitigate anxiety as I manage and mitigate these clients. And I'll tell you what, like I know how popular it is to talk about self care.
- Speaker 1: [02:23](#) Nowadays. I know there, there are no shortage of well-intentioned and healthy people that are trying to teach you how they do it, how they take care of themselves in a world that is just spinning faster and getting more hectic. But I'm telling you all the self care in the world, ain't going to erase this situation for me. It's not going to raise the anxiety, but here's the thing I'm doing it anyways. I'm just going to keep on doing it. For

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example, tonight, I had a relaxing dinner with a friend and that was so nice, so nice. But you know, it's just, I'm still in the circumstances that I'm in and pretty much nothing's going to change that until I work my way out of it. I'm convinced. But here's the thing today. We're talking about coverups. I'm going to go back and revisit a topic that we did way back in episode 39.

Speaker 1: [03:18](#) That was last December. We had, uh, we talked about this kind of ongoing issue within mental health, uh, particularly within bipolar disorder is the, how, how it is that we cover up and conceal our inner realities so that other people don't have to know what it is that we're painted with or what we're struggling with. And so we talked about masks. I did a pretty poor job on that episode of, of describing what it is to wear a mask when you have mental health, um, challenges such as this. Um, but apparently it was one of the more popular episodes. So maybe it didn't matter, cause this is a strong, solid, heavily felt topic. And today I'm going to crack it back open again, and we're going to come from the angle now that everybody knows what it's like to wear a mask like to physically wear a mask.

Speaker 1: [04:10](#) Now that the entire, like this portion of the universe knows what's, that's like, uh, it's it kind of colors the, the analogy a little bit differently. Don't you think? I mean, now it's just part of the conversation. It's part of everyday life. Like I said, in that haircut video, it was just part of that video. We were wearing masks. And so now we know what it's like to go around, you know, in stores anyways, or in certain settings to only be able to see somebody's eyes. That that's just a reality. Now, like my whole thought as I go into a store is like, I can't wait to take this thing off. And I do usually the moment I step out of the door, the thing is off of my face. It it's just, these COVID masks are now a reality. You know, I go walking in the neighborhood, uh, over here and in the evenings, usually I can catch this couple.

Speaker 1: [05:07](#) They're precious elderly couple and they go on their walk and I run into them. And the wife said to me, you know what, the one thing I can't wait for this to all be over with is when I can see people's faces again. Isn't that interesting, right? Like there's, there's this desire to see your true identity, like in that can only be seen when you remove the mask. I play coverup quite a bit with my mental health, particularly in these last six months or so when it's really been challenged and put to the test, but it's like, I've started to really come to appreciate people like this, that the people that say I want to see your face. And so, um, today I'm just going to talk really briefly, uh, on a couple of maybe key

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conversations that I've had in the last week or so that shed some light on how it is that you can let people see your face when it comes to your mental health.

Speaker 1: [06:06](#)

Like if somebody wants to see your face, this might help you, this, this whole set of conversations that I had with each of these different people this week might actually help you see how it is that you can remove your mask and feel good about doing that and have it turn out well for you. So one of the main areas where masks have to be put on as far as mental health is concerned is your job. Your job is in an arena that demands that you show up ready to give a decent, or maybe in some cases, a really good performance. And so it helps if you have a workplace that is, um, not only aware of, but supportive of your diagnosis and I'm not going to pretend, I know that doesn't exist everywhere. I know that it's like not possible to always have an employer who is, um, for you in this regard, but it is worth the search.

Speaker 1: [07:13](#)

If you can wind up somewhere and you can test early on whether or not the people that are on your team or the management that's over you, or however, it's structured that you work with people that they know like that they actually have, uh, an understanding of what it is that you deal with. And so I'm very fortunate. Uh, Chelsea who runs the agency, her, uh, her and her team, they're all in the know we have weekly check-ins and I just make it a point to explain how well or not well I'm doing and what my plan is. And really that's all people need to know, is, are you well or not? Well, and what is your plan? And of course it's easy to know the well and the not well, but it's not always so easy to define how it is. You're going to move forward and get yourself back to a place to where you want to be.

Speaker 1: [08:08](#)

Because I mean, if it, if it could be like, if it could be figured out how to get back to like the most prime and optimum mental health that you've ever experienced, then people like me wouldn't have a job or business and everybody would be like, totally cool. There'd be no, you know, stories of nuclear bombs in the workplace or nuclear bombs in the marriage or nuclear bombs, you know, wherever this disease goes, it creates nuclear bombs. So getting in the know, as far as having a plan for how you're going to get through the tough stuff, it just comes with time practice. And I got to say, it comes with a lot of journaling or some kind of self-reflection, you know, a lot of times we go through these things, super difficult circumstances where like, I swear, I never want to go through that again, but it's highly likely that you will.

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- Speaker 1: [08:57](#) So how are you going to remember how to approach it next time, if you're not taking stock and recounting the story? You know, I use a journal for that. Some people use other methods, but it's like, that's how I develop the plan. And that's why I can feel confident to tell Chelsea and the team, Hey, things aren't going so great right now, you know, upstairs in my brain, but they're going to be okay, we're still going to deliver the projects. And it's, it's actually, I don't know how this worked out as to be like such a blessing in my life. But like Chelsea knows how it is that this disease functions, because it runs in her family. So remember like whoever you wind up working for, if this is a disease that affects four to 5% of the population, you know, like there's just going to be a lot of people touched by this particular illness more than you think.
- Speaker 1: [09:51](#) So one of the things that I do is I just say, Hey, right now, I can't take on anything else. I committed to this, that, and the other we're going to get it done. You know, we're going to get it done hopefully on time. But, you know, I gotta, I gotta get some relief. Like don't, don't book me out next week, you know, just yet. And so when you make your needs known, when you say, Hey, can you lighten my load a little bit? The greatest thing about that is that someone else can do your job usually. And that's a big blow to our pride, at least to me. Cause I like to be like, no, only I can do that. Right? Like only, only I am qualified to do that. Only I am talented enough to do that. No, it's not true. There's other qualified, talented people that can probably do your job.
- Speaker 1: [10:42](#) If you just say, Hey, this one, I need a break. Or at, at this point, I need you to move me into some simpler projects. Like these super hyper technical complex projects are blowing my mind. Good way. And you know what Chelsea said to that? She said, yes, absolutely. We will take this off of your plate. You just go and you do your magic, Mike magic, Mike, you go and do your boy, go make it happen. She says, you know what you're doing? You of all people know what you're doing. So go make it happen. She recognizes that we work in a crazy industry, but I can work. I can take a job from start to finish. I can thrill and delight the clients with all the creativity. That's just something I can do. And she knows that. So Chelsea's like these she's a super ideal boss, right?
- Speaker 1: [11:43](#) She's super in touch with my issue. She's compassionate. She makes a room for me. And then she recognizes it's in everybody's best interest that I succeed. Like you need to somehow verbalize this with your manager or your boss or

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whoever. I don't know. I don't know how your work is structured or if you're even have a job right now. Um, cause a lot of people obviously don't, but you need to, at some point have the conversation. It's like, you know what? You, as a business or you as an organization, wherever you work, you are going to succeed. If I succeed and this is what I need to succeed and you need to verbalize that. And that might not be very easy to do. You might have to sit down and write this out and think this through and practice saying it like you, you might have to have, you know, the big talk with yourself about what you need in order to succeed.

Speaker 1: [12:45](#)

But, but you have to know and you have to verbalize it. Gosh, work is such a critical environment to have the mental health conversation. Like if you go into work with the mask, you know, masking your symptoms, masking your issues, masking your problems, masking your mental health. Like if you go in there with a coverup operation, it's going to blow up in your face. Eventually I like to think of it like, like inlets going into a Lake. Okay. Picture me. Mike lives here in the beautiful Southern California mountains and Lake Arrowhead is a glimmering, beautiful shimmery Lake nestled in the Pines. And there are all these tributaries that feed into the Lake, which is kind of like a large reservoir here in the mountains. And all these little tributaries flow down the Hill, you know, all the rain comes off the rim of the world highway area off of, you know, the Pacific coast and the rain comes over the Ridge.

Speaker 1: [13:52](#)

And then all the rain goes down into these streams and the streams feed in to the Lake. Well, if this Lake, if Lake Arrowhead had no outlets for all this water, the Lake would fill up the Valley. And eventually the li the Lake would kill all the trees and like cover all, all of the people that live up here that have homes nestled by the Lake. Like it's all that water is going to rise because there's no outlet. Right. And it's going to kill this Valley. So there needs to be inlets and outlets in the case of Lake Arrowhead, there's 27 inlets and there's only one outlet. So that one outlet is key to controlling the level of the Lake. Okay. Think about this in terms of your mental health and controlling the level, right? Is it, is it, is it, is it backing up because it's not getting out?

Speaker 1: [14:52](#)

I mean, think about it for yourself. Think about a mountain Lake and all the streams that feed it. Like life is like these streams, the rain comes down, the rain pours in your life and the rain fills the Lake. Are you giving it an outlet or are you letting it kill everything in the Valley? You know, if everything in your, in your

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brain, it needs an outlet. And, and like I said, with the work environment, you might not know until you open your mouth, what's going to happen. Because sometimes there are no clues, zero clues, how people are going to handle, especially your supervisors, how people are going to handle you, having a bipolar disorder. You never know. You never know, but if you can develop a rapport, you know, if you're likable, if you work hard, if you're enjoyable on the team, like, however, however, that works for your workspace, I'm willing to bet that you'll find support. And then you'll get that outlet. Now, I'm not saying you outlet 24 seven, and I'm not saying you outlet to just anybody, but you need an outlet. Does this make sense? Like stress is coming in and it's feeling the Lake and you need to let some of the Lake out to maintain the level that gives you that quality of life.

Speaker 1: [16:27](#)

Like I said, in the workplace, you know, that you need to have, you need to feel like you have freedom. You like, you need to feel that you have a say so that you have control over when it is that you have this mental health conversation. Like when you decide to take the mask off, it needs to feel like you are free to make that choice. Like, there's, there's freedom in knowing when to conceal and when to reveal there's freedom. Now, just because people can see your eyes when your mask is on. Like, just because they can see into your eyes, it doesn't mean get this. It doesn't mean they deserve your soul.

Speaker 1: [17:17](#)

I learned this. Um, I learned this after some, well, this is, this is hard to, hard to talk about because the people that I took off my mask too, I like them as people, they're friends, but the way they handle my diagnosis, like their perception of it, their perception of themselves and what they need to do in terms of support as a friend, like it's just, it, it never leaves me feeling, right? Like, and so I've learned to, to, to cover up for the most part. And you know, it just, like I said, just because they can see your eyes doesn't mean they deserve your soul. So I have these two friends, let's just call them Jay and his cousin, Chris and Jay. I'm just trying to protect these guys. Cause I really liked them. Um, but Jay, like when he sees, when he sees that you got the mask on and you're like, okay, your eyes are troubled. He's like, come on, man. Tell me what's going on, man. What? What's the deal what's bothering you. Come on, just tell me. And you're like, fine. Twist your arm. We'll talk about it a little bit. And it's like, no matter what I tell him, I'm going through. It's the same answer every single time. It's always,

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- Speaker 3: [18:35](#) Oh gosh, you got to let that go. That's so silly. You're going to be okay.
- Speaker 1: [18:41](#) Oh gosh, gosh, Mike. And so that's Jay's approach. It's like, okay, I'm not going to take off my mask for Jay very often. Cause when I do, I know that's going to, that's just what it's going to be like. Okay. And then I got this other guy. So let's just say Jay and his cousin, Chris. So Chris is a totally different vibe. Like he sees into my eyes, he sees, I got my mask on. He sees him walking around and he sees I'm shuffling my feet or whatever. And um, and he's like, Oh Mike, tell me what's going on, man. Like, do you need to come over? You can just come over. You can, you don't even have to do anything. You can just sit there and be a mess. It like, we're not gonna,
- Speaker 3: [19:24](#) We don't have to talk. And every time
- Speaker 1: [19:32](#) Like I'm going to just sit in your house and be a mess.
- Speaker 3: [19:40](#) Yeah.
- Speaker 1: [19:41](#) Well the only reason I bring up these two characters in my life and they are special characters. So don't, don't take this as me dissing them. But like I've told them numerous times like, Hey, it's okay. You don't have to pry into my life. Um, I don't feel like sharing, you know, I have freedom on when I'm going to stay concealed. And when I'm going to reveal and have him plenty of amazing people that I regularly reveal myself to. So I have that outlet, right? My Lake is draining at a decent pace every single week. It's incredible. You know, one of these characters showed up the other morning when I was just, I was, I mean, I was beat, I was exhausted. I'd come off of like two or three, 13 hour work days. And I was beat and I was sleeping at weird hours and I know everybody's like, Oh my gosh, Mike, you gotta be so careful.
- Speaker 1: [20:35](#) And I try, I really do try. But these are trying times. And I'm like, I can't, I can't turn down all the work. It's just, it's the fire hose right now. So I'm driving, it's the morning. I need to get away from the computer. My eyes just start to like glaze over. When I see the screen, you know, for 14 hours straight or however long I'm sitting in front of the screen and I'm out for a drive. And I said, you know what, I'm going to go up to the, I'm going to go up to the highway and I'm going to go, just get myself like a coffee at the gas station. So I said, all right, let's do that. So I drive up there, it's a beautiful morning. And I pull into the lot

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and I noticed this truck and I know this truck cause it's my friend Alberto.

Speaker 1: [21:22](#) And on this particular morning he was parked on the side of the building. So I went over on that side of the building and I parked right next to him. And I sat there until he got his attention and we put the windows down and we were talking COVID style talking across from car to car with a little space in between us. It's funny because I have this little tiny Honda and he's got this giant Ford Raptor, which is like a super truck and we're just talking. And uh, he said, how are you doing man? I said, no, I'm not good.

Speaker 1: [21:52](#) And he like looked straight at me and he said, Oh, you're not good high. And he's like, well, what's going on? Are you drinking? And I said, no. He said, you're sober said yeah, a hundred percent sober. Now you got to understand this about my buddy, uh, him and I know what it's like to be a slave to the bottle. And so when we see each other, which is not all the time when we see each other, we check in and we have like a physical and mental health. Check-in, it's really amazing. And this is, uh, I mean, just, this is, uh, this is a very important person to me. And so when he says, are you sober? And I say, yeah. And he comes back with 100% sober.

Speaker 1: [22:49](#) Cause he knows. And I'm like, yup. He says, cool, man. He says that I've been sober for one year, for one whole year. And he looked like it. He looked incredible. Like his, his physical health was top-notch, but I went away from that interaction, you know, saying, all right, well, okay. I do have a beer with dinner and that's not normal for me. And last week I bought some rum just to drink while I was working because the hours were so crazy. And I covered that up. I covered myself, I lied to Albert and that bothered me all day.

Speaker 1: [23:45](#) So I said, this is ridiculous. I have to say something. So I confessed. I gave him a text back. I said, Hey, just so you know, I was covering myself today. I, I lied to you about being sober and yeah, it's, I mean, it's nothing compared to what some people drink, but it's not my norm. And it's not the standard that him and I are holding ourselves to, which is a new standard. And so, you know, cause we want to have freedom. Remember how I said, having freedom to choose, to conceal and reveal, like we, we want to have that same exact freedom in our sobriety. And so I confessed. I just said, you know what, Albert, when I told you I hadn't been drinking, that was a lie.

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- Speaker 1: [24:37](#) And he came back and you know, he said, well, it's a hard job that you do, man. Anybody would understand. And I said, yeah, but you know, I worked out, he said, nobody could mistake you for being a worse. So I said, thank you. And I just said, thank you. You know? Cause I, with Albert, I need to be real with everybody. I need to be real. But with the Alberts, right. The ones who want to see my face, he could see my face. So I just want to be real with him. And I want to be real with you, by the way, the coolest part is we're going hiking on Sunday.
- Speaker 4: [25:39](#) All right.
- Speaker 1: [25:39](#) Right. All right. All right. So yes, the mask is just a reality when you have a bipolar diagnosis, but if you make mental health part of the conversation more often, you'll find that the awkward just starts to die out. You know, in an eventually you're free to have the conversation with anybody. You please. All right. So short episode today, next week is coming up. Next week, episode 83 is going to be an enormous topic. We're going to talk. And this has been 83 episodes in the making. We're going to talk about suicide. I've got some thoughts and this is a humongous and tragic topic, but I've got some thoughts that I wanted to share with you. And I just noticed this because someone people are posting about, I think it was last week, it was world mental health day. And so a lot of people are hashtagging suicide awareness. And I, I see this come up a lot and I want to introduce it on this show and I want to do a good job. So hopefully things die down with me a little bit in my job, and I'll be able to sketch some more stories out and work out. Uh, just some, just some thoughts that I have about the topic in general. So I will see you here. We will do it. Same time, same place next week. Adios.