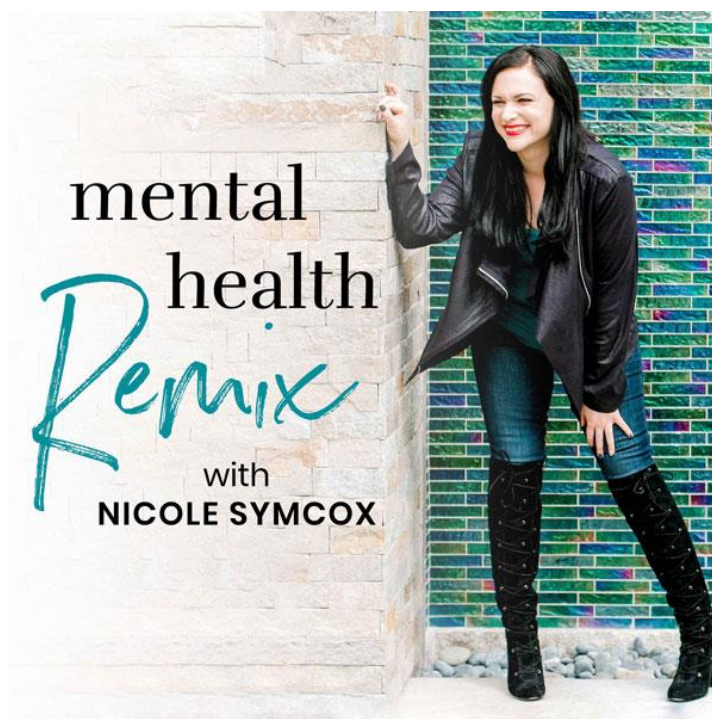


Ep #51: Destigmatizing Mental Health



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Nicole Symcox

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Your emotional world, your mental health informs the way you think about things, the way you interact in relationships. It's the way you show up at work. It's how productive you are. It goes into so many facets of living your life that you don't even realize because a lot of this stuff is unconscious or it's been there for so long, it's on autopilot, that you don't even recognize it.

Welcome to *Mental Health Remix*, a show for ambitious humans who are ready to feel, think, and be different. If you want to stop struggling with perfectionism, build better relationships, and connect with yourself and your potential, this is the place for you...

Here's your host, educator, coach and licensed psychotherapist, Nicole Symcox...

Hey, hey, everyone. Welcome to episode 51. So, today, I want to talk to you about how taking care of your mental health is just as important as taking care of your physical health.

So, one of the goals here is to try to destigmatize mental health. And I think, a lot of times, our world is way more compassionate around physical issues than they are emotional issues. And if you've wrestled with any kind of mental health disorders or emotions or had any trouble with that in the past or maybe even currently, you've probably experienced some of that.

I don't think, as a society, we are really educated and trained in how to support other people when they're having strong emotions. And so, a lot of times, we just want to help the person to get the emotions to stop because either they make us uncomfortable, or it seems like they're in a lot of emotional pain. And when we see pain show up, we want it to stop.

But I think we deal with it way differently. Like, if someone comes to you and says, "I have a really, really bad headache." Normally our response would be to be empathetic or to say, "Do you need to take something for that?" Or, "Do you need to go home and lay down?"

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We sometimes have a lot of compassion when someone brings up a physical ailment. But if someone came to you and was like, “Wow, I had a really hard time getting out of bed today and it took all of my internal energy just to make it to this meeting and I’m moving really slowly. I just, I feel a lot of pain around this relationship,” or whatever it might be for example.

We tend to be like, “Okay, well yeah, I get that. But if you could, like, buck up and put that away and just show up as best you can, that would be great.” We’re just way less empathetic when someone comes to you with anxiety symptoms or depression symptoms or grief or sadness.

We tend to want that person to get it together and stop. So, I think it’s easy, as a human, dealing with emotions, to internalize those messages, as you’ve likely received most of your life, and start talking to yourself that way.

What starts as external chatter can sometimes translate into internal dialogue. So, what do I mean by that? So, as we exist in the world, there are all of these external messages that come to us. And so, sometimes they’re bad and sometimes they’re good. It just depends on what it is.

But sometimes, if we buy into it, like if we believe it, we start to talk to ourselves that way. So, for example, maybe as a child, you were highly sensitive and therefore highly emotional. And so, perhaps you received an external message from parents, from teachers, from friends even that you are too sensitive and therefore you’re dramatic.

So, if you hear that enough as a child or as a teenager, you might start to internalize that belief, “I’m too dramatic.” And that belief might fuel the way you see yourself and the way you talk to yourself. So now, every time you cry or have an emotion, you might meet that with judgment because you now have an internal dialogue judging yourself. Does that make sense on how that breaks down?

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So, when you think about this, this is why it's so important that we do our own internal work. Because we don't want others to influence our thinking if it's incorrect.

It's one thing if people are building us up with our truth. That's fabulous and wonderful and supportive. But most of the time, the world sends a lot of negative messages. And so, we have to get our mind and our emotions right around that so we're not so easily influenced.

Because really, no one can make you feel anything. They really, really can't. We make ourselves feel something based on what we believe to be true. So, that's why we want to be really careful on what we allow ourselves to absorb and internalize. Because that is how we start talking to ourselves.

And so, when we're children or when we're teenagers, we're largely dependent on our parents, or we're largely dependent on a caregiver, or a teacher, or whoever that authority figure in our life is. And so, it's easy for those external messages to slip in, in childhood and when we are teenagers.

So, that's why, a lot of times in therapy, a lot of wounds can come up from childhood or from when we were teenagers or young adults, because we were still so vulnerable and open to the opinion of others and we didn't really know – like, if no one instilled in you to think for yourself or instilled you to question when someone says something about you or had the environment where you were able to build up healthy self-esteem, it's easy for those messages to get inside.

And then we go to therapy and we unpack that and that is the power of therapy. Because when you unpack those internalized messages and reframe them with what is actually true, you can feel more present in your life. It has the potential of changing the way you do life now in your present.

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That is why I'm always like, please, get the support you need. Because you don't want to live out your whole life in an old story, especially if it's not true.

And a lot of the messages we get as kids can sometimes not be true. We might get a message, like I just used for example, that you're dramatic. Well, you're probably not dramatic. You probably had things that were bothering you and the adults in your life didn't know how to support you so they just wanted it to stop. And so, there was a lot of telling you something so that you would stop.

But some of the healing in that is you have to learn how to respond to your own emotional cues. If you are a highly sensitive person, it is likely you're out in the world and you tend to pick up on things that maybe other people do not. And the power, the internalized power for you is learning how to filter through those messages, deciding what you think about them, and choosing how to live regardless of what they are.

But sometimes, you have to do this in therapy and break this down and work through this. And so, working through these emotions are so, so important, my friends.

Emotions can cause physical symptoms by themselves. The amount of people with anxiety disorders who have stomach aches, headaches, and muscle tension on a regular basis is incredibly high. It's in the DSM, actually. It's something, as therapists, we are actually kind of scanning for when we're diagnosing it.

So, don't be tricked by the messaging out there that your emotions don't matter. They absolutely matter. And just as if you had a stomach ache that you needed to take care of, you need to do the same thing with your emotions.

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If you are in chronic emotional pain where you feel depressed more days than not or anxious more days than not, find a way to give yourself some support, just like you would if you had a fever or if you had a headache or if you had an arm that was hurting all the time and you were having difficulties typing. You'd probably be on the phone with your doctor, like, yesterday.

You would probably be checking that out right away because we tend to respond when something physical is happening to us because we're also encouraged by others to check stuff out. We're conditioned.

When you have a physical problem, you need to take care of that. And that is correct. That is right thinking. If you have a physical problem, you need to take care of it. So, I'm not taking away from that. I would like to add that if you're having an emotional problem, you need to take care of that just as urgently.

Your emotional world, your mental health informs the way you think about things, the way you interact in relationships. It's the way you show up at work. It's how productive you are. It goes into so many facets of living your life that you don't even realize because a lot of this stuff is unconscious or it's been there for so long, it's on autopilot, that you don't even recognize it. But it is critically important that you take care of your emotional and mental health just as much as your physical health because it all plays off of each other.

I've had experiences working with clients who had a trauma story that wasn't resolved. We worked through their trauma and they weren't feeling sick all the time. They would come in and just feel sick all the time. There were stomach aches or they were getting colds or flus or whatever may have you.

And a lot of that has to do with, when you have constant anxiety happening in your body, that puts a stress response on the body. And when we have

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too much stress, we all know, we become more vulnerable to other things in the world. Because when we're so busy fighting off stress, our body has less resources to fight off illnesses. You only have so many physical and emotional and mental resources in your body. That's why we always promote self-care, learning how to support yourself in healthy ways so that you don't burn out.

So, self-care is right there with our first tool. Self-care has to do with supporting your internal world. It's not just about chocolate and bubble baths. If that's something you enjoy, fantastic. But it's also about replenishing all of that energy that you are giving out. And this is especially true if you are in a caregiving profession or if you have relationships that are dependent on you for caregiving, like very young children or maybe you have a parent you're taking care of.

But if you are working or in relationship where you're giving out a lot, it is imperative you put back what you are giving. So, finding a way to fill back up your emotional buckets so you don't get depleted and run out and feel bad. It's really important that we replenish ourselves.

The second one, of course, is to find a therapist in your local state of residence, if that feels important to you. If your emotions are getting too big, too strong, and too loud, then it's not a call that you're crazy and need to shut up. It's the exact opposite. Take it as your alarm system is going off, something needs support, and you need to figure out what that thing is so that you know how to respond to yourself.

And lastly, change how you think about emotions. Because it will change the way you respond to others as well. If you didn't know this, a lot of how we talk to ourselves is how we show up with other people. So, if you're downplaying your own emotions, it's going to be hard for you to be emotionally available for someone else. And I think this is how we create a culture of change when it comes to mental health.

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If we can offer grace and compassion for people that are going through a lot emotionally and just be supportive, like not so focused on getting them to stop or to pull it together, but just grace and compassion and supporting them on their journey of getting the support that they need.

So many times, people, when they're hurting, they just need to be heard and validated and supported more than they need you to fix it. And in fact, some people get really off-put when they talk to their friends and their friends just go into fix-it mode. Because there are some problems that do require fixing. But sometimes, when your emotions are just getting the best of you, you just want a safe, supportive space to be heard, seen, and validated. Sometimes, that's enough. Sometimes, that is being a good friend and being supportive to another human that is going through a lot.

And I want to challenge you, make your mental and emotional health a priority just as much as you make your physical health – like, those two things really, really do go together. I've seen it multiple times with clients of not feeling really great physically and when we pull down to the roots and we really get curious about what's going on there, sometimes it's unresolved emotions that are driving it.

And so, when you give emotions a new way of being, giving them the support that they need, a lot of times, they start to feel better, not just emotionally but physically as well. Now, this isn't a perfect scenario, but a lot of times, the two play off of each other. And I think that's one of the stigmas, that we're supposed to separate our physical, our emotional, our mental wellbeing. And it's just not true.

It's just not true. And a lot of times, the biggest warning signs will show up in our relationships with ourselves and in our relationships with others because it's how we are relating to things. And we'll do an episode on that coming up.

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So, taking care of your mental health and your emotional health is usually a two-step process where you need to learn new skills, new strategies, and you need to learn how to process unprocessed emotions in the safety of therapy. So, usually those two things work well together.

So, I want to encourage you, if you've been doing life one way for a while, you don't have to keep doing it this way. You can change and change the story you're telling yourself and move in a whole new way if you want to. There's potential for that. It's not a guarantee because it depends on you doing the work. And I know, people hate that. They just want the guarantee that it's going to turn out alright.

So, what I'm saying is, moving into a space to working with someone that can support you is a good move and there is never shame or blame in getting mental health support in your local state of residence. It's probably the best thing you can do for yourself.

So, as a way to support you guys, my listeners, I've been getting lots of emails and questions for a really long time, so I have decided to start a membership community where you can get help and support from other people.

And so, this is a large community group. And every month, I do trainings. I do Q&A, and really helping you get some tangible tools in your hand for managing your mind and your emotions.

Now, like I said, this is an education-based membership community. So, it won't do the same work as working with a therapist. Working with a therapist and joining this community could be a beautiful complement to one another because a lot of this membership community is really just teaching you skills, tools, strategies. It's basically like, the podcast on steroids.

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So, it's a really supportive encouraging environment because I think it's really helpful to be able to heal in a group setting where other people know and understand what you're going through because they're going through similar things themselves.

Sometimes, we run out of support systems in our current lives, and that's when it can be helpful to join a group or a community of some kind, where you can build new relationships that can support you in healthy ways, where you're all on the same learning journey, learning how to relate to yourselves and others in healthy ways.

So, if you are interested in that, you can go to mentalhealthremix.com/club and you can get all the information there. And if you want to join us, I would love to have you.

Alright, my friends, if you enjoyed today's episode, feel free to leave a rating and review on Apple Podcasts. It helps other people find the podcast and get this information. Alright, my friends, I will see you next time.

Thanks for listening to this week's episode of Mental Health Remix. If you like what you've heard and want to learn more, go to nicolesymcox.com.

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