

Episode 31 – Shit We Don't Talk About Podcast

Guest: Ian Adair

Mental Health and Wellness Stigma w/ Ian Adair

Speaker: Mia 00:00

Hey, you're listening to *Shit We Don't Talk About* powered by helix interactive. My guest is Ian Adair, TEDx speaker and author of the book *Stronger Than Stigma: A Call To Action: Stories Of Grief, Loss, And Inspiration*. In this episode we discussed the importance of talking more openly about mental health and wellness. It's a lot to unpack, and I'm here for all of it. Tune in. It gets good. Here we go.

Speaker: Mia 00:34

Ian what are you doing?

Speaker: Ian 00:36

How are you? Best intro ever. Like that Joey Tribbiani “How you doing” intro.

Speaker: Mia 00:43

It is. I should have said what are you wearing? Speaking of which, I'm wearing my Socket to Stigma shirt. (I can't even pronounce that) that I had to cut the neck out of because I went a little flash dancing and that's what you sent me when you put your book out.

Speaker: Ian 00:59

Yes, now that I know you went Flash dance instead of the socks, I probably should have sent you the leg warmers if I knew this was going to happen.

Speaker: Mia 01:08

What are they out of stock? Because I think you can still send them to me. It's leg warmers, that's amazing. Best PR gift ever. Brother, let's talk. You wrote a book. This is a whole new chapter of your life, a whole new direction that you've put out there. And tell me your story?

Speaker: Ian 01:29

Gosh, I like how you said you wrote a book and it's a whole new chapter of your life. And I can see the actual con Red Alert cross flash across your face. Yeah, Yeah, I did. When you're somebody who's suffered from a ton of learning disabilities your whole life, there's two things that scare you more than anything in the world that's reading in public and writing anything somebody else may read in public. If I had done it, and on top of a tall building just would have mastered all fears at once. But it was interesting, the book, you know, a lot of things had to happen for the book to happen. I think the pandemic had to happen, because we actually have an event for the foundation that I run called Stronger Than Stigma, mental health awareness event here in the Tampa Bay area. We weren't able to have the event because nobody could have live events. People still aren't having live events. And the book is actually a fundraiser. So all the proceeds go to support the work of the Gracepoint Foundation and the work that we do at Gracepoint here in the Tampa area. But you know, probably not a solid 2018 fundraising strategy, but 2020 with the quarantines and isolation and social distancing, people are picking up books again. And I think that that's really resonating with them.

Speaker: Mia 03:00

I do love that. That is that's a great point, too, because that's what we all did. I mean, a year ago, I think everybody's subscriptions to things are coming up that they started at the beginning of the pandemic, including Audible, and things like that. So the **captive audience**... and it's interesting in your book, you do talk about at the beginning, when you were trying to fundraise the discomfort that companies were having when they're like, *“ooh, you know, that's not sexy,”* right?

Speaker: Ian 03:25

Oh, my God. Yeah, it's when you're a mental health awareness organization and you disclose to the new executive director at the time that you're uncomfortable fundraising, because it's hard to talk about mental

health. So let's just talk about mental health and kids, or kids crisis unit, and I'm like, "*that is not what we do. It's a part of what we do.*" But when you're serving 30,000 people in your community every year, when you have 35 programs, when you're considered the behavioral health emergency room for a major city, in our country, you got to be able to talk about it. And we know stigma, it can be a broad brush and impact a lot of things but it's time to run towards it not away from it.

Speaker: Mia 04:11

Agree and this is what I like about the book. And we are going to sprinkle this in here. Because what you did with this thing was gather stories. And then you did an intersection of mental illness, depression, as well as addiction. And I mean, talk about things that hide in darkness for so many people.

Speaker: Ian 04:30

Yeah the craziest most ironic thing, almost really what I would call the biggest "son of a bitch" thing about mental health is it impacts more than 20% of our population, but every single person who's impacted by it, who suffers from it, feels like they're alone. And I know that, you know that, people suffering out there know that, we just think it's us. No matter what the statistics tell us, the one in five overuse statistic, and the 20-25% of the population statistic. But when it's you, in your apartment, in your house, in your bedroom, you know, at your dinner table, you just think it's you. And that's the thing that has driven me, literally. Crazy when I speak about this because, like I've told you before, when I was suffering, I felt the same way.

Speaker: Mia 05:31

Sure, and you can look at those numbers and go except for me.

Speaker: Ian 05:33

Yeah, because when I'm on stage, it's great. no matter what, when I'm on stage, or I'm on a zoom, I'm glad zoom has reaction buttons now because nothing really paints a picture of understanding like a thumbs up from 100 different zoom boxes. But you know, first thing I always say to kind of starts conversation "*who in the room or who on the zoom has been impacted in some way, either yourself, your family or one of your closest 4-5 friends by mental illness, addiction or suicide?*" And if you're in the room 95% of people raise their hand or stand up, when you're on zoom, you see the thumbs up. But you always see

when you're live on a stage, the best place to look is on the aisle, because you always see someone turn and look at the four people next to them, And you can physically see it like a little thought bubble in a cartoon over the head like *"I wonder which one of these four it's going to be, I know it's going to be you"*. So that's how you start a conversation. And I do that also, because I want everyone to see that they're in a safe place, because there's people with a shared experience and they are with them. And you got to start the conversation with that anyway. But no to the point of they can beat those odds. You just can't tell people, *"one in five, let's take this seriously."* *"Whoa, you said one in five, I'm good."*

Speaker: Mia 06:51

Right. Now you can see that people like carry the one doing the math and trying to not be that one person. And I think it's interesting that you rolled this out though, this book and everything during the pandemic, because you can take the numbers of everything that's happened in the last year and multiply them. You can also do the whole *"we're all in the same boat,"* nope, we are not. They're just the same storm but the boats are all different of what people are struggling with. So if you were struggling with it before, and then you come rolling into the isolation, maybe not being in a safe space, etc. it exacerbates it as well.

Speaker: Ian 07:32

Oh 100%. If there's any silver lining to this pandemic, it's that it has brought to light, I believe what people with a mental health condition or already been going through before the pandemic. You have a lot of people who need to go to work for that social connectedness you got a lot of people that didn't understand what social distancing meant. I don't think any of us really understood what social distancing meant. We knew it. We thought social media was so social distancing that can't be too different, Right? But we ended up being becoming emotionally distant. And I tell people all the time why has this taken such a toll on our on our workforce? Why is this taking such a toll on people in general? And I go *"Think about it for just one second. What is the worst punishment we do for prisoners in our criminal justice system?"* we isolate them, solitary confinement. It's unbelievable. And then they look at it that way. They're like, *"Oh, wow, I didn't think isolating my entire workforce would have that much of an impact. Besides, they've always wanted to work from home, right?"* I'm like, come on, this is not what working from home is today. My wife is working from home right now my son is e-learning. Working from home in 2018, that was very different from working from home today. It's a chaotic environment. We know the stigma that our bosses and our employers have about working from home. So we're working longer, we're trying to make

ourselves available longer. Oh, and then what are we going to do when we finally come to the self-awareness piece that says we need to get away? What's the first thing anyone always does? Well, where are you going? Because you can't go anywhere because you got to quarantine, you got to have PTO and take that. If you can't go anywhere, do you really want to go anywhere? And if I already know you're working longer, let's just hold on to that. Can't work, we're hurting ourselves.

Speaker: Mia 09:31

Wow, that is a point I never even thought about because I've always been working from home and kind of doing my own little media planet. I just tend to rotate wherever I want to go. And it has been very eye opening to start looking at it from that and I have seen some statistics lately about that piece. there's no stopping point for people So if you're not taking that and not being aware of your mental health on that you're just wearing yourself out and when you intersect Back on the mental health piece of what's going on in the world, not only the pandemic, but then what's going on from a racial justice standpoint, police reform, how if it's not being taken care of at home and at the job, it's certainly not going to get addressed out in the world. So I do think the at home piece as well as the work piece of looking at taking the stigma off of mental health, because we're old enough also to know, you know, the words crazy, you know, there was just an “Either, Or”, there was no kind of a gray area or an explanation, either you're normal, or you're not, right. Yeah.

Speaker: Ian 10:39

And when you make something so black and white, no wonder people don't say anything. Because if you make it that black and white, if you make it that either, or, really what you're saying is you're either good, or something's wrong with you. And that's ridiculous because nothing is wrong with you, you just can't do it that way. And I think when you talk about why people feel uncomfortable disclosing, when you talk about why people fear just even in general talking about their own mental health, that's what they've been growing up with, That's what they've been socially conditioned to feel. And I don't know, let's do a quick poll, go to any room, “*Who here wants to disclose their worst fear to the rest of the audience?*” nobody's going to raise their hand. I don't care if Bernie Browns is in the room had Pat passing out Hershey's Kisses, nobody's going to get that vulnerable. So you have to really understand, I think, and when I talk to any group of leaders I go, “*you have to really understand that everyday people, working professionals, retired seniors, students, when they disclose a mental illness, they fear losing the three things that matter the most*

in their life, and that's their family, their friends in their job.” Now, we've given air cover to Olympians and professional athletes and performing artists and Hollywood, social media influencers, youtubers, we give them air cover or what I call an ad hoc forgiveness Because (extra grace I mean, a lot of grace is given) we assume eventually, with the pressure, with the public scrutiny with the Pavarotti, whatever you want to call it, that they're going to break eventually. Sorry. Oh, well, like Britney, Michael Phelps, you know, Shaun White all these people, you know, and then we're horrified when people we idolize like Kate Spade, and Anthony Bourdain and Robin Williams when they die by suicide, because we were always willing to forgive them. Well, my whole thing to everybody else is, *“where's that forgiveness to your best friend, your coworker, your colleague, your neighbor, where is that? Where is that air cover then?”* Because that's who we should be giving it to, because once you start allowing people to just honestly say that they need help, and then help them get that help. Everything changes.

Speaker: Mia 13:04

Yeah and not bust out the inspiration porn. I've said that on a lot of my shows of like, just that, you know, that pull yourself up by the bootstraps. Probably some of the worst things for mental wellness has been the advent of gifts, and little meme of like, and that's it. That should help.

Speaker: Ian 13:23

Yeah. I mean, again, I'm very open. It took me a long time to be open. I didn't probably say a word about my mental health, I was about 38. I'm about to turn 47, now I tell people all the time, I just don't shut up about it. One of the groups I addressed in the book is how friends and families should respond to somebody needing help, and I think when you slowly start to go away, *“I'm going to tell this person because I trust this person.”* Like, *“oh, you're going to be fine, go for a run.”* I'm like I've been in bed for 14 days, I don't think a run is going to be the magic elixir that gets me feeling positive again. So thanks, you know, I forgot I needed Nikes and not you know, Zoloft. But all these things are going around because we don't ever want to believe that somebody we know love and trust is hurting. And so we say those kind of gift type things, those platitude type things of *“you'll get over, it'll heal on time, it gets better.”* I mean, *“come on now, you know, sleep on it. I have insomnia. Don't tell me to sleep on it.”* (Yeah, I read that you what did you have for like 10 years off and on). I have it on and off all the time. I've suffered from it just a Couple months ago for almost six weeks, I still suffer from it. I'll get 2, 3, 4 hours of sleep a night for months on end before I can get really Up to do it.

Speaker: Mia 15:01

You know what I'm liking about this too, because we are talking about a book that's come out, we're talking about messages, we're going to give calls to action, which I love that you do, because a lot of the self-help things, I do want to talk about that we talked about it before we hit the record button of the what's going on in the in the self-help world. But I do love it that you're sharing that it's not like, *"oh, everything's better,"* you just shared, *"I'm still going through it."* I think that's a key to it as well, because everybody loves a buttoned up ending, like the movies. And it doesn't work that way.

Speaker: Ian 15:34

We do, we love I mean, my mother battled cancer four times. we like to say all the way up till the very end, she had a three in one record, so a winning record. So kiss my ass cancer,

Speaker: Ian 15:49

but you know, the cancer movement with what they've done so well, and what's helped them so well, with people getting examinations and worried more about their health is, you know, how they're inspired to tell stories, they're encouraged to tell stories, they're called survivors, they're given this strength around them. And that's what I think is helped people really take care of themselves. Mental Health doesn't have that. It is one of the most treatable illnesses that there is out there, but it is management, it's everyday work. It's trial and air. People like you said, buttoning it up, you can Race for the Cure and feel like you did something in a five mile run. There's no race for the everyday management, that's not attractive to do. And that's what's so hard about it, because you're faced with, *"I'm feeling this way again, what do I got to put in place to deal with it? What's my support system? What do I need to tell them? Who am I surrounding myself with, you know, what, what physical, spiritual, mental things I need to put in place so I can get to a better place."* You know, it's management. And that's what's so hard about it.

Speaker: Mia 17:11

Super unsexy, right? Because it's not like this big crescendo and then everything gets better. And I've been doing that in the last three months, I'm going to get super woowoo on you for a second. I have this mentor that I've been working with, for empaths and light workers, told you, I'll get hippie dippy. And so we've been doing a lot about spirit guides, angels, I mean, all the cookie shit. And what's been interesting to go

through that and then ancestral healing as well, I know, But it's been interesting to go through that And I've even had to re program my mind because I keep thinking, *“alright, I'm here, I'm it, This is it.”* And then I'll come across this new layer of things that I'm kind of clearing out and healing. And it's was very interesting, because I kept thinking I was a big failure, because I hadn't hit this big Ascension thing, Like walk on water bullshit. And it's more just a daily thing of like, *“what are you clearing out? What are you going to take a look at?”* And I haven't shared this with you yet, but I'm in the middle of going dry on drinking. I'm on day 43. But if you know my brands this bitch loves her booze. (I know it is pretty wide influenced -Ian) Yeah, like who's this? So it's been interesting to also not you know, because I know we talked about addiction as well, I don't think was necessarily an addiction, but it was certainly increased from the pandemic and I had to take a look at that. Okay. Can you give that a break? Can you not? Can you listen to the cacophony for a little bit? Because that's what it is. It's a cacophony, especially if you're willing to not dead knit.

Speaker: Ian 18:57

I mean, there's so much what you said there first of all, it's all it's not cookie shit if it works for you, because I know a lot of people do a lot of things for their mental health. I mean, I'm wearing vibration bracelet right now some people might find that kooky, but I think it helps. What do you mean? (Okay, we'll talk about that -Mia) I know people doing all kinds of treatment, and they're just like, why don't you going to think I'm crazy, but, and I like how we always use the analogy crazy when we talk about our mental health, and maybe we should but we do.

Speaker: Mia 19:30

Words matter, talk about words matter, because we do sort of couch that of like, anyway, and I just did like three times when I was explaining it to you. And I'm going to leave that in there. And I'm not going to edit that shit out. Because you look at and how you sort of dance around and make it okay for everybody as opposed to just putting it out there.

Speaker: Ian 19:48

Yeah, I tell people all the time. If it works for you, do it. You know, and I know sometimes that psychedelics, I know sometimes it's marijuana, I know sometimes that's different treatments, That They don't get their due or aren't maybe as considered the norm or traditional as traditional therapy or

psychoanalysis or whatever, But if it works for you, I know there's a couple people in the book that said, Hey, *"I want to mention that I do these things,"* I'm like, *"do it."* I'm not going to hold you back to saying, there's one way to support your mental health. That's for me, sometimes if I can just watch a couple of movies, I know they're going to make me feel good and laugh. That helps me you know, so...

Speaker: Mia 20:32

Right. Which by the way, is the opposite of the hustle culture you hear so many of these you know, self these gurus like, stop watching Netflix and stop doing this. Fuck that. Is it working for you? Is it not harming someone else? Is it helping you to get to the more day to day where you're solving things then?

Speaker: Ian 20:51

Yeah, we have we really glamorize hustle. We really glamorize working 20 hours a day, the people that that say that stuff, have a team of 20 people working on them, their brand for them, so I really don't care. Like I didn't in the beginning. Well, in the beginning, nobody did. And there wasn't even such thing as a gift.

Speaker: Mia 21:14

(So even more, so you shouldn't be doing that then)

Speaker: Ian 21:16

Yeah, you were just texting on Twitter, it was just a bulletin board, nozzle. But I look at a lot of the things that I've done most of the stuff that I do, I don't take medication. Most of it has to do with environment, most stuff do with my support system, Taking negative things out, pulling my energy away, those kind of things away, and filling them with things that I know, bring me joy, or make me laugh and make me feel more complete as a human being. (That's your recipe. And I like it. -Mia) It is, Yeah, and that's me. And I'm not going to say that's going to be the same thing for everybody else. I think the thing about the book that I wanted to share was we have that word stigma across the top of it. But stigma isn't a broad stroke, I think we sometimes treat it like that. There's stigmas to everything; there's stigma to recovery, there's stigma to people who are still battling addiction, there's stigma as to people with certain types of mental illness as well. I have depression, that's the accepted one. People with bipolar are like, *"right, I need to, you know, hide behind a boulder, because it's not accepted."* So I wanted to profile people who are willing

to talk about it sure, share their story, allowed me to share their story in a way they've never done before. Because the way we broke it up in the book was, you know, like, again, it's not about trauma porn, it's not about putting somebody paid on display, It's about naming why they're there, And then really getting into the details of what they did to get better. And, and a lot of that is to three steps forward, one step back. For every single story, and in every single person I featured in the book had to be in some way, serving others, and moving the conversation forward. It's not just about you. I know sometimes the self-help movement is more about the self than it is to help. But it really is more about the help others movement. And that's what we're hoping this book does. I know there's not a section at a bookstore that's titled help others, you're not going to find it, it doesn't exist. But that's what we hope it does. And I think the people came away with an end product that was like, *"I didn't see myself as that person."* First of all, nobody felt they deserve to be in the book. And I'm like, *"Oh, come on."* Truly humble people are annoying, you know that. Jesus? Come on. What do you want? You want wings? You want sainthood? Let me do it, quit being so damn humble and nice and amazing

Speaker: Mia 23:53

But you even talk about that in your chapter, which I love is inserted Right in the middle of the book. It's not like it's the Ian show and here's my story, and everybody else is a big player. So I enjoy that too. But that, that you even went through that as well, with your own experience of one, your mom didn't even know what you're going through. So you had the mom with cancer, your brother, so everybody has these bigger things and you categorize things. So even now, people are still categorizing. I know with my own experience of childhood trauma. I do categorize it as well. So that it's like, *"well, it's not that bad, but it's worse than this."* Right? So you do see people do that a lot?

Speaker: Ian 24:35

Yeah, I mean, we're so flawed as humans, but we're also pretty amazing in a way that if we truly care about somebody, we don't want to dump our shit on them. You know, the last 10 years of my mother's life Was that good? was not healthy, It was touch and go, lots of surgeries, You know, she passed relatively quickly when things really nosedived for her health. She battled mental illness for a long time, saw counselors for a long time. But I mean, she married the wrong man, my father was a drug addict. He wasn't the best person to her that impacted her. She had a suicide attempt when she was younger that impacted her, (*which you didn't know about -Mia*) and I didn't know either till much later. Yeah, I did not find out

about how serious by Mum's mental health was till about six years, seven years after she passed. I got in touch with a side of the family I've never known. It just interesting piecing all these things together. And it really put a lot of that stuff, I mean, my backstory like my comic book one story, it's just all Swiss cheese. None of it makes any sense. It's like you're born and then you're like in grade school.

Like, wait, what happened? Were we on the run? What happened? No, it was very interesting to have her family fill in those stories. And I have this incredible relationship with these people. I didn't know till I was much, much into adulthood. And then my brother was struggling with mental health issues as well. So when you're a caregiver, you get a lot of pats on the back, you get that hit of dopamine, like, *"Yeah, I know. I'm the young man of the house. Try not to dust the cape off when you're the good guy."* It's just like, you know, and then you start struggling, and it's just a punch in the face, who are you going to tell? There's nobody in my family is going to take care of me.

Speaker: Mia 26:38

Right. So when you've already set the story up as the hero, that's a coping mechanism. And then two who is who is going to help you as well?

Speaker: Ian 26:48

So it was a struggle and um, I just opted not to tell her. She, I mean, lupus, cancer, diabetes, mental illness. *(Not to be inappropriate. But really, how can you compete with that? -Mia)* Yeah, it was the exact of shitty things that happen to somebody So when I'm feeling depression, I mean, let me just rank what I considered small potatoes underneath her, you know, her buffet of shit-storm. So she passed, and I realized that impacted me pretty hard. And it's just one of those things where I wish I would have said something, we might have had a shared experience, I might have been able to help her on that side of things, she probably could have easily helped me, But it just never happened And I do regret that. So I tell people all the time that you know, when everyone's like, *"I need to share my story."* Well, first of all, why are you sharing your story? Is it to help yourself as you get over something? There is a cathartic piece to sharing your story but then it came down to *"wait a minute. Most of the men I know in my life, what aren't sharing, most of the men are telling me, hey, it's great that you're sharing, why don't you not do it so much?"* Okay. You know, but I think when you when whoever that one person is that calls you DMs you, comes up to you after you speak on stage and just says, *"You know what, a lot of that resonated with me"* without having to get into the awkward details of meeting the speaker for 45 seconds after a presentation, right?

(And then throwing up on them. Guess what happened? -Mia). My life started from 1968. And it just all these things. And so I've met this incredible group of people that were really honestly, just looking for somebody to say, Go! Go do what you got to do.

Speaker: Mia 28:52

You said a phrase when we were warming up here. By the way, we talked for half an hour before we even started record, because we just had so many stories to tell that that you're saying that you're in the mental health disclosure world, which that is a phrase I had never heard. And then you just talked about being heckled by men's groups, which I don't know why. That's funny, but I think because they don't want you to share as much?

Speaker: Ian 29:22

Well, men are ridiculous animals. We act as if nothing can hurt us, we put on this facade of toughness. I mean, I'm a huge fan and student of mixed martial arts and I always laugh because we go down to weight classes 135 like, you know, I'm the toughest person at 135 and I'm like, "*my son is 140*" Wait, what? So it's like we have to prove we're tough at every no matter who we are. Whether we're three feet tall, or whether we're seven feet tall, we have to prove we are these tough things. and that's hurting our society that toxic masculinity is hurting our society, it's hurting our relationships with our kids, hurting our relationships, whether you're same sex marriage, or if you have a spouse of a different sex, it's hurting everything. And we need to stop. And one of the things I like to always point out is, you know, all these groups I talked to sometimes it just think it can never be that why are we talking about this? You know, we start talking about military, we start talking about the number of people that have died in active combat versus the number of people that have died by suicide, since we started all these wars, and that number is 1015 times higher. So hold on a second, don't say, support the troops, never forget when you're forgetting about who's doing and what they're going through. And I speak to a lot of veterans groups, and I hear those stories and I speak to a lot of men that were in sports or college athletics or professional athletics. And we're starting to see some of those stories come out in the last couple years, dealing with major depression, dealing with addiction issues, be getting really close, if not attempting suicide, self-harm, self-medication, all these things, it starts because we're raised the feel that we have to be a certain way. And that's just not true.

Speaker: Mia 31:24

And I like that, because what the interesting thing is, rather than normalizing the “that's just how it is, or not going to have a conversation,” it's normalizing that it happens and that you can talk about it, that is an uphill battle. I get it. But having these conversations again, I love that phrase “**mental health disclosure**,” because that's not what people do, especially when it's the toughen up thing.

Speaker: Ian 31:47

Yeah, it's hard sometimes doing it, I'm not going to, you know, blow it over that it's easy. You know, you can only go on stage and go on podcast and go on interview so many times, and rehash, and relive, and recite things that you've been through, and it's exhausting at some days. Some days, I don't want to do it anymore. I know other people that tell me the same thing as well. Literally, the best part about it is there's always somebody, no matter how bad you feel after doing it, there's always somebody says, thank you so much for doing that. You've given me back again to that word, I like using air cover to start talking about it or start figuring out how I can support others or help others. You know when I go back to that first question I always ask, “*Who in the room has been impacted in some way?*” It doesn't just mean you. I mean, it could be your best friend in high school died by suicide, it could be your best friend now who has an addiction issue and you can't figure out how to help them, It could be take care of a parent, you are a caregiver. We all have stories, we all have a connection to this, you know, I scream at the mental health PR machine that says one in five, and they're not changing the narrative at all, they're just changing the font, and that drives me insane. But what I like to say is five and five of us have mental health. So why aren't we sharing this issue in a way that resonates with everybody?

Speaker: Mia 33:18

I mean, I'll segue real quickly with that of the intersection between corporate leadership and mental health, because we're talking about it on a personal level. But this piece that loops into the five and five of that it can also be a corporate leadership thing, kind of where you started off with your company of like doing the fundraiser, talk about that real quick, and then we'll finish up. But I love this idea of making this, I mean, talk about outing it, I love the idea of making it a leadership piece, either in companies or leaders in the community.

Speaker: Ian 33:51

I think the one thing we always joke about is the place we spend the most time is work. (*Work or in bed, -Mia*). And if we're going to spend time at work, then we need to be able to address this at work. I think what we found is that a lot of these leaders today, you know, the biggest fight I have with them is *"hey No one was cared about my mental health when I was on the rise. Now that I'm a leader, why should I care about anybody else's?"* Well, let me tell you, do you want your company to grow and thrive? Yes. Well, you need to understand that 70% of the workforce around 70, I hear it's about to be 75 in the next three years is either millennial or Gen Z. Well, they have a different set of priorities than what you and I had when we were coming up. I mean, I was told forever maybe you told this to, *"Only thing you need to carry about when it comes to work is salary and title,"* and if you were given a fancy title *Ooh*, did that make you want to go, you know what, I'm going to jump, no matter how good the ship may be. It didn't matter how good it was for your mental health, didn't matter how good that work culture was, you got that fancy title on that and that pay bump, you jump ship. And if you look at my LinkedIn profile, you're going to think I'm in the witness protection program. Because I was jumping, I was like, *"you're going to make me a manager and give me \$2500 or more?"* Wow, that's like 19 lunches at Chili's after taxes, let's be honest. People today want something different from their leaders, they want mentorship, they want access to their leaders, and they want to have a voice, their company to care about their mental health and wellness. And a majority of these groups that are in the workforce today, or majority of these groups that make up this workforce today, They're demanding that from their leaders, and if their leaders don't give it to them, they're going to go, they'll tell you in the exit interview, *"oh, I'm getting more money."* they're not going to tell you *"Oh, the word culture here is toxic, and my mental health is declining. So I'm leaving"*

Speaker: Mia 35:57

Because that goes on the record, too, because that can follow you as well. And you said that earlier about the three most important things are family, friends, and then your job, your financial security, which you can't really have, you can't really take care of your family. And then also have time with your friends if you don't have that financial security. But I do think the pandemic is also shaking that up now, because everybody is in a different, you know, you're at home, you're seeing a lot more of the personal life, right? Yeah, it's going to hopefully lead to more of that conversation.

Speaker: Ian 36:33

It is if people feel comfortable to do it, I always tell leaders, the best thing you can do isn't to become somebody's therapist. Don't think you just have to flip to becoming this authoritarian leader to this, you know, telehealth specialist. I always tell leaders, you can support this conversation, you can normalize conversations about mental health, that's the best way to do it. in the workplace, if you can have leaders that can promote the acceptance and inclusion of those dealing with the mental health issue, and then improve some of those support systems around them, And improved spreading awareness when possible, creating a safe place to have those conversations. That's what a leader can do. There's a lot of steps you can take to do that. But it has to be done from the top. I mean, we share stories, sharing stories from the top, are the best way to get people below it is to be able to say, *“Okay, if I do struggle, I know that my leadership has been through this, they're encouraging me to disclose so they can work with me so I can stay with the company.”* And then obviously, if you're if you feel cared for you do much more for that organization.

So I just walked through like four easy steps any organization can do with a lot of leadership. And it really just comes down to making it safe, to talk about it whether it's online or in person, because every group nowadays has a slack or a Yammer or an internal office board. Just make it safe for people to feel like they can even just have this discussion. And fortunately for mental health, we're all over the calendar, baby. It's Mental Health Awareness Month right now, minority Mental Health Awareness Month coming up, suicide prevention and Awareness Month, world Mental Health Day, there's lots of natural opportunities, take advantage of that. Sharing stories at all levels, always starting with leadership First, someone has an experience as a caregiver, or losing a friend. I think even those leaders that don't understand the human side of this, I can always get them talking about the ROI side. Because most of them don't understand that mental illness is number one reason for loss of productivity and absenteeism in the workplace. So once they hear that they're like, *“oh, maybe I should care about mental health.”*

Like I just forget all the human stuff. You need to understand that and then it kind of slowly, it's you know, it's the Lazy Susan back to him, and it's Like, *“alright, let's get back to the human side really quick”*

Educating employees and managers just to again, recognize when somebody is not themselves, I mean, it's easy to do it at a boardroom. But you can still do it on a zoom call, you know, how engaged is that person? Is their productivity up and down? How do they look? I remember the first three months of zoom, all we did was look around somebody's house behind them to see what their house was like, if it's pizza boxes stacked up. *(Fake the fake filter behind them, right? -Mia)* Yeah all these things. And so there's ways to do it. And I think the thing that I tell managers all the time is it isn't trying to diagnose on the fly.

Just start setting one on ones up with people, *“tell what's going on what's going on in your life. How's it at home? How's remote work, working?”* you know, just have those extra conversations.

And then the last thing I kind of talked about is just make wellness a priority. That helps everybody, even people who aren't going through something and it can create camaraderie, it can get fun, you know, and if we already know that a majority of the workforce cares about health, mental health and wellness, why wouldn't you do that? Because it's still going to come down to the people that aren't the human, the human side, like, *“well, you're trying to attract top talent, aren't you? Yes. Okay, then you have to do this.”* You're trying to keep your best people right? Talking about retention, then you have to do this. So then they start to see that all these things really do matter on every single level of an organization.

Speaker: Mia 40:47

So two things I like about that one, that's kind of exhorting the corporate and the leadership to do that. And then this is also helpful for people who are in these places to think that's a possibility. Because they can start asking for it and looking for it. Again, I understand that can be uncomfortable.

And then also on the telehealth thing, because that's what a lot of leadership thinks is like, *“Oh, now I got to be a shrink. Now I got to have a couch.”* It's not that, it's having those support systems in place, so that it's easy, so that it's not like oh, my gosh, this isn't covered under my insurance, or there isn't any kind of system or something that it's not out of pocket for me to do that. So why that's really important. And we are of the age when this was not discussed.

Speaker: Ian 41:33

Oh, everything was taboo. I mean, you remember, in the 80s, you'd hear like, Mom would say, well, your friend so and so their parents are getting a divorce, but nobody's talking about it like okay. And the 90s, we started getting a little more vocal about physical disabilities, learning disabilities, but not mental issues, not mental health issues. And it's perpetuated to this day and even recovery. I know people that are in recovery and proud they're in recovery and doing very well. But it takes them a long time before they even felt remotely comfortable to tell anybody that because they fear that the consequences or reprisal or judgment, and I get it,

Speaker: Mia 42:20

Right, it's too much exposure. There's a fear to that. To the other piece that I love too and then we'll wrap up is again the last thing that you mentioned, of paying attention to wellness. So then leading by example, as well, we're not talking again about the inspiration porn means we're talking about actual things that people are doing that helps them and then sharing that, I think also because “*oh, okay, that seems to work for them,*” and gives people some ideas that it's not just the cucumbers on the eyes, and I'm going to go to the spa. And that's well, that's how you get. Oh, you're going to eye roll aren't you? I know.

Speaker: Ian 42:52

the self-care has been dropped just overly dramatized

Speaker: Mia 43:02

Imma make it one. Yeah. Only for women too if you think about that. Talk about that stigma of men and women that it's only for women to take that spa day with a glass of wine. And that's it not for men, right?

Speaker: Ian 43:14

Yeah. And I think people need to understand self-care can be anything that puts you in a better mental place presently, because I think wellness is a lot about being present. That could be just listening to the same song over and over again, and feeling you're getting better singing it when nobody's around. (*I feel seen –Mia*). I mean, there's a lot of things you know, self-care has, and it's been Hollywood eyes. It's been, I think mistaken in culture, People think it's hot stone massages, and mud baths, and like you said the cucumbers. It could just be sleeping an hour late, It could just be you know, finding time with your best friend, It could just shut off the news, shut off social media, spend time with your animal, go for a walk. You know, I have people right now that are putting on their calendar, take walk in neighborhood, they're working from home, and they're at a computer 4-5 hours, they really haven't gotten up. They need to go do that. Or go play with dogs or drink water or all these things.

Speaker: Mia 44:19

Yeah I like the normalizing of that, because you think it sounds goofy until you realize you haven't done it. So I like that. And that's supposed to note for me. Absolutely.

Speaker: Ian 44:30

Self-Care is not found on Instagram, by the way because I posted somebody I know and they're just like, we're in San Juan, Puerto Rico self-care weekend. I'm like that's not self-care. I'm having an activity, a yoga, scratching my dog going self-care day. I'm like "*Oh, come on, man. What the hell's going on?*"

Speaker: Mia 44:49

You got to take it down to the really practical level. An activity such as scratching your dog. Alright, listen friends. I'm going to hold this book up for one We put it on YouTube but Ian any last parting words before we go, and then we'll have obviously all your links in the blog post here in the show notes.

Speaker: Ian 45:08

Gosh, two things every time I speak, I always love saying and I hope maybe they put it either on the bedazzled on the back of my cape or tombstone, "*talking about mental health today really isn't just a moment talking about mental health today, it is a movement.*" So I am more and more encouraged every day by the kids that come out and disclose, the veterans that come out and disclose, the baby boomers are starting to talk more about mental health You know, let's just keep talking about it. Too many people are suffering, too many people are suffering in silence. You know, just keep sharing, keep helping, and keep the discussion going. If anybody you know, is suffering in any way, don't try to fix them Just listen to him. Always try to push somebody towards professional help. But I tell people all the time, I know it's hard to hear when somebody that you love, or know really well or care about is hurting, and you want to respond right away with something quick. You know, they don't need to hear that it'll get better in time, They don't need to hear It'll get better with exercise, It'll get better tomorrow. All they really want to hear from you is the words I believe you. And then that starts the conversation in the path forward for them getting out.

Speaker: Mia 46:30

Thank you, my friend. I appreciate you.

Speaker: Ian 46:33

I appreciate this is so much fun.

Speaker: Mia 46:36

As always. All right, everything will be in the show notes. Thanks for tuning in. Hey, make sure to check out Ian's TEDx talk as well as his book Stronger Than Stigma. Both have tons of inspiring stories and calls to action. Links are in the show notes. Let's normalize this conversation people because mental health wellness something we all need. If you liked this episode, please do all the things like share with your friends, subscribe, and leave me a review especially if it's a good one. If you really like the podcast and you want to show it, head on over to www.shitwedonttalkaboutpodcast.com, click on the patrons' button and become a full time supporter of the podcast. And if you want your very own podcast, but you don't know where to start, go to www.helix-interactive.com and get yourself some of that. Thanks for tuning in. See you next time. Bye