

STAY Tuned Episode 20- Scott Bryant-Comstock on Youth Mental Health and "Getting Busy" (Part 2)

Emily: [00:00:00] Welcome back to stay tuned, supporting transition age youth. This podcast is brought to you by the Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research at UMass Chan Medical School, Department of Psychiatry, and in partnership with our research sponsor, the National Institute for Disability, Independent Living and Rehabilitation Research.

I'm your cohost, Emily.

Mei: And I'm your co host, Mei.

Emily: And this is part two to Scott's episode. If you haven't seen part one, go ahead and listen to that first. But why don't we go ahead and get into it, and Scott, you can start telling us about the Children's Mental Health Network.

Scott: Well, um, great question and, uh, need to back up a little bit to answer it, to give it context. Um, so the Children's Mental Health Network, the precursor to the network was a group called the Alumni Network.

So I had mentioned that I had been involved in doing community assessments around the country, but they were for this, um, comprehensive system of care program [00:01:00] that, um, uh, was in and, uh, offered the opportunity for states and local entities to have, uh, Four and six year grants to basically, it was to experiment with this notion of systems of care, which was really the predominant, model that, uh, through the federal government was, was being employed at the time for many, many years.

And, uh, so I was part of that effort in a lot of different ways, but what would happen was it would be that, so you would get a four year grant or a six year grant. Well, the question that would come up is what happens after the six years are over? It's a very important question because the federal government has put all this money into testing out this notion of looking differently at partner relationships, you know, how money is spent and on and on and on.

And then the grants over what [00:02:00] happens? Well, for a lot of communities, business went back to the way it was before the grant. And so you had, uh, grantees saying, man, we got to, is there a way that we can keep this going? Keep the excitement, keep the momentum going. So the original, I laugh about this and the, the, the original kernel of a collective group was an email list.

And I, I'm not, I'm not sure I have the order right, but there were two people who had this email list that kind of oversaw it, uh, Neil Horne from Georgetown University when they had the. Uh, training contract where the system of care grants, he was the keeper of the email list. And then when AIR, it's another group, um, had the contract Emma Dennis, uh, both great guys, [00:03:00] wonderful known forever, but it was an email list.

And it was like, okay, so we got an email list of all these past grantees. And then I got involved and it was like, okay, let's, let's have Scott. Take this email list and see if we can make something. And so we wanted to create this thing called the alumni network. And basically, quite simply, it was an opportunity for grantees who had, who had graduated to stay in touch, get together, to talk about.

System of care stuff. And so we, we started doing that. We got a small, so, so we're not a formed 501 C3. We're not in anything like that. It's just this thing called the alumni network for systems of care and, uh, got a research contract to, to take a look at the effectiveness.

And we were looking at a lot of different things like websites and, uh, uh, what kind of information you send out. So I was heading up [00:04:00] that, uh, but I started to just be really bothered because if I have a contract with you and you're my funder. Then you're going to want certain things. They're not bad things, but you're going to want certain things.

And I am an obstinate individual. You know, I, you know, if you say blue, I'll say yellow, you know, and just, just to shake it up, you know, and I found myself thinking along with a few others, if we're really going to make this work, if we really want this to be an independent voice, cause that was the idea you have, people who have expertise, but, um, if they can be an independent voice, that can really help the field.

Right. That's great. The only problem is the only problem was, is that most of the ideas generated about what this could be relied on, I'll call it old world models. You know, the models that rule the day, like, [00:05:00] Hey, Become a TA center, you know, get a million dollar contract and become, and be able to employ lots of people and do great things.

That's a model and it, and it, and it's a model that has worked very well, but for me, and I think for my history, my sort of my developmental process of the kinds of things I talked about earlier, I, I just thought that if I couldn't be part of

something that was going to prescribe, That was gonna, gonna say to you, this is the way to do it.

Right? Because in my mind, there's lots of ways to do it, whatever that it is. So I couldn't wrap my head in, in all, Oh, I have so many colleagues who I love so much, who were so frustrated with me. I mean, just so like, dude, what are you doing? You know, you could have a, she could get any training contract we want, you know, we, we've got all this expertise.

Yes. Um, you know, we need, uh, we [00:06:00] need members. We need to make this a membership organization where people can opt in. But you got to remember my whole life, I've been an outsider, you know, and this idea of, of the club and then the people who are not in the club, you know, nothing pisses me off more, you know, than, than, than if, that if I'm in a situation where there's, there's the inners and the outers, you know, uh, it's, it's, uh, and I, I, you know, I struggled with it.

I struggled with, um, But there were a few people, um, Pat Baker, Cindy Nation, who eventually became on the board. And I mean a very small few people, and I know I'm going to leave people out, so I'm not going to try to name all the people who were involved, just those two, only just to give us a frame of reference.

There were a few people who got it. Or at least understood what I was saying. And it's like, so, so we were at a meeting in Atlanta. I think it was a system of care meeting. And we're in this room [00:07:00] full of alumni, people who are about to be alumni. And everybody's excited because you're thinking, Oh man, this is great.

You know, we can all become consultants. We can do this. And I stand up in the front of the room and I say, basically, okay, here's the idea. We don't take any federal money. Not a dime. And it's like you could hear a pin drop. What you what the bleep? You know, it's like what do you mean? No, we're not gonna take any federal money. Not one dime Why not because if we take money from anybody we're owned by them now, I want to be real clear there is phenomenal value in taking federal money. I'm very, very clear of that. And there's lots of amazing groups that do that.

For me, it was like, we, we have that. Okay. We have those groups. What don't we have? We don't have that truly independent voice who can call us [00:08:00] out on something and not suffer financial. repercussions. And this is, this is a real delicate subject guys. Cause it's like, you know, you're like, uh, um, and I, I

was not always good cause I tended to be blunt and I was not always good at explaining it because it, it wasn't that an, uh, uh, an entity that takes federal money is bad.

Not that at all. It's just that there were already. Bunches of those. Why would I want to? And in fact, some of them, uh, were very suspect that I was trying to start another entity like that, that was going to compete with them. So then you get into this ridiculous Kind of subterfuge fighting. What the hell is Scott doing?

What's he trying to do? Is he trying to take our contract? And I wasn't and people realize that eventually it probably took a good two years for people to you know, but guys that's the way of the world that that's a dynamic that's gonna [00:09:00] exist for you when you're running the show, you know in terms of in the in this world that doesn't change So you just need to be clear.

I needed to be clear. So we stand up in this meeting and say, okay, we're not going to take any federal money. We're not going to create a team of consultants that we shop out, you know, but for me, it was real simple. The only money we're going to take is donors. If you want to give us money to help us keep the lights on awesome, but guess what?

No strings, no strings attached. Well, we didn't get any money. I didn't care. It was like, it was like, if this is what we're going to be, this is what we're going to be. We want to be an independent voice. And, and it wasn't too, cause this, a lot of the talk at that time was around, what are they trying to do?

You know, are they going to go after SAMHSA? Are they going to [00:10:00] go after this group? It wasn't about going after anybody. It was just, wouldn't it be sweet if there was. an arena, a forum, that truly wasn't beholden to anybody and, and, you know, that's, so at that meeting in Atlanta, wherever we're, you know, 90 percent of the room left, you know, it's like, okay, well, knock yourself out.

See you later, cowboy. You know, it's, it's, uh, and of course I loved it, you know, because it was, because it was an opportunity to establish clarity early on that that No, we're real clear about what this is and what it is not. Was it the right move financially? Absolutely not. Was it, was it a move that, uh, you know, a business course would call a perfect model?

Not, not in the least. You know, what do you, what do you, [00:11:00] what are you doing? Um, but I've always been able to make something work on a

shoestring budget. So, and that's the other thing, we just, we peeled away all the mystique about what's needed or not needed. What we had, and, I'll always be grateful, is that even though people weren't necessarily willing to jump on board in terms of the structure of it, because we weren't going to take money, we had access to the brightest minds in the field.

And I think when people saw that we weren't out, you know, some of the early weird stuff of people thinking we were out to get people or to, you know, to take away contracts when people saw that that was not the case. And that happened pretty quickly. Um, I'm just smiling. I only had one group that was really pretty difficult, but, but it doesn't matter.

Uh, but when people saw that, then they embraced it and it was pretty darn cool. It was like, Oh my God. Yeah, this is [00:12:00] great. So independent voice was key. Breaking away from SAMHSA was key. And when I say breaking away, not in opposition, but just breaking away in terms of, I don't want anybody telling us what to do.

We became incorporated in a 501c3. And so obviously our model was different. We didn't have staff. I didn't pay myself a salary. It was just like, whatever comes in, let's, you know, keep this going. In effect, we became an outsider, but with lots of friends on the inside and in this still did some work with, with the inside as well.

So, um, yeah, being an outsider and being okay with it. And, and in terms of impact. So that's the whole structural piece, which is critical for me. And it's critical for the decisions I made when, and the board made when we closed the network down. And we'll get to that, I'm sure later, but, um, the impact, you know, the word impact is, is pretty [00:13:00] subjective, right?

You know, what, what do we mean impact? We did, uh, we, you know, there, there were so many things that I'm very, very proud of. I, I think the, the, the one example that I like to, um. Use. Well, let me say first we, we, uh, did get involved in holding conversations. So the 21st century cures act, there's a portion of that, the mental health portion, um, that basically was lifted out of, uh, uh, legislation that, uh, was, um, spearheaded uh, by a Congressman Murphy, and this is years before, and there was a lot of, Ooh, very passionate and heated dialogue about, especially about something called assisted outpatient treatment, which was, uh, this is before, and this is not a political discourse, but you, you know, you, you see where we're at now in terms of nobody can get in the same room together.

This was right on the cusp of that. We saw the beginnings of it, but we [00:14:00] would go to Washington, D. C. and I would have, uh, people on their own dime who were part of the network come and join in D. C. We had Youth Voice, um, uh, Martin Rafferty from Youth Era.

Uh, we had Family Voice. We had, uh, providers. We had researchers. It was, it was a nice group to talk about assisted outpatient treatment. And we had a meeting with Congressman Murphy's office. And I just remember Thinking to myself, God, there's gotta be a way we can get the two different sides talking about it.

And what was really challenging at the time is we had advocacy groups fighting each other, um, for and against, and that's just the kiss of death when you're trying to pass the legislation. So I, my idea was, and this is about just enthusiasm. I said, Hey, got a great idea. We want to have a meeting, not with you, because you couldn't get these congressional people to sit in the same room.

This press would be there. [00:15:00] Don't want you. Don't. No, we don't want you involved. We want to have a meeting, no press, with your staffers. So you have staffers from the side that, that agree with the AOT argument, which was a big argument at the time, and those that disagree. And better than that, they don't have to do anything, but come to this meeting and listen.

There's that listening again. So we're not, you don't have to go on the record as making a statement. You go on the record saying, I disc, which is what would freak them out. I said, so we don't want you. We want your staffers, and we just want them to listen in the hopes that it can broaden their understanding of the issues involved with this very controversial topic.

And dang on it if they didn't say yes. So we had this hard but beautiful meeting. We were in um, In the whip's office. I think the house was, I can't [00:16:00] remember, uh, beautiful conference table and all this stuff. And sitting around the conference table were the people that I asked to come. And with that group of people, you had at, you had, uh, advocacy groups that were very supportive and then advocacy groups that were totally against it.

I mean, With all the, as advocates are, right? With all their heart and soul, passionately, and, uh, I facilitated a dialogue with these groups, sitting around the table, around the outside, where these staffers from congressional offices, and it was novel, and it was different, none of them had ever done anything like it, um, did we change minds?

I, probably not, but it was, it was an attempt to just, you know, change the set a little bit, you know, by taking them off the hook about having to say, I'm for this or I'm [00:17:00] against this. I say, you don't have to say anything. I just want you to listen just here. And they got to hear the people who were in their corner, who fed them information for what language should go in a bill and vice versa.

I was so proud of that. I was proud of the advocates who came, uh, because it was hard. It's hard to listen to somebody who you're vehemently opposed to. That stuff's hard. And I see what's going on now, and it's like, you know, I don't know that that meeting could take place today. It could take place in, what was it, 2017?

I can't remember when it was. But it was getting, uh, difficult. So that, but that was an example of the power of the network. No money. We weren't owned by anybody. And I got those questions from congressional staff or who funds you, you know, wanting to know, you know, so, so all of that stuff was stripped clean.

It made it something that, that we could definitely do. Um, so that's a [00:18:00] great example. But, here's the negative about my approach to not taking money. That's expensive. And, and we couldn't keep it up. And so we, you know, we stopped doing those meetings, unfortunately. But it, I say unfortunately, but I wasn't, um, despondent enough to take money.

So it was like, we'll just let go of that. Uh, another example of impact and is the most basic, simple, yet powerful example for me is that when, uh, early on with the network, when I started sending out, uh, emails. The newsletter. Oh, and the reason there's Friday update news, the only reason that came into a bit to existence was I didn't, I didn't have any way to tell if anybody was reading the doggone website.

We had done this website. How are we going to know? Well, let's, let's start sending an update. And I got an email from a teacher. In Eastern [00:19:00] Oregon, which if you're familiar with Eastern Oregon, it's very desert y, kind of out in the middle of nowhere, just saying how valuable it was, and I, I can't even remember what the tool was, but often like, so let's say your university was doing a research project and you had put together a manual, or you had put together a, a document that was paid for by the federal government.

Again, here's the good news, right? And you had it available. So I put it in Friday update this teacher in Eastern Oregon who hasn't a clue who you are or that you even exist gets this thing and says, oh my god, this is exactly what we

need and I didn't have to pay for it You know, I didn't have to think that I had to be able to afford to buy it.

Here it is It's right here and she was just so excited and guys that that Kind of dialogue. That's the thing I miss most has happened. Um, I think I started writing Friday up to in 2012. It, it, it's [00:20:00] happened throughout, from people all over the world. It was, you know, it's again that ethos of whatever good work is being done and, and, and as it started in these system of care communities, how can we spread that word? How can we just send it out? And it doesn't cost a freaking dime. Doesn't cost anything. And it can get people excited about, about doing something.

It's just. Yeah, I'm, I'm getting misty thinking about it because it, it really warms my heart. There's a, uh, so many examples. There was a program in Scotland called the Daily Mile that was, um, started by a, uh, principal trying to figure out how to help kids with their, get their own mental health, you know, and get them through the day.

And it's just such a simple, simple concept. And then it was picked up by a high school coach. in, uh, in the United States. And now he runs the daily mile and introducing the daily mile to [00:21:00] people who read Friday update, suddenly it spreads, you know, it's just, I mean, it's just so beautiful to see. And, and I think again, all the times that I watched conversations with power players.

Well kind of held things close to the vest in terms of what they did and what, what they produce. It's like, there's gotta be a way we can say, and of course, um, uh, Organizations like yours just because I know them so well. I mean, I think they always loved the fact that because we're spreading your Information, you know, if it's good information if it fits, if it fits, let's share it.

So that's a long way of answering your question. I don't know if I answered your question. Who knows? Did I answer your question?

Emily: Yeah, no, I think that was really good to hear about how you kind of, you know, I liked what you were saying about like, yes, of course, [00:22:00] having funding and having these big organizations, that's really important, but there are other ways you can also do that, like outside of that.

Scott: Yeah. And it's just, it's just knowing and for your audience, especially because, you know, my journey is on this end of the spectrum. Your journey's over here and to just know that there's. There's always more than one way. Always. What does your heart tell you?

You know? What, what's that voice inside you saying? And then, okay, so how can you listen to that? And, and make that come to life. There's always, always another way. And I think that the network, It showed that time and time again, in a way that's loving, in a way that, that is not requiring a quid pro quo.

Never, you know, there never was a situation where we said, well, I'll post this for you if you'll do X for me. [00:23:00] Never, never. And we got a lot of feedback on that, especially when we were closing down for people who, of the things they admired, it was that. It was like there never was a hidden agenda. Yeah. And there isn't.

Mei: To your point about, you know, just hearing the feedback from people on the newsletter itself, when we get emails for, from the podcast, um, people listening to the podcast asking about like, hey, I was listening to this episode and I was wondering how can I get involved in this one thing that you were talking about?

It's always so cool to see that, Oh, Hey, we're actually kind of doing something here, like our reach may not be that big, but even though it's gotten to like that one person, it's still something it's.

Scott: Can I share something with you? I got to share this with you because it speaks to that point.

So we, um, we've, we've had the, yes, we've been so blessed and so honored to do work with some amazing people. So we were [00:24:00] doing work with Sesame Street and this is, uh, several years ago and, and we're, I was in a meeting with their leadership and, uh, and I, I said something like that. I said, ah, you know, I, uh, you know, we don't.

Reach a lot of people, you know, we just really don't reach a lot of people. And, and, uh, person, um, just stopped me cold and said, wait a minute, wait a minute. She said, it's not how, about how many it's about who, and you think about that for a minute and, and, and that completely changed the way I look at numbers with the network.

Cause before there was this push, you got to count everything, right? And, and so a lot of state organizations would send out Friday update under their cover, which was totally fine with us. And so we'd be trying to count, okay, there's 700 there, there's 800 there, there's, you know, 3000 here, there's this, that, and the other.

And it completely changed my thinking. It was not about how many. [00:25:00] It could be a million, it could be a hundred. It's about who. And, and it was those who's who really began to reflect the pulse of the network. So we have who's in England, we have who's in Ireland, we have who's in New Zealand and Australia and we have who's all over the place, uh, who spread that.

And so I completely stopped worrying about, uh, that's probably all I say, Oh God, that's probably also terrible advice because you've got to follow your metrics. I was like, I, I just am totally not worried about that or interested and, and, you know, take it for what it's worth guys. But it's like I lead with my heart and it's, and it's just, you know, the universe will figure it out.

What needs to be will be. And, uh, yeah, that'll go over real well in your next budgeting meeting.

I can't help you there, but it was the, you know, it's along the lines of the [00:26:00] advice I received from that professor who said, when I don't know, I'll tell you, I don't know, it's not about how many it's about who, and then that can change your whole thinking process about what it is you're trying to do. So you're not just chasing your tail,

you know.

Um, you know, the, the world of influencers, which I know you guys understand probably so much better than I do, but you know, it's, it's an interesting concept to think about. It's like, if I stop focusing on the the N and start focusing, you know, what are we, who we really want to reach, I'll give you a great example.

We had a young lady. She was, um, I want to say she was 17 at the time. She had stereotypical movement disorder. And I didn't know her. It didn't, did you know this is what would happen? The, these people would, and, and she said, I, I would like to put a, a thing on your, a blog.

I think she called it a blog. Maybe it was a blog at that time. And she wrote about her [00:27:00] experience with it. Now. Later on, she asked, she, and then a couple of years later, she was applying to grad schools, I think, I can't remember. And she said, do you mind taking my name off? And I said, absolutely. You know, this, that's the other thing we, you know, it's, it is completely driven by the people who sent in because she didn't want to be identified.

I said, that's fine. I said, but I, I just need you to know how many people you've touched. I got, I can't tell you the letters I got, not letters, emails. I got from parents, typically moms. It would say, Oh my God, just knowing that there's another young person who has what my daughter has is like, you don't know how profound that is.

And then they have the kids read it, you know, the young adults read it, and it was just this, you know, and there's part of me that would, wanted to call the anonymous and say, God, would you please just do another article, but I didn't, you know, I totally honored her wishes, but, but it's just an [00:28:00] example. Um, another example is third culture kids.

Um, Dina Sishel, who is a writer. And it's a third culture kid. That's basically a, an American who grows up in another country. Like if you're in the service or something, you grow up in, uh, Afghanistan, you grow up in, you know, England or France or Germany or wherever. And she writes about the mental health challenges that those kids face when they come back to the States.

Just because the whole, everything's different, culture's different, environment's different, but it's not something that a lot of people know about. That is the most popular thing. Host that we've ever had in Friday update. And so, so, so when I said, and not about how many, about who there's an example.

And third culture kids, cause they're all living this, but it's not good. So just an example, you know, but we would get those kinds of examples all the time. Every time that would happen, I would feel both honored and [00:29:00] blessed that, you know, it was an opportunity for little to no money to share a message in the wider universe that somehow finds its way to someone who doesn't know anything about SAMHSA, doesn't know anything about systems of care.

Oh, and that's the other thing on the network. Very quickly, we grew out of SAMHSA. We, we, originally we focus pretty much on, which made sense, but the more examples like this that I started seeing. It's like, there's this whole world of opportunity. You don't have to be a SAMHSA grant to access it and everybody can benefit.

So it was kind of a natural progression into a larger picture,

Emily: We know that you, like, you had your own podcast called The Optimistic Advocate.

Um, and, you've seen obviously a lot of shifts in the field during your time working and like your time with the Children's Mental Health Network. Um, so I was [00:30:00] wondering if you could kind of share like your perspective on like, well, you kind of talked about how far the field has come, but how like what sort of issues do you think still need to be addressed?

Um, and specifically like for our podcast, at least, what do you think are the most important topics to talk about in regards to young adults and like how we can continue to like change and improve the system? Um, for us as like the next generation of mental health workers, but also like for young adults who are listening and these things are impacting them.

Scott: Well, as far as the. System, you know, the shifts in the field, it's kind of like a hamster wheel. I hate to break it to you guys, but you know, cause the, the, the similar issues that were front and center. In 1983 are still there . Uh, and, and I remember at that time, but, but, but [00:31:00] that's not a fatalistic view.

So if you think of it, it is kind of like a hamster because things change, things revolve, you know, before you're so funny people, my generation, a lot of my friends, we like to talk about how we were at the forefront of change. Whether it's with families as allies or, or wraparound services, you know, the things that you hear about now, even youth voice, cause, cause it was tempting to take credit for that.

And, you know, you know, the, the, that we were at the forefront of change and a change was made and it was adopted and then all is well, well, then, you know, the world, you know, It doesn't work that way. I mean, there, there, there were things that were happening, you know, long before I got involved in the sixties.

I mentioned Bill Hollister, my, my, uh, one of my mentors and, uh, you know, the work they were doing. So if you think of it as like a hamster wheel, the wheel goes around. And it comes [00:32:00] back around and here we are, but there's things that you learned or things that you get put in place that improved, but it does seem to be a continual cycle of the same kinds of things, uh, family involvement, youth voice.

Um, and specifically for me, um, Looking at grants, for example, that, um, you know, there was in, in the early days, it was, there was heavy emphasis on family involvement and funding. Uh, didn't match the level of, uh, importance

associated with family involvement, cultural competence, which was the language of the day, uh, and, uh, and also youth voice in federal grants.

Well, that, that kind of stuff waxes and wanes. And we, we saw that when, especially when the system of care grants moved away from local grants where you could really get into a [00:33:00] community and, and say, okay, let's see how this can work to more statewide. Well, things get watered down. Well, that's what I mean by watered down.

Doesn't mean that they're not doing good work, but it's, it's more generalized. And we continually fight that. We were fighting that in the 1980s, a generalized approach to mental health services when that group of six parents stood up and said, yeah, but you're not addressing this. Right? So there's this flurry of activity, this funding that goes to that.

And then we've seen over the years, you talk to any family advocate who's been involved with this since the eighties, and he will absolutely tell you that it feels like in many cases, we're right back where we started. You know, so, so you can be defeated about that, or you can say, okay, what's stuck? Let's get on that wheel again and, and, and figure it out.

Um, I think youth voice is more, more important than ever, but here's the thing. I was thinking about your question. [00:34:00] Um, it's time for you guys to take over. Um, don't wait for the old geezers. Like this old geezer that's talking to you to do it or, or, or, or wait for this old geezer to give you the plan.

This old geezer can be helpful, but the ownership, the, the taking the bull by the horns. I really think that needs to come from you and you, uh, and people like you. We are living in an age of social media and AI that is just exploding, you know, right before our very eyes.

I think it's very exciting. And for me, the modeling that I want to see done has to come from the people who know that world the best, and that's not me, that's you, that's you. And so my question to you is, okay, how do we not become consumed by it? You know, how do we not run away from it? But how do we learn to capitalize in, [00:35:00] you know, to exist and to capitalize on what is happening.

Offering wraparound services in a, in a community that could be part of what's done, but I don't want to see you get stuck in that while there's freight train is moving forward on AI and social connectedness and what that looks like. And, and even that's going to be outdated, you know, before we know it.

So you see what I'm saying? So I can say, I could tell you, I think it's important that you continue to promote systems of care. But I really, when I asked myself that, what does that even mean in this world post pandemic?

You know,

the pandemic through everything on its ear. The challenge you're going to have is that bucks up against the current power structures.

In terms of the way business is done. So this is not an easy thing. But the last thing I want to do is give you an answer that has you focusing on the minor when you got that freight [00:36:00] train, it's just barreling through.

This is about you acknowledging your strength, that I'll make a generalized statement that I think you don't even realize you have. I don't think you do. And when you wake up to that, Oh, look out.

Emily: Yeah,

Scott: it's right there.

Emily: I mean, I think that is definitely like, yeah, I appreciate you saying that cause I, I feel like it is something that our generation is kind of more aware of, but it's not always acknowledged by other generations. Um, and I think it's, yeah, I feel like, I mean, yes, obviously it is scary in a lot of ways, but it's also empowering, you know.

Scott: I remember, uh, when I was here in North Carolina working and my boss at the time, guy named Michael and great guy, and he had this mindset of like, we're just gonna do it. We're just gonna do it. And we [00:37:00] were. We were like evangelists. We would go to any community that would listen to us, any school that would host us.

And we had a suicide prevention curriculum we had written and we, you know, it was very popular in the day. And I mean, literally, if I could stick my foot in the door before you could slam it shut, you know, that then we figured we had, I mean, it was, you know, it's, I looked back and I laughed. Okay. So I tell you that that world doesn't exist.

Today, the world that exists is your world. I mean, it's my world too, but I'm a passenger on this I'm just being dead flat, honest with you. Um, and I can give you my wisdom. So can all the people who your elders can give you wisdom.

There is an absolute place for that, but the fundamental structure of the engine, the model, that's going to drive you forward, that's going to come from you guys.

So get busy.

Mei: We're [00:38:00] busy.

Emily: Yeah, no, yeah, thank you for that. I think, I appreciate that because it is, you know, obviously your advice and your experiences are of course really valuable and important, but it is also like, It is a different world and there isn't much that we can do with that

and it's good to acknowledge it and to be aware of it, but like it is, like things are a lot different now.

Scott: And the thing for you guys to understand is, I'm saying this sounds pejorative, I don't mean it to be, but is that. Not, not to understand, pay attention to the, the reality of power structures and the way that works. And that doesn't mean you blow everything out of the water. You know, you've gotta, you obviously have to learn to navigate.

That's where the advice of elders can come in about navigating power structures. But, but you are at a power imbalance right now, and that is about to change and it's already changing. And I, I just chuckle. And some of my [00:39:00] colleagues, when I have this conversation, they roll their eyes and say, Jesus, Lord, what happened with you and your awakening?

You've lost your mind. You know, what are you talking about? Oh no, I see it as clear as day. You are the future, not in a paternalistic way. That statement to young people is often made in a very paternalistic way.

You are the future that I can't even fathom right now, but I know it's going to be amazing because when I was your age, we were the future.

We were the ones that, that said, that's fine. With all respect. That's fine. But we're going to try it this way. Because if you don't, then you're going to be saddled with an antiquated model in this case of mental health delivery that just that even today is quickly not fitting with reality.

Mei: Yeah, I, I do see what you're saying. And, uh, okay. A bunch of things come to mind. Firstly, um, [00:40:00] I think the way in which. Yeah, Our

system is set up to make changes. So like academia for probably the most obvious one policy, all of those barriers that you'd have to go to school, you have to get your PhD. So you can be a PI so you can run your own study.

Um, which, you know, to your point, I think that's where. The older generations can give us advice of how to best navigate to get into those positions where we can start making changes, because the reality is the system is pretty set, and it's going to take a lot to overhaul those. Um, but then I think that's where like social media and tech comes into place because we're already seeing people who don't necessarily have the.

academic requirements, right? But they still come up, they still have valid points to make, they still have lived expertise. So you can use social media as a platform to sort of deliver new [00:41:00] ideas. Um, and then that brings me to the way in which people are, Interacting with their world and, um, what's the, what's the word like practicing social connectedness through these online communities and platforms.

Yeah. It just looks a lot different than my parents generation. And because like, I was pretty much born into it. I think I have a hard time recognizing the differences exactly. And like, um, noticing, oh, I guess like that is a way I. Connect socially to my world is through this online mechanism. And I don't even fully realize how immersed me or my peers are in it.

Scott: And I, I, I am excited for that explosion of growth and recognition of your own power. Guess what? That already exists within you. It's already there, . No, you're, I'm telling you, you're wired, you're wired differently than I am. And that's a beautiful thing. [00:42:00] And for me, it's like, you're the one who's better, better prepared to lead us.

than me or people like me. And that's a hard thing for people to say. It's hard for people to wrap their heads because you spend your whole life building an identity, right? But do you see the power and being able to, for the older generation to be able to let go of that a little bit

and,

and honor, totally honor, What they have to offer, but totally embrace supporting not their version of what that younger generation needs to become, but supporting that younger generation to develop a version,

a reality of what they need to become.

Because guess what? It's going to happen anyway. So my question to you is, do you want to be a part of it or do you want to just sit on the sidelines? Yeah, both are options, but this world is going to change and, and, uh, it's going to, I mean, [00:43:00] gosh, just, just with what's happening with AI now in terms of, uh, job replacements, you know, and, and, and things like, I mean, things are going to, things are going to happen in the next couple of years that none of us sitting here Can't even imagine, but the one thing that I believe in with all my heart is that you two are going to be better equipped to deal with it than I am.

Emily: Hopefully. Yeah. Yeah, no, I mean, yeah, like I, again, like it's really honestly refreshing to like, hear you say that because I do think that, you know, for the most part, older generations. And I mean, it makes sense why like I can understand why, but they do really have a hard time kind of stepping out of the way a little bit like for us and saying, okay, like you guys are going to figure it out and like do it in your own way.

And like, we can't predict that, like may and I can't even predict that. Like we don't even know what can happen. But it's like, we

Scott: [00:44:00] can be here to help you. We can be here to offer thoughts and guidance, but it's. This is just such the critical, critical part of all of this. It's your model. It's not my model for what I think would work best for you.

It is your model.

Emily: Yeah. I appreciate that. Thank you, Scott. Yeah. Thank you. I think and that

Scott: leads me to, um, I think your last question, which was about the music.

Emily: Recommendation for us. Do

Scott: you want to go there?

Emily: First of

Scott: all, I want to tell you why I did the music. So for, for your listeners that Friday update always had a song that started off.

And I remember that when I first started doing that, I got some of the feedback I got from my contemporaries. Oh God, that is so hokey. What, what are you doing? You know,

Mei: and

Scott: for a lot of people, it remained hokey and remained true. But the reason I start, so Friday [00:45:00] update is a listing of, of, you know, great resources in mental health, some opinion pieces, you know, be a variety of things, but that's, that's all, you know, head stuff right up in the brain.

And I, and I, I just been a firm believer is like, I want to figure out a way without hitting people over the head to help them break set, you know, to just, to just throw them a curve ball to help them think. So starting with a song and, and sometimes with some of the music, I would say, okay, you got to close your office door and I want you to dance to this, you know, it's like, well, you know, that's where I'd get the hokey comments, but.

For the people who embraced it. Oh, man, the feedback's always been wonderful. And so, um, I know you guys wanted to know a song suggestion and I never know, excuse me, what the song is going to be until right before it goes out. It's, it's whatever. [00:46:00] Oh, excuse me. Sometimes there is, is a deliberate, Song choice based on an event that might've happened, but very often it's just, it's just how my brain works.

And, and, and, and if I find, I typically, you know, a lot of times there's mainstream music, but oftentimes there's not, you know, and music from different countries, it just, whatever it is, but I thought about for this, Since, since this interview was about sort of my journey with this, um, the song I chose for you is by Lucinda Williams called rock and roll heart.

And there's a couple lyrics that in, uh, that, that I really like, uh, one follow that dream, wherever it leads, uh, outsiders. And that kind of frames what we've been talking about this whole morning, follow your dream outside of the outsider. As long as you got a rock and roll heart, [00:47:00] it can't be broken or torn apart.

Mei: Aw.

Scott: Rock and roll guys.

Emily: Rock and roll, . Well, thank you so much, Scott. This was really fun, and it was really great to hear your story and your perspective on things. So thank you for joining us today.

Mei: If you would like to contact us, you can email us at stay_tuned@umassmed.edu and check out the transitions ACR website at umassmed.edu/transitions-ACR. Thanks for being here and be sure to stay tuned for next time.