

Mental Health Monday: Digital Resource Center for College-Age Students

Host

Hey, welcome back to Show Me Today. Jessica Duren is our guest for this week's Mental Health Monday segment. She's with the Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development, and they partnered with Show Me Hope crisis counseling programs, and they created this HappierU, a digital resource center for college age students. Jessica, first of all, welcome. Thank you for joining us.

Jessica Duran

Thank you for having me.

Host

And how did happier you come about and your department's involvement?

Jessica Duran

Yeah, so HappierU actually came about because of the pandemic and the effect that it was having on college students in particular. As well as high school students. And just the kind of isolation that happens all of a sudden, for students and having to transition very quickly out of kind of their normal routine. So, Department of Mental Health actually noticed, you know, this is a segment of the population that's being heavily impacted and what can we do about that? Our department naturally serves that age group, and those college students. And so we were brought in to kind of help spread the message.

Host

So brought on by the pandemic, is HappierU still going on, though?

Jessica Duran

HappierU is still going on. And we are excited that we've been able to give it a new home on our Journey to College website that is designed specifically for students and families about planning and paying for college and succeeding in college. So we have a new webpage that's dedicated to it, and we are actually adding new content to it, in the near future.

Host

Oh that's great. All right, so is it's geared toward college age students, but can it apply to anyone?

Jessica Duran

Oh, this can absolutely apply to anyone. We have an amazing playlist that I actually myself listen to all the time. It's just music to make you happy. And it is science-based evidence to kind of change your mindset, to be more positive so anyone could benefit from this.

Host

Jessica Duran is our guest here on our Mental Health Monday segment on Show Me Today. She's with the Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development, and we're talking about HappierU. So what are some of the the fun things that are on there that people will find, whether you're, in college now or, in adult?

Jessica Duran

We actually have several videos and several of them are really short so anybody could do this at any point. The videos focus on various aspects of mental health so everything from the importance of sleep to being resilient, mindfulness and breathing exercises, setting healthy boundaries, and self-affirmation, among others. And then there's also a really great playlist, to get you in a happier mood. We will also be adding some blog posts, so kind of any type of content that you're looking for, whether it's long or short, we've got it for you.

Host

I'm sure then the feedback that you've received has been really positive on this, that you're continuing this past the pandemic stage.

Jessica Duran

We have received a lot of good feedback. I think mental health is so important, and people have started to realize that, especially coming out of the pandemic, I think people are understanding more that this can impact anyone. These are tools that anybody can use so it's great to have them available and just at your fingertips. It's something I think will continue, long term because mental health is not an issue that's going to go away.

Host

Jessica, where's the website now where people can find the archive, stuff and the new content that's rolling out.

Jessica Duran

So we have a new web page on our journey to college.mo.gov website. And it's actually, at the very top of the website, there is a tab that says HappierU. If you click on that, we have moved all of the information to this website as well as added some new things and more will be coming.

Host

Oh that's great. HappierU, check it out from the Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development and their work with Show Me Help. Jessica, since I have you, obviously, thinking about college is a stressful time of year, and you've got kids now that are getting ready to graduate high school. What are some things that parents and a students should be thinking about here in the next month or two as they get ready for college?

Jessica Duran

Yes, this is a crucial time, especially for high school seniors and even returning college students. So over the course of the next couple of months, students should be nailing down which school am I going to in the fall? They should actually be enrolling, talking to the financial aid office to make sure that they're getting the most financial aid possible. If they have not completed their FAFSA, it is not too late. They definitely still need to do that in order to secure some financial aid and really just focusing on what are the practical steps I need to take to get to campus in the fall, whether it's transportation, setting up a budget, enrolling or going to that orientation, just thinking about housing, all of those things. So it really is a crucial time right now.

Host

Jessica Duran, always a pleasure to hear your voice. And thank you so much for joining us on our Mental Health Monday segment. Thank you so much. This is Show Me Today The Voice of Missouri.