

Speaker 1: Hello, and welcome to Decipher Podcast. This podcast is hosted by William & Mary staff members who are committed to student success. We all know that this year has been unlike any other and our hope is that this podcast provides a fresh perspective on the challenges our students are facing.

Speaker 2: Navigating college life is no walk in the park and being a William & Mary student in 2020 is no different. Joint experts from around campus as they discuss ways to decipher common college experiences.

Heather Deere: [00:00:30] Hi, everyone. Welcome back to another episode of the Decipher Podcast. My name is Heather Deere, the Assistant Director of Parent & Family Programs. And on this episode, I got the chance to talk to Dr. Kelly Crace about ways that students can get ahead of the burnout they may be experiencing this semester, or they will experience this semester and how they can maximize [00:01:00] their spring break days. I hope you enjoy this conversation. Now, before I turn it over to our guest speaker, I do want to ensure that they have a proper introduction. So joining us this evening is Dr. Kelly Crace.

Kelly is the Associate Vice President for Health & Wellness and the Director of the Center for Mindfulness & Authentic Excellence at William & Mary. He is a licensed psychologist and the coauthor of Authentic Excellence : Flourishing & Resilience in a Relentless World and the Life Values Inventory. [00:01:30] He has published and presented in the areas of values, flourishing, resilience, life world development and transition, and organizational development, all very critical topics right now. He has served as director of two college mental health centers at Duke University and here at William & Mary, and he received his academic and clinical training from Vanderbilt University, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Duke University. Thank you so much, Kelly, for being with us this evening. We are very grateful for your time [00:02:00] and the floor is yours.

Kelly Crace: Wonderful. Thank you, Heather. I appreciate it. It's such a pleasure to be with you Heather tonight. Thank you for inviting me and just such a wonderful pleasure to be with my dear colleagues of the parents and families of our lovely students. Happy new year. We're in a new semester and I so appreciated the time that it was able to spend with you near the end of last semester to talk about flourishing during burnout conditions. I'm coming from you from a different location. I'm [00:02:30] not in Williamsburg right now. We have a family medical emergency and so we immediately drove down to Florida. And so I'm in this little remote location in a little country town far away on this little lake and there's no wifi reception. So I have my phone as a personal hotspot out on a dock in a boat house on the Lake because it's the only place that I have cell reception.

So Heather has been so kind and patient with me for us to try to work this out. The only thing that's a little troublesome about this is I have heron behind me [00:03:00] that really likes to scare me. And so every now and then he'll make a

sound that it will just startle on me. So if you could just be patient with that, I would appreciate it. I wanted to see this as a part two of a conversation. We have all talked and we've all experienced, just what a strain 2020 was on our systems, on our mental health, our physical wellbeing. We're just all exhausted and that didn't end December 31st. We still carry in [00:03:30] some fatigue. I haven't talked with many people that were able to say I was able to completely recharge my batteries. I was able to completely feel the tank and come back completely restored.

There's still a strain. But the interesting thing that I want to share with you tonight is we were talking about how to restore during burnout conditions and how to recharge those batteries. Right now, the issue is more about managing the what ifs, because what happens is, as we move into a new semester, [00:04:00] we are often filled with those anticipatory what ifs. What if spring is like fall? What if this blows up? What if I come back not completely at 100%, can I do William & Mary affective? Can I do William & Mary at 60%? All of the what ifs come about and how do we manage those? Because those are human. Those are bringing natural to experience. So all I want to share with you is I want to just as what they do [00:04:30] with series, where they show a preview of the last episode, I want to share with you just two minutes of reminding ourselves what we talked about last time.

And then I want to share with you two strategies that are about two sides of the same coin. It's still about burnout, but it's more this anticipatory strain that we're experiencing as we're looking ahead. What can we as parents and family members and support systems for our young adults, what can we help them with? Heather, would it be okay if I share a screen [00:05:00] here? Thank you. We'll see if this can work with my limited technology with the cell reception. Can you see that okay? Can everyone see that all right?

Heather Deere: We can see it.

Kelly Crace: Thanks Heather. So when we moved to the what ifs, one of the things that's so important is to recognize that what that does is that pulls worry and fear forward. Worry is always about the future. And so whenever I'm worried, it's [00:05:30] about something that's ahead of me and that's normal, it's human. We are forward thinking and reflective human beings. It's hard for us to stay in the present, and yet we can manage that. And more importantly, it's essential for us to manage it. It's interesting, this past semester we found a trajectory, two paths that our students, this is an overgeneralization, but we found this to be generally true. Is that last semester, it was overwhelming for all of us.

[00:06:00] And whenever we went through a period of being overwhelmed, we found with our students that some students took the path of, I have to do something differently. When they reached that point of overwhelming, they turned inward and reflected and said, "I need to do something differently to manage this because how I'm normally managing my stress in my life is not

cutting it. This is more than what I'm used to, or it's different. I [00:06:30] need to do something differently." And so they would turn inwardly to their resources and then they would turn outwardly to support systems around them to help them learn how to manage this differently.

And those students tended to get through the semester well. And then we had other students that in being overwhelmed, their first response was the university needs to do something differently. Something needs to change around me to make this manageable. Completely human. [00:07:00] We all feel that way at various times. And yet what we found that in that need state of things need to be different around me, we found that those students struggled more and were much more fatigued, exhausted, were mentally strained near the end of the semester. And so what we want to do as parents and as support systems is how do we take that very normal human reaction and how do we move them toward a sense of agency of them stepping in [00:07:30] to new strategies or new ways of thinking or new ways of behaving with the support around them.

And the interesting thing when we worked with some of the students that were in that place, that helplessness and needing things to change around them, and we would also often try to get them to think about making some steps in and strategies that would often say, "I just can't see myself doing that. That's too uncomfortable for me." Or when we would talk with parents, they would say, "Oh, my child [00:08:00] would never do that. That's too uncomfortable." I would never see them doing that. And the interesting thing is we found that the people that did turn to try to do something differently, it wasn't easier for them. It was just as hard.

I don't know if you listen to our Ways to Flourish podcast, but one of the most recent Ways to Flourish podcast around art therapy, we had one of our students, our first year student that joined the podcast and she talked about that she reached a period of isolation and this was her first [00:08:30] semester and she was so lonely and it was so the opposite of what she thought college was going to be like. And she stepped into an action where she reached out and joined an art therapy group and started engaging in various things and started meeting people. And she said, "I just never thought I would do that." And it was so hard and yet she did step into it.

And that's actually how we define courage. Courage is essentially stepping into [00:09:00] something that's right and healthy for us when it's so hard. That's courage. We all have that capacity to do that. So what I want us to talk a little bit about today is how do we give our students that agency? How do we support them and also encourage them to move into a sense of agency that can help them flourish during these anticipatory, what ifs? It's a reminder that this all comes from our Authentic Excellence Initiative that's a part of the Center for Mindfulness and Authentic [00:09:30] Excellence.

These are the strategies that we help students be able to learn as they reach out for additional support. Just real briefly, as a recap of last time, I want to spend just a couple of minutes and remind people that we talked last time about how there's this dynamic relationship between values and fear. You can't have one without the other. I can't care about anything without being reminded of the uncertainty of what I care about. And I can't be afraid of anything that's unimportant to me. So they [00:10:00] are one of the same. They are this dynamic relationship where we can't have one without the other. And we talked about why is this burnout prominent among our young adults and why does this play a part in this time?

And we talked about this fear-based model of excellence that our young adults learn growing up. It's a human. We're neurologically wired for this. But what it does is whenever we focus on something that matters to us, we also become very aware of the fear of failing at it or losing [00:10:30] that. And in that dynamic relationship with values and fear, we can just drift into a natural response of either perfectionist to control or avoiding and escaping. And that's just how we're wired, but it's also what leads to the greater strain because this fear-based model of excellence has a ceiling effect and also has an increasing costs to where it starts to move from stress to strain.

What we learned over this past semester, especially of our young adults this year, that it wasn't [00:11:00] just fear, it wasn't a dynamic relationship between values and fear, it was also about grief. It was about loss. It was about experiencing something that was so different than what they had hoped for and expected that they were really feeling. And it was around things that are important to them, around things that were values. And so the cause of that, there was this relationship between values and loss, hurt, which also then brought in fear. What if this continues? What if this doesn't change? What [00:11:30] if my college experience is going to be like this the whole time? All of those things are very natural. And so we talked about what we've got to take a different approach of being able to address this.

And we talked about the steps to manage burnout and to manage this strain and to put things back in perspective. And we talked about the mindful intentions of there was some essential steps, this essential nourishment to recharge the batteries, which is living every day with a sense of purpose. Starting every day, [00:12:00] with a sense of purpose of what matters to me and of that, what matters most. And then when you engage in that during the day, you do so with complete experiential acceptance. That accept whatever happens and at the end of the day, you take a moment and reflect on where you stepped in and reflect and appreciate and value where you stepped in courageously to those aspects of purpose. That's actually what transforms purpose into meaning that reflective process.

Then we talked a little bit about those essential seasonings. That's the essential [00:12:30] nourishment, but if you want to take it another step further just to

amplify that sense of burnout, restoration, the essential seasonings are stepping into something enjoyable every day and step into something healthy every day, and step into encouragement every day, both giving and receiving. We found those essential seasonings just add that sense of a perspective of flourishing that helps us manage burnout. Well, this is just as important when we start to talk about anticipatory anxiety [00:13:00] and the what ifs of this semester, because the purpose helps us find that sense of agency amidst uncertainty.

And so what I want you to think about is this is two sides of the same coin that we still need to practice these things. And as parents, I want you to still reinforce this and practice it. You have to be good role models. You can't say these things and not do them and have any credibility. So they need to see this in you in terms of leading and giving [00:13:30] your sense of success by living with purpose, with acceptance and reflecting on that. Doing these things matters because it also brings us back into a perspective. And so that leads to the strategies that I wanted you to think of. I want to share two things with you that I think are really important to be mindful of. And that is learning the difference between how wants and values and needs are playing out.

Because what happens is whenever the what ifs start to emerge, [00:14:00] as I mentioned before, that pose fear to the foreground, and when fear is pulled to the foreground, it will distort our perception of values. For instance, one of the things that it'll do is it can pull values into a need state where value like value of achievement or the value of belonging becomes a need to achieve, a need to belong. And whenever a value drifts into a need state, [00:14:30] it just lowers our effect and there's nothing bad happens, but it lowers our effectiveness. And by effectiveness, I'm talking about it lowers our sense of productivity, our sense of fulfillment, and our sense of resilience. That's the most important thing that it impacts because what you're doing is you're putting yourself into a place of psychological press. You're pressing too hard.

You're constantly sitting with this chronic worry of needing to understand and worry and control everything that I need to happen, because if I need [00:15:00] to belong, then I cannot fail. And that intensity puts us into a place of psychological press that actually causes us to be less effective because we become so sensitive to how's it going now? How did it go yesterday? How's it going today? How will it go tomorrow? We're constantly keeping score out of that need state, or we might find that it results in the opposite way is that a value starts to drift back into just a preference, [00:15:30] just a want. And whenever a value drifts back into a want, we lose our psychological commitment. We have preferences and wants in our life. We may want a lot of things. We may prefer a lot of things, but when we want them, there's not the psychological commitment to engage.

And what we start doing is we become very externalized and hope for change. We move into this motivational strategy of hope. Hope is a wonderful thing. It's a beautiful thing, but not as a motivational strategy. I didn't study for this test, I

hope it's easy. I'm very [00:16:00] shy and it's so uncomfortable for me to go out and join organizations or be involved from remote or in Zoom so I just hope people can come to me at some level. All of these things put this in a state where essentially what happens is when we're in a need state and when we're in a want state, we become more emotion centered. Values take a back seat and emotions take a foot seat and we start then seeking emotional [00:16:30] comfort and emotional relief.

In the need area, what's happening is chronic worry and we're going to constantly seek relief from that worry. And we need things to change around us, and we need our experiences to change, to calm that worry. Over in the other side with want, what is being lamented is hard. Whenever we move into this place of want and preference away from our values, when we ask people, "So what's keeping you from [00:17:00] engaging in this stuff?" The constant response is it's just so hard. I don't see myself capable of doing that. It's too hard and so hard matters, worry matters, calm matters.

And so what we're constantly being over sensitized to is our emotional place in that moment. The sweet spot are your values because when we're truly living a [00:17:30] value centered life, what happens is it allows us to feel, it allows us to feel deeply, it allows us to be affected and yet what comes to the foreground are your values. And so what happens is I can feel deeply and yet choose to lead with purpose. And when that happens, we just hold these emotions really well. We can struggle, We can be depressed, we can feel lonely, [00:18:00] we can be worried and yet it holds it in its sweet spot because we're leading with our values. In other words, what it looks like is that I can be affected by my life, but I don't have to be defined by it.

And so how we do that is we back right up to that thing that we talked about. How do you actually keep values in its sweet spot? And you do it by this. You come right back to that. [00:18:30] What matters today? What's purposeful to me? What is important to me today? What are my values? And more importantly, we find it's not what your values are, it's how you express and manage them. So it's not only what my values are and what matters, but how do I engage in the day by defining my success by the expression of those values, rather than the outcomes that I collect from those values, both matter. [00:19:00] Expression has to matter more than the outcomes.

And then taking the time in the evening to value and appreciate where you courageously stepped into purpose. So that transforms into meaning. And so, again, like we said, two sides of the same coin. Different dynamics are happening, but the solution is the same. But I want to share with you one other thing. We also found that the way to find that sweet spot of values driven life and the way to [00:19:30] keep your emotions in perspective to where we can feel them, and we can learn, emotions are wonderful things. Sometimes our emotions are our first level of awareness. And so we want to listen to them. We

want to be informed by them, but we don't want to be led fully by them. Otherwise, we move into a place of want or need.

So one of the other strategies that people that flourish do to stay in this values sweet spot, is they switch from being noun focused to verb focused. And in [00:20:00] fact, they focus on four verbs because in our life every day, our life, at some point in time will relate to one of these four verbs. Your life can be reduced down to flourishing through four verbs that are also guided by our values. So I want to share this acronym with you to keep this in mind, as you think, and work with your adult student is one, come back to this aspect that when you hear them say certain words of I have to, I need [00:20:30] to, I can't, it's too hard, is bring them back. Don't don't shoot them. Don't say, "Oh, don't do that. That's bad for you. That doesn't work."

It's about both end thinking. It's about, "I hear you. This is hard. This is scary. This is fatiguing. This is upsetting." And switch from or to and. Bring both and into this conversation. And when you say and say, "Well, let's bring this back to what matters. What matters [00:21:00] to you today? What's right for you to do today." And being able to focus on just a sense of purpose. What would be purposeful, what would be important and how can we do that today? How do we step into that today?

So it's bringing them back to that values conversation, but then there's another piece and that's getting them to be verb focused. And the way to do that is to focus on use this acronym, use the A for actions. That's the reminder that the ALERT acronym A stands for verb focus to actions. [00:21:30] But here are the four verbs. First, shift from the nouns of achievements and grades and relationships to the verbs of learning. When you study, study to learn. When you stop learning, go take a break. How many times have we seen our adult students study? Sit down for three or four or five hours at a time.

After that first hour, just sitting there studying for a grade because it makes them feel good to sit there and study. Their retention is 17%. And yet we find that if you study [00:22:00] to learn with curiosity, with wonder, and take a break when you stop learning, and come back and learn some more. It deepens your sense of critical and creative thinking. And then as you've learned, then you go tell them what you've learned. You go and express your talent, your training, and your learning today.

So when I go take a test I'll tell them what I know. When I write a paper, I'm going to tell them what I know. Because no amount of worrying about what I don't know is going to cause me to know it. And yet, if I need this grade, [00:22:30] all that does is get in the way of your best performance by 25 to 50% because it will undercut your critical and creative thinking. So learning, then stepping in to express what I've learned and then relating. That's the shift from when I focus on relationships. If I'm thinking about my relationship with Heather, I'm going to constantly evaluate, how are we doing? How are we doing

now? And I'm going to constantly be thinking about how do I contribute to this conversation?

So I'm actually not listening to Heather, I'm thinking, "What do I say [00:23:00] next to contribute to this conversation?" In other words, my focus is on being interesting. With relationships, I don't control that completely. But with relating, I completely control so that I can focus on being interested instead of interesting. How do I want to relate with Heather? Well, I can relate with curiosity, with kindness, with respect, but I control that. This is one of the biggest markers of distinction of lowering social anxiety is when we can get [00:23:30] individuals to focus on relating instead of relationships, their social anxiety drops. Because now they're focusing on being interested. And we also learned that that's one of the most endearing human qualities in a relationship is someone actually showing interest in me.

And then the last one is taking care of myself. At any given point in time when we get overwhelmed, when we start to think about nouns and when we started to become very outcome oriented, what we find is that if we [00:24:00] will take a deep breath and move into the next right verb, well, let me just go learn a little more about this. Well, let me just tell him what I know. Let me just go express myself. Well, let me go and relate or let me go take care of myself. One of those verbs will be relevant. Here's the power of verb focused thinking. Whenever we become more verb focused in our thinking, three things occur. One, you manage stress better.

It puts things in perspective because [00:24:30] it brings your values to the foreground and it brings behavior and action into the foreground rather than your emotional state or your fears or worries. It keeps it in its sweet spot. So you manage stress better because you come within your agency. Secondly, with the wonderful thing it's paradoxical is the more verb focused you are, the more nouns you collect. That's the coolest thing. That's why a lot of people, they'll argue, "Yeah, that's a good thing, but you got to have the grades. You got to have outcomes. People [00:25:00] that flourish don't deny the reality of outcomes. They just know that the only part of outcomes they control is their performance. And they know that they perform better when they're verb focused in their thinking.

So they get more nouns, they collect more nouns the more verb focused you are, but the third, most powerful reason why to be verb focused is when you get those outcomes, you actually experience joy because when you're now unfocused and you have to have outcomes and [00:25:30] you get those outcomes, the first emotion you feel is not joy, it's relief. And then you immediately start chasing the next noun. So what we found is the best way to manage these anticipatory, what ifs and when our children call us and talk about how overwhelmed it is, it's important to bring them back to values. Look, here's another thing that happens when we're in a need state or in a want state out of fear.

Fear [00:26:00] drives all of this. Fear drives our intolerance of hard and fear drives that worry. You know what else it does, it causes us to be myopic in our thinking and it distorts our reality to what we are actually describing is happening is not completely accurate because what we start looking is we start looking for things that will support our perception and we'll ignore things that are refuted. And so what you'll hear from them often is you'll hear their description [00:26:30] of what they're experiencing.

But if they're talking to you in a need state or in an avoidance state, what you'll be hearing is not fully accurate. It's close, but fear always distorts truth. Worry and lamenting hard, always distorts the complete picture. And so what you'll hear from them and something that scares us to death as parents. The important point is if you bring them back to their values, they think [00:27:00] more expansively, and you'll hear a clearer picture of what's going on and you can work with them with that. So much about that is also reminding them, well, how do you find those values? And I just want to remind everyone that there's an open educational resource out there that's free to the public, completely free and it holds your data that allows people to develop an understanding of their relationship with their values.

It's not a values assessment tool, it's an empirical [00:27:30] assessment of their relationship with their values, which helps move them to a deeper state of motivation that overrides fear and fatigue. Instead of using fear and comfort, which are most natural motivators, it moves you to this purest form of motivation, which are our values. So I'm going to ask something that's really hard of you. It's one of these things and I want you to be mindful of my availability and accessibility to you. So always feel free [00:28:00] to give me a call. I wish two responsibilities for you. It's a request and they're both really hard. And I know them because I'm a parent, my children that are in their 30s and so I've been there. But one of the things that I would love for you to consider is as parents, I would love for you to join us in when your son, or daughter, your adult student [00:28:30] are overwhelmed, is to bring them to a place of what can we do differently together to manage this?

What do we need to do more of, or less of, and thinking about their values as a sense of purpose and walk them through those steps and help give them a sense of agency. But also what I want you to do is I still want you to advocate for them. So I do want you to call us and say, "Hey, I'm hearing this, I've [00:29:00] heard this from my student. I've heard it around..." And being able to inquire and be curious and ask, because what you may hear may be accurate. And what you may hear may not be accurate, but it's about asking an advocating. So even though we're encouraging you to help your student find agency within themselves and to access the support around them, sometimes the most independent thing a person can do is to access the support that is available and the resources that are available to them.

So we want you to advocate for that, but we still want [00:29:30] you to help us be as good as we can be. And so we want you to still advocate for them, not take over responsibility for them, not fix it for them, but we still want you to advocate for them, because you may have a great idea. And I'll be the first one to say, that's brilliant. I never thought about that. I'll also be the first one to say, "You know, what you're hearing is accurate and we're trying to do better. And we're trying to work with that." Or we may say, "What you're hearing is partially true, [00:30:00] but there's more." And being able to talk about more of an expansive truth. Here's how I'd love for you to come... and for those of you that have had the misfortune of hearing me before, you've heard me talk about this ad nauseum, but it's so critically important.

I want you to think about three things as you develop your adult relationship with your adult student. Is one being able to... when you talk with them, instead of asking them, "How did it go today? [00:30:30] How did the class go? How did your grades go? How are things going?" That's just the most loving, caring thing in the world to ask and it's just so natural for us to ask, but what it does is it kicks them into an evaluative mindset and they will start judging themselves and their day and eventually it will cause a strain where you'll start to see them screening your calls a little more because they feel like it's a report card. Instead, ask them to share something of meaning with you today. [00:31:00] What was something that was meaningful? Ask them to share a highlight. And whenever they share that thing of meaning or highlight, make sure you pull from that their contribution to it.

So they may say, "Well, highlight was I made a great grade on my quiz." And that's wonderful to celebrate and make sure you pull from them. "How did you contribute to that great grade?" So being able to constantly bring them back to share something meaningful, [00:31:30] share something purposeful with me. And the last two things is when you find that your student calls you because they're overwhelmed, or upset, or heartbroken, being able to listen to them and in listening to them after you've heard them ask them an important question, how can I best be of support for you right now? And then be [00:32:00] willing to be coached because that whole fear-based model of excellence that I showed you at the beginning, that applies to us too. And so when we get afraid, and we get worried about our students, we naturally can move into control and try to fix it.

And if we're really good problem solvers, and that's where we tend to go to because we're really good at it, that's natural for us to want to do. Resist that pull and ask, "How can I be of most support to you?" And they may say, "I just needed someone to hear [00:32:30] me that knows me. I just needed to hear your voice." Or they may ask you, "I want your head. I want you to solve this for me. What do you think?" And then all means step in and tell them what you think. Don't take over but say, "When I think about this, this is what comes to my mind. Here's the ideas that I have. What do you think? How does that land for you?" Don't say you need to. You need to do this. You need to do that

because now you're moving them [00:33:00] right into that need state. Remember that need state is more about worry and you're just stoking that flame.

That's just so natural for us as parents to do. And we want to catch that and say, "Here's what I'm thinking." If they ask you, here's what I'm thinking. But then the third thing is always leave them at the end of that conversation, that very tough conversation. Tell them the truth. Tell them I have complete faith that you can get through this challenge. It may not be linear [00:33:30] and it's probably going to be messy and it's probably going to be clumsy and I have faith in you. Because that's important for them to hear. Even if you're worried to death, even if you're scared to death, they will get through it. Don't have to be alone. You can be with your support, but it's so important for them to hear that even while worried, I choose to bring my trust in you, my faith in you to the foreground. That I'm going to choose faith in you [00:34:00] over my own worry, and be able to say that with a sense of calm, with a sense of comfort, and assure them that you're here for them and whatever support you want and you have faith in them.

So with that in mind, what questions do people have? What comments I would love to and I haven't been able to check the chats or anything, [00:34:30] Heather, if there's anything that we need to bring from the chat room, or I would just love to open it up to any questions that people have. Heather, I'll turn it over to you.

Heather Deere: Thank you. I'm going to give people some time to think about what questions they might have for you, but as you were talking, I was thinking about how this question might tie into what you were really speaking to. And I'm getting a lot of feedback of like, "Oh, students are just going to use their spring break days to do more work. And I think my student is just going to do more classwork [00:35:00] and I don't really think that's going to be a recharge for them." How can we enter conversations with our students to help them make those spring break days meaningful to them?

Kelly Crace: It's really coming back to what we've learned in our research about flourishing. The fear-based model of excellence creates a competitive relationship between wellness and excellence. They feel like they're competitive and so a lot of times when we tell our students take care of yourselves, they hear it as you're telling me to throttle back. [00:35:30] And I'm not going to throttle back, but that's out of fear. Being able to bring into the gather that statement of the value of what know to be true, which is wellness is essential to excellence. And so the good thing in a sad way is they experienced it in the fall because with the compressed schedule, they realized I can't hold this level of intensity throughout. I have to engage in creating space for myself because [00:36:00] the environment didn't do it. We did as much as we could to foster wellness and activities and things like that, but they have the agency to choose to keep the pedal down, to keep the throttle open.

What they learned is they couldn't do it. They couldn't sustain that. And so that was the point where they would reach out and look at things to be able to recharge. We can bank on that and remind them as parents remember for you to truly flourish [00:36:30] and be at your excellent, you have to engage in daily self care that's a few minutes, and weekly something a little longer, and then when the spring break days full immersion. Those are our full immersion days and that's why we've used the term Wellness Your Way is that came from our wonderful wellness ambassadors that created the Wellness Your Way campaign, which is about reminding their peers, that wellness has to look like [00:37:00] we provide it for you.

Here's what wellness is, is through your own personal and cultural lens, you may know what wellness and recharge looks like. Those spring break days are meant for that, but it's not limited to that. We don't want six days of just recharge, we want every day. One of the things that I found among my colleagues, all of my colleagues in Student Affairs, you included Heather, we work so hard and so did the parents. Everybody works so hard and the ones that made it through without being exhausted [00:37:30] is they did these little seasonings. They did something enjoyable every day even if it only took a minute. They did something healthy every day and they did something encouraging everyday and they defined their life by purpose and meaning rather than outcomes, because we were failing every day and we were succeeding every day. We had to look internally.

So it's about reminding them of that truth, that not only spring break days, but everyday, do a little something, but the spring break days is full immersion and [00:38:00] we want the faculty and everybody to cooperate. And we hope that everyone will, but some students will be in very fair situations and some students may be in unfair situations, but no matter what, they can manage it if they work with themselves. So I'm encouraging them to work with themselves and see those spring break days as truly Wellness Your Way opportunity. We can bring them to the water, we can't make them drink. There are plenty [00:38:30] of recharge opportunities out there. They have to courageously step into it. So don't use the word just. Don't say, "Just take a day off, just take care of yourself because this is hard." Courageously be well. Courageously step into this hard thing of taking care of yourself and you'll benefit from it.

Heather Deere:

That's wonderful. Thank you. I've been anxious to ask you that question because I knew that you would have a really phenomenal answer [00:39:00] and some really great advice, because I think I too were looking from the outside, I'm like, "How do we encourage students to maybe really take care of themselves if that's something that is meaningful for them during that time." And so I'm thank you for that response. I see a couple of questions here that speak to students who may be feeling pretty isolated after their first semester. What resources do we offer to students to help them with some of that isolation?

Kelly Crace: There are so many wide [00:39:30] range of resources and programs and support systems. We have support groups that are available to them. We have organizations that are still active, so they can align with their interests to meet people that have similar interests. Is it how we want it? Ideally, no. Is it available? Yes. So when we talk about loneliness and isolation, the thing that you want to remind yourself of is the issue of feeling trapped. And whenever we feel trapped, like I'm [00:40:00] trapped in a place of loneliness and isolation, and it's impossible to engage. During these times, it is harder to connect. It is harder to move beyond our sense of loneliness and isolation, but it's not impossible. It's within everybody's capacity to connect. And we have programs, activities, resources, events. We actually are getting really high marks from other universities about all [00:40:30] that we've been able to do, not only in terms of depth, but the breadth and students have to courageously engage in that.

And for so many, they say, "Well, it's just so hard. Or that's just not my personality. That's just not natural for me." We have so many wide range of activities that yes, that's the courage part. We have to step into something that is harder and more difficult for the value of it. That's where value centered thinking plays into part because it makes it worth [00:41:00] the hard that the harness of stepping out into a discomfort and uncomfortable place is worth being able to connect with others. We're also starting an app soon this semester called the Nord app, which is a scientifically based app that is available to help people break from issues of isolation and lack of social connectedness and to engage in social connectedness and to teach them the psychological strategies and tools [00:41:30] to be able to step into that hard. So again, it's not, "Oh, just go and connect with people."

It's courageously stepping into this using some of these strategies. And so we're trying our best to make sure they have those support and resources available to them, including our students that are in Richmond Hall. We have support groups available for not only when they're at Richmond Hall, but when they return back to their dormitories, because that's a difficult transition too when they come back to class and people say, "Hey, where are you? I was in Richmond Hall." And they [00:42:00] see that look on people's face. How do you manage that in a flourishing and healthy way? The resources are there, the events, the activities are there, engage them in their courage, support their courage to step into that hard act of engaging with others.

Heather Deere: Wonderful. Well, I think that's all the time that we have this evening. And I want to thank you again for being with us and finding a location that works and all of the WI-FI and remote [00:42:30] things that come along with joining us for this webinar. I appreciate listening to you each time you speak with us and we value your time and energy and all the work that you're doing for our students at William & Mary. So thank you again, Dr. Crace,

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Kelly Crace: Thank you, Heather, and thanks to all the parents and families for your trust in us and for your work collaborating with all of us to help our students flourish. Thank you to all of you.

Heather Deere: Thank you. Everyone have a wonderful evening.

Speaker 5: [00:43:00] Thank you so much for tuning into this episode of the Decipher Podcast. For our show notes, please visit our website, decipher.blogs.wm.edu. Take care.