

Live Well, Be Well

Let's talk about social wellness, social connection, and The Zone

Introduction

CC: Hello, welcome to Live Well, Be Well! A podcast where we speak candidly about all things wellness!

My name is Catherine and I'm a Peer Education Coordinator at UCSD Health Promotion Services.

On this episode of Live Well Be Well, we'll be discussing social wellness, social connection, how The Zone fosters both of these at UCSD, and more! Joining us for this episode is Nighlah, who is the Senior Lead Intern at The Zone. The Zone is our campus student well-being lounge under Health Promotion Services. While Nighlah's worked diligently to build community through The Zone's programs for the past 3 years, she is also a Class of 2020 grad who prepares to navigate social wellness and connection throughout her post-grad journey beyond her academic and co-curricular spaces at UCSD.

NK: Hey everyone, thanks so much for that introduction Catherine. As you all heard, my name is Nighlah, I am an intern at The Zone and I worked there for 3 years, I am also a student graduating this spring Class of 2020 yay! I am so excited to delve into this topic of social wellness, social connectedness

CC: So on that note, we hope you get inspired, we hope you feel connected, and we hope you discover new ways to live your best life.

NK: Let's get started!

CC: Ok Nighlah, so let's jump right into our first question: how do you define social wellness and social connection?

NK: Sure, I think that social wellness and connectedness is something to me that I'm still learning, something that I am trying to define in my own life, I would say they are things that are multidimensional and multifaceted. At The Zone we talk about wellness being multidimensional and being applied in our lives in many different ways. Personally for me social wellness is something that I would apply to my life first, making sure I am socially well in everything that I'm doing now that my routine has changed - just taking time to make sure I am feeling as best as I can so that when I attempt to be socially connected to friends and family I can support them as best as I can. It's something I don't necessarily think can be sorted into one category.

CC: I agree - especially with the multifaceted, multidimensional piece you mentioned. Sure, there are structural, functional, and qualitative aspects of social relationships but to me it comes down to there being no rigid standard of social wellness. It's defined by you - a construct, encompassing ways we connect to others socially. It comes down to what energizes you, what makes you feel comfortable, nurtured, and supported.

For example, when I think of my personal social wellness journey, The Zone immediately comes to mind. You may know The Zone for it's cozy and welcoming lounge located in Price Center, which has served as

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a student space for de-stressing and social connection since 2010 - with its innovative programming that promotes skill development for healthy living and introduces well-being resources to students.

Even though UCSD students are operating remotely this quarter, and The Zone's physical space is currently closed, we are excited that The Zone continued to offer free wellness programs virtually to build community and support students on their wellness journeys, and connect them with others throughout the process, which Nighlah will discuss more in this episode.

It's Week 10 - it's the homestretch: Spring Quarter finals are upon us, it's graduation season for our seniors, summer is right around the corner. On top of it all, we're transitioned and are still adjusting honestly to the circumstances of being in a pandemic - students are re-shifting plans and making plans not entirely certain of what will come next. Tuning in to your health and wellness, and checking in and maintaining connection with others is important now more than ever - but it's just as challenging to do so.

NK: I think that's 100 percent true, to me health and wellness is super important but of course it is challenging. We here at The Zone are doing our best to figure out how to support our students during this transition.

CC: Nice, so what are some examples of what The Zone has been working on at this time?

NK: Traditional programs in virtual formats:

- Virtual Tea and Paint Nights - usually at The Zone this would be an after hours program, to create more hours for students unable to visit during the day. We got a lot of great feedback, a lot of students tuning in with their friends, their families joining along to paint. And it's been super cool because it's been the Zone interns who have been leading the sessions - and gives them a chance to showcase their skills but also connect with the community. We collaborated with the Housing Dining & Hospitality Department for this program to make sure during this time we are staying connected with our campus partners.
- The Zone Talent Show - There were some super cool prizes for students who had submitted their talents. And it turned out super awesome and students loved it - it was a fun way to take out that stress and be on the computer as a form of leisure since we are always on the computer now for class and so reframing that so it's a little more de-stressing.
- Themed staff meetings - Within The Zone staff we have themed staff meetings, now that we can no longer see each other on a daily basis while working at The Zone we decided to make themed staff meetings just to make it a little more fun.

CC: I love these ideas - so creative and super innovative in comforting others and acknowledging the challenges that folks are facing in staying connected with their loved ones. I also think about the Class of 2020 - this unique experience of graduating virtually, entering the post grad world and the potentially stressful parts of it - it calls for a time to lean on others, to network, which in my experience took a lot of focus and energy. And so that can ultimately take a toll emotionally and mentally.

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NK: For sure, I definitely agree that it can be stressful, as a graduate of the Class of 2020. I definitely feel the pressure, feeling a little stressed - I'm sure as you all know there's been hiring freezes, budget cuts, and limited opportunity and of course that's no one's fault, it's just a result of what's happening right now.

Hopefully eventually it will get back to normal, there will be more opportunities for us to practice our skills. But for me I think I'm just trying to do my best to be kind to myself, knowing that I am being as flexible as I can - and if things don't work out that's okay, I'm just trying to be as creative as possible so that I can still achieve my personal and professional goals.

CC: Nighlah, thank you so much for sharing your experience with that - know that you are an inspiration to many and that I am absolutely rooting for you with your next steps. So, do you see yourself applying and modifying what you've learned at The Zone to foster social connections once you've graduated, and if so, how?

NK: What I will take with me, among many things, is what I mentioned before - that wellness is multidimensional, individualized with so many moving parts that allow wellness to be something you can construct for your lifestyle, for the way you do things. I think that as long as I have that in mind that is going to allow me room to grow, make mistakes, to succeed in how I practice social wellness and connectedness.

I think that's also something students can take with them when connecting with family and friends and practicing social and emotional wellness - just knowing that whatever they're doing, they're doing the best that they can, what's right for them, and that there's always room to grow.

CC: Thank you for that, definitely - there's always room to grow. And so to conclude our conversation I figured I'd ask in the spirit of The Zone, what Zone tip you'd like to share with our audience and why?

NK: OOH I love that question, the Zone tip I'd like to share with everyone is Zone Tip #79 "Do small things with great love." I think it's just super wholesome and super cool. What about you Catherine?

CC: I would pick Zone tip #73 and that one is "Acknowledge the little victories of each day. Being yourself is already a win." And I picked that one because it's exactly that, being yourself is already a win, showing up for yourself today, tapping into your curiosity, choosing to tune into this podcast episode and reflect on your own social wellness - I'd say is definitely a little victory. In fact it's a big victory in our book - so to everyone listening, thank you, we see you, and we appreciate you joining us for this episode. And of course Nighlah thank you again for joining us - we appreciate you being here sharing your experiences and your insight and congratulations on graduating.

NK: Thanks so much for having me Catherine, truly appreciate it and hope y'all enjoy this episode.

Closing

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CC: So that concludes this episode of Live Well Be Well! If you like what you heard and would like to learn more about topics related to health and wellness, there's much more to come!

NK: Be sure to check out The Zone's website for more Zone tips and a full list of programs at zone.ucsd.edu and follow us on our social media platforms @ucsdzone

CC: And check our website healthpromotion.ucsd.edu and follow us on Instagram and Facebook under @ucsdhps. Stay tuned for our next episode of Live Well, Be Well.

Until next time, be kind, be true, be you. And remember, to be well is to live well.

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General notes and guidelines:

- Some of your options when recording include (interview-style episodes):
 - You can select one person to act as the moderator who asks questions
 - You can take turns asking each other questions
 - You can share the floor to discuss your experience with XYZ. For example, if you're discussing how to stay motivated with online classes, one person can discuss their experiences, and another person can do the same.
 - Figure out a flow that feels most natural to you!
- The episode should be less than 10 mins; ideally, around 7 minutes
- Please be mindful of what you say and how you present yourself. This is a department-sponsored podcast so we need to ensure that we're professional and that the content is aligned with our goals of promoting health and wellness as it relates to behaviors, attitudes, and perceptions.
- Please do not use explicit language or advocate for or suggest engagement in unhealthy behaviors (e.g., Inappropriate: "one of the ways that I like to destress and relax is smoking cannabis and drinking a 6 pack" → Appropriate: "one of the ways that I like to destress and relax is by taking a warm bath, listening to my favorite music, and drawing")
- If recording with others, you can use Zoom (tip: keep your cameras off and record the audio only). If recording by yourself, you can use any recording app or software (e.g., Voice Memos, Garageband, iMovie, etc.)
- Once you have recorded, please send me the file (rdellacqua@ucsd.edu) and I will make the necessary edits and insert the opening and closing music, as well as schedule its release date.
- Have fun with this! When you have fun and enjoy what you're saying, it'll radiate through your voice!