

>> Thank you for tuning in to the healthy mind podcast we his conversations with people who really need this year's and we asked him to show us and we see Caldwell and I worked for the next public schools today, we're talking with Laura mayor she's the director of prs crisis Lake, 24 7.

>> 365 days a year crisis hotline and provider of the National suicide prevention lifeline hotline. Purists crisis link is not only the regional provider of the lifeline but also a national backup center. Host a regional Texan service and it's a provider of the lifeline checked during the overnight hours. Laura has served as a director for the past 7 years. Her background is in community health and social work. Last year Paris received over 8,000 calls from people of all ages in crisis. In reviewing the pier us crisis literature last night in the weeks. Recent weeks. I know that there are some particular issues. I hope you can explore in our conversation today. The number one reason people are calling the hotline loneliness. Laura thank you for being here and being part of the conversation during such an important and historic time. Thank you for having sure tell me about yourself how did you end up working for crisis hotline is there some kind of career Pa.

>> How does this happen I asked myself that often actually started out as a volunteer at Pierce crisis like almost 10 years ago actually over 10 years ago. I had recently moved back to the area had lived in Georgia and looking to meet people. I can't see Georgia you have to say Joshua Shaw a day sure. But I was actually graphic designer working and business design before all of crisis like happened as a freelance work here. How is looking for a community and I wanted way into the mental health community here so like many other volunteers, I fell in love got hooked and I've been here sense.

>> Before I move on I hear that a lot for especially from younger people that they're looking for a sense of community. What do you have any thoughts about that and what made you realize you needed that.

>> I think did our area and in kind of a larger urban areas, it's harder to meet people. It's hard to find a shared interests outside of work, especially at the kind of pressure cooker and fast paced environment that many urban communities have. And you don't want to always be connected just people working on it find things outside of that world that bring you joy that bring you peace that make you feel connected to a larger cause but not something that's your short term if you're going to invest your time you want it to be meaningful. So I think places like crisis link. They offer that weekly commitment where

you know what to expect here learning a skill you developing yourself
and you making friends at the same time.

>> That's right.

I can imagine

and I touched a little bit on it in the intro

that the number one reason people are calling the hotline is loneliness and you
mention that when you talk about community.

How are those 2 connected.

>> They were all looking for connection human beings in this is what makes us
unique from other species and that exist and we need people we need
empathy when the connection need to be heard.

We need to feel that we're real that we exist that are life matters.

So

it's no surprise to me that you know people who are reaching out on a hotline or
attacks and they're looking for human connection.

Because

a lot of people have pain you know I think that's part of the human experience is to
have pain in

not sharing that are not having other people to carry that load it it's more pain no
more painful

to exist so.

I think it just makes sense.

This is where you find connection or people listen where people want to listen
wonder what people

want to

not just like help because I think that's too generic me that they want those
interactions to be deeper right.

They want to care about something.

>> What was it like when you first came to
be a volunteer.

>> Pierce crisis link.

I

I had no idea I was getting myself into.

And it was really hard at first because I just started seeing people struggles
everywhere

things I never thought about that people might be going through.

But then it was like I would leave each shift feeling like even though it's only 4
hours or 3 hours at a time.

But it made a difference and there's sick.

Doing this kind of work.

Yeah, it's awesome that you're helping people that you're also meeting your own
needs.

You're also learning a lot about yourself.

So for me it was really a journey a thinking out like who I am and who I want to be
which is why my career path completely changed why work in mental health noun
pursued miss W and things like that completely changed who I was
and help give meaning to my own struggles in my past it kind of
should be that it was an offer nothing.

>> Absolutely

one of the issues that I've seen with prs crisis link

is that you've done such a good job, you're the victim of your own success in some sense.

And it sounds like you picked up a lot of additional duties and a lot of additional callers tell us about that.

>> Yes, so that that number of calls that 8,000 that's just specific to Fairfax County.

And those are only are verified Fairfax County residents.

We have plenty of other people who might be coming from Fairfax, but they choose not to disclose their location.

We respect that.

But our total caused this past fiscal year we handled over 77,000 calls.

And this is

you know part of our success is that we are and then the backup system so what a lot of people don't understand about the National suicide prevention lifeline and this is really important because we have a big change and and how the services being delivered in the next couple years is that the network is designed to have local centers answering calls so.

If you're Virginia caller from northern Virginia.

You're going to get out of the crisis like because we're the hop.

But but say you are in

Wyoming and your local crisis center as you know really small can't handle the volume that call has to go somewhere

and so the backup system is about 10 centers.

You're handling anything that's rolling over after minutes of the persons held from and it's coming into that system.

So P Ras

has been inundated for a long period of time.

The past year

starting to get better as more resources are coming in and more centers are grabbing being brought online.

But that system is overflowing at times with because they had nowhere to go so we've been answering them,

and benefits are local community because we get additional financial resources to do that so but those dollars we can actually build up or local call volume capacity as well.

>> Have you seen a difference.

In recent months.

Unfortunately, due to the covid situation.

>> Yes, not in the ways that I think that get played out in the media because the media loves a sensational story they want to hear

the calls are coming in there.

So many calls.

It's not the number of calls and changing as much as the acuity of the call so these are not

simple like they're not.

I have a stressor let's talk about that.

Here's solution.

Here's a plan people on.

We're now dealing more with people who've lost their jobs lost their homes different

set of problems, yes, 2 people are sick people who lost family members in so. We're good at mobilizing resources into helping people connect the dots to know what's available to them.

But in communities that are maybe not as fortunate as our community.

There are a lot of resources to connect people with those nonprofit dollars are dwindling

and so economic stress and suicide or so intertwined

that our work is predominantly around suicide intervention at this point.

>> Goodness, what are some of the other changes you seen maybe even in your staff because of the covid situation.

>> This is one of those rare occurrences where people are going through

the same thing our callers are going through May.

I can only kind of reflect on it like 9.11 timeframe where first responders had their own

reactions and trauma associated with the tragedy right.

Now we have you know

we're not only stressed and kind of sitting with that uncertainty like our callers Roston on our call center anymore.

We can't operate because that's when most dangerous environments for workforce to be in an open space and where

and you're projecting as we speak and you're talking all day and the heirs not ventilated in any sort of meaningful way.

So classic sense of community and some ways we don't we can't 6 Willer chair and talk to somebody that high

intentionally reach out and so burnout is very real

and everything that we're doing our calls but our operations are procedures.

Our mission has somewhat involved in the past 6 months which is overwhelming.

>> Absolutely it sounds like you might need be in need of volunteers.

We don't see volunteers at us one go about doing something like that and what's volunteer in Mike.

>> So we have a couple different ways that people can connect and then get involved.

We can't 3 primary services we have our hotline which we've been talking about the of chat which runs for volunteers from like an 08:00PM to 11:00PM shift.

And then we have caring which is are out on telephone reassurance program so year connecting with older adults who really need a lot of extra support right now these are people who are super isolated.

You know they're not able to get

out into their churches into their you know

community centers in the same way because there are so at risk so the best way to get involved is to first go to our website prs Inc dot org.

And look at the crisis like services and see kind of what

of which of those make sense to you talking to older adults, not a super high risk high intensity dot job.

You're just going social conversations which is awesome.

The chat, you know the benefit of that is

Yellen more time to think that you're typing instead of talking so you're nervous about being on the hot line that might be a first step and then hotline is kind of

that

more of that first responder bowl where demand higher acuity calls much, you know involved really serious

thought to be 8 years around suicide.

And those shifts or once a week for 3 hours anytime today, our biggest challenge right now is the capacity to train our volunteers and so we see super flexible without a schedule but we've had a really narrow that down to Tuesday Thursdays and Saturdays and just running that through the end of this year.

So that's more manageable for us so that we're not all over the place trying to like do.

While touring schedules so if that works that fits in your life.

He really are committing to making a significant difference, not just even locally, but nationally as well.

>> And it sounds like we need that and as you said before sometimes having that sense of purpose

and really helping others and really giving others a sense of purpose as well, just by being listen to me it sounds like is is pretty rewarding.

I love that you talk a little bit about your career path.

What are some of the other types of folks you have working who are on that end of the line that people are talking to her calling in are they from where they from and what what's their typical day like as a volunteer.

>> We have I think people from every year during all different kinds of things in life.

We have a couple of CPS teachers actually Raymond resign, wonderful.

We have

a lot of

people who are

can't go into a career change and deciding if what they really want to do is work in mental health may be working in different feel completely notice kind of get their feet wet.

We have people retired.

But there's kind of one theme doesn't matter where you want your background is as far as your career, it's a sincere desire to

how enough to save lives like just to kind of tide people over and usually that comes from lived

ince from a person having lost someone to suicide or had a family member that struggled,

but they have that you drive

that they know

either one what recovery can look like and how inspiring that is or they know the pain of that loss and I want to try to prevent that for 4 other people so

it's a really.

I'm so fortunate, I got to work with people who want to work for free most the time you know I want to just show up every week to do this which is you know such a motivated crew

and therapy dogs probably literally to we haven't they heard the dog couple of those yeah.

That's greet that all they're doing is they show up they.

We have a virtual call center right now Sir alan's him together we see each other and

the church at.

And they wait for that color that chatter that tax to come in and
and we support in D brief we train.

We have tea time every week tell me a story about people that.

>> You or

and the people you work with and volunteer work with volunteer with tell me a story
about some people you've helped or

you know what is there anything that comes to mind those particularly meaningful.

>> 50 years we have this.

You know there's always people we want to know like scary stuff for the hard stuff
but

some of our most meaningful conversations with parents who are in these impossible
situations that are working so hard to connect with their child the child is
struggling.

Not knowing what to say, but wanting to get it right and in these are
such important moments to offer guidance tonight.

I think back to some of my most meaningful conversations are was mothers who are
worried about their kid

and they want so badly to know what the right thing to say is to date they have that
connection that relationship and just

walking them through that conversation because they're terrified, you know these are
so worried that something bad is going to happen to their child.

They don't want to create distance.

>> Tell us tell us the kind of things that you would tell that my
a dad or aunt or grandmother that calls you.

Let's say let's save them calling.

Yeah and I have some of that

things that you might say to them if they were to call you.

>> With a serious serious situation so we start with us.

>> The gut feeling that you have is completely valid and we trust you trust you
that

what you're feeling is correct and there's nothing wrong with what you're feeling.
And

a lot of parents are calling because they're worried that they're overreacting and
we want them to feel validated that there

your instinct is probably right and

and then we talk about how do we create a safe environment to have a conversation
because a lot of parents don't have these conversations regularly.

And now they're kind being pushed into a space of

not have a sensitive topic and I'm not used to these conversations so we talk about
how to keep the conversation safe, we asked them to think about a time

in which would not be as charged emotionally like maybe not at the end of the day.
Not right before bed.

We talk about how to approach it so letting that the child now.

The reason I'm concerned is because of what I'm seeing not because I'm
you know overreacting because I see something wrong and I care enough
to point that out.

We talked to them about

talking openly and directly about suicide so that they're not going to skirting
around the issue.

You know saying asking a person to say
are you having thoughts of ending your life versus an indirect anything about
hurting yourself because can mean so many different things
we talk about what to do if the person says yes, you know what are the resources.
So that
no one's blindsided they know all their choices.
So
when is it serious and one is at FOX.
That's a really scary question I ask it's really scary because you don't want the
answer to be yes
absolutely but that taking that
energy away from it and putting it on the table and see more likely to get
honest response.
And then we give them the tools this is what options you have this is
how do we evaluate and then we always offer getting the whole family on a phone call
together with us
to talk about it so we can kind of de escalate and make sure everyone is supported
because
of course with parents you know your child is your first priority.
That's a huge
emotional experience as a parent and you need support to that's running order to be
healthy.
You have to have the support as a parent to not feel alone to not feel bullied in
the system of care to feel like you have choices to feel like you still
have your empowered to make choices with your child and not just being told that you
have to do.
And so we want to empower those a child and a parent to make decisions
not to prevent death, but to find ways to live and I think that's such a critical
missing piece of you know we talk about suicide prevention.
It's not always about preventing death, it's about making life
more livable 3 and if we can approach it that way it feels a lot last
contained in controlling and like scary, like let me help you find ways that life
can be more manageable rate or partnership.
>> I've thought about that with the covid you know the isolation now families are
spending so much time together are there things that families can be doing now
during this period where they are together so much either ways they can learn to
talk to each other.
>> Yeah, I think every family is a little bit different.
I think
I think it's it's all about balance right now, which is so impossible.
I think it starts with parents.
Giving themselves permission to not have it all figured out and not feel like.
They have to do this right.
There's no script for this and I think when if parents can be more patient
themselves
that doesn't get displaced on the kids whose needs you know right now
are increasing as uncertainties increasing they're going to get more clean either
going to get more.
Add it to door irritated by,
you know just not ever knowing what's going to happen next.

And so that can create a greater demand on parents I think it can all starts with routine.

Mike we're back to foundational basics of safety we predictable routines we need to schedule time

to be together and we need to schedule time to be apart when you schedule time that in cages or families that

also shares the burden of kind of the space and living together it's OK to ask kids to do a little more right now

to give them structure, and sometimes parents

because they're just so overwhelmed.

They want to get it done as quickly as possible, but like give kids responsibility

give them an opportunity to participate in the family to feel like they're

contributing so that they can gain that confidence and feel you know are connected.

And then get help you know if it's not going well if you can't figure it out.

It's important to reach out to providers right right now telehealth is everything so you have more access in some ways to people to help you

then you would having to worry about a commute and you know the evening's being busy.

So I would say

it's never

should never be a question of whether or not to engage a 3rd party, if you need to support this point.

>> It's really good advice.

We're talking with Lord mayor from prs crisis link.

And I'm so thankful.

You're here today to talk us scps parents and families and students

who many of us are struggling with that loneliness with the isolation.

But now we're getting ready for the new school year.

>> And that will bring new challenges said learning virtually.

>> But we're excited because we are doing so much training with our teachers

in we have a new program called social emotional learning the cell program

and our staff are learning many new ways that we can before we do anything else engage with our students to try to

no every child by name and by need

and really get to know them

as people before we launched straight into the learning, it's sort of that social

emotional support to I'm so glad you're here

and we talked you just talked about parents in some of the things in conversations you have with parents.

Do you have any memory that comes to mind, but that just at the end of the day.

It could it even a small memory

that will let parents listening.

No that they if they're struggling there is hope and they can feel good about their own child

and not to give up and to have those conversations

even when they're hard.

>> It's easy for me to say on this side of the Mike and tell people how to

parents and how to feel about things

and being a caregiver who also has teenager Sunday at CPS system right now you know

I I get that to get them where we're at and I get to

not wanting a repeat and you know of of like the fears of the spring in you know all of that and what I can say is that kids and families especially in our community are resilient and they can get through hard things and to not lose sight of that that he doesn't have to be

all or nothing we can hold 2 feelings at the same time we can be both frustrated and you know irritated and upset with things that we can also be hopeful that we're all doing the best that we can

and when I think about the kids that we serve you know, I think as adults we we think that you know specially teenagers

always thinking negatively about us and always you know like oh you know they don't understand,

but they do they they they they understand what we're up against and they want to be part of and they want to learn and they want to help

and kids just want to be good in this.

It's all about and parenting and being part of this right now is it's not out.

Doing it right as is picking the next best option at all times and if we can all just kind of take a breath.

See that

we do have resiliency and that we will come out of this on the other side and we'll be better off for it not saying that everything happens for a reason and I believe that but

he doesn't have to be

the trauma it can be a point of resiliency for for our community.

>> Laura mayor, I love that and I'm so glad you're here with us, I'm so thankful.

He took a few minutes out of your busy schedule to spend with us me ask you a couple quick questions before we let you get a day.

3 quick questions this is how we wind up who is your favorite teacher and why.

>> 3rd grade Mister an Sul was the coolest teacher and the Bulls school because he was young he was engaging and he played classical music and made us play chess and he made me feel like I was the smartest person so I remember him very well.

>> Wonderful.

What was your favorite toy growing up.

>> I was a creative kids.

So I like to imagine it's I I had a dollhouse and my dad made and I played it that constantly just cuz I love creating the stories inside.

>> Career accomplishments.

You're most proud of.

>> You think it is an award or something but

I would have to say

moving the entire crisis 19 remotes during this whole thing

and doing it and not

and I don't now signed congressman but

to see such an amazing team that wanted to beat something to help

guilt is huge to see that what we're able to do together not as one, but as a team.

>> Remember when crisis calls serious crisis like answers.

24 7 call 802 7, 3,

T a l K or 8, 2, 5, 5, or text the word connect

to 8, 5, 1, 1,

>> Thank you for joining us today.

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