

## Presence of Mind: Mental Health Matters

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Visual: Presence of Mind: Mental Health Matters. Alanah Pearce, popular content creator, game developer, and streamer, talks about how to take care of your mental health to stay in the game.

Alanah Pearce: Hello, I'm Alanah Pearce coming at you today with a topic that I care about a whole lot; mental health. If you've watched my videos or streams, or listened to podcasts, you might have heard me talk about struggles that I've had in the past with depression or with just managing feelings and emotions in general, and there are a lot of things that have helped me like video games, like being a part of the gaming community, and the tremendous amount of positive output that it can have. And learning how to manage my own mental health effectively. Since I started paying attention to the way that I feel and the things that I need I have way more good days and good days mean more time to focus on the things that I'm passionate about. Reaching out and getting support from the Internet has been one thing that has genuinely really helped me. And doing positive things on the Internet has made my world a whole lot more positive in general, so here's me giving a gift back to you guys. Check out this video that's designed to help you be your best self by taking care of your mind and your body, and it'll only take a couple of minutes.

Narrator: Before we begin, let's listen to a real conversation about mental health. This is Leo, talking to his Dad, Marc, about how he came to understand his depression and learned to manage it.

Marc: Leo, I want to start by asking if you have depression. Yes. And what does depression mean to you?

Leo: It sucks. I mean, in seventh grade, when I started to get it and it was getting really bad, I was crying like I was having, like, breakdowns every single day because I felt really bad. And then the first day of school happened. There's just kind of a gray feel to it. Like, I had lost my, like, childhood. It just felt like insignificant.

Marc: How would you describe it to somebody who's never experienced it?

Leo: I don't have my neighbors depression. I don't have that guy over. There is depression. I have my depression. And I know that it's different for different people. It just felt like a change in, like, dimensions, almost. It was so subtle that I couldn't put a finger on what it was, but everything was just like slightly different. And I wasn't happy. I would feel really lonely a lot. Depression is like this little puzzle where there is no reason, you know? Or maybe there is, but oftentimes there isn't. It's just, you know, this really intense feeling. One of the most intense feelings, especially because it's so constant, at least for me. I was just like, hoping this is going to change if I didn't have that thought in my head, I might not be here.

Marc: It was that bad.

Leo: Yeah, like that was the thing that I was holding onto. Thinking I'll feel better again in the future.

Marc: Like it just lived inside you like an illness in that way.

Leo: It was just kind of like this endless dark cloud. I had other emotions. It's not like I just became, like. Just like, you know, potatoes. Just only sad all the time. But there was always underlying feeling of depression, this sagging almost like a dread that was cast over everything. So it was like you could watch, like this really happy scene in a movie. But there's like a blue tone or something like, you know, it's been treated that way. Was that with medication and with therapy? It's definitely a lot better. Can't really do much about it to make it completely go away, but I can deal with it.

Marc: That's okay.

Leo: I'm not like that person. I would be like, if I could go back to seventh grade and change everything, I would. I wouldn't do that because I don't know what else would change. To be honest, I am happy with my life right now.

Marc: That's nice to hear.

Leo: Yeah.

Marc: When I grew up, there was this sort of shame associated with

depression and mental illness. In your generation, is that also true? Do you know friends who have depression?

Leo: Oh yeah. I think there's way more kids with depression than people think because they don't want to come forward about that.

Marc: I still think there's a lot of stigma and shame around mental illness.

Leo: It's pathetic and it's sad that people are like that. You know, if you fell and get a big cut and it's getting infected and you're like bleeding out, and if someone's going to come up and be like, you got to cut, weirdo. I mean, it's not the best example, but it's a thing that needs to be treated because it hurts and it's bad for you to just sit with it like it is and not do anything about it.

Marc: What would you say to kids who are going through that for the first time, beginning to experience these feelings?

Leo: There's really nothing wrong with you and it's not your fault. Try to get help. It will get better.

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Visual: Questions answered in this video

Narrator: This video focuses on your emotional well-being. It will help you answer the following questions. How is my mental health connected to my total health? How does my mental health impact my life? What can I do to make my mental health a priority? What resources are available to support me?

Visual: How is my mental health connected to my total health?

Narrator: Your mental health is part of your total health because your brain and body are connected. Just like our physical health, sometimes we're okay. Sometimes not so okay. Taking care of your mental health and wellness allows you to feel and be at your best. You need to eat right? Sleep well. Exercise and have healthy relationships. Doing these kinds of things helps build resilience so you can manage stress and get through tough times. As kids, we may have been taught to take care of our physical

health by heating our vegetables, brushing our teeth, and getting lots of exercise. But when were we taught to take care of our mental health? For many of us, we may have learned little bits here and there or nothing at all. And yet, mental and physical health play equally important roles in total health. You can support your total health by taking better care of your mental health. You can make your mental health a priority by eating well and exercising. Taking time for yourself. Talking about how you feel. Practice ways to manage stress and get help when you need it.

Visual: How does mental health impact my life?

Narrator: In a game or not? Some days we just don't feel that great emotionally. We may feel stress, anxiety, fear, or just feel down. Anyone can have such feelings now and then. But what does it mean when these feelings last a long time? Like several weeks or months? Or if we start feeling worse, or our feelings keep us from being our best, or doing the things we enjoy. When negative emotions start to dominate our lives, we may be diagnosed with a mental health condition such as depression or anxiety. Some people ignore mental health conditions and hope they will fix themselves or go away. This approach doesn't work well because mental health conditions are medical conditions, just like diabetes or asthma. Mental health conditions can impact anyone, but some people experience prejudice, racism, trauma, abuse or violence at higher rates, which can harm their physical and mental health. People of color, people who identify as LGBTQI, and people living with disabilities are among those who experience these stressors. More often. This can make them more vulnerable to developing mental health conditions. The good news is that like many types of medical conditions, mental health conditions are manageable. Support and treatment from a mental health professional or doctor can help get us on the path to feeling better.

Young man thinking to himself: I get it. My mental health is important. I need to pay attention and take care of myself, both physically and mentally. I can do that. But what about the judgment? What about the negative and toxic things some people say online and IRL?

Narrator: Unfortunately, some people have the wrong idea about mental health. They treat others who have intense emotions or mental health conditions as less than. The judgments may be obvious, such as making negative remarks about a person's mental health condition or feelings, or

making toxic comments in chat. Other times, their words or actions may be more subtle, maybe even unintentional, such as avoiding or ignoring a person who appears to be struggling. How does this feel when it's directed at you? When we become overwhelmed by other people's toxic words and actions, it can impact how we feel about ourselves. It can become part of our identity. Sometimes people feel they cannot speak up or be themselves.

Middle aged man laying in bed thinking: Sometimes the depression overwhelms me and I can't get out of bed. I can't admit that to anyone.  
Young woman sitting against the wall looking at a scale and thinking: Who am I going to tell? People will never treat me the same if I tell them about my eating disorder.

Young man with head down on desk thinking: When I have a panic attack, I look for somewhere to hide until it's over.

Young women looking at her phone and thinking: I smile because I have to, but inside I'm falling apart. I feel like no one sees me or cares.

Narrator: One of the most important ways you can protect yourself from the negative judgments of others is to seek out psychological safety. This is where you're able to say or show how you feel without fear of negative consequences. Look for environments, situations, and relationships where you feel safe or you can be open about your feelings and where you feel accepted and supported. If you find yourself not feeling safe, think about removing yourself from those situations or taking a break from those relationships, at least for a while.

Visual: What can I do to make my mental health a priority?

Narrator: When other people's toxic words and judgments have a negative impact on your mental health, what can you do? Here are some things you can do. Maintain your physical health. Pay attention to your feelings. Talk about the way you feel. Practice techniques to manage stress. Get help when you need it.

Visual: Wrapping it up. Thanks for taking the time. Take care of yourself!

Alanah Pearce: Thank you for staying with me. I hope you got some tips on

how to take care of your brain and your body. And of course, why that's important. If you make your mental health a priority, you can really see the positive impact it has on your life and those around you, and how you can start to help the wellbeing of others. When you're in a more positive place yourself. We have more videos coming soon and we hope that you can stick around and check them out. The more you learn, the longer you can stay in the game.

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