

- This is our session with David Tannenbaum. David is a long-time friend. I think David, I met you about 20 years ago, maybe 16, 17 at a support group meeting.

- And we haven't changed a bit.

- No! Still talking about the same things

- Right, right, right.

- David is just a wonderful speaker, and more than a speaker, he knows how to relate to people. He has CMT, and there's just something so spiritual and down to earth about David, and I just love being in his presence. It makes me feel grounded. He is a psychotherapist in New York City. Because of COVID he's been working from home, and he is just full of information. He also has, he's a member of our CMTA Advisory Board, and he does a column, "Ask David," in The CMTA Report, which is always just great to read, and I look forward to the newsletter for that column. So with that, I'd like to introduce David Tannenbaum, my good friend, and take it away.

- Thank you Elizabeth. So, what I'd like to do is - first of all, thank you all for coming today. I always feel at home when I see other CMTers. What I'd like to do is share a little bit of my personal journey, and some of the lessons that I've learned over the last many years about living with CMT. And absolutely open up to questions. I really encourage anyone to ask me questions. It's a great way for all of us to learn. So, just a couple of weeks ago, a friend of mine that I've known for many, many years, who knows that I have CMT, but never, ever asks me about it, finally did. And he said, "Well David," he said, "How did you, when did you first see that you, when did you first experience that you were having some issues?" And I said, "Well, you know Frank, in the '60s, I was doing a lot of tripping. And he said, he said, "I didn't know you did drugs!" I said, "No, Frank." I said, "Like tripping, you know, like falling? You know, like, like I'm falling, like that commercial I've fallen and I can't get up? You know, that kind of tripping." He said, "Oh." So, it kind of reminded me that anytime I try to explain my CMT to people who have no idea what it is, you know, it's, I have to, I have to like over explain it. So that's why it's nice to talk to people with CMT, where I just know that they know. They know. I don't have to explain so much. So in the '60s when I was finding myself tripping a little bit - or a lot. I, by the way, in full disclosure, I actually had some experience with drugs, but that's not the point. So, I started to make the rounds. I was about 20 years old, started to make the rounds, doctors. Doctors who told me some really crazy, weird things. Finally, finally, finally, I had the good fortune to get to a wonderful, wonderful, kind neurologist from Harvard University. Again, we're going back, this is 1969. And, he saw that I was this frightened kid, and he just, he looked at me, he examined me a little bit. He said, "You know, I know, I know what you have." He said, the first thing he said was, "It's not as bad as you think." Which was good because I was thinking some pretty awful stuff. So he put me at ease immediately. He said, "It's not as bad as you think." He said, "You might at some point, need a brace, or a cane, down the road." He said, "I don't know about a wheelchair. Maybe, maybe not." "But," he said, "go

live your life." He says, "Live your life." And, and I left his office, and I felt much calmer. And you know, I did, that's exactly what I did. I lived my life. And, next week I turn 70, and I'm still living my life. I'm still living my life. So, it was so important. It, you know, it was so important, to find somebody who didn't flame my fears. He just put me at ease. He just put me at ease. So fast-forward, fast-forward, I was in my 50s. And by the way, I had never, ever met anybody with CMT. Now this is kind of a, not so easy, since I'm a guy from New York City. I don't come from a small town in the Midwest. To no offense to the small town in Midwest, but I'm always surrounded by lots of people, but just never, ever met anybody. So consequently, I never spoke about it. And it's funny, because I always prided myself as, ah, you know, I'm, I'm an open book. I can talk about anything. Ask me anything! Drugs, sex, rock, and roll, I can talk about anything, but not CMT. Well, partly because there was nobody to talk about it to. Nobody in my family had it. So, I realized that I needed, I was feeling kind of isolated, or very isolated. And a colleague of mine said, "Well, why don't you try, you know, try finding a group." I thought, okay, yeah, I'm a psychotherapist. I can figure this out. I'll do, I'll find a group. And I went on the internet, and I found Country Music Television. And it took me a while, you know, to figure this out. But there was a group, and guess what? There was a group not too far from where I was in Pennsylvania. And I called, and I spoke to another fellow. And in the middle of my conversation, I realized, oh my God, I think this guy has what I have. This guy has what I have. And it was just, I can't describe the feeling, but there was a sense of being home. There was sense of, I didn't realize that I was isolated for so many years, but to be talking to someone with CMT, to be talking to someone who knew what I was going through, even if he didn't say much, was so comforting for me. And he said there was a support group. So a couple of months later, I drove to the support group, and was walking down the hallway, and heard laughter in this room. And I thought well, this certainly can't be the support group for CMT. You know, I walked in. Wow! There were a lot of people there. You know, and they look pretty normal to me. They looked okay. And yes, even some of them were laughing. So, that actually began the journey for me, in feeling much more connected, and wanting to, you know, wanting to, actually wanting to understand more about CMT, but more than ever wanting to connect with other people who knew what I was going through. You know, I come from a long line of, well, I'm a Jewish guy from New York City, so I come from a long line of worriers. So, we're hand-ringers. I always think there's a little bit of a, there's a little bit of Woody Allen in me. I mean, not the part that married his stepdaughter.

- Yeah!

- But the neurotic Woody Allen. I could worry about anything. So to give you an example, just this morning! Just this morning, I did a little exercise, and I took a nice warm bath. And immediately I had this like panic that came over me. Oh my God, my iPad is not charged! My iPad is not charged. And, my iPad takes a long time for it to be charged. So I started to, and by the way, before I did this, I was so enjoying, lying in the tub, looking at the trees, the trees are beautiful this time of year, gold and red, it's beautiful. But in that moment of worry, I was completely transported. I was not in the tub. I was not looking at the

trees. I was totally in my head. And by the way, it didn't matter that I had all these little statues of Buddha, and crystals, and candles. It didn't calm me down at all. In a crisis, that's not going to work. But I did at least, and I've learned enough about my own process to know that when I get anxious, I take myself completely out of the present, completely out of the present. And my biggest lesson about CMT, is to pay attention to when your anxiety takes you out of the moment. Because it's in this moment that we feel peace. Not the narrative that you create in your mind, which we all do. You know, the stories that you create in your mind - this is going to happen, that's going to happen, this is going to happen. First of all, 99% of the worry is simply not true. But fear, by the way, has a logic all its own. You actually can believe the thoughts, all the thought, the fear thoughts, and they seem perfectly reasonable. But it's like, you're transported. It's like you're in a trance. It's not real. So I try to do a lot in my work, even with my patients in New York City, who worry about lots of other things, I try to get them back into the moment. To recognize when you're out of the moment, recognize when you're making up a story, bring yourself back. That's the practice, by the way. It doesn't happen after one time. You're not going to get rid of these fears after one time. This is a lifelong practice. Recognize the fear thoughts. Name the fear thought. Pay attention. It's a fear thought, okay, bring yourself back, bring yourself back. And guess what? It's going to come back again, bring yourself back. But after a while, you get, after a while, it becomes like second nature. So yes, you have the fear thought, but you don't stay in the fear thought, you bring yourself back. So I always say, have the thought, have the negative thought, or have the fear thought, don't become the thought. As long as you're becoming aware of the thought, you don't become the thought. In other words, it's you the observer, that has the thought. So, if you want to identify, identify with the observer, and not the thought itself. So, you know, the other thing I wanted to - that's become so helpful to me - is that I realize a lot of the feelings that we have around CMT are perfectly normal. I mean, come on, this is tough stuff. And for many of us, it's like the biggest thing in your life. You know usually we have, everybody has one big thing in their life. Well, for a lot of us, it's a big, it's the biggest thing. So because there were times in my life, particularly in my 30s and 40s, where my anxiety, and my fears, became so overwhelming. I didn't want to live like this anymore. I just, I couldn't stand myself. So I think honestly my becoming a psychotherapist, or a big part of my psychic becoming a psychotherapist, was really to to heal myself. And I like to think that I'm so much better now at almost 70 years old than I was at 30. Yes, my CMT has progressed. But, for some crazy reason I'm feeling so much more at peace, so much more at peace. So the things that help, by the way, in bringing yourself back to the present, are things like, well, number one, simply recognizing when you're not in the present! Recognizing when you're like spinning. Spinning. Okay, I'm spinning. Take the breath. I'm a big one for just taking a breath. Take a breath, come back to your body. That's so essential. Take the breath, come back to your body. Okay. The other thing that helps becoming back into the present, is just look around, look around where you are. Because when you're in your head, you're not in this moment. You're somewhere else, you're somewhere in the future. And by the way, fear is all about the stories you make up about the future. I'm going to say this again. Fear is all about the stories you make up

about the future. They say anxiety's about the future, depression is often about the past, but peace is about the present. Peace about the present. That makes sense to me. So, the other the thing I wanted to mention is, is it takes courage to express or talk about your feelings. Your feelings of sadness, your feelings of anger, depression - it takes courage. And oddly enough, when you think of the root word of courage, C-O-U-R, guess what the root word of courage is heart, in many different languages, cor, core, corazon, it means heart. And the original definition of courage was telling your story with your whole heart. I love that. That's what courage is. Brene Brown writes a lot about the power of vulnerability, sharing your pain with someone, talking about it. It doesn't even mean that you have to be in therapy, or, just share it. You can share it in a support group. You can share it with a good friend, but just don't keep it to yourself. Because when you keep things to yourself like that, guess what? You feel more and more isolated. And we don't want to feel more and more isolated, because feeling isolated, isolated creates anxiety. And guess what, when you're anxious, your body registers that anxiety, meaning that - I'll give you a perfect example. So I have 13 steps at my house up to the second floor. So, if I'm anxious about something, or upset about something in any way, those 13 steps feel like 50 steps. They just do. This is not hocus pocus stuff, I mean, this is true. Your anxiety is going to, your muscles are going to reflect how you feel. When I'm feeling pretty good and hopeful, wow! I could get up there, no problem at all. No problem. Another example, okay, that just happened to me about, I don't know, right before pre-COVID, was I was sitting out my beautiful backyard, and I was enjoying the day, enjoying the weather. And all of a sudden I started to focus on a restaurant that I was going to go to that evening. So what did I start thinking about? Okay, do the chairs have arms? Is the table solid? You know, are there going to be steps up to the restaurant? On and on and on. And I got myself into just a frenzy, for probably for a good 10, 15 minutes. So again, what happened? I was totally transported into the future. Totally, totally missed about 15 minutes of my life, and enjoying the beautiful, beautiful day. This happens all the time until you recognize, again, that it's happening. So if you can catch yourself, by the way, if you can catch yourself even after it happens, that's fine. That's okay. And hopefully the more you catch yourself, the shorter it becomes you know, the shorter, the time period becomes, between the time you experience the anxiety, and the time that you catch yourself. When you first try to do this, it'll maybe it's a day later, that you catch yourself. Oh, wait, what happened to that? I was just transported the other day. Hopefully, the more you practice it, maybe you can do it in two minutes, three minutes, and then it just becomes like a blip. You leave and you come back. You leave and you come back.

- But David, may I ask a question?

- [David] Yes. Absolutely.

- Aren't those all normal thoughts to think anyway? Oh what if this, what if this, what if this? How do you, maybe, because those are real fears. And I do the same thing, oh is there going to be a ramp? Do I have to walk backwards? Then you don't have not going. But would you think of calling the restaurant? What do you do to bring?

- Well, that's a good, that's a good question. So, if you're in that frenzy state, guess what? All you do is you're just obsessed by the fear. You just get anxious. When could, can just recognize the fear, and bring yourself back within a few minutes. Yeah, then you're more rational. And by the way, that's exactly what I did. After I calmed down, I thought, you know, wait a minute, here's a thought, I've gotten like good at going onto the internet and finding the photos of the restaurant!

- Good!

- And seeing if I can get, see what the chairs look like, or see what if there's steps, you know? So in other words when you're at, when you're relaxed, you have much more, you have much more equipment in you to ask the right questions. When you're in a frenzy, all you are is in that frenzy.

- [Elizabeth] Right.

- So these aren't, and by the way, to your point, these are not strange questions. The point is to recognize the question, recognize the fear, but not obsess about it. There's a difference between again, having that fear and then totally identifying with the fear, and holding onto it. You want to have the fear, have it come in. And if you don't obsess, it'll leave by itself. It always leaves. But in that middle of that fear, guess what? We're frightened that it's not going to leave. Thank you for asking that question, Elizabeth, because I want to, you know, emphasize that all these feelings that we have, are perfectly normal feelings. But it's the idea that you don't want to hold on to any of them. You want them to come in and let go. And by the way, let me talk a little bit about, because I think, I'm always asked this question, about depression, and sadness, and how we deal with that. So, there is a difference between sadness, and depression. Okay, by the way, I think it's perfectly understandable that, you know, we go through periods of sadness when we, within our life around CMT. You know, every time there's a slight change in your body, or I don't know, something that you thought, that you might've been able to do 10, 15 years ago, you realize you can't do now. Yes, that is, that does cause some sadness. I always equate it to a kind of a grieving process. You know, we're dealing with loss, all the time. So how do you deal with loss? Well, you're honest with yourself, you know, this sucks, you know. It's sad, you know, you allow yourself to feel it, and then you let, then you go on to the, you know, you go on to letting the different stages. You know, you can get angry, You can, you know, you can get depressed about it. You can, then you go on to hopefully to be able to accept it. And by the way, accepting does not necessarily mean you're defeated. We think, oh, if I accept it, I'm defeated. No accepting simply means, you're accepting what is for this moment. That's what you're accepting, just for the moment. Just for the moment. Accepting is just for this present moment. It doesn't mean I, you know, as I said, it doesn't mean that you surrendering, or you're defeated. It just brings peace. I've spent a lifetime trying to work on this. It's not so easy, by the way. But if you resist the sadness, if you resist the depression, guess what? It digs its heel in. Whatever the feeling is, it digs its

heel in, you know? What's the expression, what you resist, persists! You know?

- Yeah.

- What you resist, persists. It's kind of like I always often use this analogy of the quicksand. You know, what happens when you fall into quicksand? Not anyone of you will have that experience, but when you fall into the quicksand, what do you do? What's the best thing to do? Stay still.

- Struggle. Right.

- You don't want to struggle!

- No.

- You want to stay still. If you struggle, you'll sink. It's kind of like that with feelings, too. Accept the feeling, release, you know, feel the feeling, and release it. So, so honestly the process is, you have the feeling, you name the feeling, whatever it is, just name it to yourself, experience it, and let it go, and move forward.

- And that's-

- See David, we're getting some questions about, like, so that's when you're awake, and you can those are such good tips for in the moment. Some people experience - and I'm looking at the chat - like at night, anxiety during the night, and everything's still, and you're kind of feeling alone. And, how do you deal with the nighttime anxieties? Same way?

- Good question. Well, first of all, night, night, it's awful at night. I mean, I'm not going to lie to you. You know, why is it awful at night? It's all at night because you're in bed, and you're feeling particularly vulnerable, you know? So, all your defenses are gone. All your defenses are gone. So honestly, and I've, I've done this, you know, waking up in the middle of the night with that kind of narrative. Sometimes, when I recognize my mind is spinning, I do exactly what I will do during the day. I start to breathe. I start to breathe. But not just breathing, but listening to your breath. Listen to your breath, inflow, outflow, inflow, outflow. Now, here's an interesting tip. If you're listening to your breath, you can't be listening to your thoughts, and breathing at the same time. You can try it. So if you listen to your breath, you give yourself a break from the thoughts. Okay, now at the same time, by the way, I've lately, when I, if I have that kind of, rough time at night, I'll turn on a podcast, a very soothing podcast, or soothing music, anything to take me away from the spinning thoughts. Now, I'd like to say, I used to say, well, get up out of bed, you know, because you're always much better out of bed, but that's not always so easy, you know, because you get lazy right? But the breathing, whatever soothing music, podcasts, whatever it is, to get out of your own thoughts. And by the way, we all have little, little sayings that we might say to ourself during that time. And usually at night is when it's most needed. Whatever

saying, whatever imagery you might have, sometimes I think of the beach, sometimes I think of the mountains, and I breathe. And you know, the worst thing is that when you get up in the middle of the night, you're worried about, oh my god, how am I going to fall back to sleep? That's what creates most of your anxiety. I can't get back to sleep. So if you let it go, and just say, I'll sleep when I sleep. I'll fall asleep when I fall asleep. In other words, don't put extra pressure on yourself to think that you have to fall asleep.

- Thank you so much, that's really good advice, because then the more you try to fall asleep, the less you get.

- [David] Yeah, that's right!

- Kym Peters has a question. Kym, are you out there? And do you want to unmute yourself and ask your question?

- [Kym] Sure.

- About controlling your emotions and dealing with others. Go ahead.

- So I do, I think over the years, I've learned how to kind of pull myself out of my head, when I'm struggling with kind of my body, and some of accepting some of the losses and things, but it takes one person to say something, someone that doesn't know me, to point something out or to ask a question. or something that kind of throws me off my game, and will bring up some stuff, you know, like, it'll make me feel like they're watching like, kind of my mannerisms, or like what I can or can't do, and that's what kind of starts the anxiety, probably even worse than when -

- Well give, if you don't mind, could you like give me an example?

- Sure, so in working with some of my clients, like if I'm, you know, grabbing and putting papers together, or something like that they'll ask like why I grab things a certain way. And for me, I usually feel like, I'm, you know, I'm kind of hiding my CMT, I guess, and it's really not that noticeable, but that is a quick way to kind of throw it out there, that, yep, somebody is noticing it, and it's just uncomfortable.

- Okay. So, so I think, I think that the answer actually is in the question. You know? So, so when someone points something out in you, okay, it's pushing some button for you, okay. So the button probably has some something to do with some insecurity or some shame around having CMT, or some need to be, you know, or some self-consciousness about it, okay. So, how do you think you could deal with that? The shame around it?

- Well, I mean, when it comes to like, I don't know, maybe that is the hardest problem. Maybe I just haven't quite accepted everything, and that is hard, and I'm young. So I feel like I shouldn't be here to this point yet.

- Well, I think it's just pointing out, probably pointing out, and this is not unusual, pointing out a part of you that is, you know, is still struggling with coming to terms with what we have. You know, and that,

and by the way, these are very old feelings, these are not new feelings. We've had to deal with this all our life. So it's not strange that it should push some old buttons, but I think it, I think what would help, is to really recognize, okay, so what part of me that is still struggling, or still feeling insecure about this, and recognizing that we are so much more than whether we can fold papers in a particular way. In other words, don't identify with what you can or cannot do, because if you're hoping, and by the way, it takes a lot of effort to pretend that we're okay. You know, it takes a lot of energy, physical and emotional energy, to pretend we're okay. But if we just be, if we're okay with you know, I'm not perfect, I'm not perfect. I have an issue. I have problems, I have physical limitations. But if you don't feel, as I said, embarrassed about that, but more about, wait a minute, this is just simply a part of who I am. In other words, if you're, if you're feeling, if you're not feeling a need to, if you're not feeling a need to pretend that you're have a perfect body, you're so much more relaxed. You're so much more relaxed.

- [Elizabeth] Yep.

- So if, go ahead. Elizabeth, you were going to say something?

- No, I'm just, I'm just agreeing wholeheartedly with you.

- Yeah, so I mean, when these things happen, it just points out, okay well maybe I have to work on allowing myself to feel just okay being exactly who I am. Because it will be people, by the way, there will be people who question, and point certain things out. But you know, you're giving them permission, basically, to upset you. In other words, if you don't give them permission to upset you, you're not going to be upset.

- Well, and I think it's hard, too, because you know, people will ask questions like well, why do you do things that way? Or, you know, why are you limping? And will point stuff out, and it's hard to kind of figure out like, okay, in a split second moment, how much do I explain? And like, how can I make it a real quick, like, this is what it is. Okay, let's move on. You know without, can I figure out how much do I need to explain to them so they get it? 'Cause like somebody wouldn't ask me if I was in a wheelchair, what's wrong with you?

- Right!

- I mean which is to say-

- That's so true. I would worry a lot less about explaining or not explaining, but it starts actually before you explain. If you're feeling perfectly okay about having what you have, you're not going to worry so much about whether your explanation hits its mark or not. In other words, it starts with you. If you're feeling not, as I said, if you're not feeling embarrassed, or if you're feeling that you've come to terms with the fact that you don't have to be perfect, the explanation is secondary, by the way. You know, even if you explain things perfectly logical, often they don't connect with that, anyway. So it's really more about, if you're feeling okay about your vulnerability, you know, that's what I'm saying. There's power in vulnerability. If you're out there, and you're

not excusing yourself in any way, guess what? The people who are asking are probably, in other words, if you're okay, they're okay. If you're okay, they're okay. People are, you know, it's so interesting to me that I notice that there's such a difference between the way people ask. You know, if someone asks, and they're generally concerned, they're really, they're really, they're very concerned. And they say it in a way that it makes you feel that they really do care. Actually, it puts me at ease. It puts me at ease. But when someone just said, "Hey, what's wrong with you?" Or, "How come you're walking like that?" It does shake me up a little bit. And, to tell you the truth, in that moment, I kind of like get pissed off. Because it's like they're asking just for their own information. They're not really asking out of true concern about me. So, so I really make a difference between, if someone is really asking out of love and caring, it's so much easier for me to tell them what my story is. If someone just say, "Hey, hey, hey, why are you walking funny?" You know, I don't even worry about explaining to them.

- Sorry.

- Okay.

- Do you ever feel like you have like this deep yearning for people just to understand?

- Are you asking me? I'm sorry, Elizabeth, what was that?

- [Elizabeth] I'm just putting it out there.

- Do I have a deep need for-

- Yearning, a yearning for people just to get it? You know, it's just... Exhausting.

- I have really more of a, of a yearning for people to just care about me than to understand, you know? Some people will understand. Some people won't, of course. Of course it it's wonderful when people understand, but it's the caring that makes all the difference.

- Yeah.

- You know, that's why I like talking to people at the CMTA because, you know, for the most part because you've gone through your own pain, you've gone through your own suffering in some ways, it makes you that much more empathetic to the other people. And in an odd way, I mean, I know this sounds strange, but it's kind of a gift of CMT, that it does create empathy for you. And it makes you that much more understanding, and compassionate with other people in your life.

- Thank you, Kym, that was a great question. I have another question here. And I think it's important, especially during the pandemic, is someone who said when you have health issues happen, and CMT seems to be progressing at the same time, so it's like a double whammy. And then you have this situation of COVID, and you're self-isolating. I mean, the anxiety gets really bad. And I'm wondering how many people can relate to

that. And if you're having issues with that, so your CMT's declining. You know, you feel like you're declining, you have other health issues, you have COVID, you're afraid to get it. How do you deal with all that in the world today, David?

- Well, it's a good question. And you know, I have so many patients in New York, who feel incredibly isolated, and so what happens is that, you know, particularly if you're living alone, you know, you're so, you're so close to your own issues. You can't escape, you know, there are no distractions. You can't go to the restaurants. You can't go to parties. You can't, you know, you're just left with your own head, you know? So I'm so encouraging people to, you know, to not to forget, to connect with people in their lives, through the internet, through FaceTime. Yes, maybe it's not the same thing, but it is something. You know, to connect to at least two or three people every week! People that you haven't heard from, you know. But you know, here's the other thing, someone wants that adversity, adversity is an opportunity. Adversity is an opportunity to move forward. So even psychologically, you know, adversity, or what we're all going through, is actually causing us, or pushing us, to go a little deeper, to say, wait a minute. You know, this is, in other words, everything has been so magnified. Our own fears or anxieties are so magnified. Maybe it's going to push you to go a little deeper, to finally figure out how can I work on calming myself? How can I work on stopping the narrative? You know, even with the COVID, what's going to happen? Will I get it? You know, what's going to happen to the world? What's going to happen to my business? So, everything right now is magnified, but in a weird way is also an opportunity to say wait a minute, I can't live this way anymore. Let me see what I can do to calm and find the stillness. We need to find the stillness, which is different than isolation. Isolation isn't stillness. Isolation still feels like worry. Stillness is peace. So even during the time of COVID, we can find peace and we can work on holding, and creating, and maintaining our connections with people. I can't tell you -

- David, I think the hardest thing during, during this, for some people, I don't know, others maybe can relate, is touching. I am such a hugger, and toucher, and a lot of Americans are, some aren't. But like in France, you do like la bise, on the cheek, and you know, that's such, that's been taken away, and I just feel so, like needy, like I want to touch people! Doesn't sound so great, but how do you deal with that? I know you have maybe people you live with at home, but I don't know if anybody else feels that need to be with, it's like, I don't know. Is it a vital part of our being to be touched and to touch?

- Well, of course it is, of course it is. You know, but right now, there's some, you know, we have limitations. But you know someone sent me an email the other day, and she signed it, virtual hugs. You know, virtual hugs. I kind of liked that, I actually felt her hug. You know, I felt her hug. So, as important as touch is, and I'm not going to deny it. Okay, but there are other ways that we can express our love for one another. And you don't maybe, because we can't just touch each other. Maybe we have to express it. Maybe we have to say, you know, I really miss you. I miss you, I miss hugging you. Being able to say, "I miss hugging you," is almost the same thing as hugging. So it's forcing you to

kind of use other ways to connect. And you're right, I mean, I think that's probably the hardest thing around this whole COVID thing. You know, the elbow bump doesn't do it for me, you know.

- [Elizabeth] Me neither!

- But to say, you know, I really miss hugging you, or someone says, you know, wow, you know, I can't wait 'till this is over, for this to be over, to hug you. I like that. That makes me feel warm inside. I can hold on. I can hold on, until this COVID thing is done. It will be done.

- Thank you. Who else has questions here for David? There's so many subjects. Go ahead, Jacob.

- Yeah, hi, first off I really appreciate the message today, and...

- [David] Thank you.

- You know, particularly the peace is living in the present. And so just to shift gears a little bit, I have a daughter that was recently diagnosed with CMT. And so we're processing that, and she's been symptomatic since birth, and so she she's nine years old. She realizes that she's different. She calls her feet crooked feet, and that she's not necessarily one of the kids, but she has a very full life. But I wonder if you might be able to speak how we as parents can continue to, kind of empower that self-awareness, and that emotional stability, as she progresses through the teenage years, because there's so many pressures on young women these days.

- Sure. So thank you, by the way, for asking that question. You know, one of the best ways to help your kids develop, sort of the the emotional muscle, to deal with this stuff, 'cause there's going to be stuff for them to deal with, on so many levels. But one of the best ways is to be able to truly listen to them when they are going through something that's difficult. It's such a simple thing, but listening. And when I say listening, I don't mean listening with your phone, I mean, or listening, and yourself being distracted. I mean, truly connecting with your daughter, eye to eye, taking the time to truly simply accept and listen to what they're upset about, or reflect back. You know, by the way, sometimes, kids are not going to, they're not going to want to talk, and that's okay too. But for them to know that you're there, to listen to them when they need to talk, is invaluable. To listen to their pain, without, by the way, necessarily coming up with a solution. Because I know it's so hard not to come up with a solution, but to simply listen to them, helps them endure their own pain. So in other words, you're creating the ability for them to cope with their own pain, by you simply listening to them. So, I can't stress it enough. And again, even if they don't want to speak in the moment, just say, you know, "Sweetie, I'm there, when you want to talk to me about it."

- And David, someone just said-

- [David] I think that can go a long way.

- Other kids can be so mean. And you know, as adults, we have-

- [David] Sure. Problems dealing with others and their questions, and inquiries, but you know just, kids can be mean, because they don't understand.

- They can. They can! And you don't want to, you know, you want them to hear that. You know, when a child says to you, this kid was really mean to me, you know. But look, you can't protect the kid from life, you know. But you can offer love and support, when your kid comes to you and says, you know, "I have had a really awful day," And you can empathize with that, and you can hug your kid, and you can say, you know, "Things will get better." So the process is, you listen to them first, just listen. And then you come in with some, something of comfort, period. That's all that we need to do. But you can't protect them. No, and by the way, and this is a not such an easy thing to do. You know, someone wrote a great book called "The Conscious Parents," "The Conscious Parent," and so much of parenting is simply yourself being grounded. You know, when your child comes to you with some upset, often it pushes some anxiety button for you. You know? So here then you have two anxious humans, you know, trying to deal with each other. So your job is to stay grounded, is to try to like put your anxiety away for the moment, and be there for your child. And I cannot tell you how comforting that can be, when your child knows that he can come, she can come to you, but she can come, she's not coming to an anxious parent. She's coming to a parent who is really ready, and grounded, and able to listen to her. I appreciate that, thank you.

- Thank you everyone, for your patience.

- Other questions?

- Five minutes, gang. Five or six-

- We have, we have room for one more question. If you just have a question, just unmute yourself and ask it. I guess, David, what I'm thinking is, you know, when you have kids it's hard, and they come to you, you want to fix the problem.

- Of course, of course.

- And as parents, we have to give them tools, and it's just, it's hard 'cause then you feel really bad for your child, right? And that's not going to help them in the end.

- [David] No.

- You know, so what do you think one of the most important tools to give your children?

- Well, as someone would just, I saw it come up on my computer. Just validating their pain is plenty! Thank you for whoever said that. Just validating their pain is plenty. Don't think just because you can't take away their pain, but you can validate it. Breathe, validate their pain. That's a lot. And again, by allowing them to express themselves to you,

you're helping them tolerate the pain. You're helping them tolerate the pain. I can't tell you that there's not, you know, your child is not going to go through stuff, but guess what? You know, in learning how to deal with their pain early on, they're going to, they're going to flourish later on. Because most of us, by the way, haven't had great parenting, where our parents were able to sort of make the space to listen to who we were.

- And David, may I make a comment on that? The parenting, and when you know what I have found, and this has been very, very hard for me as a parent, 'Cause you know, I have CMT and then, you know, Riley does.

- Sure.

- But one of the things that I have allowed Riley to do, is explore herself as a person or a child living with CMT, and allowing her to tell me what she can and cannot do. And so not pinning her, like well, Riley, no, you shouldn't be you know, going out for softball because you have CMT. No, you can't do this because you have CMT. Letting her find her own path, and letting her wear the wrong shoes, and you know, allowing her to find her normal. And Kym, one of the things that I have really stressed, to Riley and even to myself, is I try not to explain myself, and why I do the things that I do, because when I cut an apple, or tie my shoe, or walk down the street, that's my normal. You know, society has built this, like, everybody is supposed to do the same thing. All, you know, everybody walks the same way. No, I don't, it's my normal.

- Right.

- And that is one of the things that I have really, truly instilled in Riley, and allowing her to find that, and find her way, because that's going to make her a stronger person, and it's going to, she's going to feel stronger inside with her CMT, if she can-

- Exactly. Exactly, that's great. You know, and also it's sometimes difficult to, to teach children to let go of comparison. You know, kids are always comparing themselves. Adults are always comparing themselves. You know, an old teacher of mine used to say, "Comparison is an American disease." You know, we always compare, you know. So to make her feel great for just simply the things she does, you know, and as someone once, someone just actually emailed me, and to encourage her also, to find activities that she's really good at. You know, every kid needs some activity that they're really good at. You can't prevent her from feeling sad about some of the things that she can't do. Although I must say, that just the effort, you know, to make her feel really wonderful about the effort that she's putting forth in doing it. What's the expression, let the effort be the reward. It's the effort. So she's going to have to go through her own ups and downs, and being able to do certain things, and not being able to do other things, and having to simply cope with that, with that disappointment. But don't be afraid about that disappointment. That disappointment that she's going to go through, is going to eventually, if you allow and validate her pain around disappointment, will make her a strong person. She doesn't have to do everything well.

- I think parents sometimes struggle-

- I want to thank you so much for such a great presentation. I just want to, I know we have to switch gears in just a second, but how do you find a good therapist? How do you find somebody that's good in your area for kids or adults? And, I can't fly to New York every time I have a question for you. You know, thanks for that question. You know, this is not, this is not so complicated. I always tell people, forget so much about the quote, the qualifications, you know, whether it's a doc, a psychiatrist, a social worker, a psychologist. Meet with the guy, interview the woman or the man, basically, trust your gut. Do you like this person? Do you like this person? Is this person clear, okay? Is this person - is there a warmth? You know, your child's going to have to like the person. I don't care how quote, how many degrees the therapist is going to have, your child is still going to have to like them, or they won't stay. And you're going to have to like them, so keep it simple. Interview a few.

- So I guess, ask around?

- Ask, of course.

- Ask local people.

- Always asking around but, but don't be afraid as in to interview a few. Don't choose the first one that you see.