Grace 00:03
Welcome to Whats Up: Wellness from the third floor. This podcast is provided by the Wellness & Health Action Team also known as what from Portland State University's Center for Student Health and Counseling. We're located in the old tutoring center suite on the third floor of the University Center building on campus. Our purpose with this podcast is to discuss a variety of health related topics in a way that will be accessible for our non traditional campus. My name is Grace, and my pronouns are she/her

Whitney 00:27
And my name is Whitney. And my pronouns are she/her, we are all members of the Wellness & Health Action Team, and we'll be the hosts of this podcast. Let's get into it.

Grace 00:48
All right, hello, everybody. Hi, Whitney. How are you doing?

Whitney 00:52
Hi, Grace. How are you?

Grace 00:54
Um, I asked you first.

Whitney 00:57
I'm great Grace. I know as soon as I said, "Hi, how are you?" I was like, I didn't even answer her question. I'm being so rude right now.

Grace 01:04
Yeah!

Whitney 01:07
No, I'm great, though. I had a really good weekend.

Grace 01:10
What'd you do?

Whitney 01:10
How was your weekend?

Grace 01:12
Okay, I'll answer first. You have to stop taking every question that comes into my mind Whitney. Um, no, my weekend was good. I just kind of hung out. And you know, saw some friends saw some folks hung out with my dog. As always, just regular Grace weekend. Would you do Whitney?

Whitney 01:35

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Regular Whitney weekend.

Grace 01:37
Oh my gosh, alliteration! Whitney weekend!

Whitney 01:41
I work at a restaurant in downtown Portland. So I was doing my thing at the restaurant. Talking story with people getting them their breakfast, killing it doing my thing at work. So that's what I did this weekend. Not not exciting, but it wasn't too bad. It was fun.

Grace 01:59
The time that I visited. You visited you at work, that was fun. I enjoyed seeing you in action.

Whitney 02:04
That was really fun. I wish I had more time to talk to you because it just got crazy out of nowhere. And I was like, "Oh, she's not in my section. I can't talk with her!"

Grace 02:14
No, your coworkers kept coming over to me and being like, "Wow, your coworkers with Whitney? like we have shared trauma." So today, we're gonna talk about nostalgia, and kind of like the psychology of it. And the good, the bad, the ugly. I feel like nostalgia is not really- I don't know, it's not really like ever talked about. I mean, it is but people are like, "Oh, I'm so nostalgic for that!" But like the way that after doing research and like learning about it, I'm like, Oh my gosh, wait, this is actually crazy. Because of the way like impacts our brain or just like impacts our perspectives in life.

Whitney 02:51
Yeah, honestly, my mind has been blown. Like go into the research.

Grace 02:56
Before we were recording Whitney was like, "I'm sorry. Like, I want to start recording. But I'm just so into this right now." I was like, save your thoughts, I can't wait to hear.

Whitney 03:03
I really am. My mind is just blown because I never really reflected on nostalgia in my own life. Like I will have these moments where I'm thinking about the past, but I never thought about how it actually impacts me. So it was really interesting to read about nostalgia, and like learn how it's impacting me. I've never heard anyone talk about it before. So that's why I'm really excited to talk about it today.

Grace 03:29
Yeah, totally. And I'm a very sentimental person and sentimentality and nostalgia, I feel like kind of go hand in hand sometimes. Because there are sentimental things or you have sentiments that you feel nostalgic for. But I feel like nobody ever really talks about the intricacies of nostalgia. So that's kind of what we're going to talk about today starting off with just the definition. So the Oxford Dictionary defines nostalgia as a sentimental longing or wistful affection for the past typically for a period or place with

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happy personal associations. So I feel like the classic example is like "Oh I'm so nostalgic for college!" Like when older people are like college was the best days of my life like that type of stuff. Yeah, so it was initially actually first considered a neurological disorder. And the term was coined in 1688 by Johan Hoffer, who was a Swiss physician who attributed soldiers mental and physical ailments to their longing to return home. So, kind of saying like men who were in war were nostalgic for home due to the neurological impact of war and like the physical toll that it took on them. And many believe that nostalgia is a universal feeling and I definitely think it is but it can be confused with rumination reminiscing and also can contribute to depression and anxiety. And I think this is kind of when it starts to get a little in that kind of like psychological aspect of how it can impact your brain or just kind of like your way of thinking. And it is different from ruminating. Because when you're ruminating, you're unable to stop repeatedly focusing on things that distress you, and you're trying to figure out possible causes and consequences for them. It's interesting, I'm looking forward to having a conversation with you Whitney about this. Because, I mean, I told you to save your- save your thoughts when we were doing initial intro, so.

Whitney 05:28
Yeah, my first thought on this whole idea of like nostalgia and rumination on things, is... I like to give a little backstory, I'm not from Oregon, I'm actually from Hawai'i, and I moved here to come to grad school at PSU. And so I've been like thinking a lot about home. And so obviously, I'm not a soldier, or like, I've been to war or anything. But that idea of like, longing for home resonates with me. And so I totally like feel that and understand like that idea of where that comes from. So that was really interesting to hear of like where nostalgia comes from and like how it became a thing. And so why are we so invested in this phenomenon? Like, why do we even care like, now that we know that nostalgia impacts us everyday, like, why do we care about this? And why should we talk about it, since we both haven't heard about it before.

Grace 06:31
And I feel like nostalgia, like this phase of life in college is so I mean, I, in my personal experience, like I grew up in a small town, and I was so excited to move to Portland, because I was like, okay, like, Screw this small town. Like, I don't like it. I want a big city, I want to be a big city girl. And now that I'm in the city, I'm like, Oh, my God, I'm so nostalgic for my small little town. So I totally get what you mean, Whitney about being nostalgic for home. And I think that it's something that impacts all of us as college students, in our relationships with others and in our relationships with ourselves, because there's been times where I've not allowed myself to move on from stuff because I was ruminating or I was too nostalgic about it. So that kind of shows why I'm so invested in it. Like, it's always in the back of me. I don't know how to explain it.

Whitney 07:23
No, yeah, for sure. Like this whole idea. Like, for me, it's something that has happened to me before, but I've never really had maybe the language to really talk about it. And so nostalgia has been shown to counteract loneliness and boredom and anxiety, which can be helpful for us when we're comparing like, nostalgia versus... that word is like killing me.

Grace 07:52

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rumination.

Whitney 07:53
rumination, yes, when we're comparing to Soulja and rumination, and focusing on like the past and like our lived experiences, because one thing I didn't know when I was reading about nostalgia, is that most people experience it at least once a week and nearly have and nearly half experience it three or four times a week, which is something I didn't know. Like, I didn't know this is something that people think about and like, experience so often, though,

Grace 08:29
to say that it is once a week or like three or four times a week that feels like it's it that makes it sound like it's some big event. It sounds like it's like, oh my god, I'm having a bout of nostalgia, where like a lot of time I'm just like, nostalgic and passing. Like, I'm probably nostalgic three or four times a day. Like not a week like, but it's not something it's not like that rumination, like deep, dark pit of like brooding, necessarily, but it's just like, Oh, that was a happy time. Like I miss that. Whitney do you want to kind of talk about how nostalgia can impact our relationships?

Whitney 09:02
Yeah, so nostalgia and our relationships really can go hand in hand. And we contemplate a lot of when we were in a relationship or like when everything was more like enhanced and sunnier, and brighter and more golden. And I kind of compare that to like the honeymoon phase of relationships, because everything is so lovely and your partner or relationships like nothing can go wrong when you're in. Yeah, kind of like stages, right?

Grace 09:37
Yeah. And then when things inevitably start going badly, you romanticize the hell out of them. And you get super nostalgic where you're like, oh, like I missed the time when we barely knew each other. Like, it's so it's so twisted. It's just like so. Nostalgia. Just nips, nips me in a place where I'm just like, that is so rude. Why would you do that?

Whitney 09:58
Yeah, no, that's really good. because it's kind of like, how do we move on when we're like so stuck in the past of like thinking, Oh, that time was so great. And like things were so amazing. And you're not even thinking about like the present and what's so great about your life in the present. And so nostalgia is a natural, like inebriant because we're so like, happy and like, brings us pleasure.

Grace 10:26
Yeah, it's a form of escapism. It's like you're unhappy in the current moment. And so to make yourself feel better, in that natural inebriation, like you're just reminiscing, and you're going back to this time when it was supposedly happier, but I mean, our brain only wants us to remember happy things. So your brain with nostalgia is like blocking out all the bad parts just so that you can like remember the good parts because like you said, Whitney, you're bored, or you're lonely, and you're using it as a form of escapism?

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Whitney 10:57
Yeah, like when you go through a breakup, like this is what I kind of think of when you go through a breakup. Like you can only remember the good times or it's harder to remember the bad times or like totally, why you may have broken up in the first place.

Grace 11:11
Yeah, yeah. Yeah, um, I had a friend a while ago, when her and her boyfriend broke up. Like when they were kind of in the midst of the breakup, like the day was happening, I sat down with her, and we like wrote a list of things of why she was breaking up with him. And it really helped. And because there's times where she was like, Oh, I missed that blah blah blah. And I was like, refer to the list like nostalgia is getting to you, you need to refer to the list girl. And that list is like, based in rational thinking. It's not based in rose tinted nostalgic glasses.

Whitney 11:48
Yeah, kinda like I was saying, like, you can't make good memories, when you're spending all of your time in the past. Like, if all you can think about is like how great like last year was, or like, college was like way in the future, like when we're thinking, Oh, my gosh, college was so amazing. We're not really thinking about how great our life is now. And like how we can continue to improve our lives and be better for our future selves,

Grace 12:16
it really hinders your ability to grow. And kind of going back to what I said earlier about, like that list that my friend made. In the article about nostalgia, it said, the reason why you ended this like are like through the frame of a relationship, I think that you can be nostalgic for anything, but I've always kind of personally experienced nostalgia for like relationships with past relationships, or friendships or like, times when I was super young, like, that type of thing. But this article was kind of talking about nostalgia, post breakup, and it says, "The reason why you ended this relationship at that time was because you were making decisions based in reality." And this is like stuff that's like logical and factual. Whereas when nostalgia creeps up on you, inevitably, you're, you know, you're thinking based on abstraction, and you're not thinking based on reality. And abstraction and reality, don't, they can't mix. So I think it's really important. If you're in that sort of mindset, where you're just ruminating constantly on something that happened in the past and regretting why it ended or stuff like that. It's important to remember your decisions. So, so moving on to different ways that we frame nostalgia, I think Whitney, and I kind of talked about the difference between rumination and brooding versus nostalgia. And so we have different ways of framing it and appreciating it. And obviously, nostalgia brings to mind these cherished experiences that assure us that we are valued, and we do have people in our lives who are meaningful, but this strategy of reframing it to something positive rather than something that's hindering your growth is to draw on nostalgic repository, which is like a term for when we need a psychological lift or extra motivation. So at moments when we try to focus on memories and savor them, without comparing them. So I think that's kind of like what nostalgia does is it is like fueled by that comparison. So you're just comparing your present to the past so much that it's hurting you so but if you're doing this like nostalgic repository where you're focusing on the present moment, and you're focusing you're acknowledging these memories and why they were good, but you're also trying to move forward, and it's helping you feel connected, and it's also helping you feel inspired to deal with the present, I think

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that that is really important. Because when I get stuck in that kind of nostalgic spiral, being able to reframe it, being able to just like, I guess, take a step back and be like, okay, obviously, I'm feeling this way, because that was a really good time. And I did enjoy it, and it was positive. But I guess- take like taking those bits and pieces of value and love from that memory and then forcing it into your brain and just being like, okay, yeah, that was great. We need to move on, because there's gonna be new opportunity to feel loved

Whitney 15:34
Well, I was going to ask you Grace, like, from your own experience, if you don't mind sharing, like, when you're in these times, where you're just like, ruminating about the past, like, how do you try to get out of those moments?

Grace 15:49
Totally. Um, I like to journal a lot, which, okay, I feel like, Yeah, everybody. That's normal advice. But I guess just getting it on paper and acknowledging how I feel on paper feels a lot better for me, because I, I think very, like when I'm having those nostalgic moments or ruminating moments, it again, is based in abstraction. So getting it on paper, and like forcing myself to write a coherent sentence about it. Sometimes I'll write something when I'm feeling nostalgic. And I'm like, the next day I read it, and I'm so embarrassed, like, feeling that like embarrassment, I guess, in a way, kind of counter conditions me. And it doesn't harden me, but it does, like make me like, Okay, that was obviously based in abstraction. And I need to keep moving forward in this current reality. And moving forward in the current reality also makes me have a stronger sense of self in a way. It's like, okay, yeah, I overcame that. So let's keep moving forward.

Whitney 16:51
No, that's a really good point. Because I have a hard time like coming out of that, like nostalgia. And I like sometimes I'm like, What do I do? Like, I'm just like, sad. And I have so much anxiety about the future, because I'm like, am I going to be as happy as I was before? Like, is that even possible?

Grace 17:10
Totally. And- I feel like that's actually like, sorry to interrupt, but I wanna say this before it exits my brain. Oh my god it exited my brain for a second. Oh, having that anxiety about the future can really, really impact your ability to move forward. I'm having this like, pre emptive anxiety about not being nostalgic in the future. Yeah. Like,

Whitney 17:35
it's like it not happened yet.

Grace 17:36
Yeah, I'm like, I don't even know what I could like. I'm preemptively being anxious about the fact that I might be nostalgic later on, if that makes sense.

Whitney 17:44
No I think that makes perfect sense

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Grace 17:45
Like, that's actually the most ridiculous thing I think I've ever thought in my brain. And my brain is like, Yes, girl, like, you love to do that. And I'm like, I know, I love to do it. But I can't, like I need to stop. And yeah, I don't know. I think like reflecting back on my past as a teenager, as well, Whitney and I were talking about all of our information is like, done now. Like, we're at the end of the script. So this is just tangents. But

Whitney 18:08
We love it

Grace 18:09
I'm, I'm loving it. Um, I was telling Whitney, I have a cousin who's 18. And she texts me for life advice, which I absolutely love. But it just like, it always puts me back into being 18. And like, where my mind was when I was 18. Like, I'm so different now. Like not to be like, I'm so different. But like, oh, but there's so much that happens.

Whitney 18:33
Yeah, like so much growth.

Grace 18:34
Yeah, from 18 to 22. Like, it's very, it makes me there was times where I was super nostalgic for my past. But now, I've reached a point where I'm no longer nostalgic. I'm, like, more wistful or like, grateful that it happened. I'm like, Oh, that's sweet, like, but it's not impacting my ability to move forward the way that it used to.

Whitney 19:01
Yeah, I was gonna say like, thinking about our past, like changing our mindset to think yes, we were grateful that it happened. And yes, it's possible, like kind of like manifesting or like affirmations of like, I can make this happen in my life in the future. Like, it's not just in the past. And these feel like positive feelings or positive emotions that you've had can happen again, and it will happen again for you. And so trying to

Grace 19:32
It's just that uncertainty that makes it

Whitney 19:36
But trying to like change that mindset for the future.

Grace 19:41
Absolutely. Yeah.

Whitney 19:43

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Yeah, but I love that your 18 year old cousin, you said, Yeah, I was texting you. I love that because I feel like you are an older sister to her.

Grace 19:51
Oh my god stop. I try so hard. What was I gonna say... I think nostalgia like romanticizes everything so much. And even in times, where I know that I wasn't having a good time, I still in my nostalgic brain, sometimes is like, "oh, like I was sad, but at least this was happening. And now I'm sad that like, this thing isn't happening anymore. So this part of the past must have been better," like comparing so much, even in times where I was in distress is something that I do sometimes too. But it's just like so rooted in... I just love to think of it as an escape, because it feels very much like an escape, and being able to recognize when you are in that unhealthy escapism, nostalgia spiral, because it happens to the best of us. So I hope that this episode kind of gave clarity to those people who needed it. And I don't know, I enjoyed having this conversation and doing this research, because like you said, Whitney earlier, it kind of helped me put my feelings into words. And that always helps me. Because if you're just constantly thinking in that abstract, you're not going to be based in the current reality. So that's what's most important. But do you have any final thoughts Whitney?

Whitney 21:09
Yeah, I just hope that this conversation was helpful for people to hear. And maybe it was the first time that they're hearing about in a soldier as a concept. And so hopefully, it really starts that conversation for them to have with their family members in their relationships, or even just with themselves. So I hope this conversation was helpful for everyone as it was for me, and hopefully, like we can all like start to reflect and think about how to, like combat our nostalgia, like when we're in those moments.

Grace 21:44
Yeah. All right. Well, I hope you all enjoy the rest of week three, or I guess this is the end of week three, because it's releasing on Friday. So yeah, that would be all finished strong on week three, and we'll talk to you next week. Bye, everybody.

Whitney 21:58
Bye.

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