A Conversation About… Digital Well-Being and Young People's Mental Health

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Host (00:01):

Hi there. Welcome to Mental Health Professionals Network podcast series MHPN's aim is to promote and celebrate interdisciplinary collaborative mental health care.

Dr Lyn O'Grady (00:17):

Welcome to this episode of MHPN Presents a conversation about, my name is Lynn O'Grady. I'm a community psychologist based in Melbourne, Australia, and I'm delighted today to be joined by Jocelyn Brewer, a Sydney-based psychologist. Hi Jocelyn, thanks for joining me.

Jocelyn Brewer (00:31):

Such a pleasure, Lynn, to have this opportunity. Great

Dr Lyn O'Grady (00:34):

That you're here and I'm really pleased that you're agreed to talk with me. When I first thought about who I could have joining me in this conversation about the nexus between mental and digital health of young people, the first person I thought of was you. And in fact, your news set on number 65 has arrived in my inbox this morning like right on queue, so there it is. So we might talk about that. Number 65. 65 is a lot of newsletters that have been going out for quite a while, so we might have a conversation about that, but I guess when I returned to doing private practise work after 10 years away from working directly with children, young people in schools and end of 2019, I returned to working directly in that private practise setting. And one of the first things that struck me was the impact of technology on children and young people.

(01:21):

So I knew about it and I'd been aware of it and obviously we're all using it, but I found that my usual ways of engaging children didn't kind of work for a while. I think I've got better at it and I can now sort of engage children again in what I consider normal kind of play. But I remember having some really tricky conversations with children to start with about where's the technology or what are we doing today?

And looking very strangely when I just presented pens and papers and farm sets and games and things. So I guess that got me thinking about how do I tackle this? And that's where I found the digital nutrition concept really, really helpful and seeing the work that you are doing and as I say through the newsletters, keeping up with what's happening and what we need to be thinking about and seeing that you are doing this work. So your generosity in spirit in sharing information through newsletters and various forums and using social media very well, I would say, which is always interesting when we think about these parallel processes that are going on here. So that's why I thought it would be really great to have this conversation today and continue some of the conversations that we've sort of had in various ways and picking up on some of those things. So thank you very much for agreeing to have the conversation.

Jocelyn Brewer (02:33):

It's awesome to be here. I mean, I think the thing is there's so much to say that we are going to have to keep our eye on the prize in terms of not going too broad, even from what you've said already, the idea that psychologists need to keep abreast of digital youth cultures is something that's been around for quite a while and it's really hard on top of everything else that we do to kind of know what be real is or what's happening on TikTok or what the coolest YouTuber is. I guess we don't have to keep on top of that. We just have to know how to ask the right questions.

Dr Lyn O'Grady (03:03):

That's maybe a good takeaway right there isn't it that we don't have to necessarily enter into this space completely, but being alert and aware and being ready to ask the questions to discover what it does mean for the person that we might be working with as well. So let's start with what is digital health or wellbeing? So when you are talking about it, and I imagine it's evolved over time, so you might want talk about where this journey began for you and then where you're at now with it. And I imagine it's continuing to evolve, so we might get down the track to the point of where we might finish our discussion with her what's coming?, what do you foresee? But let's begin with what you mean when you're talking about digital wellbeing. What does it mean for you at the moment?

Jocelyn Brewer (03:44):

Sure. Look how I came to this space, I guess was as a teacher retraining to become a school counsellor and training to become a psychologist. And what was around at the time was a lot to do with digital citizenship where there was a focus on cyber safety and preventing cyber bullying and things like that, where as the digital wellbeing space and the health space was starting to creep in and so I naturally jumped onto that. The way that I did that was looking at boys and gaming a bunch of kids in year 10 as I was doing basically my honours thesis and I was like a dog with a bone. So while gaming addiction I guess was the question that I had this entrance into the space through it then kind of opened my mind as a, well, I was probably in my late twenties, early thirties when I was doing this work about my own use of technology.

(04:32):

So many of us, we kind of bring a lot of, I guess the questions from our own lives into our work. And so I was noticing what happened when at age 32 I got my very first smartphone, which I think was an iPhone three at the time. I think I'm now on a 13. So that gives you kind of a sense of that evolution. So as I say, at the time there was a big focus on cyber safety and I was edging into cyber psychology in a way that I

wasn't seeing a lot of people do that. So whether we call it digital wellbeing or we call it cyber psychology, I guess what we're talking about here is the impact on our wellbeing of the highly saturated nature of our world, given that it's really hard to go anywhere without technology. I used to go to cafes without it and then we needed a QR code to check in and of course you needed your phone unless you wanted your details to be sitting on a piece of paper for everybody to read.

(05:25):

So obviously Covid has had a big impact then on how our wellbeing is balanced or blended with our offline worlds and all of the, I guess, confusion that we have between using technology for good as in for learning, for doing things like this. And then for the kind of risks to I guess broad wellbeing and health, which again, we could unpack for hours, but looking at it from, I guess a perma model is usually where I come from psychology. Looking at those positive relationships, engagement meaning things like the impact of sleep is a really big pace of looking at this, especially when we're talking about young people and brain development, how important sleep is, all of those kinds of things. It really just millions of different implications here.

Dr Lyn O'Grady (06:19):

Wow. So there's so many things there for us to talk about, isn't there in terms of the current situation post covid or if we're post covid, it's probably a debate, but I guess the impact of covid is pretty important, isn't it, in terms of technology. Because I kind of feel like we had this sort of demonising or need to control technology before covid hit. So it was a lot around screen time and managing and what is screens is always a good question in terms of what's okay, screen use of what's not. But there was a lot of that kind of focus. And then Covid came and technology became our link to the outside world, didn't it? So we were physically distanced, but socially we needed to remain connected. And there was lots of conversation probably around Australia and the world about that idea and technology was seen as our way of keeping connected.

(07:09):

So suddenly it became very, very important. And for children and young people, technology was their connection to school and certainly Melbourne and Sydney, but also other parts of Australia perhaps for shorter periods of time, but certainly Melbourne, we had long periods of that. That was children and young people's access to education was through that in various ways, which is a whole other kind of topic in terms of access and what technology looked like for children in different parts of Australia, but also really connecting with friends. So using games suddenly that became okay because that was the way and we were able to sort of expand on that and children probably had quite a fair bit of free reign over that and taking responsibility for some of that for themselves as parents were also trying to manage. So suddenly technology took on a whole different way of being. And now of course post covid, if we can say that or coming out of that part of it, at least technology is probably a very confused space compared to what it was before and during. So where's that sitting and what conversations are you having with people about that?

Jocelyn Brewer (08:12):

Yeah, look, again, super complex even in that because our love hate relationship with technology is just, it was there before. I thank goodness that we had what we had during the last two years. However, as we come out of that and we sort of reemerge into this, doing things in real life, although a very new

version of the new normal, I guess we are back to kind of noticing how, I guess for a lot of young people there is a dependency on those online activities and how they're finding it really difficult, partly because of the habit and obviously because of the design within technology that really does as lots of people would say, hijack your attention in order to want to keep you in those spaces. What I notice I guess, is that people are in very different places around this because of their own, I guess situation.

(09:03):

So for parents who really did need screens to do a lot of the parenting for them because you literally cannot be present to your child and working a full-time job, we kind of have to unpick some of that with a lot of compassion around really what we have been through, not just for parents obviously, but also for young people who I think constantly get mixed messages about please use this device for learning, but don't do any of these other things that are naturally what your brain is going to want to do because you want to be connected, you want to be part of your community, you want to belong. And so again, I find that there's a kind of conversation at the moment about blanket bands of smartphones in high schools and where young people actually have a voice in some of these conversations given they have been that kind of be in the sandwich, so to speak, between what adults always seem to put into place for them without necessarily that consultation.

(09:57):

Yeah, so it is quite interesting. I think the big focus on, I guess our use of technology really happened around the Cambridge Analytica scandal with Facebook in about 2018 or 2019. Then through the pandemic, we just were in amongst it doing what we could, hoping that our broadband held up, and now we're kind of at the other end where there is that big movement around I guess really pushing back against our use and being more intentional with that, with thanks to things like the documentary, the social dilemma, and the work that the Centre for Humane Technology and a range of different organisations like that are doing.

Dr Lyn O'Grady (10:33):

So it's quite a confused space with a lot of moral panic in there as well. And maybe fear from adults, is that what some of this, when we think about banning anything from young people, it tends to be about control and fear and trying to adults do something about it.

Jocelyn Brewer (10:49):

Yeah, look, and I understand the need to protect young people because we are the ones with the fully developed brains. I think sometimes there is that Sisyphean cycle of moral panic when something new comes up that we haven't grown up with that we don't fully understand, that we probably haven't bothered to really get amongst. I think there's a generational nature of that, but what I try and do is to bring curiosities to some of these things. My five-year-old sometimes watches really what I think is digital junk food on YouTube and really grinds my gears. I absolutely understand how if you've got a teenager who hasn't really done any schoolwork all week, that's going to really create anxiety and worry around their future. I guess what we do here is we need to look at what is the function of some of these activities and how we do use time.

(11:41):

So while there's a pushback against screen time as this kind of blunt metric, we do only have 24 hours in the day. We do need to be considering getting that eight to 10 hours of sleep that most teenagers

probably still need unless you've got one that needs seven, I'm yet to find one that really only needs seven and to look at the content of what they're consuming and the context and then create conversations around that. So being able to say, what did you watch today? How well did you play Minecraft today? Who was in your game? How are they doing? All of those things that we would probably do if your kid went to a soccer or a netball match, we would be saying, oh, that kid played really well or that mum wasn't there, or all of those things can actually happen around the conversations to do with screens. What I think goes on though is it's like, oh, it's all weird and different and there's a minimization of that world and then a disconnection from parents, which then kind of perpetuates the fear cycle. I don't know what they're doing, but it can't be any good because look, they haven't moved. So it is quite judgmental.

Dr Lyn O'Grady (12:44):

Yeah, so a lot of it then is picking up on parenting more broadly, isn't it, in terms of how do we listen? How do we enter our child or young person's world? How do we have that open mind? And probably also how do we think about our own use in terms of our own struggles with it? And I'm often, particularly with young people, I'm often commenting because I'll often talk about sleep hygiene and put your digital stuff away before you go to bed to unwind. And then I often will say, but I know that that's really hard because I struggle with that as well. I use my phone to wake up, so that means I just do another little check of Facebook or then I get onto Instagram and then I might see something else before I know it. I can lose a lot of time. So there's something also, which is a bit scary, and maybe that old parenting do as I say, rather than what I do comes into this as well. And children are very alert to that, aren't they? And put you on your phone, put your phone away. Absolutely. It comes into all of that parenting space of that tension,

Jocelyn Brewer (13:40):

And it's so different that generational change. If I had ever said that to my dad or said, but you are being a hypocrite, there was a very different conversation and it sometimes wasn't a conversation, I can tell you that much. But what we see is yes, that young people, I guess, have a different ability to call out their parents' behaviour to some degree that they don't really tolerate hypocrisy in the same way and they want to have conversations about things because ultimately we do hand out technology for birthdays and Christmases and bar Mitzvahs and all sorts of reasons. Without putting the kind of guardrails in place to support young people really be safe and sensible with that. They just simply, especially if we're talking about giving an 8-year-old an iPhone, don't have the brain architecture or what I say is that batteries are not included, they don't come preloaded with the social emotional skills and maturity to be able to even spot some of the dangers, let alone respond to them appropriately.

(14:37):

So the work that I've been doing, I guess it has switched a lot from really working with young people and putting boundaries in place for them to working with the entire family and looking at what do you value and how do you get back to a place where you can balance being connected online and having all the value that technology can add, but really avoiding some of the pitfalls of distraction dependence, the digital dramas and the data overwhelm, the data deluge of just how much information we're actually consuming when we spend that much time online. Again, the quality and the context of all of that is really, really different because if you're playing a really sensory game that requires a lot of your mental and cognitive load to be paying attention to those things for six hours at a time, that's really different to

watching half an hour of a TV show than using a meditation app and then having music playing in the background or listening to an audio book screen.

(15:31):

Time is not one thing. It's a million things. And what researchers are now starting to look at is what is your screen gnome like your genome? What is the kind of characteristics of how you use technology? And again, when I create agreements with families, I run a course in this. I do one-on-one coaching with families. No two kids use technology in the same way. Even twins don't use technology in the same way. So we really need to play into the differences in how we use technology in order to come up with a plan that does suit whatever is healthy in our family. And many families are really tech confident. Many families have gamer dads or gamer moms, and they actually have rituals around being connected in online spaces rather than just having this singular focus on time not being online or the list of misdemeanours rather than the opposite, the target behaviours and the values.

Dr Lyn O'Grady (16:25):

So it really says there's a lot of work that we could be doing in terms of helping parents understand this and being powered, I guess, and looking for the good, but also being aware of the risk because I certainly, I've heard some speeches lately from the eSafety commissioner about the impact of covid on really inappropriate sexual predator behaviour and quite young children like four year olds with access to devices and people being able to access that and some pretty horrific stories about that. So it seems like there's a need for parents of quite young children to understand the potential risks that are there and that increased risk that seemed to escalate over or has escalated over covid. But then this other sort of extreme of having parents who are aware and interested and curious and engaging in it so that they can understand it. And then using that to be able to build their connections with their children and be able to use it as family fun time. Just as in the past we might've done other things, but also within a balance. So we're not all sitting around on screens all day. We are still also saying getting out into nature is also a good thing to do and doing other stuff as well.

Jocelyn Brewer (17:31):

Yeah. So look, the alert but not alarmed I think is a really nice kind of thing that we used to talk about years ago in a very different context. But having an awareness that it's not all fun and games in those online spaces and that four year olds can very easily navigate into yucky bits of the web and find all sorts inappropriate stuff. So if you Google Barbie doing the splits in a browser that doesn't have some kind of control around the material that shows up, you can be finding that you are not actually watching what you were hoping to watch when you Google Barbie doing the splits. The other aspect to this, or the analogy that I'm giving, I think it's really powerful, is around how we actually monitor our use or how we actually keep ourselves safe. So it's a combination. I'm going to use a swimming pool analogy.

(18:19):

We can fence the pool and we can build a really, really high fence and try and fortify that fence so that we don't accidentally fall in the pool, but we also need to teach swimming lessons and people need that to different degrees. Some people will naturally swim quite well, other people will flounder around. The problem here though is that we can't actually fence the ocean, and we need to think of the internet kind of more like an ocean because when young people do leave home or grow up or go to another home or go to different places, they potentially are going to need a range of skills, not just for swimming in one

particular calm pool, but swimming in different kind of conditions in order to be that kind of safe savvy user of technology.

Dr Lyn O'Grady (18:57):

Yeah, fantastic. So there's so much to think about in there, isn't it? And again, it's probably not that different to a lot of things parents have faced over the generations.

Jocelyn Brewer (19:07):

You can insert that with drug use or driving a car safely or sex and relationships. These are actually lots of people come to me thinking that they're learning stuff. How do I put a filter on my phone? And they come to me and actually learn a range of skills that support young people for all areas of life and they take with them through life. And I guess that's the difference. A lot of the skills that you learn in self-regulation and around digital wellbeing, they're not things that just only apply when you're in year nine. They apply all the way through. There's this idea of a digital immigrant and the digital natives that they're digital natives who have grown up with this. I kind of flip that and I say they're digital orphans because they've grown up without elders and parents guiding them. We didn't have that, and we haven't been on the front foot necessarily about thinking about those things or we're in different places around thinking about that.

(20:01):

And so young people, again, they need that guidance. And there's not a one size fits all approach to this. Some great research came out last week that talked about the four main styles of digital parenting, which is either rule setting and restriction all the way through to participating together in shoulder to shoulder participation. And I think increasingly we do need to, and again, why my work is so tailored is work with where those parents are at and work with their values. If they're a low or no screen family, then we need to work with that. If they haven't had those limits in place, maybe we can reign that in, but maybe we do different kinds of work to mitigate different levels of risk.

Dr Lyn O'Grady (20:43):

Fantastic. And that sounds like really interesting research. That's again, continuing to evolve and continuing to find ways to understand this, which is really important. I sometimes do work with people or adults who think that everything technology wise is bad. So the idea that TikTok is just bad because young people accessing a whole lot of things that are unhelpful or dangerous even in mental health. And we've certainly seen the research around that and young people accessing that because of this need to find out more about mental health and mental illness, probably more likely. But it's not always bad, is it? Because I have had conversations with young people around do they access that? How do they find it? And that curiosity. And sometimes they will say to me that they've learn some things from there and that there is something that's been really interesting and really helpful to them.

(21:31):

And then we can have that conversation. So ADHD I guess in young women is one at the moment that's coming up a lot. This is a conversation I can have. So what have they found? What does it mean? What were they thinking? What were they thinking when they were looking for that? Did they seek it out because they were interested in it and then found it and then what sense did it make of that? And would they like to explore it a bit more with me? And then we can do that. And sometimes that can be a

really helpful and a real in through that conversation to have a deeper, more helpful conversation where I can then maybe have a bit more information about it or do some screening or whatever, which can be helpful. And similarly with bullying, I often hear adults saying, well, bullying is all cyber bullying now, or cyber bullying is so much worse than other bullying. And yes, we know it's pervasive, we know it 24 7, but the research isn't that clear about that. Is it in terms of cyber bullying being its own thing in terms of the risk being very different to physical bullying? And that's something that I guess we need to keep helping people to understand as well, isn't it?

Jocelyn Brewer (22:34):

Yeah, look, again, the bullying piece is a very complex one, and it happens for a range of different reasons and in different spaces to different degrees. I think sometimes even the word bullying has been sort of diluted. I guess that we use it sometimes almost to refer to anybody who doesn't agree with us rather than from its much more specific use with online incidents of that can kind of really document it and it's provable. You've got those screenshots rather than other things that might happen in a playground that people aren't seeing or experiencing in the same way. So yeah, look, bullying is a kind of one that I do put over there to the side and say there are a range of people who have really specific expertise in that. But in terms of, to go back to TikTok and some of those sorts of things, the misinformation on TikTok is obviously of concern.

(23:30):

The number of people who are content creators or in commas, influencers, and they literally do influence, however, don't have often are not mental health practitioners and not allied health professionals have no certification in providing information. Really do need to think about the impact that they have. I work sometimes with elite sporting professionals who have 300,000 followers. Sometimes one thing that they're kind of trained to be very wary of is how impactful them sharing an idea has on their community who can have a range of vulnerabilities. Increasingly, I would love to see a little bit of a crash course for people who want to be influencers. And lots of young people will say, what do you want to do when you grow up? I want to be an influencer. Okay, great. What do you want to influence and how do you want to influence from the fluffy perspective or really have some depth to you?

(24:22):

And they can tell you the people who are really good at creating stuff and really have strong messages and tell great stories from the people who are a bit fake and just in it for the fame and glory and that kind of stuff. And that in itself is a whole literacy. So increasingly the media literacy or the information literacy is incredibly important for young people to be able to spot looking up ADHD, which is, as you say, a very popular one in TikTok, to be able to tell the difference between information that's probably too good to be true and to be able to look at the profiles of people and identify, do they have any training in this? Are they somebody that I would take advice from? And they're fantastic questions. A new hashtag I have to share that I saw this morning on Instagram from the amazing Diana Graber at Cyber Civics over in the US was hashtag manipulation literacy.

(25:18):

So this is understanding how games manipulate you to continue to play. So this is how far we're kind of digging down into this space to understand all the different literacies and capabilities that we need to have when we are transversing all of these different online spaces. So for kids who are playing games,

there's a range of things that do to manipulate their sense of achievement, their sense of time, their sense of attention so that the more we can understand, and kids love knowing this stuff, when I tell them some of these facts, they're like, no way. I'm not doing that. I'm going to be really careful about that. And so when we pull the curtain back and we give young people information, we don't necessarily lecture at them. They make their own inherent decisions about what to do. And that's super powerful, super, super powerful just to say, Hey, did you know about this? What do you think?

Dr Lyn O'Grady (26:11):

That's so interesting, isn't it? So it's something about critical thinking skills, again, not just for technology, but being more broad, but then using those in technology and empowering young people. So we're talking about empowering adults to be able to do this understanding and have the different kinds of conversations and build awareness. But this empowerment of young people, wouldn't it be fantastic if this generation actually becomes more aware and mirror alert and more savvy about it and uses technology in these healthy ways?

Jocelyn Brewer (26:39):

And I think they are. They're so savvy. They have such an ear out to kindness and empathy for they often get said, or I often hear that, oh, they don't talk to one another. And I'm like, they don't stop talking to one another. Actually, you just have a different currency for what that looks like. And while we want to kind of judge that and not get curious about the kinds of conversations that they are having and the kinds of information they do want to know, we are really missing out here. Again, more research that has just come out is questioning whether or not the whole brain development thing is actually neuroplasticity that could go in all sorts of new ways. There's some really interesting stuff happening that is flipping the idea that not that young people don't need our support and protection, but actually we could probably put some training wheels on earlier and let our own anxieties sort of manage that a little bit better so that they are really more prepared for the world. If we go back to some of Jonathan Heights stuff around coddling of the American Mind, I'm starting to see a lot of that come through in clinic with parent anxiety just as much as kids.

Dr Lyn O'Grady (27:51):

Fantastic. So there's this real kind of keeping up with the research and keeping up with what's going on around the world, which of course technology helps us to do, which is the other part of this. It's how I keep up with the latest thinking. I was watching last week, there was a conference, I had great envy of course, but I was the FOMO fear of missing out because I saw a conference around suicide prevention in Copenhagen, which I would've loved. And I saw how people are very good at showing their journey on the way to Copenhagen. I was sitting there doing my clinical work and doing my normal work kind of feeling like, yes, I'd like to be on that plane with those people going to Copenhagen, but it did give me access in a bit of a snapshot of some of the conversations that were happening and some of the research that was being presented that I can then follow up on.

(28:33):

Or sometimes people were really very good at releasing articles and making them accessible. So that gave me that opportunity to feel like I was connecting in and keeping up with the latest thinking and some of the debates because suicide prevention, just like technology has a lot of areas of the unknown or the learning and the debates and the division, I guess in terms of where the attention should go,

where the priorities should go and where the research is heading and who influences that, I guess is the other part of it, which is a whole other kind of conversation. We are getting to the end of this really interesting conversation, which I think we could keep going forever. But I know in terms of theory and approaches, we've talked about self-determination theory as one of the models or one of the theories that helps frame some of your work. Do you want to spend a minute also talking about that and how that fits given our focus on research and making sense of all of this in some way?

Jocelyn Brewer (29:28):

Sure, and it connects in I guess to the idea of empowering young people because what they get often from online spaces is three psychological needs being met. One is for connection, that ability to be with have a sense of belongingness, which we know is incredibly hardwired and important, a sense of control. So that empowerment is really kind of around helping young people have a sense of control around what they're playing. They get to choose who they are, what gender they play. Sometimes I have gender questioning kids who actually try on their new gender and new names and things like that in those online spaces where they feel safe. So that sense of control around what you play, who you play as, what skins you use, what loot boxes you might purchase, if you can get your parents to let you to do those things, which games, which version of the game, who you play with, all of these different ways.

(30:20):

Whereas in a classroom, you might get one maths handout and be told to do that activity, not a lot of control. And then the final other really important one is competence or mastery, the ability to actually feel good and feel successful at doing something. So again, if we use a classroom example, if you are not loving the particular subject that you're doing, and you have no ability to really demonstrate your skills in that until you get your semester report that has a bunch of tick boxes and that you are competent at something but not very descriptive, that's really different to playing a game where you can see your score going up. You can see a whole range of statistics about your performance. So yeah, self-determination, theory, rain and dehi from 2007 I think really kind of helps. And that's all about a theory of motivation and intrinsic motivation, which is ultimately what most parents say.

(31:10):

I want my kid to be motivated, but not just to play games or to have more money. So if we can nail some of these things, we find that trying to bring some of the things that they get in the online space to the offline space. So how can you have competence, connection, and control in your classroom, in the playground within your friendship group? How can we actually find things that mimic some of the activities that you do? So my mate down in Melbourne, Andrew Kinch runs a fantastic organisation called Game Aware, and he uses this basically as central to his programme, which helps kids who have gaming difficulties go from habit to hobby. So that's literally central to how he works. And I find generally it's central to how most of us work. When you dig into those things,

Dr Lyn O'Grady (31:56):

I guess I'm thinking that there's a lot of opportunities that perhaps we could miss if we're not careful. Maybe that's the danger here, the danger of worrying about protecting children, and that's important of course, but the danger of focusing on that too much and focusing on banning and restricting means we might be missing as adults, whether we're parents or psychologists or teachers missing these fantastic opportunities to actually delve in and do some things quite differently.

Jocelyn Brewer (32:24):

And I think what we definitely miss is that if we take an end curve, most kids are going to observe the ban. They're going to lock their phones, they're going to do the right thing. It's the kids at the pointy end who push the boundaries, who take further risks, who have needs that are not being met in other parts that we really need to take into consideration when we do these blanket bands, because they're the ones who, I guess we're already concerned about that one to 3% who may form a clinical level of addiction to a game. They're the ones who maybe get left behind when we are building high of pool fences, but no one's getting swimming lessons or they're getting a fly in fly out speaker who comes in and I do that work. I used to do that work. I try not to do that work anymore because I feel like I can't really deliver sustainable and meaningful change if I rock up, do 45 minutes maybe with some cool memes and make some jokes that land, it's a bit of a performance, but I don't have the relationship with kids to really deliver social emotional learning skills that needs to be embedded.

(33:28):

And we don't want to ask teachers to do anything more than they're already doing. There's not enough of them. They're leaving in droves and they're totally burnt out. But a lot of these skills are actually already in the Australian curriculum. So it's already in the seven capabilities as critical and creative thinking as the ICT capability where there's central ethical use of ICTs in there. So we just have to tweak some things, throwing some regular lessons for ourselves as much as young people need to be careful that we're modelling the right thing, right? The teachers on playground duty on their own phones, or the deputy principal standing at the front gate with playing on his iPad every morning, really not even joking, really sends messages to kids. Yes, he might be checking his email or he might be reading the news or doing something very virtuous or digitally nutritious, but kids go, that iPad is fun and games, right? So yeah, there's a lot of work to do to meet people where they're at right? There's no blanket one size fits all approach here.

Dr Lyn O'Grady (34:32):

No. So it leaves us kind of in this space of opportunity, I guess, and finishing our conversation today around lots more that we could be talking about for sure. What are your top takeaways in terms of messages for people that are sort of thinking about this, and we've talked about a whole lot of different things. What would be your takeaways in terms of messages you'd like people to go away and think about from our conversation?

Jocelyn Brewer (34:57):

Yeah, I would love people to be more curious and to really engage with young people as experts in their own experiences around technology and just, I guess, what's your own judgement around it or your own confusion around it and know that you can't break anything by playing or having a go that get curious, not furious is a mantra that I like to share with basically all adults. What would that be like? There is like Dr. Kellyann Allen down at Monash, she wrote a paper quite a while ago about why psychologists need to know about twerking and why staying current with youth culture is actually really important to engagement with young people. I would prefer to spend most of my first session just talking about games and TikTok than I would try to do psycho-ed because I'm going to build better rapport. I don't know, half the stuff. You really can fake it till you make it. If you know some key games and some key words, they will tell you so much, and they become kind of my experts. They're the people who tell me about all the different trends. So yeah, just really recentering young people as experts and getting

curious about some of that while using clinical judgement. Obviously we can tell where things are going wobbly and where there's really big impact on their functional abilities, and that's where we need to be really quite concerned. As with any behaviour,

Dr Lyn O'Grady (36:20):

And the more in we have talking about the positive parts of it, we're more likely to pick up on the dangers and risks or be more influential in talking to children, young people about that. So it all fits together. It's great that you mentioned Kellyanne Allen, because I'm going to be talking to Kellyanne Allen in a future podcast, so that's fantastic.

Jocelyn Brewer (36:38):

She's wonderful. I have her belonging lab, all of her resources and her just general vibe. She's such a great human.

Dr Lyn O'Grady (36:45):

Yeah, no. So that's a nice little plug for a future podcast. I'll be talking to her then, but we'll make sure that we put all of your links and information that you can share with us and things that we've talked about today. We'll make that available for people as well. And I feel like we could keep on talking and we will continue our conversation. So thank you very much for joining me today. Jocelyn in MHPN presents a conversation about, and you've been listening to me, Lyn O'Grady, and

Jocelyn Brewer (37:12):

Me Jocelyn Brewer.

Dr Lyn O'Grady (37:13):

We hope you've enjoyed this conversation as much as we have. I, for one, certainly had many penny dropping moments. If you want to learn more about Jocelyn or me, if you want access to the resources we're referred to, go to the landing page if this episode and follow the hyperlinks. Additionally, on the landing page, you'll find a link to a feedback survey. MHPN values your feedback. So please follow the link and let us know whether you found this episode helpful. Provide comments and suggestions about how MHPN can better meet your needs. You can also provide a star rating, which we'll look forward to seeing. Hope that it's a good one. Stay tuned for future episodes in the series A conversation about where we will be discussing young people's mental health or listen to other MHPN podcasts. Thank you for your commitment to and engagement with interdisciplinary, personally centred mental health care.

Host (38:00):

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