

#27 Procrastination!

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: [00:00:00] Welcome to Inner Challenge. I'm MJ Murray Vachon, a licensed clinical social worker with more than 44,000 hours of therapy sessions and 30 years of teaching mental wellness. Join me as I have an unscripted conversation with guests just like you as we strive to take the mystery out of mental wellness.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Welcome to the podcast today. Last week I invited any listeners to send me an email if they wanted to be on the podcast to think through a typical dilemma that gets in the way of their own mental wellness. This offer still stands, so if you want email me at mjmurrayvachon.com if you'd like to be a guest.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: This is exactly what today's guest did. He responded to an email and here you are sitting in the studio for what I hope to be a really helpful episode on what I think is a very common dilemma that people struggle with when it comes to mental wellness. So first I want to thank you for being on the podcast.

Guest Speaker: Of course. It's great to [00:01:00] be here. I'm excited to see how it goes.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Great. So, can you just tell our audience a little bit about yourself?

Guest Speaker: I'm a sophomore in college. I'm studying science, pre-professional studies, along a pre-med track. I live in the beautiful state of Utah, but I was born and raised in the country that I call home, South Africa.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Oh, nice. Wow. How do you define mental wellness?

Guest Speaker: I think mental wellness is being, first of all, aware of your own mental state and being able to , define what mental state you're in and define how you and your mind are reacting to the circumstances around you and the positions that you're put in. And obviously having a good mental wellness is being able to. Take in all the stimulus around you all the things that you're facing in your life, and be able to classify that and internalize that and be able to take those situations that you're in and take them head on, but also in a way that keeps your mind and your health at the forefront.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: That's a great definition. It's a great definition because self-awareness, being aware of our mental [00:02:00] states is one of the foundational tools that we need as we try to cultivate a really healthy mental wellness that works just like as you said, in our everyday life.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: How do you know when you're in a good mental state?

Guest Speaker: For me, I think a lot of the time I just feel a lot less stressed and a lot less pressured. It takes for me time where I just sit down and process the things that are going on in my life and take a second to just breathe. Because if not, it feels like I have so many things going on and my brain's struggling to keep up. Then my mental health sort starts to take a hit as I become stressed and I start to put taking care of myself on the back burner with a lot of other things going on in life. So, I think for me, it really is just when I'm feeling calm and I'm not feeling stressed, that's when I feel like I have the best mental health.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: What I love about what you're saying is you at a really fairly young age understand that our mental health needs attention. I think we really understand that when it comes to our physical health. People are pretty, often dedicated to working out or washing their hair or whatever, but it [00:03:00] really is great that you know that your mental health needs some time. I don't think it needs an enormous amount of time, but I think it needs some. So that's great that you are already aware.

Guest Speaker: One of the biggest things in my life that I feel I struggle with is procrastination. I'm a very driven student, but at the same time, just with so much going on in my life, I find myself procrastinating in favor of, giving myself a break, but then I'm pushing off things for a later point in time, which then just leaves me more stressed in the future.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Procrastination is a very common issue. I've worked on this hundreds of times in my office and what I thought we might do today is just take a real-life situation that you are procrastinating against and I would walk you through what I call a game plan to help people really work through procrastination.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Can you think of something that is real in your life today?

Guest Speaker: Yeah, I sort of experience it in two ways. One's more generalized and reoccurring and one's a little bit more relevant to this [00:04:00]

upcoming week. In general, I find that on weekends I sort of procrastinate and push all my homework off until Sunday afternoon or Sunday evening and then that sort of leaves me stressed going into the new week because I haven't really given myself a separation between the two weeks. My last week is rolling on into my next one as I procrastinate things. And then one that's pressing this week is I have two big exams and I've started preparing for the easier of the two, but I'm pushing off the harder one, just because it's harder and I'm worried to get started on that.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: So, I noticed you used the word pushing off. So, let's begin by asking you, how do you define procrastination?

Guest Speaker: For me, I think it's choosing things that are more enjoyable or less difficult to do earlier and pushing off the hard thing. So, a lot of the time, you know, I have a big assignment coming up or I have a paper and I'm like, oh, it's only due on Thursday and let's say it's Monday. So, then I spend time hanging out with friends for Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and maybe I'll start thinking about it [00:05:00] or start in a very minor way, but I leave the bulk of the work until very late in the process. So, a lot of the time it does take place for me in the form of doing things that are more pleasurable, hanging out with my roommate or going to the gym or hanging out with friends .

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Okay. So, I think that's almost like the scientific definition for procrastination. Where we do what is easier, what is more comfortable? Sometimes I use the word soothing, enjoyable. Instead of that which is harder and what you're suggesting, we think about, it's two sides of the same coin. One is, you procrastinate on weekends, of getting your work done, and . In this particular weekend you have these two hard tests and a subset of that procrastination is you are leaning into the easier test first and avoiding the harder.

Guest Speaker: Yeah.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: I want us to just think through that with this game plan I have devised over the years. One of the parts of being a therapist is you do a lot of trial and error. You can read theory and you can read books, but people are fairly unique [00:06:00] and what I've tried to do is create a process that people can go through that really is very tailor made to them. But the foundation is to understand that if you can see procrastination as this dance between distraction and avoidance. It is really helpful. Distraction is the tool that you use to avoid. Just think about this weekend, when you're avoiding

doing the harder test, what were the distractions that you used that allowed you to do that?

Guest Speaker: I had quite a few honestly. when I began to think about preparing for the test, I'd pick up my phone. I'd be like, oh just half an hour, just half an hour more to relax and then I'll be even more focused when I do start. So that was one of them. A lot of time spent on my phone.

Guest Speaker: Another one was, oh, my friends are doing something that sounds more fun. I can always study later. I can't hang out with my friends when it's past midnight cause they'll be going to bed. But I can study when it's past midnight because then I'll have time.

Guest Speaker: It was a beautiful day on Saturday. So, I was like, oh, you know what? I'm going to make the most this beautiful day and go [00:07:00] outside and throw around a ball. Of course, that's a good thing to do. It takes care of my mental health, but at the same time, I was pushing off other stuff.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: So, there's a lot of rationalization. You're like, oh, I'll only do 30 minutes on my phone. And then How many did you actually do?

Guest Speaker: I would say 30. And then maybe that time it turned into 45 or an hour. And then it was like, I do a little bit of work and then it's oh, I deserve, a break.

Guest Speaker: And I go on my phone again. I'm like, oh, it won't be very long. But then, the time just slowly builds up throughout the day. And then you look at your phone at the end of the day where it says how much time you spent, and you're like, wow, that is way too much.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Okay, great. You're doing these things and how aware are you that you're doing them?

Guest Speaker: I'm pretty aware of it in the moment or right after it happens, but I don't know if it's disappointed, but I'm like, oh, wow. And then I I'm just like, oh, I guess it is what it is now. I just have to work. But then the next time comes around, I'm like, oh, I deserve a break. It's just a cycle. I'm definitely very aware that it's happening. I'm still letting the [00:08:00] procrastination happen just cause I don't want to face the thing that I have to do,

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: That's the avoidance. , you don't want to face it. The distraction is the phone, the friends, the nice weather, but the avoidance is underneath it. What I tell people to do is to be really honest with themselves about what their distractions are and to say, I use the phone to distract. I use my friends to distract. I use the weather to distract. And that you're really honest.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: I just want you to say that right now. I often use the phone distract. , I use my friends to distract. I use the weather to distract.

Guest Speaker: I often use my phone to distract. I often use my friends to distract and I often use other circumstances like the weather to distract.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: And what's it like to say that?

Guest Speaker: It's a way of self-acknowledgement. I think it's good, but I think deep down, I already knew the things, but saying it out loud does make it a little bit more real.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Right, because the rationalizations are what's tricky in this. You're in college, you're a smart kid, you can come up with any kind of rationalizations, right? I like people just to understand the [00:09:00] rat in rationalization. When you have a rat running in your brain, you end up just being more honest with yourself. And I think of it like static. When you have that static of you're on your phone, what's the internal vibe going on in you as you minimize and rationalize? What's the feeling part of that for you?

Guest Speaker: I think definitely I'm feeling stressed and that's a way of covering the stress. I'm feeling stressed about the exams coming up, but then I go on my phone and I watch YouTube, or I scroll through Instagram and it's like I don't have to think about that anymore.

Guest Speaker: So, I don't have to feel that stress anymore because I'm feeling the joy of, I don't know, seeing what my friends are doing on social media or watching whatever YouTube video it is, or when I hang out with friends, it's like I don't have to think about the stress of homework because I'm enjoying being in their presence.

Guest Speaker: And it's the same for when I went outside. It's oh, I don't have to think about the stress of the upcoming exams, the upcoming week, the upcoming work that I have to do because I'm just, I'm taking in the sun, enjoying that [00:10:00] moment. So, it's substituting the stress, feeling for some other more enjoyable feeling.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: And does the stress feeling go completely away?

Guest Speaker: In the moment? I would say it goes away for the most part. It's still a lingering thing in the back of my mind, but then as soon as I'm done with whatever the thing was that was substituting what I was supposed to be doing, then it's almost like the stress is even more intensified because instead of having seven hours to do the work that I was supposed to do, now I only have five or four because I've substituted with spending time with friends or going on my phone.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: You are perfectly explaining this really hard dynamic. It isn't really true that the stress goes away in the moment. It just gets covered up. So, one of the consequences of procrastination, which is obvious, but it's worthwhile saying, is you're never really in the moment. You're outside enjoying a beautiful day, partially, but internally you're having this storm front of stress that's saying I really should be studying. Really just [00:11:00] understanding and putting words to this dynamic that while you're soothing yourself, while you're giving yourself something in the moment that feels good, it actually costs you because you don't enjoy the moment fully and you're creating a bigger storm of stress down the road. Right? You knew that, but it's important to say it.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: So that's distraction. What are your tools of distraction? , I have not done this with anybody in the last 15 years, that the phone is not their number one thing. So, if someone's going to work on procrastination, they have to work on the phone. And we'll talk about that in a minute because that's the main tool.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Let's look at avoidance. I want you to go back. You have these two big tests. I want you just to sit with this reality of these two big tests, and I want you just to go inside yourself and connect to what is it that having these two tests make you feel right now as you sit in the studio.

Guest Speaker: Like I said earlier, a little bit stressed. [00:12:00] But, since I'm on a pre-med track and that is very demanding just in terms of all the requirements you have to fulfill in terms of the GPA that you have to maintain. It feels that a lot of the small actions that I have now, like having these tests have bigger implications. So, it of like magnifies in a way in my life and the significance of things that might otherwise be a little bit smaller. I know that I'm well capable doing well in the tests. It's just that the stress and the feeling of the test sort of gets magnified

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Part of what I hear you saying is the long-term goal of I want to be a doctor. In the moment, there's an element of feeling threatened that everything you do in the moment feels bigger. If that brick doesn't fall into place, what might happen?

Guest Speaker: Obviously like one brick in the bigger picture probably isn't that big of a deal. If you're using the metaphor of a brick, it's like a, all these little bricks build a house and one little misalignment [00:13:00] or one little error can get blown out of scale if it keeps happening. It feels like every test I have to do as best as possible cause you never know what the next one might hold. It might be even harder. You might screw even worse. Everything feels really big because you're trying to build this much bigger structure for me of becoming a doctor. All the minor steps that are along the way feels like one little like mistake or one little misalignment could throw off the whole thing, even though that's not necessarily true.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: But internally on a feeling level , it feels true.

Guest Speaker: Yeah.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: You actually have to live with that seven days a week, 24 hours a day. Can you feel that as you sit here right now?

Guest Speaker: Yes.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Where do you feel it on your body and what's it feel like?

Guest Speaker: Definitely my upper to lower chest area. It just feels like a tense feeling. It feels like everything's super tight and there's a lot of pressure.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: What I want you to do is I just want you to put your hands over the area that feels very tight and has these really intense emotions. And all I want you to do is breathe for 90 [00:14:00] seconds, which can seem like a long time, and I want you just to allow those emotions to pass through you. You're honoring them because this is a lofty goal and it's worth honoring, but it also needs to be tended to. So, allow yourself to have the sense of being overwhelmed, the sense of threatening, the sense of just discomfort and let yourself do some breath work to dissolve it. What happens when you do that?

Guest Speaker: First of all, the breathing part is a little bit refreshing. Taking deep breaths, it helps me feel a little bit reset. I also feel a sort of release of a little bit of tension. It felt really tight. Like there's a lot of pressure in my chest and now even if it's not all gone, it feels like there's definitely been a release as I was breathing.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Because we're on a podcast and we can't necessarily have it all get gone, I want you to understand that our emotions run on a bell curve. I want you to understand that you're living in a state of feeling threatened all the time, which means that you have to tend to that emotion. I call it, name it and tame it. That's probably [00:15:00] incredibly stored up in you. Have you ever done something like this before with that particular emotion?

Guest Speaker: Not necessarily with that particular emotion. At the end of last semester, I got into the habit of trying to meditate for 10 minutes a day and just breathe. For the first five minutes I would just sit in silence and try and not think of anything in my head. The next five minutes I would try and organize the things in my life that I needed to do or that I wanted to do better. And that really did help when I was doing it. But then, after Christmas break, going home, having so much free time, that sort of threw me off the cycle. there wasn't anything that at that point in time that I was really stressed about. It didn't feel like I needed to maintain that habit anymore. So now coming back to school, I've struggled to get back into that habit.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: This is part of the age and stage that you're in adolescences from 12 to 25.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: These are self-care practices. Procrastination is really about self-care and emotional regulation. It's not a character issue. You're living in a [00:16:00] state of threat all the time. . And you can rationally say, oh, I know I'm not living in a state of threat. That doesn't matter. inside, when you connected to this, your response was, I feel overwhelmed. When we're overwhelmed, we feel threatened. That's one tool. We start with distraction. If you're not honest with yourself, the biggest con men, con women in our life are ourself. We're better off just saying, I'm going to procrastinate. I'm going to go outside, I'm not going to study, I'm going to be on my phone, I'm going to procrastinate. And you say it out loud so you're not conning yourself. It's one of the really important skills in adolescence is that we learn to not be our own conman. After that then it's really to just name, and I don't even think you have to name like, is it, from the family of fear? Is it from the family of guilt? I just think you have to name like, I have a lot of emotions inside and do that breath

work and 90 seconds is really what the cycle is to begin to decrease it. You might [00:17:00] have to do, two or three rounds.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Can you go back to when that breathwork stopped. What's the thoughts you have connected to these two tests?

Guest Speaker: Once I stopped the breath work and the moments after I felt, despite all the stress and the emotions I felt, and I knew that I could do it. If I just put in the work I can do. Even if it doesn't go a hundred percent as planned, I know that I did what I could and that's really all you can do at the end of the day. I think the task seemed a lot more manageable, just strictly based on the fact that deep down I felt, I had that feeling of I can do this.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: What's interesting is you cleared out the emotions and the thought that surfaced is, I can do this. What I want you to do is I want you to run a movie in your head. I want you to think about today, and I want you to imagine studying for the harder test. I [00:18:00] want you just to run a movie in your head for about 20 or 30 seconds of actually studying for that test today. What happens when you do that?

Guest Speaker: Even though I wasn't trying to, formulate a game plan. I have a game plan now just because I pictured what I would be doing if I was doing it. Now I know when I do it, that's what I want to do.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: So, run the movie again with your game plan, because what always happens, I've done this 10,000 times, when people work from the inside out, they always come up with their own game plan. Run the movie again and make the game plan more detailed. What time, what do you have on, what do you do with your phone? Do you have a drink there? What are you going to study first? What happens when you do that?

Guest Speaker: I sort of rationalize the things that I have to do in my day and figured out exactly what my day looks like and where the studying that I want to be doing that I otherwise might procrastinate, would fit into my day. [00:19:00] Cause a lot of the time it's oh, I don't have enough time because I've all these other things to do. If I really think about it and I reduce being on my phone and all those things that break up my day, there is really a time slot that works for that and I can figure out exactly how I want to use that time slot most efficiently.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: You said two really important things. One, you would figure out how to do your phone, what would you do with your phone?

Guest Speaker: In my game plan I thought I was going to go to the library and study there and leave my phone in my dorm.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Okay. That is incredibly wise. You also said the word chunk. Research shows these two things are the most powerful tools, once people create the game plan. How often have you lost your phone and never found it again?

Guest Speaker: Never.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: I've asked this almost 2,500 times. That really helps us understand the science behind the phone. They are perfectly synced up to our brains. We have to learn to manage our phones [00:20:00] because they are wired to manage us. Leaving your phone will be painful. You will miss it. You'll feel a longing for it because that's how connected we are. Everybody loses car keys. People lose money. People lose lots of things that they never find again. I've asked this, I've never had anybody say, I've never been able to find the phone. So, in your movie, that is wise.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: The second thing that science has shown us is chunking it down, which is what automatically happens with the movie. I've never had somebody say, , oh, I have to study for a test. Okay, I'm going to read 300 pages in 20 minutes. There's something about the brain being really good to us that helps us create a game plan that is often very usable.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: In this process, we started with distraction. We went to avoidance, and then we went to what was beneath the avoidance, which is the feeling state of being overwhelmed and threatened. you did a little bit of breath work and then you did the movie, [00:21:00] and the movie really without any effort on your part, tapped right into your distraction.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: What's the thought that you had, you said it before that after you cleared out the emotion.

Guest Speaker: Just the thought that I can do it.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Now, what I want you to do is I want you to run the movie with that thought. I can do this! I can do this. What happens inside of you when you put that together?

Guest Speaker: Sort of feeling of determination and resilience in a sense, because I thought to myself a lot of the time, what is a barrier for me is when I

get through stuff and then there's stuff that I've done wrong or incorrect and I feel that I what to do, or I don't know how to find the right answer. I don't know the process to get the right answer. . As I played that back, I thought to myself, there are the resources, I have the resources to find that answer, to figure out what I'm doing wrong and to redevelop a new way to get the right answer.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Your unique in this process, because when you went through the feelings, [00:22:00] what came up was a really positive belief. I can do this. Most of the time people get blocked with beliefs that aren't as positive. I can't do this. I'm not good enough to do this. This is over my head. I have to do this perfectly so I can't start it. What you saw is using the same tool of running the movie, then you began to say, wait, if I get stuck, I have resources.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Running this movie is free and you can do it anywhere. I probably run a movie in my head two to three times a day because it helps me sort and clear things out very quickly. Do you think it's effective?

Guest Speaker: Yeah. A hundred percent.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Have you ever thought of it before?

Guest Speaker: Not in that sort of way, I maybe give like a quick glance like, oh, what does my day look like? Then I see, okay, I have class until this time, and then I just say, all the time after that I'll do homework and spend time with friends, but I never really, specifically think, I have. this to be done, and this is when I'm going to do it and how am I'm going to do it, and chunk that out. I just throw it all into one chunk and say, it'll get done.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Which makes sense why it doesn't get done. [00:23:00] It's really like a two-to-three-minute process, no more than four, which then allows people to move through their days feeling much more empowered and less stressed. What's going to be really important for someone like you who wants to be a doctor, is that practicing this skill now, I cannot think of a better skill to have going into med school because you are really training your mind. you're training your mind to behave in a healthier way instead of just thinking, oh, my mind will just get trained. Just like anything we do, we have to put a little bit of effort. It's not a huge amount of effort, but it's just being more intentional in where you allow your mind to go. And I think really being committed to not being your own conman. The other thing I think is really helpful is I think there's a feeling in most people behind procrastination of I just want to play. If we understand the brain is a lazy beast, that's why

people [00:24:00] love the phone. It just syncs up with this deep inclination in the brain to do nothing. The only antidote for our lazy brain is our spirit. It's the only antidote. I could see when you initially had the emotion of feeling threatened, your whole face and demeanor completely changed, and then when you worked, I could feel your spirit come into it. When you ran the movie. Is that a fair statement? .

Guest Speaker: Yeah.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: So, what you're trying to do with procrastination is change the spirit and you're trying to connect to, I can do this, but there's also I think, a spirit of gratitude.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: How many people would kill to be where you're at? At a top ranked university with the option to really be able to choose your profession and do it. I wonder how often do you try to cultivate that spirit of gratitude, that spirit of this is a privilege to be able to have this opportunity.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: How often do you try to [00:25:00] cultivate that?

Guest Speaker: I definitely don't think I do it nearly enough. There's definitely times that I'm like, wow, like I get to live this life. I have an empty canvas and I get to do with it what I want? But that is something that happens very rarely. And more so the stuff that I'm doing now feels like, a burden or a task just to get to something later on that seems more rewarding.

Guest Speaker: I do definitely feel and understand what you say about the spirit being the thing that overcomes the laziness. Because at the end of the day, being a doctor is something that really excites me and something that I'm really passionate about. If I can channel that passion and that excitement that sort of spirit , I definitely see what you're saying. How I can use those emotions to drive myself.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: And they're all there. Had I let you have more time, I think it would've surfaced. I could feel your energy shift and if it isn't there, if people really are like, Ugh, I don't even like medicine, then maybe their inner work isn't to cultivate the [00:26:00] spirit of, I'm excited to do this but to cultivate the spirit of what am I really wanting to do? Yeah. And to be excited about. But often we see these years of undergrad and graduate school as a burden. And that is a thought that we easily can change with just about 30 seconds of, wow, I, I get to do this. , it's not that I have to do this.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: At your age start to try to really shift that energy, it won't feel like a burden. . And then you begin to, I think, have a secret weapon against the phone because the phone is just lazy energy 99% of the time and the 1%, then it's not, we're using it for emergencies or we're using it to, give money for a fundraiser.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: We need fluff time. We need downtime, but we also want us to choose it versus the phone choosing it for us. If you can just accept oh the brain is lazy, but we have the chance to cultivate our [00:27:00] mind any way that we want. I would really encourage you to try to connect more to the spirit of how lucky you are, how blessed you are to be able to do this.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: The second thing in, in getting ready to end is that sometimes procrastination starts out as a normal human thing, and people use different distraction tools that turn into addictions.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: I do think that most people are more addicted to their phone than they realize it's completely wired up to the body. That's not surprising. Sometimes I see that with people who use pot, sometimes with porn, whatever is their distraction tool. That doesn't seem to be what you presented at all today, but I wanted to say that because if people find that, gosh, I just can't let go of it, then they really do want to get some professional help because distraction is a secondary problem and addiction is the primary problem. Once the addiction is dealt with, then the procrastination falls into place.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: This is about really being intentional. That's why procrastination is about self-care. [00:28:00] How do I go inside of myself? I have this lofty goal. I have to take care of myself because this lofty goal puts me in the state of being threatened. That's why meditation will be a really good thing for you. I want you to own that your goal puts you in a threat state. that's not going away. And because of that, you have to have some antidote for being constantly in a threat state. or you're going to do procrastination.

Guest Speaker: Yeah, I definitely see the meditation at least as a way to ease that threat state. Even when I just took the 90 seconds and it felt like a release of some built up tension. I definitely see meditation as a way to, release that built up tension, but then also like you said, a time that I could, run those movies in my head. Get that game plan going.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: You can run those movies the minute you sit down to study. I strongly recommend that when you sit down for a study

session, run the movie because it allows the brain to work faster. it takes a while. It's a lazy brain, and it doesn't just fall into that. We [00:29:00] have to use some intentionality, some push. In wrap up, sum up what you're going to take from this.

Guest Speaker: I definitely think that one of the things I'm going to take is the idea of the movie because that was a very quick thing that helped me come up a pretty well-structured plan that instead of just saying, I have all these things and I'll get them done later in this chunk of time, I further specified how I was going to get them done. What behaviors I was going to cultivate that were going to help me get those done. Then also the idea of going back to taking the time to, you know meditate. Not only does it help with what we opened up with, just the idea of mental health, but like I just said, it also helps release some of that built up tension.

Guest Speaker: I would say the difference that we both helped to outline between procrastination and taking a break. Even just you pushing me to think about that myself, not just giving me the answer, helped me define how I view the break and the idea of [00:30:00] procrastination differently.

Guest Speaker: But then also the ideas that you gave me about it I found very valuable just in distinguishing, a break is a lot more intentional, whereas source procrastination is like a mechanism that we use to shy away from things that we don't want to do.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Yeah. We're all con men and con women and procrastination is one of our favorite cons. It's really being committed to yourself that I'm not going to con myself, it's just not a healthy way. It goes without saying, procrastination is not good for our mental health because it does cause us to feel stress. It causes us to feel guilty, it causes us to feel shame and probably more importantly is it causes us to not do things well. Mm-hmm. , I don't think we need to ever do anything perfectionistic, but we spend a lot of time on devices. We spend a lot of time doing things that don't really further who we are, the gifts we have, our contribution to the world. Procrastination really gets in the way of people [00:31:00] being able to contribute and that's a big part of mental health. So, thank you so much for saying yes to this. I hope it was helpful.

Guest Speaker: Yeah, it was honestly amazing. I feel even just now a lot better about even just from the way I walked into the room, but also just a lot better about, my week going forward and just the steps that I can take to combat procrastination, but also to find, a more healthy alternative.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Ready. Set. Action. Without procrastinating, here are my Inner Challenge Insights.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Insight number one:

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Procrastination is a symptom, not the problem. Procrastination is really about problems with self-care and emotional regulation. Got it. It is not, and I repeat a character issue.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Insight number two:

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: be your own director in creating a script for transforming procrastination.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Scene one: say out loud your favorite tools of distraction. [00:32:00] My name is, and I distract, using the phone, cleaning, Netflix, snacking, hanging out with friends, napping. Bring your distractions into the light. Say them out loud. Write them on a post-it. Tell a friend. Just stop conning yourself.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Scene number two:

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: name and tame your avoidance. Sit for 90 seconds and feel the feelings connected to your avoidance. Are you overwhelmed? Are you stuck and not sure how to move ahead? Are you a perfectionist with standards so high you get paralyzed? Do you hate this type of work? Is the only thing you can think of is your craving for pot, alcohol, porn, or food? Sit with the discomfort and breathe for 90 seconds. Remember, emotional discomfort is a physical sensation that will pass. Step into the role of directing your emotions.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Scene [00:33:00] three:

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: run a movie in your head imagining you doing the task you're avoiding. .

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Scene four:

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: run the movie again this time, adding details, colors, sights, sounds, locations.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Scene five:

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: run your movie a third time, adding more details. When you're done notice, what are you thinking? What are you feeling? Maybe it's a feeling of relief and thoughts of confidence. I can do this! Or maybe a bit of compassion and understanding. Oh my God, no wonder I'm avoiding. This is the math that we were supposed to learn the first month of the pandemic over Zoom. Now, I know what I need to do. I have to go back and figure out how to relearn this. Trust your movie. It comes from your inner wisdom. Write it down and let it guide you. Remember, our mental movies are a free mental wellness tool that can be used throughout your day. These movies help our minds move from lazy to motivated, [00:34:00] from confused, to clarity.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Insight number three:

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: if doing the process and number two helps you understand that addiction or issues of self-worth fuel, your avoidance, please seek therapy. Don't procrastinate. Addiction and severe self-worth issues are treatable and they do not age well.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Insight number four:

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: you're probably saying, Hey, MJ, sometimes we need study breaks or periods far away from responsibilities to relax and unwind. Enjoy our friends in those two sunny days a year. Yes, absolutely. Our mental wellness depends on being able to relax.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: So how do we differentiate between procrastinating and taking a break? It all begins with having an inner conversation with oneself. Go inward and ask, is this a break or am I conning myself into procrastinating? [00:35:00] A break is intentional and procrastination is avoiding. If your inner conversation says, Hey, buddy, you're avoiding follow the steps in insight number two.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: If your inner conversation says, Hey, time to take a break and relax, go back to the steps in insight number two. Do your breath work for 90 seconds, and name and tame the feelings. Run the movie three times. Letting the plan for your break and your relaxation emerge from your inner wisdom. You will not believe how doing this will help the quality of your break and relaxation increase tenfold.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Your movie may say, Hey, before you take a break, take notes to help you remember where to begin when you come back. Or it may say, set an alarm for a 30-minute break. Walk around, get a drink, and enjoy that sun. Or it may say, what my movie said last night, enough for the day [00:36:00] time to shut down.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: But what it seldom says is lose yourself into the black hole of your phone for two hours. Or eat some gummies when you still have half a paper to write.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Insight number five:

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: there is no way to write a script to transform procrastination that does not involve learning to manage our phones instead of allowing our phones to manage us. As a culture, we must get honest and admit how damaging our phones are not only when it comes to work and relationships, but to our mental wellness. I know, blah, blah, blah, blah, the phone, but it is the truth.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Insight number six:

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: if you want more information about the topics we talked about on the podcast today, listen to episode six and seven on emotional Regulation, episode nine on Managing Your Phone, episode 13 on How's Your Spirit? And if you want to be a guest in, in-person, or remote [00:37:00] on the podcast, send me an email@mjmurraybashan.com.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Thanks for listening, and as you move through your week, stop dancing with distraction and avoidance and write a script to transform your procrastination. Moving your spirit from, I have to do this, too I get to do this. This is your inner challenge.