

#28 Selling and Mental Wellness!

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: [00:00:00]

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 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. You might be wondering how did Inner Challenge start? Let me tell you, it wasn't just a few months ago when the podcast started. It actually started as a girl's camp in the mid-nineties. Then it was part of a junior high curriculum for 20 years, and then I taught it as a course for Notre Dame football players, and now it's a podcast. So, my main teachers have always been students. A few weeks ago, I saw on Facebook that one of my former had students become a very successful real estate saleswoman. I know a bit about real estate [00:01:00] because I have siblings and parents who are realtors, so I know it's not only a rewarding profession, but one that is quite stressful. I sent her a message and asked if she'd like to be on the podcast and talk about how she manages her mental wellness in this profession that is unpredictable, demanding, yet can be lucrative and very rewarding. I want to begin by saying thanks for being on the podcast today.

Guest: So excited.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Yes. It's a reunion. I think you graduated from junior high how many years ago? How old are you now?

Guest: I'm 25 now.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: So, 12 years ago. Tell our audience a little bit about what you're doing at this stage of your life, the mid-twenties.

Guest: I graduated from IU Bloomington in 2019. I was a marketing major when I was there and, did not get into marketing. My first job ended up being in sales and that's what I've been doing for the past three and a half years. Doing sales [00:02:00] for a new home builder. So, I am in residential real estate and it's totally unlike anything that I anticipated getting into but I love it, which is awesome!

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: I think it's so exciting. If you could see, or, she'd be a really good person to be in sales . Before we talk about sales, I want you to share with our listeners, how do you define mental wellness at this point in your life?

Guest: For me, mental wellness probably means balance in all areas, so I value different categories of my life, and I don't like one to majorly trump the other for long periods of time. I don't want work to always come first. I don't want my social life to always come first or love or whatever it may be. I want to have them evenly distributed as much as possible or as much as my schedule allows. For me, mental wellness would be investing in each of those categories significantly and not letting any drop off, but I will feel it if I lose track of any of those categories.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Balance is a really part and it's also a holistic [00:03:00] perspective that you're not just over functioning in one area at the expense of another area.

Guest: Definitely.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: How do you know when you feel mentally well? For you what is that like?

Guest: I feel internal cravings, sometimes it can be craving for a night in because my mental battery is a little bit drained. It can be craving some different kind of stimulation or like something that's different from work. I feel it. I'm very in tune if my brain feels overstimulated by one of these specific categories and I will literally have to do something different or I'll feel crazy.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Wow, that's interesting. It's really a self-awareness that you have where you turn inward or it almost sounds like it's a little bit more intense than this gentle process of turning inward.

Guest: I check in with myself all the time because that's how I feel best on the day to day. It's natural, which has been beneficial for me, but that does mean then I feel all the things all the time.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: There's been [00:04:00] a theme as I've been doing these podcasts. When you say checking in, some people call it inner conversation, but it really seems to be this emerging theme of how important it is to check in with ourself in order to manage our mental wellness. Stay on top of it and not let it get out of balance.

Guest: I notice that the most when I'm forced to be alone. Sometimes when I'm alone, it is the most refreshing and recharging time and I know that I'm feeling good because I've now invested in all these other categories, and now I'm investing in myself, and it's cyclical. If I'm alone and I feel uneasy, or I feel like a weird pit in my stomach, then I'll be like, okay. This does not feel recharging and refreshing. This feels like I haven't put something into one of these other categories and I need to figure out what that is. It's like a puzzle so that I can then proceed in that direction so I can feel better.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Do you have a process that allows you to figure out what it is? ,

Guest: I'm working on a process. I'm still figuring myself out, I would say. But it's more just like a mental scan. I [00:05:00] try to figure out okay, normally its network based. Do I feel loved? Do I feel connected with my friends and family, first and foremost? Is there something that's bothering me at work right now that is just lingering in my mind that I either need to reprioritize or attend to right now? Am I eating well? Have I had enough water? Like just checking with my body needs. Have I slept enough? Could I be hormonal? There's so many things I have to check into to see if I'm doing okay.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: That's great. What we really hope your 25 adolescence starts at 12 ends at 24, 25. To have this kind of self-awareness as you move into young adulthood is terrific. I'm super interested in your experience in sales especially because it wasn't something that you had planned on. Tell us a little bit about the work that you're doing.

Guest: Luckily, for me, sales feels really rewarding. I think before I got into sales, I never considered it because there was this idea that sales [00:06:00] was sleazy or that there was some stereotype associated with it, and I don't know why I thought that. When I realized that what I'm interested in is interacting with people and helping people or representing a product that I can stand behind, then I got excited about it. I would not be a good vacuum salesperson because I just don't care. But with my product itself, I feel like there's a lot of value in what I'm doing. I also like depth in my interactions and conversations with people, and when I'm selling homes, I get that on an extreme level because I have to know what their pain is, what are they experiencing in their day-to-day? What is prompting them to change their situation? Drastically, because moving stresses people out more than a lot of other things. You have to get into you want to leave your current situation. Why is that? What does this new home look like for you? What would be the solutions to your day-to-day problems that would make you happier and feel excited about your living situation going

forward? So, it feels meaningful [00:07:00] in that way. It feels like there's depth because you form a deeper connection with your clients when they trust you to tell you these things about their lives.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: It's interesting when we think of work and it's not something that is connected to real estate, just in general. People can have a job, people can have a career, people can have a calling. I used to come home and take a half day off when the person cleaned my chimney because his calling was really cleaning people's chimneys. He did it with such joie de vivre. He knew fires helped families feel warm and cozy, and he loved cleaning people's chimneys. That's what you're reminding me of, part of what helps your mental wellness is that this feels meaningful to you. It feels like a calling, like I get to work with people who are stressed because buying a home is stressful, but it's also a happy thing at the same time.

Guest: Definitely. Feeling like I can be a big part of [00:08:00] someone's new stage in their life feels meaningful to me. You build relationships where they're Hey, as soon as my new home is built, I want to invite you over for dinner. The gratitude that people feel when they find the right solution is very rewarding. Especially because I'm 25, I'm younger, I may not, be married for 15 years. I might not have multiple kids. I might not be able to relate in those ways. But to feel like even from where I'm coming from in my stage of life, to be able to give that to other people and connect with them at where they are makes me feel like I've accomplished something and that I'm good at this.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: It's interesting because you said a few minutes ago that your impression of sales is that they were sleazy and now you're in sales and you are saying it's so meaningful. How did you get your mind to open up to something that the impression you had was pretty off base.

Guest: You cannot mislead people in this specific line of work. It would ruin something so [00:09:00] big for them. It would make them unhappy in a long-term way. For my reputation, for the company's reputation, for their longevity and livelihood and happiness with their biggest financial decision that they make in their lives, I don't even feel like I can make a mistake because it would be such a strong disservice to them. So, there is that stress where I feel like I have to be the absolute smartest and best and on it at all times so I can set the right expectations, because if I set any wrong expectation, the gravity feels so much heavier. I actually feel great about that because it means that I can really stand behind my actions in this job. There is no kind of sleaziness or whatever that is. If there is an accident that I have to own up to and have to, speak on and make better and correct.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: It's really this one part that says, this is so meaningful to me because of the importance of the purchase, but also along with the importance of the purchase I hear you feeling a lot of accountability. That [00:10:00] must feel stressful. If you're part of you saying I can't make a mistake that is a lot of stress to carry 40 hours a week or however many hours a week you work. What do you do for that part of the job that is quite stressful?

Guest: I think time in this job has helped me so much in understanding things so much better. One, it's product knowledge that comes with time to make sure that I know the material, but then it also comes to understanding people and their reactions to stressful situations because they're actually sometimes may not be anything that's gone wrong. It could be a miscommunication, a misinterpretation, and so learning how to figure out what the true issue is, whether it is outside of themselves or inside of themselves. Learning that, has helped me then just get better and avoid a lot of these situations going forward where there aren't those types of miscommunications. But, say something has legitimately gone wrong. It's not always in my relationship with them. It could be the wrong shower door was installed. They're building a home. There's so many [00:11:00] pieces, so many trade partners, construction team, the design center team, we're all a team. I think it's then trying to rally the troops and the sources to say, Hey, maybe one of us made a mistake along the way, but we are all committed to giving you the best experience that you can have. So, we as a team, make it right going forward if there has truly been a mistake. So, knowing that I have the support from my company and my team helps me a lot. For me personally, there were plenty of moments where I had panics, like full panic moments of, oh my gosh, like they're so upset and I don't know what to do about it, and I need to make this right. You lose sleep over it. You get a pit in your stomach. It's the worst feeling. I think learning from it every time and understanding how to make people happier and how to make things right. And knowing that you have the ability to do so takes a lot of that weight off of my shoulders.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: You're now three and a half years into this career, profession, calling, and [00:12:00] I often say it takes five years to really become excellent at something. That's what I hear you saying is that at the beginning it was really hard. Can you go back to the beginning and what that felt like for you?

Guest: It was like drinking from a fire hose because with a home we have different collections and different price points. We have different options that we offer, and then those options are constantly changing as we're adapting to the market. Then there's construction knowledge and then there's timelines and

there's deposit structures, and there is everything that is one, constantly changing or two just niche to that specific home collection or that specific community or that specific area. There's so many things to know. I'm lucky that my company trains us for three months before we get into the role. A lot of different home builders don't take people right out of college because they want people who just already know the stuff. So, I felt [00:13:00] grateful that I was given a training program straight out of college that could teach me these things. I didn't feel even remotely comfortable for the first year because there was so much to know. And I think that I'm a smart person, and it was so difficult. When you know the answer, as soon as someone asks you without having to say, oh, let me figure that out and get back to you. That would feel like mini rewards along the way where I'd be like, okay, I can see progress within myself on a day-to-day, and that was encouraging.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: I am so glad that you said that you didn't feel at all comfortable that it was very uncomfortable in that first year. I hear this a lot and one of the concerns I have with young people is that they don't want to feel the discomfort, so they bypass these kinds of opportunities. That just the nature of them is a fire hose experience. It's not that the boss is being mean. It's not that the company's being insensitive. It's that the first couple years of work are really a lot to learn. How did you [00:14:00] cope with the discomfort? What helped you be able to not say, this is too hard, I'm going to quit.

Guest: I think there were two elements. One was perspective and the other was gratitude. Perspective being, I'm young, so when you're younger, that's the time to take risks, and I can still allow myself to figure myself out through this job. If this isn't the right job for me because I am not good at it and can never become good at it and don't like it, then I can get out and find something else. This wasn't my degree to begin with. But, if I am good or if I have the potential to be, then this is something that I need to stick with. Then, when I figured out, I think I can be good in this job, I then needed to focus on all the great parts of it to allow myself to feel the most comfortable staying in it. It would be things as small as my work hours being 11 to six. I never drive during rush hour. I never hit traffic and I would be like, yay. I'm so excited about that. Or, since [00:15:00] I work at 11, I can wake up at eight and I can always work out in the morning before work. I don't have to wake up at five in the morning to get my workout in. So, it was gratitude for that kind of thing. Also, I work weekends and a lot of young people might not like working weekends, so I would say, Hey, no. I don't have to get in until 11. I can hang out with my friends the night before and still have a good work day, and I'm grateful that when I go in on those weekends, those are my busiest days, so I know that I'm getting something good out of being at work on those days. And then on my days off being Mondays and Tuesdays, look, I can go grocery shopping and there's not a line I

can go to a doctor's appointment and not have to request off. Focusing on those things that could be spun positively or negatively and just eliminating the negative completely. Having to focus on the positive.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: That's excellent because perspective is really important where you were able to see the whole picture and understand that while the fire hose was coming, you didn't have the fire hose 24- [00:16:00] 7. Your 40 hour a week job and the other parts and the way the job structured really gave you some things that mattered a lot. You know this from the program that you went through at the junior high we talked a lot about in adolescence, we answered the question, Who Am I? Part of what I hear you saying is you went into this field really with curiosity. I'll do this. I was a marketing major. What did you think you might do?.

Guest: I thought that I would maybe get into PR, specifically. I wanted to represent a company and represent them in some way. This is a super similar kind of concept.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Your idea is PR, which makes sense of what I know of you. You'd be great in PR for sure. Then this opportunity comes, you're not quite sure you can do it. You're still answering the question, Who Am I? Am I a person that can do this kind of job that has unique stresses to it? One of those is that I'm assuming you work on commission. I would think that's quite stressful. I want you to talk a little bit about those [00:17:00] early years when you were learning the job and you worked on commission, how you mentally managed that stress of not having a paycheck that was a certain amount every week.

Guest: I have friends who have, said to me that they could never do a job that was commission based because of the stress of it. Again, that's one of those things that you can look at positively or negatively. So, the way that I looked at it was, this is a motivator to work. My job allows me to be very self-sufficient. It's almost like running my own business with my company's product, and I am expected to be a self-starter. And I was like since no one is looking over my shoulder at all times, this is the dangling carrot to say, Hey, if you don't put anything into this, you are not getting anything out of it. But also knowing that if I do work, I will see reward. Having enough self-assuredness to say, I know that I'm smart [00:18:00] and I know that I can learn and grow and that I like to do that. I believe then as long as I keep a steady state of work and effort in this job, I will receive a steady state of reward, financial and otherwise back. That's what I would tell myself the whole time.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Now three and a half years into it, what would you say about working on commission?

Guest: I'm lucky that real estate has been a lucrative profession for me and for a lot of people. I would say I just had to learn to be really intentional about saving money as I got it. I remember reading a book called *The Automatic Millionaire* right out of school where it was basically telling you save and anything that's left over can be your fun. Just automate your investments and things like that. I decided, okay, I'm right out of college. I have no money. I don't have a lifestyle yet. Let me create a lifestyle of saving and then whatever's left over, I will feel great because I've never had an [00:19:00] income like this. I've worked at restaurants, but this is finally an income and I'll just make due with whatever is left over. I set up my 401k to max out my 401k. I spoke with a financial advisor and made sure to have ongoing investments every month that I was pouring into, and then enough money for whatever other expenses I had for living and food and then after that was something that I could spend on travel or fun things that I wanted to do.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: What you're talking about is being very intentional. Very intentional from the very beginning. You couldn't count on what your income would be, but I loved what you said that you decided that you would have a lifestyle of savings. That's pretty un-American because we tend to like to have a lifestyle of spending. Of course, one of the things that really increases people's stress and anxiety in their life is when they don't manage their money well. I want to give you a lot of validation because so much of mental [00:20:00] wellness is really about being intentional. It's about thinking through, not just Friday night, what do I want to do? But when I set up a lifestyle, how do I want to set it up so I don't have stress? And that you are doing this at a very young age, probably quite different than many of your peers, and you're making very conscious choices. I use this image that mental wellness is this river where we're peaceful, we're calm, and we're alert. One bank is chaos. The other bank is rigidity. Chaos is when we don't have a plan for our money and rigidity is when we have too much of a plan and we don't ever enjoy anything. It sounds like you've really done the Inner work to set up your finances in a way that frees you from anxiety.

Guest: Yeah. I think that is probably the best way to do it to counteract commission checks that are irregular, that makes me feel the most safe in my job. And if I were [00:21:00] to, lose my job at some point, then I know that I have time where I could go find something else that would bring me joy. I wouldn't be strapped to just have to jump into the next job, regardless of if I

thought it were right for me or not. It gives me freedom that makes me feel at peace.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: I'm also really fascinated because you entered real estate at the craziest time one could enter real estate right before the pandemic, correct? . . . What's that been like?

Guest: Oh my gosh, that was nuts. You had to learn a different style of the market, of the ebbs and the flows, and that's also what's fun about this job is that it's always changing. Before covid, I had just basically started and there were negotiations. You had to learn how to, I don't know, when people ask for discounts, how to have that conversation. Do we offer any? It was more of a normal market and then all of a sudden interest rates are down in the twos and everybody wants to buy a home, and suddenly you're in a seller's market where then a lot of our [00:22:00] company's policies had to get a bit stricter. And that was a bit different. That wasn't like working as sales muscle so much because it was more like taking orders. If someone's Hey, I'm here. I want this house here. I want this house. Which is such a phenomenal thing for me and my job. However, you then don't get to grow in your skillset. You're just trying to manage your pipeline of people. Now then with the market kind of shifting back and interest rates going back up, the people who then didn't want to work on their skillset along the way will struggle more at this time because it's no longer order taking. You always have to stay sharp with this job. Luckily enough, I really like learning new things in this job. I kind of embrace every new ebb and flow because again, I have to, or else I will no longer be happy. I have to just ride every wave as it comes and enjoy surfing. But yeah, it's been totally wacky the past three and a half years with all the changes.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: I would say [00:23:00] that from just listening to you, that one of your skills is that you like change.

Guest: Yeah, I think it can be mundane if there's no change and it doesn't challenge me as much. It's almost like I get to prove to myself that I am adaptable and flexible as I keep adjusting with the market. I will say this job has a lot of turnover. Sales can be a revolving door of new people coming in and then old people leaving and every time that someone else would leave, I would think to myself, okay, I think I've figured it out other people are struggling, but I rode this wave and it would almost be validating for me to say I made it work, and that makes me feel good.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: One of the things that we do in cultivating mental wellness is just to try to keep our spirit up, and I can feel your positive

spirit about this profession, and that isn't just because you lit a match three years ago and it seemed to stay lit. It feels to me like you're always leaning towards the light, towards the positive. These people are [00:24:00] leaving, these people are leaving. You're not catching should I leave? Actually, you're looking at them and trying to learn about why they're leaving and how you can do things differently.

Guest: I think it's such a mental game and I will say, so this past week I actually just won the award of Indianapolis Sales Counselor of the year and in the speech that was given they were mentioning my positivity, they said she starts her day with a smile and she ends her day with a smile. I knew that in a job that can be difficult for people mentally, with the highs and the lows and the stresses that we take on for our customers, I knew that something I could control that would set me apart was a positive mindset. Especially because if I want to have this job stability, I don't want to get fired. I need to make myself as a desirable of a teammate and of a sales counselor as possible. So, I just lean into the positivity and anytime I see someone else struggling with the [00:25:00] negativity, I stay as far away from it as I possibly can.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: But the positivity isn't, I think I'll just, repeat a mantra. What I hear you saying is it's about learning, it's about growing, it's about being curious. It's about figuring out this market, figuring out that market, figuring out this person. I think that we so underestimate how fun that is in life. We're in a period where there seems to be a lot of people who do work without engagement. They're just showing up, they're doing the job. I'm not surprised, congratulations, you won the award. It's quite remarkable, but I'm not surprised because as you talk about your profession, you're doing positivity, but it's really the spirit of, I want to learn how to do this. I want to get better at this. I want to accept the challenge and that it's okay if I don't know, but I can figure it out.

Guest: Taking everything as it comes and being excited for how I will grow selfishly, and then also then how I can use the tools to help [00:26:00] people in the future. It's always growing and changing, and that is exciting and motivating for.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: As we get ready to end, is there anything you haven't said about mental wellness and real estate that you think would be important?

Guest: With a job that is commission based, it can feel scary to then spend time away from work. Because you feel to make an income. I have to invest all of my time and energy into this one category, but truly because I'm interested in

balance, like we talked about in the very beginning, knowing that keeping my mental state calm is what makes me better in my job. I know that investing in my other categories will make me better at work, make me feel more at peace and more grounded so I can bring a better version of myself to work every day. I think it would just be never neglecting the other categories that need attention so that you are best in every aspect that you can be.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: I completely concur. Do you still sing?

Guest: I [00:27:00] do. I I've started doing gigs locally and as a kind of a side hustle, but really just something that is non-work related. That's all my own, a hobby of mine.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: That's great. And because I think singing is just one of the most natural ways that people can keep their mental wellness in a good place because music helps all of our spirits feel better. Mental wellness really is how do I keep my spirit in a calm, alert a peaceful and a happy place.

Guest: Yes. I have grown so much as a human in the last three and a half years with clients from all different ages and backgrounds and cultures. I've learned so much. I feel so much like I've grown into myself as an adult through this job, and I'm really grateful for it.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: That's great. Thank you so much for being on the podcast. I love touching base with you again and to see you all grown up and doing well. I'm not surprised because you were a pretty terrific junior high student, but it is really great to see you 11 years later.

Guest: Thank you so much for having me. This has been great.[00:28:00]

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Well, that was quite rewarding for me to see one of my former students. Here are my Inner Challenge insights from this Saleswoman of the Year.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Insight number one:

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: what are your cravings? No, I'm not talking about ice cream or pickles. I'm talking about what is it you really feel like doing? This young woman really encouraged us to use our self-awareness to turn inward and ask, do I need time alone? Do I need some time with my friends? Maybe I need sleep or a good movie.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Insight number two:

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: whether you're at work is a career, a job, or a calling, it is very possible that the first period of when you learn to do it will feel like a fire hose in your face! . This young woman really helps us understand how normal that is to persevere and to understand that we can do [00:29:00] hard things. Stay with it.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Insight number three:

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: perspective and gratitude. Who would've thought that would be the antidote for the fire hose in your face. To look at the positive. To gain perspective of a big learning curve, what is it that's going well? What is it that you like? Even if it means that you're not driving in rush hour traffic. When we have perspective that leans towards the positive gratitude often follows. That is a winning combination.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Insight number four:

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: are you a boss or a mentor to a young career professional? If so, don't underestimate how difficult it is and offer some support, a pat on the back or maybe take 'em out to lunch and help them understand that feeling overwhelmed at all the newness [00:30:00] is normal. This too shall pass.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Insight number five:

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: so often we're given the impression that positivity is just a mantra. Actually, it's an intentional mindset that one cultivates throughout their life. Today's guest helps us understand how she has done it in this new career of hers. She leaned into being curious. She was open to learning, and then learning, and then learning, and then relearning. She stayed engaged by really seeing her work as a challenge. She stayed engaged by leaning on her team in times when she was lost and a little bit confused. Yes, positivity doesn't mean everything goes your way. It actually means that you dig deep and help things move your way no matter what happens in front of you.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Insight number six:

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: if you'd like more [00:31:00] information on things talked about in today's podcast, check out Podcast number one: what is Mental Wellness Podcast number five: how do I train my brain and tend to my

Mind? Or podcast 13: are you connected to your spirit? I am always looking for guests, so please email me at mj@mjmurrayvachon.com

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Thanks for listening, and as you move through your week, think about the positive aspects of your job. And if you pass a lemonade stand, stop and buy a couple lemonade. Who knows where that young person could end up selling.