00;00;00;00 - 00;00;22;26
Pascale Diverlus
What's up everybody? My name is Pascale Diverlus. I am a writer, educator, founder of Living Practices consulting and one half of your hosting team for Speak, Unspoken.

00;00;22;28 - 00;00;35;24
Rodney Diverlus
And my name is Rodney Diverlus, an artist and a changemaker with an interest in the most transformative ideas. Okay, we can't have a podcast about health and not talk about social media.

00;00;35;27 - 00;00;49;16
Pascale Diverlus
Yeah absolutely. It feels like when you log on, I don't know if you ever go on TikTok and you see so many differences like therapists or mental health practitioners, like either giving out advice or talking about mental health. It's like it's very, it's a lot.

00;00;49;18 - 00;00;52;00
Rodney Diverlus
No, I don't, I don't know because I don't have TikTok.

00;00;52;01 - 00;00;52;19
Pascale Diverlus
Oh yes.

00;00;52;21 - 00;01;13;02
Rodney Diverlus
I turned into this for my own mental health. And when the world was burning in 2020, I just deliberately avoided downloading because I felt like I was already overstimulated. And, although it's a great distraction for some people, it would have just been additional stimulation that I did not need.

00;01;13;04 - 00;01;21;13
Pascale Diverlus
Yeah, I'm not going to hold you like I definitely avoided it for like maybe all the 2020 and 2021 came and I was like, oh, we're still here? I'm a little bored.

00;01;21;15 - 00;01;22;04
Rodney Diverlus
And then you jumped on?

00;01;22;05 - 00;01;23;10
Pascale Diverlus
I did, I did.

00;01;23;12 - 00;01;24;23
Rodney Diverlus
And now are you hooked?

00;01;24;25 - 00;01;38;03
Pascale Diverlus
I was hooked for a minute. Like for sure. There were. Maybe there's like, I want to say it's 2022 and, you know, that year, that where I was like, oh, it's been two hours. I'm just saying, I have been scrolling.

00;01;38;03 - 00;02;01;09
Rodney Diverlus
Okay, well, you calculate the amount of time spent. I mean, generally across the board, though, in the grand scheme of content. What I appreciate that TikTok does, though, is that there are two sides. You can go on the side where you just want mindless entertainment and challenges. But there are also a lot of discoveries and curiosities and people posing important questions on that platform.

00;02;01;17 - 00;02;22;10
Pascale Diverlus
Yeah, I think that's what I found that I liked is like there was like advice or there was like recipes. There were things that I found useful. The thing is, you have to sift through to find the useful. You have to sift through at least five dancing videos to the same song. Yeah. Like it is.

00;02;22;13 - 00;02;42;13
Rodney Diverlus
All in the videos. I mean, this is an aside. It's not. The dancing videos are not even your. It's like the same choreography. It's done by a million people. And I would actually, I would say it's like repack. It's like mass produced. And there's a part of me that actually feels like that's devoid of creativity. But what has been creative is the original thought, like we said.

00;02;42;16 - 00;03;03;05
Rodney Diverlus
And so, you know, this conversation that we had was actually really great to hear someone who IRL is thinking about these things and they happen to be sharing them online, and the ways that, like online, then becomes an amplifier for the very questions and topics and curiosities that she has in her practice.

00;03;03;07 - 00;03;14;02
Pascale Diverlus
Absolutely. And bringing it and making it significantly more accessible to like bringing things that many may not have access to on an avenue that they may have access to.

00;03;14;08 - 00;03;26;17
Rodney Diverlus
True. And then we talked about her research for her book. We talked about BetterHelp. We talked about and trends that she saw, concerns that she saw, but also some very useful advice. Oh, very useful advice.

00;03;26;18 - 00;03;30;18

Pascale Diverlus
How are we forgetting this is when you also sang the wrong song.

00;03;30;21 - 00;03;39;00
Rodney Diverlus
Oh I did, yeah. Okay. For the record, everybody, I do know that My Boo was by Alicia Keys. For the record.

00;03;39;00 - 00;03;44;19
Pascale Diverlus
Or like or we were referencing one person and Rodney singing a song that we were like that, I don't think. And that's.

00;03;44;19 - 00;03;44;24
Rodney Diverlus
That’s not the right one.

00;03;45;01 - 00;03;46;14
Pascale Diverlus
That's not, that's not.

00;03;46;16 - 00;03;48;05
Rodney Diverlus
Just disregard that when we get to that. Right.

00;03;48;05 - 00;03;52;24
Pascale Diverlus
Yeah. Giggle along with me and Angelyn in the back. Okay.

00;03;52;26 - 00;03;54;01
Rodney Diverlus
Well you can.

00;03;54;04 - 00;04;14;06
Pascale Diverlus
Today's episode was actually super cool, super fun. We get to talk about social media and mental health. I remember reading a post that you had actually shared, Rodney, a minute ago, where you talked about how long you've been on social media. I don't know if we all think about that. The fact that, like, I got Facebook when I was, oh man, I want to say middle school.

00;04;14;09 - 00;04;19;18
Pascale Diverlus
Yeah. And that means I have spent a good chunk of my life over half of my life just on social media.

00;04;19;18 - 00;04;42;29
Rodney Diverlus

Absolutely. We're the bridge, the millennials we're the ones that have a little bit of life before. And a little bit after. And we were the guinea pigs actually, to learn and utilize our patterns to create this beast that is social media. And in this episode conversation, we talk about this in relation to mental health. We talked about how to care for each other IRL and what our practices that we need to embody.

00;04;43;01 - 00;04;46;12
Rodney Diverlus
I mean, we had a very good conversation with Simone Saunders.

00;04;46;15 - 00;05;06;15
Pascale Diverlus
Yeah. We got to know a little bit about her. If you're not following her TikTok, please do. It is actually quite entertaining, but to be able to see somebody who is talking from this profession, you know, bringing really helpful tips, but then also getting to see what she likes in beauty, like different aspects of her life. That is actually really cool to discover.

00;05;06;17 - 00;05;20;24
Rodney Diverlus
And Simone Saunders is an entrepreneur, licensed therapist, a speaker and a content creator. She is the founder and director of The Cognitive Corner, a thriving psychological practice group dedicated to transforming the mental health landscape.

00;05;20;28 - 00;05;34;11
Pascale Diverlus
This episode of Speak, Unspoken is brought to you by Across Boundaries with support from Ontario Health. We hope you enjoyed this episode.

00;05;34;14 - 00;05;56;03
Pascale Diverlus
Thank you for being with us today, Simone. I'm going to jump right in. Like I mentioned, I was perusing, looking through the social media and it really was fascinating. You have really brilliantly bridged social media. And you know, some of us use social media. I use social media for frivolousness, for dancing videos, for recipes.

00;05;56;05 - 00;06;11;06
Pascale Diverlus
But you've done something really brilliantly and brought urgent conversation surrounding mental health. And so take us back to the start of your social media career or your TikTok career. What made you feel that you needed to bring these conversations to that social media?

00;06;11;09 - 00;06;36;27
Simone Saunders
Yeah, absolutely. So this takes us back to December 2019. And initially, the reason that I started was because I noticed that there were some mental health accounts starting to pop up, but not very many people of color, essentially. And so I was like, okay, I think that that's an important addition to this conversation. And so that's where my initial focus was.

00;06;36;29 - 00;06;47;01
Simone Saunders
And so initially it was just infographics. I didn't post my name, I didn't post my picture. I didn't post anything really about myself. It was just psycho ed posts.

00;06;47;05 - 00;06;47;29
Pascale Diverlus
Interesting.

00;06;48;03 - 00;07;13;19
Simone Saunders
And then slowly over time, I then sort of attached myself to the account and talked a little bit more about the therapeutic process. And then I believe it was February 2021 when I joined TikTok, and that grew fairly fast. And so I think that's really what sort of catapulted social media, both Instagram and TikTok.

00;07;13;22 - 00;07;26;13
Pascale Diverlus
And so you saw a difference once you put yourself in front of the camera, I guess. And so what made you do that jump like, what made you do it? And then what did you see happen as a result of it?

00;07;26;16 - 00;07;51;25
Simone Saunders
I think because number one, people were wondering like, who is who is behind this account? And so I think introducing myself in that way in the beginning, especially, was still more of a distance. I had my profile picture of my face and I had an introductory post, but still in the beginning it was all psycho ad and then TikTok is a video platform, so you don't really have much of a choice other than to sort of put yourself out there.

00;07;51;26 - 00;08;19;16
Simone Saunders
Yeah. And so I noticed that people connect a lot with for sure, like the psycho educational grad posts. But I think a lot of people resonate with you just talking to them. And of course, with social media, it's not necessarily someone talking to you specifically, but I think it gives that personalized feeling. And talking about mental health in a conversational way can be easier than reading something. Reading just a post.

00;08;20;04 - 00;08;22;12
Pascale Diverlus
That makes sense. Yeah.

00;08;22;15 - 00;08;40;10
Rodney Diverlus
Do you see this as social media as an extension of your practice, I'm assuming, or is this something that also has sort of, like a personal curiosity? I'm curious. Yeah. If you approach

social media from like a professional lens or if it is an extension, really, of a blurring between your professional and personal selves.

00;08;41;11 - 00;09;18;11
Simone Saunders
Initially it was strictly professional. And then I would say now that it's more of a blend, I think especially once I opened my practice, I think I really thought about who I want to be as a therapist and how I want to represent myself. And I think for so long there's been sort of like this binary of you are professional or not professional, you are a therapist or not a therapist, and people show up in this specific way and in my practice with my clients, I show up with my personality, and I think that I like to express myself through the things that I wear.

00;09;18;11 - 00;09;31;11
Simone Saunders
And I think all of those things make me who I am, both as a person but also a practitioner. And so that's sort of where I started to see, like, okay, I do want to blend these two things because that just makes sense for who I am and how I practice.

00;09;31;11 - 00;09;53;18
Pascale Diverlus
Yeah. And what I will say too, is watching the kind of transition from just talking about the practice of talking to a little bit more about fashion and things of that nature. It brings a level of levity to conversations that could feel daunting or overwhelming. And so in the last four years, I was doing that math really quickly in the last four years.

00;09;53;18 - 00;10;08;09
Pascale Diverlus
And the community that you have built both on Instagram and TikTok, what trends are you seeing emerge from your time on both apps? Are there a particular demographics, particular type of people that are feeling, seeing or disclosing how they are being impacted by your content?

00;10;08;11 - 00;10;36;11
Simone Saunders
Yeah, I would say that I mean, the first thing that comes to mind is I was like late diagnosed with ADHD, about a year, a year and a half ago, I think it was now. And so that's something I shared very openly on social media. And so one of the things I've definitely noticed is especially black women, a lot of them are messaging me and commenting and saying, like, I see myself in a lot of these different things, that I didn't realize that some of these experiences that I had might align with this.

00;10;36;14 - 00;10;58;09
Simone Saunders
And so I think especially with just people of color being able to resonate with not only ADHD content, but a lot of the mental health content when, as we know, mental health therapy, all of that is much more stigmatized in ethnic communities. So I think that's one of the biggest things that I've noticed from my account.

00;10;58;11 - 00;11;18;11
Rodney Diverlus
Yeah. I mean, I think like right away from your account, there is an approachability that definitely helps that destigmatization. And I think, you know, there's something around. And I'm very curious to get your thoughts on this. I have noticed an increase in mental health conversations online, but there's a portion of them that are done by experts.

00;11;18;17 - 00;11;55;27
Rodney Diverlus
And then there's a slew of sort of self diagnoses, self critical content. And I do see an impact that I'm seeing is just how quickly people are to diagnose themselves and others and what they've been learning and it's showing up in relationships as well. And I mean, there's a whole thing around therapy speak relationships in which if we're talking therapy talk, I'm curious from you, from you, what do you see as potential harms or cautions that can exist by bringing awareness or language around mental health issues and diagnosis is to an avenue where there are also dancing videos.

00;11;55;29 - 00;12;22;05
Simone Saunders
I think that I agree that there's definitely been an increase in self-diagnosis, and conversations both from people from all ends of the spectrum. I think that there are positive and negative aspects to it. I think the positives are that not everyone has access to a diagnosis. And so I think that being able to be diagnosed and beyond medication and all those different things is a privilege for a lot of folks.

00;12;22;07 - 00;12;44;00
Simone Saunders
So for other folks who might not have access to that, and still this is their reality, that might be really helpful for them as far as looking at a new way to cope or a new way to try and experiment with their, you know, different strategies of everyday life. But I also think that in a lot of ways there's an overcorrection happening.

00;12;44;00 - 00;13;07;23
Simone Saunders
So I think we went from mental health being not really a conversation at all to our overcorrection of, you know, therapy, speaking all those different things, sort of infiltrating relationships and sometimes in a harmful way. And so I think it's more so about how do we maintain balance. And I think social media self-care and social media hygiene is a really big part of that.

00;13;07;23 - 00;13;25;24
Simone Saunders
Not everything is going to apply to you. And so just because you don't like your ex partner doesn't mean that they're a narcissist. Just because someone doesn't agree with you doesn't mean that they're gaslighting you. So I think it's really about understanding what do these terms actually mean outside of the hype of social media?

00;13;26;00 - 00;14;04;10

Rodney Diverlus
Yeah, yeah, I really like that. I mean, I've seen things where people are like, I'm so OCD and I'm like, I, I don't I'm you might just be needed. I think that folks who experience that would talk about how this is not something that we get glamorised. What I do like though I think I do like that you talked about that balance because I, I have noticed, particularly in spaces where there's primarily dudes, the sort of watershed social media of the last ten years, watershed moment of like opening up conversations I've definitely seen in my lifetime, particularly dudes have more space to actually be like the words trauma come up more openly.

00;14;04;10 - 00;14;17;09
Rodney Diverlus
Like people are. I think social media, you're right around that balance that creates space for people to at least be like, well, I have experienced these things. I can talk about them. I might not have the perfect language for them, but at least I see everybody talking about them. I might as well open up.

00;14;17;09 - 00;14;38;00
Pascale Diverlus
Yeah, I do see like you know, I have these conversations with my loved ones and we talk about, you know, one of my loved ones particularly, you know, studying social work and kind of has that background and they particularly feel the frustration of the language now that has become kind of everyday language. And, you know, I'm of the mind that we lose some.

00;14;38;00 - 00;14;58;05
Pascale Diverlus
But what do we also gain by people just knowing more and understanding themselves in ways that they may not have before, you know what do we lose or gain by someone being able to understand why they are acting the way that they are or why they are, you know, doing the things that they are or even just resonating, like seeing someone's content and being like, oh, this resonates with me.

00;14;58;05 - 00;15;04;11
Pascale Diverlus
I'll think about this a little differently. And I think it's like one of the, you know, we'll have to do one of those circles called when they overlap.

00;15;04;10 - 00;15;7;09
Rodney Diverlus
Venn diagram, a Venn diagram.

00;15;8;05 - 00;15;17;11
Pascale Diverlus
Thank you. I've been trying to understand, kind of like what are the pros and cons of it? You mentioned something that was very important, though, the kind of social media hygiene of it.

00;15;17;14 - 00;15;35;16
Pascale Diverlus

I want to hear about how we are hygienic and the day and age where we are asking people every kind of work you're doing to be on social media or to do social media and, you know, dance even though you're doing these really serious work or so forth. How can we practice being more hygienic?

00;15;35;19 - 00;16;00;08
Simone Saunders
I think number one, taking a look at how much time you are spending on social media? I think that it's easy to get sucked into this TikTok Instagram vortex. I'm a victim of that as well. But I think that taking a look at okay how can I set limits around how much time I spend on this app, what is the content that I'm typically consuming as well, and how is the content making me feel?

00;16;00;19 - 00;16;31;01
Simone Saunders
So when you're consuming self-help content all the time, if the content is perpetually making you feel like you, there's something wrong with you or there's something that you have to work on consistently, then it's probably also not doing a lot for you. So I think it's about that balance of, okay, if you're on the self-help, self-help, side of TikTok or Instagram, how can you consume that content in a way that feels manageable, whether it's or if it's the funny videos or the cooking videos or whatever it might be.

00;16;31;03 - 00;16;35;16
Simone Saunders
So I think it's really all about a sense of balance.

00;16;35;19 - 00;16;55;03
Rodney Diverlus
I hear that, I mean, the pandemic really introduced this doomscrolling concept, and I, I, I found myself like, definitely in the last five years or some periods of time where like right now, the tariff talks, like earlier this year in January, I was like, I need to step off of this. Like I was deep into it. And I'm like, the whole world is ending.

00;16;55;03 - 00;17;12;28
Rodney Diverlus
Like, and it's not really helpful. I'm very curious, though. I mean, I have two very quick, quick questions for you on that. And I'm very curious if you're seeing, because social media is important, obviously, but I do notice a difference between like, okay, I will look at something and I will figure out, okay, these are the terms.

00;17;12;28 - 00;17;38;27
Rodney Diverlus
But then, you know, nothing replaces it. Also like talking to people in my life, loved ones, I actually also see I see, I see a therapist was a black woman thankfully. And I feel like I have to keep that part as well too. And I'm curious if you have any advice for listeners around how to take what is it that you know, you, the gems that you, and other sort of thought leaders are giving online and how to sort of take that off and apply it to the relationships in our lives.

00;17;40;02 - 00;18;19;07
Simone Saunders
I think that one of the things that I think is missing the most is grace for a lot of people. So I think with the resurgence of all these mental health terms, it can both be true that, yes, someone is gaslighting you and sometimes it's not an intentional harm. And so how do we balance, how do I give this person grace to say like, how can we repair this and have this conversation around this doesn't feel good, or this boundary that you crossed that didn't feel good to me and try and repair that versus this person did this, and then that's it.

00;18;19;09 - 00;18;46;06
Simone Saunders
Because I think that with the rise of, you know, talking about our mental health, I think in some ways we've become a little bit individualistic. And that has sort of risen a lot of the, you know, loneliness factors, I think, in society. And so I think there isn't a lot of, I guess, education on how to repair relationships when there's harm done, because inevitably harm will be done in relationships.

00;18;46;06 - 00;18;47;17
Simone Saunders
That's the nature of that.

00;18;47;19 - 00;19;02;25
Rodney Diverlus
I love how you say that. I mean, I saw something once that was like, we've now gone so much into self caring that we've just cut everybody else in our lives, and then we're like, oh.

00;19;02;28 - 00;19;25;13
Rodney Diverlus
I have a very quick question for you. BetterHelp. Yes. No. Maybe it's controversial. I know, I know, I say this okay, so let me just give context. I mean, give context. I'm a YouTube head. Like that's my platform of choice. And definitely three, four years ago it was every YouTuber like it's every YouTuber. Right now I'm seeing the pendulum swing and people will be like no.

00;19;25;13 - 00;19;49;15
Rodney Diverlus
And it's like, I don't know how to navigate. Is it a yes or no? I will say also that my therapist was in person and over the pandemic we switched to online and I thought that that shift was going to be very hard, I think because I already have a connection with her, it was somewhat okay. But the longer we go online, the more I'm like, I'm kind of just sitting right there staring at me.

00;19;49;15 - 00;19;54;18
Rodney Diverlus
You know, I kind of need your energy. Like your concern, your worry. I kind of want to see it right there.

00;19;55;02 - 00;19;56;05
Pascale Diverlus

You want her to hand you a tissue.

00;19;56;05 - 00;20;02;27
Rodney Diverlus
Yeah. But, like, you know what? Like, I think it's like, feel free to just give it. Give it us. Give it to us.

00;20;02;29 - 00;20;29;05
Simone Saunders
I would say I think that there's the conversations around therapy. I think there's BetterHelp and then there's virtual therapy. And like, BetterHelp is virtual therapy. But I think the conversations are a little bit different. I think some of the criticism that BetterHelp has seen has more to do with sometimes practitioners that may not be as present and as focused and, sometimes maybe not as qualified.

00;20;29;05 - 00;20;48;18
Simone Saunders
And therefore a lot of folks have found that sometimes it's been harmful versus I think the conversation around virtual therapy, I think, is different in the sense of is it the same as in-person therapy? No. Some people find it more convenient. Some people find it resonates a little bit more, but yeah, I think that they're two separate conversations.

00;20;48;18 - 00;21;10;16
Pascale Diverlus
Okay. I think that you do bring up something that is very important to kind of touch on as well in terms of and sometimes therapy as, like that means of healing or wellness can be harmful to people, right? They may be seeing folks who may not be qualified or, you know, if they don't look like them or represent very similar cultures or so forth.

00;21;10;18 - 00;21;23;14
Pascale Diverlus
And one of the A couple polls that I've actually seen you post about is how therapy is not a replacement for things that people should seek in their lives as well. So I'm hoping you can maybe touch on that specifically.

00;21;23;17 - 00;21;50;13
Simone Saunders
Yeah. I mean, I think therapy is a great, great addition to your toolbox. I don't think it is absolutely everything. So you can't go to therapy and not replace friendships that replace a romantic partnership that replace, you know, family relationships or hobbies or whatever it might be. So therapy, I think I sort of see it as like a stepping stone to perhaps you don't know how to really engage with friendships.

00;21;50;13 - 00;22;10;03
Simone Saunders
Perhaps those past traumas or whatever else it might be that prohibit you from, you know, making meaningful relationships, whether that's platonic or intimate. But ultimately, therapy

can't replace those things for you. So you do need those things in order to, you know, feel grounded in your life.

00;22;10;05 - 00;22;30;16
Pascale Diverlus
Absolutely, absolutely. It is a mechanism to also address harm or wrongdoing, but ultimately there's work that needs to go in addition to that. Like, you know, you ever see the statements there, you know, I've caused harm statements on the notes app. And they're like, I'm going to go to therapy. And that is a step. But you know what?

00;22;30;18 - 00;22;51;06
Pascale Diverlus
What else comes from this? Right. Like, how else are you actually, applying whatever it is that you're learning is also something that really comes to mind when I, when I hear you speaking, I'm also going to reference another one of your posts that really has resonated with me. And you say clearly, therapy is political. Can you speak to this and what it means to you?

00;22;51;08 - 00;23;21;22
Simone Saunders
Yeah, absolutely. Therapy's political because people's lives are political, right? So if we think about the presidential election, for example, right. That of course, impacts everyone in the states, but it impacts everyone elsewhere as well. So if I am a therapist that, you know, says that I'm apolitical or that therapy shouldn't impact or politics shouldn't impact therapy, then I'm likely going to be missing a core part of some of my clients.

00;23;21;29 - 00;23;55;01
Simone Saunders
So if I was the client, then it would end. Let's say I was living in the States. I would likely feel much more on edge living in a place where the president, very vocally, does not care about people who look like me vocally, is trying to take away the rights, the reproductive rights of women. So I think it's really important to be able to integrate a lot of those pieces into the therapeutic process, because otherwise you're just dealing with symptoms.

00;23;55;07 - 00;24;08;21
Simone Saunders
Rather than the core issues of what's going on with this person and looking at intersectionality. So what are all of the identities that this person has that might impact the way that they show up in the world?

00;24;08;23 - 00;24;30;09
Rodney Diverlus
I mean, I was a black queer person who went through a couple of therapists and, you know, I had a previous therapist that worked really well on paper. But when I was trying to, like, lament about the, like, state of the world because that was, you know, the state of the world was like connecting to all of the things in my life.

00;24;30;09 - 00;24;49;26

Rodney Diverlus
I felt like there was just a lack of even acknowledgment or understanding that, like, the state of the world impacts very much and triggers me and impacts how I move. And so it is, I can tell from a patient perspective, it changes the game. To have a therapist that can at least, at least validate that.

00;24;50;11 - 00;24;56;23
Pascale Diverlus
Yeah, and you can't separate what's happening in the world. You cannot. Yeah, absolutely.

00;24;56;25 - 00;25;32;29
Simone Saunders
I think one of the things about being a therapist is it requires you to sit with a lot of your own stuff. Right. And so when we look at the concept of like, therapy is political for a lot of folks, if you were to acknowledge that therapy is political, then you also have to work through how do I contribute to the systems of harm and sometimes it's very difficult to sit with clients in a space of like, okay, if I'm seeing, let's say, a white woman therapist and I'm talking about how difficult it is to be a black woman in this day and age, then she would have to be able to sit with that

00;25;32;29 - 00;25;58;29
Simone Saunders
discomfort to say like, how does it also feel to have a therapist that's a white woman. Is that a feeling for you in this space? And do you feel like I can connect with you in that way. And being able to have the open conversations of, I might not be able to connect with you in that way, but if the practitioner practices cultural responsiveness then they're able to sit with me in that.

00;25;59;02 - 00;26;01;14
Simone Saunders
And that's the most important thing.

00;26;01;17 - 00;26;28;02
Rodney Diverlus
Wow. I mean that what you just said is like, meta is really is it really is. And I think that that and I just know a lot of people are looking for that, that depth. I think the last decade, definitely the last five years has created a sense of awareness for a lot of people. And I think that particularly millennials, Gen Z, maybe a little bit Gen X, have realized that the world, the easy peasy world of the time, passes and it's it.

00;26;28;05 - 00;26;50;19
Rodney Diverlus
We're in it. And you know, this last few years between Covid and the global uprising against police brutality, where we're kind of just seeing the impacts of these unprecedented times that we've all been living in and. Right, it's how many times you see signs and your unprecedented days. And there might be an economic moment, oh, another economic moment.

00;26;50;19 - 00;27;13;02
Rodney Diverlus
And, like many millennials, I started my adulthood in a recession and so I'm like, oh, lovely. Another one. In your opinion, though, what can we foresee as impacts in the upcoming years from living through these most recent unprecedented moments? And an additional question is, how do mental health practitioners and agencies prepare and be ready?

00;27;13;05 - 00;27;34;08
Simone Saunders
I would say now we're already starting to see the impacts. I think that there's a lot of existential dread and a lot of existential anxiety that I'm already seeing in so many clients. And that's an experience that even consulting with other practitioners as well, that just generally folks are feeling and like this feeling of like the goalpost is always moving.

00;27;34;08 - 00;27;59;05
Simone Saunders
So even if I get to this place, then now, okay, things are more expensive or now my degree doesn't matter. Now it's harder to get a job. Now it's harder to get a house now it's more expensive to have a family, whatever it might be. So I think as far as what practitioners can expect, I think sort of sitting with the fact that, like it sucks, it really sucks.

00;27;59;10 - 00;28;11;10
Simone Saunders
How society sort of is shaping up to be and how our nervous systems sort of have to be on overdrive in order to survive in the society that we have right now.

00;28;11;13 - 00;28;28;27
Rodney Diverlus
Yeah, yeah. I mean, I feel like I talk to older folk who are like, no, you're not tripping out. It was significantly more stable in our end. Take older folks your age, you know, I can afford x, y, z. My work was like this. I knew what to expect, and I could just kind of lock into life.

00;28;28;27 - 00;28;45;08
Rodney Diverlus
And I really like how you talk about that goal post. Great. I feel that it's like the goal is to make this much, and then you make this much and you're like, that's not even useful. The goal is get this checkmark and you get the checkmark, the degrees you get the things, you get the good job, you get all of this thing.

00;28;45;08 - 00;28;46;25
Rodney Diverlus
And you're like, I am still struggling.

00;28;46;25 - 00;28;48;20
Pascale Diverlus
Yeah, yeah, yeah.

00;28;48;22 - 00;29;12;01

Simone Saunders
I think to add on to that, seeing around like the political climate, a lot of things go backwards. I think we're also going to see people sort of living in more of a hypervigilant state. And I think from a mental health standpoint or a mental health practitioner standpoint, it's difficult because a lot of our inclination is like, okay, how do we fix this?

00;29;12;01 - 00;29;20;23
Simone Saunders
How do we process this? But I think that that is a very normal response to living in fear.

00;29;20;25 - 00;29;42;27
Pascale Diverlus
The conditions. And this came up in a previous conversation that we had, but the conditions we are living in are conditions that are maddening, that we are, you know, feeling the impact of just actually existing in, in, in our world, in our world, that is a further they're becoming destabilized like you talked about the tariffs. We just finished an election here in Ontario.

00;29;42;27 - 00;29;49;17
Pascale Diverlus
We're heading into a federal election like these are conditions that heighten that can heighten anxiety.

00;29;49;19 - 00;30;09;18
Rodney Diverlus
I mean, the tariffs, the tariff, the tariffs. I mean, like it's literally existential I mean, it depends on the province that you're in to like these are like but if they do get implemented in their full scope, they were talking like deep recession. And for a lot of people economic uncertainty. We're already economically uncertain, right.

00;30;09;19 - 00;30;26;28
Rodney Diverlus
Even with full time steady work. And so I definitely was definitely my doom scroll personally. And I think also for many of us who don't like that I'm not an economist. I'm not, it's not my world. You didn't expect I did not stick stats. No I didn't. I knew I wanted to kick ball change very early.

00;30;26;29 - 00;30;29;18
Pascale Diverlus
You didn’t either, Simone? You didn't take stats?

00;30;29;21 - 00;30;30;28
Rodney Diverlus
No right?

00;30;31;00 - 00;30;31;17
Simone Saunders
I wouldn’t have a degree.

00;30;31;18 - 00;30;51;12
Rodney Diverlus
You know, like 100%. So when you hear things like Covid was like global health and you're like, what is that? And tariffs are like macroeconomics and you're like, what is that? Like, just what I do. Well, right. And each province is going to be hit so differently. So anyways, I just think that that's causing a lot of the doom and gloom.

00;30;51;14 - 00;31;12;17
Rodney Diverlus
You're getting older, but you're not getting more stable. And so I just think like content like yours and the work that you're doing of, at least giving people tools to like, do a lot of the, the self work and that when I'm online, I'm not just be I'm taking in some things that are like gems that I can take in and, and, and reflect on is so important.

00;31;12;19 - 00;31;37;27
Pascale Diverlus
And that to switch gears a little bit, but switching gears, let's switch gears. Switching gears a little bit, we're doing this podcast in collaboration with a mental health agency Across Boundaries. And so, we've been thinking and talking a lot about the sector as a whole. And so particularly we really wanted to highlight the experiences and the realities for black folks that are trying to access and navigate through the mental health sector.

00;31;37;29 - 00;31;53;04
Pascale Diverlus
And so from your vantage point and also probably from your province to like where you are situated, what gaps do you see in the mental health sector that exist for black folks and black communities? And how do these gaps exasperate issues that black folks may be experiencing?

00;31;53;07 - 00;32;02;25
Simone Saunders
I mean, I think right off the bat, there's I think it's it's less than 5% of mental health practitioners are black so that 's that stats.

00;32;03;00 - 00;32;05;12
Rodney Diverlus
Less than 5%.

00;32;05;14 - 00;32;13;14
Simone Saunders
Yeah. That's based on North American standards. So yeah, yeah.

00;32;13;16 - 00;32;20;14
Rodney Diverlus
So wow. No, I'm making sure I'm still sitting with that. I'm like wow that's wild.

00;32;20;17 - 00;32;59;24
Simone Saunders

Yeah. So finding a black practitioner in itself is difficult regardless of where you live. Especially of course, in Alberta because it's predominantly white. I think that there's a lot more diversity now in recent years than, let's say, a decade ago. But it's difficult to find a black practitioner. So I think that in itself impacts folks. And there was a study done actually in Ontario, and the actual study is leaving me, but it was something like, there's a large portion of the population that they had researched that had said that they wanted to go to therapy or had tried to go to therapy, but they didn't have a practitioner that either looked like them

00;32;59;24 - 00;33;29;23
Simone Saunders
or that was culturally responsive enough to be able to sort of integrate their identity into their mental health care. And it was something like 45% or 50% it was up there. And so I think that it's important for black folks and just people of color in general to be able to see themselves in this space because ultimately, if you don't, then what you assume is that, like, oh, that's not for me.

00;33;29;26 - 00;33;51;24
Simone Saunders
And it doesn't even have to be conscious. That's not for me. It's just a if you don't ever see teachers who are black growing up, you assume that's not for me. Yeah. If you don't see people who are actors or actresses that are black, that's not for me. And so mental health is so personalized, but it is for everyone.

00;33;51;24 - 00;34;16;16
Simone Saunders
And it's very important that the black community and other racialized communities have access to that care. And so I think my focus for my personal practice has been less of how can I have as many black practitioners, but more so how can I have as many practitioners that are culturally responsive? And so how do we keep those conversations open and keep that learning and growing open?

00;34;16;16 - 00;34;22;27
Simone Saunders
Because the reality is right now that there isn't enough. And so what do we do with what we have?

00;34;24;16 - 00;34;54;19
Rodney Diverlus
Well I mean I mean as you're speaking I was thinking about an irony like and this is you know getting into like stereotypes and whatnot. But ironically I feel like particularly black folks are called to provide emotional support for a lot of folks all the time, especially black women like black women just every day. Regular black women hold a lot of emotional support, community support, space for people to vent, to rant, like to really hold people.

00;34;54;19 - 00;34;57;21
Rodney Diverlus
And so I find that quite ironic.

00;34;57;21 - 00;35;19;06
Pascale Diverlus
Yeah. Right. Right. And then can you maybe also speak to the sense of maybe like responsibility that also falls on black therapists and practitioners to help and kind of addressing that, that that gap that exists for black folks. What is it like to be a black practitioner, especially when you're seeing black clients and knowing that they're like, oh my God, you know, I finally found one.

00;35;19;12 - 00;35;23;07
Pascale Diverlus
Like, do you feel that extra weight that falls on you?

00;35;23;09 - 00;35;47;18
Simone Saunders
Yeah, I think sometimes. And I think it's really about balancing, making sure that you are also taking care of yourself because I think that black practitioners can't fill the void of, you know, let's even say like 60% of therapists that we don't have. And so I think it's really about how do you, yes, show up for our community.

00;35;47;18 - 00;36;10;18
Simone Saunders
And also take care of yourself, because I think more often than not, black people and people of color are also looked at as like, okay, how can you find the solution and sacrifice yourself for the solution? And so how do we take care of ourselves? Because you can't see everyone, and the demand is much higher than the actual resources that are available right now.

00;36;10;20 - 00;36;12;19
Simone Saunders
And so what do you do with that?

00;36;12;21 - 00;36;27;23
Rodney Diverlus
Yeah, I mean, I have whoa whoa whoa whoa. Wow. You have to be thinking, Simone. Yeah. You're thinking I'm very curious for those who cannot access that therapy, what other ways can we find wellness and healing?

00;36;27;25 - 00;36;51;07
Simone Saunders
I think community is a big part of it. As we were talking about earlier, there is a large loneliness problem within society generally right now. And I think a lot of that has to do with, you know, social media. A lot of it has to do with just general burnout capitalism, all of the isms. But I think community is something that is so, so, so healing.

00;36;51;07 - 00;37;08;15
Simone Saunders

And in the absence of therapy or self-help work, if you have a community where you feel safe enough to have some of these conversations and also call each other when maybe something doesn't feel right or something feels off base, then I think that can be really healing.

00;37;08;17 - 00;37;13;20
Rodney Diverlus
Yeah. Do you see a delineation between online communities and IRL communities?

00;37;13;23 - 00;37;51;28
Simone Saunders
Absolutely. I think they're very different. I think that online communities absolutely can be helpful, but I think in person there's an energy that you won't feel online. And relationships inherently are different via text, via voice note, than they are when you're able to speak to someone face to face. And so I think that that's part of like, why people are lonely is because you might feel like you're connected with people because I text you every day, or I do this with you every day, but I actually don't get to spend quality time sitting with your energy.

00;37;52;02 - 00;37;54;12
Simone Saunders
Yeah. And I think that a lot of us are missing.

00;37;54;15 - 00;37;56;02
Pascale Diverlus
And nothing can replace the hug.

00;37;56;05 - 00;37;56;25
Rodney Diverlus
No, it's true.

00;37;56;28 - 00;37;59;14
Pascale Diverlus
Nothing can replace that hug.

00;37;59;17 - 00;38;14;16
Rodney Diverlus
I mean, in dance, we always talk about things that are kinesthetic, kinespheric like that. There's something magic that happens when two bodies are together. Sometimes you don't even need to know instructions. You need to know what to do, but you get in sync without even knowing it. And so I can imagine it. It connects like.

00;38;14;24 - 00;38;36;18
Pascale Diverlus
Yeah. There are a lot of conversations, you know, around community and community building that is happening. And I don't always know if people know what it means to be a good community member. Like, what does it mean to be able to hold space with folks? And you had mentioned one thing before about Grace, but I'm wondering if you could also share some other tenets that people can take with them as to how to be in good community.

00;38;36;21 - 00;38;37;24
Pascale Diverlus

00;38;37;27 - 00;39;06;15
Simone Saunders
Yeah, I think grace is important. I also think accountability is equally as important. And so how do you balance grace and accountability? And communication. Right. And so I think as a society, most of us are either conflict averse or on the other side of the spectrum, and neither is helpful for building or sustaining a community. So conflict, I think perhaps changing our perspective of conflict is a bad thing because it doesn't have to be.

00;39;06;22 - 00;39;31;24
Simone Saunders
But conflict, I think, is an opportunity for connection. Just okay. This is something that maybe hurt my feelings or I didn't like, or I feel like I need this and it's an opportunity to connect the two people or multiple people and have a deeper understanding of one another. Yeah. So ideal world. We would take that need, that boundary, whatever it might be, and say like, okay, I really hear you and I really see you.

00;39;31;24 - 00;39;35;19
Simone Saunders
And then behavior is changed and then that strengthens that bond.

00;39;35;23 - 00;40;06;29
Pascale Diverlus
Yeah, yeah. This is reminiscent of when I recently read Adrienne Maree Brown's “We Will Not Cancel This”. And she talks about conflict in this way of it being just an opportunity, like an opportunity to understand a relationship differently. Or really understand yourself differently. And it's really had me thinking about how it is that we can like, be in community with people that we love deeply and also make space for the fact that we will be in conflict with one another just by the sheer nature of just being different people.

00;40;07;02 - 00;40;08;05
Pascale Diverlus
Do you have anything to add?

00;40;08;06 - 00;40;13;05
Rodney Diverlus
Yeah. No, I was going to say one of my, one of my dear friends, Syrus Marcus Ware.

00;40;13;08 - 00;40;14;07
Pascale Diverlus
Pick Up Cyrus?

00;40;14;09 - 00;40;35;25
Rodney Diverlus

Yeah. Pick Up Cyrus. It is really one of the people in this community that has sort of been an advocate and an ambassador for abolition as a concept and expanding our concept, our our ideas of conflict and harm. And, he always says conversations that matter like that's his like, that's the sort of mantra that he says.

00;40;35;25 - 00;40;59;09
Rodney Diverlus
And it's about, you know, when the conversation matters the most, like lean into it rather than pulling away. And, that's always been even myself. I am definitely on the spectrum of avoiding conflict or not. Both. Like external world conflict, I'm there, and interpersonal conflict, I'm avoidant. So thinking about it around like conversations that matter, making sure you stuff it right in front of it.

00;40;59;12 - 00;41;00;22
Rodney Diverlus

00;41;04;10 - 00;41;18;13
Rodney Diverlus
Simone. Speaking of which, speaking of books, tell us. Tell the people damn where and what and how to read you, but not read, read you. Like read you like a book, we ain't reading you like that. No, no.

00;41;18;15 - 00;41;43;23
Simone Saunders
Yeah. So the book is not out yet. It will be out in 2026 August. Yeah. So the book is essentially about our connection to our body, or lack thereof for a lot of people. So it really takes a concept of intellectualization, which essentially a lot of people struggle with, which is really knowing from a cognitive perspective, like, okay, I need to work on this, this and this, but things are not changing.

00;41;43;23 - 00;42;12;02
Simone Saunders
Something feels like it's disconnected. I'm still running into the same relationships, the same triggers, the same ness, the same thing. And it takes sort of an intersectional lens. So looking at body disconnection as a coping mechanism and as a protective mechanism. And how does each person so each reader intersectional their identities or different identities, how does that impact how connected or disconnected that they feel.

00;42;12;04 - 00;42;38;01
Simone Saunders
And what are ways to move towards disconnection? And so I think a big part of the book, as well as sort of being curious about quote unquote, like evidence based practices and who that evidence is for, because often times when there's research being done, a lot of times the most vulnerable populations are cut out of that research because of funding and complexity and all of those different things.

00;42;38;01 - 00;43;02;16

Simone Saunders
So I think it's really important to take a look at which modalities are for whom. And based on the research, who is it saying it's for? And taking a look at regulation in itself. And I think going back to sort of our conversation around things like the recession and political climate and all of these different things, that regulation is often a privilege.

00;43;02;16 - 00;43;25;01
Simone Saunders
And so how do we look at it from that standpoint as far as perhaps my dysregulation is coming from the fact that I don't have some of these points of privilege and it's not some inherent deficit within myself. And so how can I move towards a state of regulation or a state of connectivity, even in absence of some of those pieces?

00;43;25;04 - 00;43;32;15
Rodney Diverlus
Wow. Okay. August 2026 everybody. I mean I cannot wait to read it and not fall apart.

00;43;32;18 - 00;43;35;16
Pascale Diverlus
Do we have a title? It was it that I understood.

00;43;35;16 - 00;43;38;13
Rodney Diverlus
Oh my gosh. Oh you want you want the tea.

00;43;38;13 - 00;43;42;12
Simone Saunders
Yeah, the working title right now is “Befriending The Body”.

00;43;42;14 - 00;44;07;22
Rodney Diverlus
Oh “Befriending The Body” okay, okay, y'all, y'all read that here first, right? Yeah. “Befriending The Body”. You need to bookmark it and to grab it. I mean, from a personal standpoint, how it's been writing the book. I wrote a book, and it was honestly speaking of dysregulation. So I'm curious from like, yeah, from, from from a process wise, how's the process been?

00;44;07;24 - 00;44;27;17
Simone Saunders
Both good and challenging, I think good from a standpoint of I like writing, I like research, I find all of that really fun, but I think doing that on top of my everyday work, it's very easy for me to be like, what? Something came up and then all of a sudden I'm like, wait, my deadline is around the corner.

00;44;27;17 - 00;44;34;22
Simone Saunders
Okay, got to get focused. And so, yeah, I think it's been both good and challenging.

00;44;34;24 - 00;44;40;08
Rodney Diverlus
Yeah, I hear that. I mean, I think I had to like, literally leave and go to a cottage.

00;44;40;08 - 00;44;41;11
Pascale Diverlus
I was just going to say.

00;44;41;11 - 00;44;45;01
Rodney Diverlus
To leave the city. I was like, this is too many, too many things, too many things happening.

00;44;45;04 - 00;44;55;27
Pascale Diverlus
I was just going to say I in my research was like, oh, you left the country to go write? good for you to good for you. Was the time away helpful?

00;44;55;29 - 00;45;11;09
Simone Saunders
So helpful. I find if I can disconnect and just focus on one thing, then it's easy for me to, you know, bang out a couple chapters or whatever it is and then go back to whatever else I have to do versus sort of integrating it into my day to day.

00;45;11;11 - 00;45;23;14
Pascale Diverlus
And in writing, were you able to bring aspects of your practice that are not well known or that you don't get to do a lot where you're able to just expand on that more in the writing process?

00;45;23;16 - 00;45;53;10
Simone Saunders
Yeah, I think definitely, because a lot of, well, all of the content essentially, that I put out a short form of content. So there is as there's some context that I can give and some nuance that I can give, but I think it's been really nice to write in a way where I can give all of the context and all of the nuance without having to think about how long is this or engagement or like any of those different pieces that might, be difficult with social media.

00;45;53;13 - 00;46;17;00
Rodney Diverlus
And speaking of social media, what is your phase two one part? What is your favorite content, topic, type of thing that you really want to do every day and then vice versa? What is it that you get asked all the time that you want the readers and the listeners to know right now? This is the definitive answer.

00;46;17;02 - 00;46;22;28
Simone Saunders
My favorite type of content?

00;46;23;00 - 00;46;24;19
Rodney Diverlus
Oh. We stumped you, okay.

00;46;24;19 - 00;46;49;02
Simone Saunders
Yeah, I think it changes. Right now I will say. I like a lot of the sort of storytelling blog type content right now. I think that it's been fun to create and it allows me to explore my creativity more. I also really like creating content with, like, the people at my practice. I think that's really fun.

00;46;49;03 - 00;46;53;11
Pascale Diverlus
They're really fun. Those videos are super, super fun.

00;46;53;13 - 00;47;00;29
Simone Saunders
Yeah, everyone's so great. So I think that's really fun. And then the content that people ask me to make the most.

00;47;04;00 - 00;47;17;15
Simone Saunders
I would say I get asked a lot about things like, medication type stuff and prescriptive type stuff, which I can never post because I'm not a psychiatrist. So.

00;47;17;17 - 00;47;21;12
Rodney Diverlus
Speak to your local psychiatrist, if you want a prescription, if you want some pills.

00;47;21;17 - 00;47;29;08
Pascale Diverlus
Okay. I really thought you were going to say, could people compare you to. I thought that's what you're gonna be like. That's what, like.

00;47;29;10 - 00;47;31;20
Rodney Diverlus
What do you mean? Like, comments?

00;47;31;22 - 00;47;34;06
Pascale Diverlus
I'm not going to speak on it if you don't want to think. Okay, so I'm.

00;47;34;09 - 00;47;46;02
Rodney Diverlus
Oh. Do you have a doppelganger? Do you like, do you have a twin somewhere? Like a twin flame or a celebrity? I mean, I was going to say, I mean, this is totally personal. I would say you remind me of our sister.

00;47;46;05 - 00;47;46;26
Pascale Diverlus
Oh, really?

00;47;46;26 - 00;47;48;11
Rodney Diverlus
You do? You do? Yeah.

00;47;48;11 - 00;47;50;29
Simone Saunders
Are you siblings? Yeah. Yes. Same last name.

00;47;50;29 - 00;47;58;29
Rodney Diverlus
Yeah. We are your siblings. But. Yeah, but I thought it was that. But you mean, like, I still like, like, like a public figure? Okay, okay, so we're not going to speak about it.

00;47;59;01 - 00;48;03;00
Pascale Diverlus
We're not going to talk about it. Just in case you start listening.

00;48;03;02 - 00;48;08;09
Rodney Diverlus
Know, whoever you are, Simone is your doppelganger, and we vibe with her.

00;48;08;11 - 00;48;23;24
Pascale Diverlus
To the question about favorite, you took the words kind of right out of my mouth because I was thinking about like, oh, you do so many different types of work. I'm curious as to what your favorite aspects of each are. And so you spoke on the kind of social media and content creator side, but what is your favorite part about being a mental health practitioner?

00;48;23;24 - 00;48;29;23
Pascale Diverlus
And then further running your own practice? What are your favorite parts of those?

00;48;29;26 - 00;48;49;18
Simone Saunders
I think for my own practice, I think I love the diversity of it. Like, I like that it's just different all the time. I think it keeps me going and keeps me stimulated, which is really nice. I think like the marketing aspect of it, I have so much interest in and I love doing that part.

00;48;49;20 - 00;49;22;14
Simone Saunders
And I think about all the different projects that I sort of get to take on. So more recently, I created a baby therapist support group. And so that came from having an intern at the Cognitive Corner. And that has been a really fun project, and being able to connect with a whole bunch of people and chat about like, different therapy topics and all of that in a

different way, because I think more of my work previously has been a lot more client centered work, versus the work that is more, you know, clinician centered.

00;49;22;14 - 00;49;24;05
Simone Saunders
So I think that's been really cool.

00;49;24;08 - 00;49;32;18
Pascale Diverlus
Yeah. Baby therapist I saw that I was like, what a heartwarming way to really, allow people to have a safe space. That sounds lovely.

00;49;32;18 - 00;49;51;00
Rodney Diverlus
I'll say, this is an aside. I just remembered who or, I mean, our tech person was like, this is who. Okay, I see what you. I'm like, okay, okay, we're talking on an Excel cell phone. We're talking about "It started when we were younger, you were mine (my boo)". Ok, never mind. But I'll say that. Okay? Never mind, never mind, never mind, never mind.

00;49;51;03 - 00;49;51;20
Pascale Diverlus
You don't know when she'd be listening.

00;49;52;12 - 00;49;55;27
Rodney Diverlus
Exactly. We don't want any copyright. You know what I'm saying?

00;49;56;00 - 00;49;58;24
Pascale Diverlus
She's going to be like, take that song down. Now he's singing.

00;49;58;26 - 00;50;03;08
Rodney Diverlus
But that is a great compliment because, you know, we rate her, we rate her hard.

00;50;03;10 - 00;50;16;13
Pascale Diverlus
Thank you so much for sharing space with us. This was such a beautiful, beautiful conversation. Before we end, any last words you want to share and where can our listeners find you?

00;50;16;16 - 00;50;34;14
Simone Saunders
Yeah. No last words to share, except for. Thank you for having me. I think this is such a fun conversation. You go through so great to chat with. And where you can find me on all of my social media handles. My handle is simonecsaunders, and then you can find the practice at www.thecognitivecorner.ca.

00;50;35;13 - 00;50;43;29
Pascale Diverlus
Beautiful. Thank you so much for sharing space with us. Thank you so much for listening, everybody. That's a wrap.

00;50;45;04 - 00;51;07;27
Pascale Diverlus
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