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- Lily Cornell Silver:* Hi, everyone. And welcome back to Mind Wide Open, my mental health focused interview series. Today I am talking to my dear friend, Sir Carter, who is a model and TikTok sensation. He speaks really beautifully to the use of social media as a tool for vulnerability as well as talks about his experience with mental health as a gay black man.
- Thank you so much for all of the love on the series so far. And I really hope that it continues to resonate with you. Thank you so much for tuning in.
- Hi, sir.
- Sir Carter:* How are you, Lily?
- Lily Cornell Silver:* I am good. I've missed you.
- Sir Carter:* I miss you, too. It's been way too long.
- Lily Cornell Silver:* So I've known you since we were like 17. Let's just start, like, tell me about your journey with social media for those who may not know.
- Sir Carter:* If I'm being honest, I never really wanted to show off my personality on my Instagram. I would just be like, oh, look, I'm cute, like, I can take a picture and stuff like that. But right when I was given an outlet to share my stories or post funny videos, things that I find funny, things that I find important, that's when the following really started coming in. And the introduction of TikTok, which I think yesterday I just woke up in the middle of the night and I hit like 1.6 million. I was like, wait.
- Lily Cornell Silver:* Amazing.
- Sir Carter:* Like, hey, guys. And that translated to my Instagram. I remember when I was posting videos for like three of my followers. Like, "Hey, guys. So, being gay." And just honestly, consistently putting

out things that are genuine. Right when I started to be my true self, that's when I saw people come in. So, honestly, stay true to yourself. Love yourself. Find others where you can connect with them. And that's how I kind of found my happiness.

*Lily Cornell Silver:* Totally. I think that is such a good message. And definitely something that I'm aspiring to right now with this series is just total vulnerability, total genuineness, as you were saying. And a lot of the time that genuineness isn't pretty. And I think that's something that social media can be a negative place for, is people wanting to show only the gorgeous parts, only the glamorous parts. But this series and what you're doing as well is all about, like, these are the nasty parts and these are the parts that we all go through.

*Sir Carter:* I think my first video I posted I was like, oh my god, being a gay athlete and kind of like how you have to prove yourself, dah, dah, dah. And then a whole bunch, within 24 hours, of people who were going through the same thing. Gay athletes in all different types of sports were like, "Woah, I feel the same way." or "I've had to go through the same thing." And honestly, that's when Sir the Star was born, and I just wanted to keep sharing things that I thought I was alone with with the rest of the world and get other people's opinion and let others know they're not alone. Like, I'm going through the same thing.

*Lily Cornell Silver:* Absolutely.

*Sir Carter:* Especially for me being black. In the black community, especially for men, being feminine is looked down upon. Opening up about your emotions is also looked down upon. And I just wanted to, as I kept growing my following, I wanted to kind of go against that stereotype, showing, hey, if you are a black male, you don't even have to be a part of the LGBT+ community. But if you want to be emotional, if you do inherit feminine traits, that's totally okay. And we have people that love you for that.

*Lily Cornell Silver:* That's beautiful, and I think such an indication that what you're doing is so important and so powerful. In that vein of being black right now, something I think more and more people are waking up to in light of the surfacing of systematic oppression and structural supremacy is the fact that living as a member of any marginalized community in our society is a traumatic experience. That comes with trauma. And also statistically, marginalized folks have far less

access to mental health resources. How have you personally been taking care of your own mental health in what I can only imagine is a highly triggering time?

*Sir Carter:* Everything going with the Black Lives Matter movement, living in this small town, there's a lot of opponents rather than proponents to the Black Lives Matter movement. And me being myself, somebody who is very outspoken, I will speak my mind on these issues. I will not stop, no matter what a lot of people have to say. And I actually have gotten a lot of hate. I'm not going to lie, a lot of death threats just because of that.

*Lily Cornell Silver:* Yeah.

*Sir Carter:* And I actually just got done speaking at a rally. This is a video of me speaking.

*Lily Cornell Silver:* Oh, amazing.

*Sir Carter:* And in the back, a whole bunch of people up on motorcycles decided that they wanted to, you know, stop the peace with weapons. So we all had to – we all just kind of sat down. We were all very peaceful. And we kept talking. I mean, there was nothing going on that was wrong, so we just kept talking and we marched. And that was the end of it. I mean, I definitely do get a lot of hate about kind of my stances on how systematic oppression right now is in America. But, again, it's an issue. I have a huge fan base. I have a huge following. I would like to think I have a little bit of influence. And if I can use that for the better and I can address these issues, I feel like that's the first place to start.

*Lily Cornell Silver:* How have you been taking care of yourself personally?

*Sir Carter:* Personally? I feel like I needed to – for a week straight I kind of unplugged. I was like, there's a lot of things kind of being put out on social media. And honestly, you just need to look after yourself for a little bit, make sure that you are okay. Unplug for a little bit and definitely get back into it once you feel mentally stable enough. And that's definitely what I did.

*Lily Cornell Silver:* We talked a little bit, you and I, about your experience with being suicidal and experiencing suicidal ideation. Could you talk a little

bit about what brought that about? What was your experience with that?

*Sir Carter:* For sure. That also tied in with isolation. I felt like nobody really understood. My parents are very, very, very accepting people, and I definitely could have told them way earlier. But I just felt like it was my own journey. I always had these preconceived notions of what they could say, which is not something smart to do. If anyone is watching this trying to come out, do not be in your brain, because that is your worst enemy.

*Lily Cornell Silver:* Yeah.

*Sir Carter:* It was a really hard time. I was in a very, very dark area where I felt like I will never be as respected as my counterpart just because of my sexuality. I feel alone. As I grew up, as I made genuine connections, as I opened up about my true self to my family, to my friends. I did lose a lot of friends and family who just said they can't see eye-to-eye with me. But it honestly brought my family, who loved, supported me throughout my entire journey, my friends, who did the same, and honestly brought us a lot closer. And I'm really thankful for them. So if you guys are watching this, I love you.

*Lily Cornell Silver:* And I think one of the hardest parts that comes with that is, as you were saying, you don't know how people are going to react. You can't control other people's reactions, other people's opinions. But coming out on the other side of that –

*Sir Carter:* So much better.

*Lily Cornell Silver:* – makes a world of difference. I have a friend living with me right now who is a young, gay, black man. And we were talking about you and how I'm going to have you on the series. And he was saying with his identity, he was like, it is so vital for young, black, LGBTQ folks to have somebody to look to. Because he was recounting something similar to you, that there were so many times in his life where he felt really alone.

*Sir Carter:* For sure.

*Lily Cornell Silver:* You are one of the funniest fucking people I know. *[Laughter]* But you are also such a good storyteller.

*Sir Carter:* Thank you.

*Lily Cornell Silver:* Is there any stories you have about your mental health or, you know, times that you stood up to whoever, like a Karen or –

*Sir Carter:* Oh, we love a Karen.

*Lily Cornell Silver:* Or people who, you know, didn't see eye to eye with you, or anything in that vein.

*Sir Carter:* Hmm. Okay, we can go with short and sweet. So I'm shopping at Fred Meyer right next to my house. You know, getting groceries because I'm cooking, I'm a chef, or whatever. I notice every aisle that I go down, there is this same woman, like, staring at me. And I'll look at her. And right when she notices I'm looking, she'll look away all quick. I'll go down another aisle, same thing. She looks away. And I was like, you know what? My fan base on TikTok is usually 13 to 14-year-old girls, but maybe she's a fan. Maybe she wants to talk and is too scared to ask. So I was like, you know what? Let me just mind my business. Let me go to self-checkout, get this done quickly so I can leave.

I am at the self checkout, and she's literally hovering. And I was like, "Oh, excuse me, ma'am." I was like, "Hi, how are you?" And she was like, "Oh, I'm good." I was like, "Is there a problem? Because you've been staring at me. I've noticed you for the past 30 minutes while I'm shopping, staring. What's the issue?" She was like, "Oh, I'm just trying to make sure you're not stealing." And I was like, oh, I was like, "Me?" I was like, "Okay." I go in my pocket, I bring out my Chanel bag. That was the first – I made sure to wave it around really quickly. She looked at me. And I feel like right when the Chanel bag came out, she was like, "Oh, uh-oh, I done fucked up."

I paid for my groceries. Home girl was in the checkout right next to me. So I was like, "Here." Paid for her groceries as well, and left. Because, I mean, I felt like in that moment I had a choice. I could either be very rude, aggressive – which that is apparently her preconceived notion of me already as a black male that steals, that's aggressive – or I can go against that stereotype and be nice. Even though she wanted to be racist, I can still go against that and be nice to her. And that's definitely a lot of comments I got on my

TikTok. A lot of people were like, yes, period. But the other majority of my comments were like, "Wait, so she was being racist and you paid for her groceries?" I had to explain. I was like, it's not like I was being like, "Here you go, here's your groceries." It was more of a point. Like, you really profiled someone because you had this preconceived notion that I didn't have enough money, that I am going to steal, that I can't pay. So I did the exact opposite. Paid for mine and paid for hers. I hope she enjoyed her meal. I hope it was delicious.

*Lily Cornell Silver:* You are Chef Boyar-Sir.

*Sir Carter:* Chef Boyar-Sir. You know? If she would have said something else, I might have even had to cook for her. I might have had to go there, but it didn't.

*Lily Cornell Silver:* I can't imagine the strength it would take to not just go off on somebody, but to – I mean, and that's something that you've experienced your entire life.

*Sir Carter:* Mm-hmm. It just gets easier and easier. I just deal with things so much with grace now. When I first started to encounter these feelings or people coming up to me, like, I'm not going to lie. It's a journey. I definitely blew up a couple times. Not cute. But as I grew up and realized that's not the way that you need to address these people. Because it's coming out of ignorance. So instead of just blowing up and giving them another reason to hate on you or give them another reason to say, hey, yeah, he is aggressive, dah, dah, dah, you're – you should just be cool with it. Just be cool, graceful, sweet. And then that might make them like, oh, hey, did I just – am I messing up? It poses a question.

*Lily Cornell Silver:* Your fan base is mostly younger people.

*Sir Carter:* Mm-hmm.

*Lily Cornell Silver:* What is your advice for dealing with mental health and being a part of this generation?

*Sir Carter:* Honestly, the advice that I would have that I wish I would have been told is if you feel as if something is wrong with you mentally or if there is something that you're going through, don't keep that to yourself. Because that is kind of when you start compounding is-

sues on issues. And then it's really hard for you to dig yourself out of that place. For the longest time I would just keep my sexuality, keep my identity really just locked in. And right when I was able to express that to other people, it helped me come to terms with it. And flipped a full 180, honestly. So have an outlet to talk to, even if it's a school counselor or a friend or your parents, or anyone that you trust. Really just open up to somebody else and go from there. Because it's really vital to have someone to talk to during these really hard times.

*Lily Cornell Silver:* Do you have anything exciting coming up?

*Sir Carter:* I am dropping an EP.

*Lily Cornell Silver:* Dude.

*Sir Carter:* I know.

*Lily Cornell Silver:* I'm so excited.

*Sir Carter:* I know. I've written music for, like, so long. For like seven years now. Because I started when I was – I was a classical pianist for a long time.

*Lily Cornell Silver:* Me too. Me too. Good roots.

*Sir Carter:* Yes, yes. And honestly – oh, this relates back to mental health perfectly. Whenever I wasn't out, I couldn't really talk to anyone at the time. So I definitely had a little journal where I would just make a beat or play something on my piano and kind of just write, just write songs. And I was given the opportunity to kind of record. And I used a lot of things from my journal. Kind of like the before and after I came out. Before and after I really started working on my mental health. So my EP is definitely coming out soon with all of that in it. And I am so exciting.

*Lily Cornell Silver:* Oh, that's so exciting, Sir. That makes me so happy.

*Sir Carter:* Thank you. Thank you.

*Lily Cornell Silver:* I, of all people, totally understand the impact that music can have on coming more into yourself –

*Sir Carter:* For sure.

*Lily Cornell Silver:* – and being vulnerable and finding that outlet for creativity. So that is so exciting.

I have been ending my interviews on the note of what's something that's bringing you hope right now.

*Sir Carter:* Honestly, what's bringing me hope right now is my followers, the people that resonate with me. Because I'm not going to lie, I'm still working on my mental health. I am not somebody to look to, like, that's the perfect mental health, that is what I need. No. That is not what it is. It's a process.

*Lily Cornell Silver:* Yes.

*Sir Carter:* It really is a process. I definitely find myself with ice cream crying at night. But it's gotten a lot better. And honestly, my followers. Seeing how I make their day, seeing how I've helped someone come out. I just got one of those DMs. Literally cried. Everything that you say, everything that you do has given me the confidence to come out. And honestly, just hearing their stories and seeing how much growth they go through. Because I have conversations in my DMs with just people that really need help. And seeing them months later, like, "Sir, I did it. Sir, I came out. Sir, I asked them out." Like, it's honestly really – it's heartwarming.

*Lily Cornell Silver:* Yeah.

*Sir Carter:* So definitely them. All my stars out there. Them.

*Lily Cornell Silver:* That's beautiful. And I'm sure, you know, when I was younger and struggling with my mental health, that's somebody that I would have so appreciated. And part of why I'm wanting to have public figures on this series is for other people to see, like here's this person I really admire, and they struggle with the exact same things I do.

*Sir Carter:* Exactly.

*Lily Cornell Silver:* So, that's so incredible that you have become one of those people. I love that.



*Sir Carter:* Thank you.

*Lily Cornell Silver:* And, I mean, I never had a doubt. You're Sir the Star.

*Sir Carter:* Thank you.

*Lily Cornell Silver:* You always have been. Thank you so much for being here, Sir. You are such a joy, such a light, and such an inspiration to me and so many people. So, it just makes me so happy that you could be here. Thank you.

*Sir Carter:* Of course. Anytime. I love seeing you. I love talking to you about actual issues going on. So, anytime.

*[End of Audio]*