



Matt: I want to make every day count. I want to do something every day to help another human being, and to just share something positive and beautiful with people.

[music]

Lily: Hi. I'm Lily Cornell Silver and welcome to Mind Wide Open, my mental health focused interview series. Today I am talking to Global Head Of Rock at Spotify, Allison Hagendorf and MTV host Matt Pinfield. Alison and Matt have been friends for 20 years and now consider each other family, and Matt has been very close with my family for a long time. I'm excited to chat with them about maintaining mental, physical, and spiritual balance, especially these days.

Thank you so much for watching and I hope you enjoy. Hi you guys.

Allison: Hi.

Matt: Hey.

Lily: Thank you so much for joining me today. I'm so excited.

Allison: I am so excited. I'm so pumped be part of this. This series is so special and I'm just psyched to be here today with you guys.

Lily: Thank you. You're both, obviously, in the music industry, have been for a long time, pioneers of rock and roll. I would love to have you guys talk about a little bit how you met each other.

Allison: Long story short. I grew up watching MTV and knowing I always wanted to be a VJ on MTV. Matt Pinfield was my favorite VJ, and I wanted to be Matt. That was it. I just thought that Matt was unique, because he was so authentic and knowledgeable and credible, and he had the best rapport with artists. He was really the liaison between artists and fans. I always just wanted to be in that position.

You can't just decide, "I'm going to grow up and be a VJ in MTV." I figured I would just start somehow in the music business, I started stockpiling CDs and record labels and stuff. I became a college rep when I was at Penn State, and I won rep of the year and I got a job offer at both Columbia and Epic records. I knew that Matt Pinfield worked at Columbia Records.

The job I was offered had nothing to do with Matt, but I was like, "I'll just take it and I'll find my way to meet Matt." Lo and behold, Matt's the best and we became fast friends. Then I literally pitched to Matt and HR, to become Matt's assistant, and became Matt's right-hand for many years, and just fell in love with Matt. Our relationship and A&R, just scouting bands and making records, and the rest is history. This is a good like 20 years ago now. That's so crazy.

Lily: Wow.



Matt: Isn't that amazing? I know. I cannot believe it, but it's great Allison. I love it. What's so great is we've stayed like family ever since then, Lily, which is so, so important to me. It's amazing when you have true relationships with friends that you love. You have those relationships that really lasts through everything. My life has been a pretty crazy roller coaster.

I've struggled with alcoholism and addiction most of my adult life, not all of it, and going through periods of sobriety, but it's been an incredible ride. That's when you know who your true friends are and the people that absolutely love you, who will stick by you through some of the rough times, but also be there for the great times as well.

That's the really cool thing about Allison. I know she's very proud of me right now for this six months marker that I made for this weekend, which is great.

Lily: Beautiful, congratulations, Matt. That's huge. I wanted to tie it back to that as well, in the topic of ending the stigma around mental health and addiction. Both of you have, obviously, put in a lot of work towards that in the public eye.

Matt, I just read your Rolling Stone article about what it was like relapsing during the Coronavirus pandemic. You've been so open and honest about that, and I think that's something that's huge, because I can imagine there so many people struggling with that right now, and would love to hear a little bit about that story and how you've been taking care of yourself since then.

Matt: It's one of those situations where, at the time, I was living alone. I had ended a relationship that I was in about a year and a half before. Being a person in the program, in recovery, it's so important that you have support from your fellows, from the men and women that are also in recovery. At the time, what happened to me was I was just spending a lot of time alone and it went from being where, and I know so many people watching right now have been through the same thing. I was always out at shows. I was out attending recovery meetings and I was just eating out, going to comedy shows. Going to see music and just spending a lot of time, because the thing is, the human contact is so important to me. I think that so many other people that are in recovery, it's so important that they stay connected to other people. I think the isolation is such a really difficult thing.

My friends discovered, they could tell that I had picked up the bottle again and then came to my rescue, which was amazing. Because I've struggled for many, many a year, it happens very quickly. It's one of those situations where you go from zero to like 60, in a matter of days. My friends were like, "Listen, we've got to get you help. We're going to do something for you." I was blown away by the outpouring of love and support that came from musicians and people that I'd worked with, in all my different jobs over the years. Whether be MTV or Columbia Records, or K-Rock and your mom.

Lily, I've been friends with your mom. I love your mom so much and I've been friends with her forever. When I hear from your mom or from Allison and they said to me,

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"Matt, you look better than you ever looked." I know that you mean it and it makes me feel really good about what I'm doing, and I'm working hard at it.

Allison: You look the best you have ever looked. I've known you for 20 years, but you're really good also on social, like the show Throwback Thursdays, or whatever, got photos of you, and you literally look better now than decades ago. You're a dream boat, Matt. When you're healthy and focused, you're a bright light for all of us. This is a gift. Your sobriety is a gift for all of us. I'm so proud of you. Keep going.

Matt: Thank you. Absolutely, Allison. I can't go backwards. Like I said, Lily, I'm completely accountable, but I love the way I feel right now. By telling my story in Rolling Stone, when they asked me if I would do it, and people said to me, "That's really brave." I said, "Not really, because I want it to be completely transparent." Because like your show focuses on, I want to get rid of the stigma of mental health and the struggles of alcoholism and addiction, and let people know that they're not alone out there. There are so many people out there like myself. I'm just grateful to be here today and look at my [crosstalk].

Lily: I'm grateful to have you. I'm grateful to have both of you. I completely agree with you, in my experience with mental health. I know many people that have had this experience with a number of things, that when you do finally talk about it with somebody or talk about it in an open platform, you realize there was no need to be ashamed at all. There is no need for the stigma that surrounds things like this. I'm so happy that that's been your experience. I totally relate on the front of wanting to share your experience and what you've been through in order to help other people. That's huge and super healing, I think.

Matt: Yeah, absolutely. I feel incredible and I love doing that. I'm helping out people that are struggling, that are just getting sober and clean right now. What I call the newcomer. People that are literally either just coming back from relapsing or people that had a really rough time during the pandemic.

Like I said, people had so much time on their hands. A lot of people lost jobs. They were under a true pressure cooker. The isolation and the uncertainty. I think all the anxiety that went along with so much of the pandemic was also a trigger for so many people. I've been able to come out the other side of it and just feel so good. For me, I know that my calling is to help others and to be an example for people and I'm doing it.

And that means I work out, I hike and it's crazy. Allison could tell you the story. Allison was there by my side in the hospital. It's amazing that two years ago I was hit by a car and almost killed. That story is just incredible too. Walking across the street and seeing this car racing towards me at the corner of my eye, and then jumping up, which probably saved my life, instead of going under the car. I would've, who knows, if I would've survived. Broke my leg in half. It snapped and then my head went through the windshield and tore my head open. Then they hit the brakes and I spun off out of the car and landed about 15 feet away.



Miraculously, I wasn't paralyzed, I didn't have brain damage. I was able, in about eight months, to walk again. I have a metal titanium rod in my leg and it was very traumatic. I'll tell you what's interesting too and I remember telling Allison this, they knew I had PTSD. They knew there was trauma and they would ask me every single day and come in and they I said, "At some point, emotionally, you're going to have to deal with it." For me, I've dealt with it through some therapy, which I think is very important.

Lily: Absolutely.

Matt: Al, what do you-- I just messed with Allison, because I-

Allison: I know. I always say I'd tell Matt that all the time. I'd be like, "Cats have nine lives." Matt Pinfield has 9 billion lives. It doesn't even make sense. When this last time happened and everyone was part of this GoFundMe. I gave Matt some tough love and I was like, "This is it. You are now accountable to all of these people." Matt is so loved and it, and each time that he had a struggle or a setback, he always had a friend, or someone to come through and help him out, but this time it was like the world. I was like, "On top of everything, you need to be healthy for all of these people."

I'm just so proud of you and like I said, it's the best you've ever looked, it's the best you've ever sounded. Matt and I talk every single day and I think that this next chapter of your life is just the beginning. I think it's a beautiful new chapter, a new start.

Matt: Yes and it feels great. When I was in rehab and I want to talk about while I was in treatment, eventually right before I got out and Allison knows this. They let me look at the letters and the notes that came with the donations. I was in tears.

Lily: I can imagine.

Matt: Just the heartfelt love and support, it just completely choked me up. I was so humbled by the whole thing. Which is so important, just to be that and to stay humble and just really in the present. It was just the most beautiful thing, because life happens on life's terms, not everything goes exactly how you want it to go. That's just a matter of being alive. That's part of the experience and journey.

I make a list of five things that I'm grateful for, it might my two daughters who I love so much and my mother that she's still alive at 88 years old, and my incredible friends. How lucky I am to get to do what I love and still make a living talking about music and turning people onto music. I love it so much. It's always been a big part in my heart. It was my dream when I was a kid. How blessed I'm I? How lucky I'm I? That's the thing I remember. It's always important to start your day that way.

Sometimes if you're having a bad day, like halfway through the day, people who said to me, "You might want to take that list out again, halfway through the day."



[laughter]

Lily: That gratitude and that human connection and having connection with your friends and your people is something that's so important. You touched on, Matt, with the pandemic, with that feeling of isolation. I think it hit everybody pretty hard. I was curious from your perspective, Allison, whether it was directly your experience with Matt or anyone else that's in your life that has struggled with addiction or struggled with mental health. What does it look like for you to be an ally to them? I know I've had plenty of friends and family members that are struggling and I don't always know how to be there for them. Do you have any suggestions in that vein?

Allison: If you have someone that you're extremely close with that is an addict, there's nothing more heartbreaking. It's the most impossible situation. Being with Matt over these past 20 years has been absolutely heart-wrenching at times. You feel so helpless, even though you're giving everything you could possibly give physically, emotionally and mentally, but at the end of the day, it's the person. It's up to them 100%.

Also in addition to, I want to say traditional addiction, which sounds so weird, but there are so many new addictions that are coming up, whether that's social media, whether that's devices, and just that need to feel like checking your phone every five seconds. We all struggle with that. This is a new wave of addiction, that's dangerous. I always think about young people, especially young women. I can't imagine what it's like to be a young person, having access to all of this false reality and comparison and all of these things. I just remember what that was like being 14 or 15 and just feeling insecure, and now I can't imagine the exposure that all these women have.

I always just try to keep everything in mind, that everyone's going through their own struggle. It's sad. For me personally, my son's about to turn one and I haven't seen my parents since he was born, because they're all on the East Coast and I'm in L.A. That's devastating. I haven't seen my family in a year and that's devastating. I'm fortunate, I'm a very positive person and I'm very lucky. That's just the way I am, but of course, I get super down and very overwhelmed and depressed. I think it's important to think that every single person is going through something and that's called empathy.

I think there's nothing more important than gratitude, empathy and compassion.

Matt: Yeah, I agree. I think it's so true. It's amazing. When you talk about words that are so important, Allison and Lily, I would say, one of the things, that's when it comes down to recovery for me, because yes, I'm going to go through those mood swings. There are going to be moments, honestly, where I'm just in the shower and a black cloud of depression comes over you. You're like, "Why does it always seem like it comes at 10:30 at night?" Then, I find something to take my mind in a different direction, which is absolutely so important. Whether that's a show that I watch or a record that I put on, or I start to write, or do something like that.



It's recognizing those things and not giving into them anymore, not giving in and realizing that a drink is not going to fix it. It's not going to make it better, it's going to make it worse.

Lily: With addiction as a form of self-medication, that's something that Duff struggled with and still struggles with, and something my dad absolutely struggled with and using addiction and using substance to treat mental health issues and to self-medicate for mental health issues. I wanted to know in your experience, Matt, if that's what you feel like addiction was for you. Was it like self-medication for mental health?

Matt: Absolutely, it was. It was the way to get out of those feelings. Just like Duff said, it would come on—I sometimes would just either wake up depressed or like I said, be in the shower, I use that as an example, because it's a true one. Those feelings would come on where you don't even understand why. All of a sudden you feel this incredible darkness. That's what I was doing. I was self-medicating for years, and to the point where you're doing it and you're not even really aware that you're doing it, and you're caught up in the cycle.

One of the things that I noticed in this last bunch of months that I've been staying sober, is that there was one day that when I was very, very upset about something and somebody had really pushed a button. Then I stopped and I said, "Okay, this is where you would usually lose control. This is where you would pick up a Vodka or you pick up whatever it is, a bottle of wine. This is where you would make the wrong turn." I think it's so important, with that self-realization that I now can see outside myself, that where it can be a major mistake to make that wrong decision. Duff's absolutely true. I know that.

I know as your dad's struggled, that is the thing. Self-medicating is the hardest thing to do. It's important to see those signs and get other help, whether that's therapy of some sort, or other some types of medications that are good to help people out with certain kinds of anxiety. Everybody does it different ways.

I know that exercise has really helped me through this and I'm constantly exercising. I've been keeping my mind and I've been keeping my body. I've been concentrating on physical, mental, and spiritual stability and growth. Those are the things that are so important.

Lily: They go so hand in hand. They have to be balanced, they have to be.

Matt: Yes, and I think consistency and conviction is everything. That's why I stay so connected to my network of sober people out there.

Allison: It's definitely a gift to have either whether it's one person in your life or a handful of people in your life that they provide a soundboard for you. I can't stress that enough as part of mental health and it's helped me throughout my life. I'm blessed. I have two older sisters who are like strong, fierce femmes. I'm very lucky. I have two unbelievable women and my mother too, but I was born with this network.

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The advice I'd give to people no matter who you are, find that person or people that you can trust a billion percent. No matter what, you know they love you unconditionally. Even if you don't talk with them all the time, maybe it's your friend you lost touch with, but you know they have your back. You know those friends that you don't talk to for like years, and then you catch up again, it's literally like you just spoke yesterday.

Lily: But even subconsciously, having that knowledge, it can change your whole outlook, your whole demeanor, totally.

Allison: Exactly. I just think those people, stay in touch with those people, respect those people, love those people. Drop them lines, like "thinking of you." Just keep those people in your life, because there's nothing more important than that.

Matt: I agree with that Allison. I think you should always let people know that they're important in your life, that you love them every day, or as often as you possibly can.

Lily: Allison, in addition to being the queen of rock at Spotify, you also are a health and wellness coach. I think that's so huge and something I appreciate so much, because just growing up in the music industry, there can be especially like on tour, a significant lack of self-care. That's something that's not necessarily always prioritized, especially by musicians. I love that that's the duality of what you do, is appreciating music and being so entrenched in music, while also focusing on self-care.

I was curious how you got into that and what the importance of that is for you?

Allison: Sure. I think that music and fitness have always been my two pillars, just always. I grew up playing sports. I actually grew up dancing, playing sports, just being very active and physical. The same way that I live for music, I also live for just being active. It it's an outlet for me. The same way if I get pissed off, overwhelmed, upset, angry, and I put on music, it's the same way I want to go for a run or a hike, being outside, moving my body. It's like a moving meditation. I guess I am lucky that I genuinely enjoy fitness.

But I think it even became more important as I got older, because balance is everything, and it's the hardest thing. By the way, this is this something I have been working on my entire life. It's not I like came out of the womb, like Zen, like balanced, no.

[laughter]

I am very proud of my personal journey and I have struggled. Even being with Matt in my 20s in New York City, I was out of control. I'm lucky I never battled with addiction. I'm very, very lucky, but I was all or nothing. It was like Aerosmith, whose quote is, "If it's worth doing it's worth overdoing." I think that was like my MySpace quote. I've just always been so hardcore. That's my personality. I give everything 100%. Aren't I intense about everything?

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Matt: Yes. We do it. That's it.

Allison: That's how we do.

Matt: That's why we get along so well, because that's how we are. We're very all or nothing.

Allison: I was always work hard, play hard. I'd be out at night with bands and partying and hanging out. I was in New York, so you're out till 4:00. Then I would somehow wake up the next morning and literally go for a run. I was out of control. The whole moderation thing and balance, it always sounded so boring and like, "That's just not me. I'm not wired that way." All of that time.

I will tell you it was something I've worked at over years. Now I have the opposite mantra, where I'm like, "Less is more." I still value fitness and self-care, it's a non-negotiable. I have that, but I'm almost like, "What's the least amount of fitness I can do where I'm enjoying it, and maximizing the efficiency, before it gets to diminishing returns?" Because too much of anything is not healthy.

I always say as being a health and wellness coach, everyone's like, "First of all, what's the best workout or fitness?" I say, "Whatever the one you're going to do and enjoy doing, that's literally the answer." Whether that's walking or boxing or doing yoga, whatever it is, that's a gift if you found something you enjoy. I work out literally 20 minutes at a time now. I just get in and get out, because a lot of times people also have the all or nothing mindset. Where like, "I don't have time to get to the gym and take this class. Who has time for an hour?" Then they don't do anything. I'm like, "Take the pressure off."

Lily: That's so huge just for me personally to hear you say, because you're someone that I look up to so much in that regard. You're literally describing me right now.

[laughter]

I don't have two hours, so I'm not going to do it. Now it's been like two months and I still haven't done it.

I was just talking to a group of my friends recently who were all my age and, and we were laughing about how we're all 20, 21 years old and realizing like, we're really learning how to be people. How to balance, "I drank water today and I ate today. What is it that I forgot to do? Shit, I didn't sleep. I forgot." You know what I mean? [crosstalk] and do all these things and learn how to be a person. So to be able to hear from you and you as well, Matt, that you worked to get where you are, I think that's something that means so much to hear, especially from people that are now in good places that weren't always in good places like that.

Allison: I will also tell you that it's an ongoing process. I think the key is though, and I know this is cliché, but it is to enjoy the process. It really is. It's also about taking



little time-outs, to actually note your progress, and to be proud of what you've accomplished to this point. I think that's key. It's a self-love.

I think when you take those little moments like, "You know what's great, let me just take a second," and be like, "You know what? I did this today. A week ago I couldn't do this or a month ago or a year ago I never would have imagined this." I think to take the time out and give yourself some credit is massive. It's a huge part of the journey.

Lily: Definitely. I was curious to hear from both of you about tying everything in with the music industry, because obviously that's where you guys have been and that's been your passion your whole lives. How you've seen the focus and intention around mental health and wellness change in the music industry, since you guys have been a part of it?

Matt: I can tell you that I've seen so much change. I've seen the acceptance. The stigma is not quite as bad and as hardcore as it used to be, where people really looked down on or judged people. Still, we're dealing with some of the stigma and we're working on that. We're working on changing that, but I have seen it get so much better.

I look back at people that were before me, idols of mine, whether it be a Keith Moon or Phil Lynott from Thin Lizzy, or John Bonham from Led Zeppelin. I see before, there were people that really understood that there was treatment out there and they could get help. There wasn't that then, but it's become much cooler to not be a mess in rock and roll, like really. It's so many people, they realize it's like, "No, it's not." We don't want to be a complete mess. It's not a good look, let's be healthy.

Allison: One of the great things about social media, and specifically in the younger generation that I love, is that everyone talks about their struggles. The fact that we have this social media platform, the good thing about it, because there are a lot of not great things about it, but one of the great things about it is that people use it as a catharsis. For so many people to share a struggle, is medicinal for them. It's so medicinal for others to be able to read about the struggle. So with the introduction of social media and the younger generations in particular, I think it's been an incredible way to de-stigmatize mental health issues. I think that in this day and age, people are being much more communicative about it, and that is so empowering, not just for the person, but for everyone to hear the story. It's all about honesty and communication.

Bands are always hitting me up about fitness tips.

[laughter]

Matt: That's great.



Allison: When bands were touring, I should probably start a show, where I was like prescribing workouts that bands can do on the road. I was demonstrating for them and send them the video. I've done that for so many bands.

Lily: That's awesome. I know both of you have kids. Allison, your son is significantly younger, I think, than your daughters, Matt. I am curious, coming from my generation and I'm super interested in how parents relay information about mental health, and emotional intelligence to their kids. What have you talked, not quite yet, Allison, what are you planning on talking to your kids about mental health and about addiction?

Matt: For me, my children are both well aware of it because they've seen me go through my struggles. That's one of the things that I think a lot of parents worry about, who have struggled like I have. I know a lot of men that have suffered in the past with alcoholism or addiction, whose children also have struggled and have gone that way. I know it's heartbreaking. I've been extremely lucky and blessed that both my daughters, neither of them have gone in that direction, but we do talk very openly about it all.

Allison: Obviously, I can't speak to Cole about things yet, but I was very blessed. I have and continue to have the most amazing relationship with my parents and my family. They were the best parents, and I plan on doing this with Cole. Always, it was communication and there was a mutual respect, no matter what age I was. My parents always treated me with respect. They never gave me a curfew. They would never interrogate me. They would trust that I was making good choices. I always did feel like I could talk with them.

I remember, and I am dating myself because there were payphones were available, my father, every night I'd go out, which was all the time, he would make sure I had multiple quarters. He would say, "I don't care what time it is. I won't ask any questions. Never get into a car with someone whose been drinking or using. I just want you to be safe and I will come pick you up at anytime." I thought that was so amazing that he was understanding my world.

I was a teenager, but whether I was doing those things or not, he just was like, "I want you to be safe. That's all I care about." I thought that showed so much respect that I never wanted to do anything to disappoint them because they gave me respect, so I wanted to respect them. We always had such an open an honest relationship and I definitely plan on doing that with Cole. I think that it starts early. I think things are starting earlier and earlier with kids.

Lily: Especially when it comes to emotional intelligence. That's being taught from kindergarten on now.

Allison: For real. I literally plan on starting immediately, just getting the conversation going.

Lily: You're both fantastic parents for that. [laughs] That's how it has always been with my mom too, it goes both ways, the open channels of respect and honesty and

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communication and especially when it comes to mental health, to be able to talk openly about that. There is already such a societal stigma that there doesn't need to be a stigma in your own family dynamic as well.

Allison: I think something I like to talk about is that Matt and I, we are rock and roll missionaries. We send out love and positivity and we use music to do that. I feel very proud of this new show I just launched on Spotify, the *Rock This with Allison Hagendorf Show*, which is 100% inspired by growing up with Matt. For me, ultimate full circle growing up watching Matt on MTV, 120 minutes, literally, that's what I wanted to do.

Now to have this show, it just shows that music is the universal language. Music is such a healer and such a healing facet for so many people, especially in these tough times, where there is no live music or performances. People are going nuts. Hearing the music and connecting through the music, has been so medicinal for me. It's just a source of light in a very, unfortunately, dark time. I am very proud of this show. I feel grateful that the community has come out to support this and are also waving the flag.

Matt: It's amazing. It's such a great show and it's so cool. I listen to it every Friday morning and me and Allison talk about musical selections and everything else, we just go over stuff because we are family. That's what we are. I love that.

In parting, I'd really love to say just how grateful I am to have the love and support of so many people. Allison is right, music is the thing, it's the healer. It's the thing that let's you know that you're never alone. When you have music in your life, even on those lonely times it can get you through anything, really. It can help get you through anything because it is something that I have leaned on all my life and I've always wanted to share it with other people. That's why I'm so grateful we get to do that and I've been planning to do that for so many years.

The thing I want to do is that I want to make everyday count. I want to do something everyday to help another human being and to share something positive and beautiful with people. That's it. That's pretty much my story right now.

[laughter]

Lily: That's amazing. In a similar vein, I like to end by ending all of my interviews by asking both of you, what is something that's giving you hope right now, whether it's mental health-related or in general?

Matt: My hope is I see my daughters that they're both healthy and they're both creative and they're both are strong young women. I loved that about them. I love that they're real thinkers. For me, that's so important that they have that strength. They refuse to be walked on, they're just really incredibly positive human beings. I love that and I see that. If that's one thing that they got from me, it was that true love of life and of people.



Allison: Let me just give you a second. You're amazing. You know who's giving me hope? You. You're actually giving me hope right now. You are such a light and from one woman to another woman. "Yes, girl." I'm wowed by you and just keep going. You're magic. You're strong. You're a beautiful, fierce spirit and just keep doing you. Thank you. I'm grateful for you.

Lily: [laughs] Thank you guys so much. I look up to your guys' relationship so much. I appreciate your positivity. I appreciate your support of each, your support of me. It means so much. Thank you guys so much for being here.

[Music]

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