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[music]

**Lily:** Hi everyone. I'm Lily Cornell Silver, and welcome to *Mind Wide Open*, my mental health focus interview series. Today, I am talking to the lovely Sienna Mae Gomez, who is a TikTok and Instagram influencer and an amazing body positivity advocate. Today, her and I are going to talk about body positivity and social media and what that looks like for her, her experience with mental health, and the strength in being vulnerable. Thank you so much for watching, and I hope you enjoy.

It's so nice to meet you. Thank you so much for being here, Sienna. I started following you when your first body positivity video went viral. I would show my boyfriend and be like, "This girl has the best fucking energy." [laughs]

I'm just so psyched to have you here because your mission is so close to my heart and just the way that you show so much strength in your vulnerability. I think that's something that's so important for young people to be seeing. Have you always felt confident in your body and in yourself, or did it take time and work to get you there?

**Sienna:** Thank you first of all. I say this all the time. I grew up dancing. I grew up a competitive dancer and along with dance comes a lot of self-image. You're looking at yourself in a mirror 24/7. I grew up around a lot of 5'9" tall, skinny, beautiful girls, and I am 5'3", and I'm not any of those. I'm shorter and curvier. I was struggling with it for a little bit, but I found the beauty in difference for me just by being different from the people that I was surrounding myself with. It empowered me. I was trying to look at it in a more positive way. Then once I started getting on social media and seeing all the feedback and the middle body representation response, I was like, "Oh my gosh, I'm like not only doing this for me now but for so many other people."

**Lily:** Absolutely, and I get it. To an extent, just with the small platform I have, I've talked about mental health. I want to represent hope and positivity. Sometimes it can be hard to show or admit when I'm having a bad day, or when things aren't going well for me. Do you ever experience that with your platform?

**Sienna:** I've definitely tried to steer away from posting myself crying or putting negative videos or stuff out there. That gets hard because we all do have bad days, and when I do, it's hard to film anything that's upbeat and like, "Oh yes, I love my body today" when it's like, "I'm not feeling it today." I think it's important to stay authentic, but I also try to aim for more of a positive platform because people need somewhere to just be able to—[exhales]

**Lily:** Totally, and there's authenticity in that too, to be like, "I'm struggling, but I'm still going to do my best to make other people happy and remind other people that they're not alone."



**Sienna:** For me too. I remember I made a video. I was just like, "I honestly have no idea what to post right now. Here's some things I love about myself. Comment something you love about yourself." That video ended up doing pretty good. People were like, "Thank you so much for this vulnerability. So many influencers are like, "Oh, my life is great 24/7."" I'm just like, "No, I'm having a bad day."

**Lily:** That's something about social media too, is I feel like a lot of people shit on social media because that is what it is. It can tend to be people only putting their best foot forward, but just what I've done because my platform's mostly on Instagram and you have Instagram and TikTok, to be able to use it still for positivity but authentic positivity, not pretending like everything's great all the time, to be like, "This is what I look like and this is who I am," and I think that's so amazing. How has your mental health been with quarantine? You blew up during quarantine. No?

**Sienna:** Yes, August.

**Lily:** How has that been for your mental health? How have you been doing?

**Sienna:** Honestly, it was great when it first started because it just skyrocketed. I was like, "Oh my gosh, I have something to do." I would do online school in the morning and then make TikToks the whole rest of the day. I had a pretty good routine going. But for me, online school was really, really difficult. I'm a very visual and hands-on person. I think mental health, for me, has been very up and down especially in quarantine because I'm such a social person. I love to touch and feel and be present. With everything that's going on, it's so hard because I don't even know if I can give my friends a hug anymore.

**Lily:** Totally. What are some things you do day-to-day to take care of your mental health while things are so freaking weird? [laughs]

**Sienna:** I know. I try to wake up every morning. It's hard some mornings because we all have to go somewhere or do something, but I try to wake up and I try to just brush my teeth and make my bed and make those the first start of the day because I know that when I get on my phone, it just sets me off. Little things are just keeping me sane, and trying to avoid social media. It's hard because it's my job, but too much of it, it can really just push you further.

**Lily:** In that vein, what is something that you would tell young Sienna, if you could tell her anything?

**Sienna:** Be patient with yourself and listen to yourself. Listen to your gut because I've made many decisions based on other people's input and opinions. Although I try not to regret anything because I'm a strong believer in everything happening for a reason and the butterfly effect and small things create bigger amazing experiences, but I would just tell myself that, "Listen to your intuition. Listen to your gut. You know yourself better than anyone. Don't take advice from somebody that you wouldn't ask for it from." I remember just being a people pleaser. I'm glad that I've acknowledged



that, and I'm able to realize that, not "I'm right" but listen to myself. I know myself best.

**Lily:** Absolutely. No one can tell you anything about you that you don't already know.

**Sienna:** Exactly. I think there are so many people, everyone-- There are so many people that act like they know you. I've seen TikToks that are like, "I went to school with Sienna, and she bullied me." I'm like, "I've never seen you in my whole life." So many people would try to tell you things about yourself that really just don't make any sense.

**Lily:** I think that's something that people our age are learning younger and younger. I think that's something that we're talking about more, which is so special and so important.

**Sienna:** I agree.

**Lily:** What is something that you wish people understood about body positivity?

**Sienna:** Something that I like to speak about more often is that it's called body positivity for a reason. It's being positive about your body. For me, I know that people will say to me, "Why are you the face of body positivity?" That whole message is not what I'm striving for to be like, "Oh, this is a positive body. This is the perfect positive body." Every single person's body is body positive. For me, it's about the whole confidence thing. I think the whole body positive movement is such a beautiful thing on TikTok. I've found so many creators that are just so amazing, and they all speak on so many different things and so many different aspects.

We've all been through so many different experiences in life especially for body positive creators I know. Some speak about mental health, some speak about eating disorders, some speak about measurements and being okay with having bigger boobs or a bigger butt or not having boobs at all. I think that the term body positive, it really just applies to everyone. I think there's a stereotype that only certain people can do it, but it's really just about being confident in your own body. That's a stigma that the whole body positive movement has created, which I wish wasn't a thing anymore.

For me, I encourage my followers. If I'm not the right person for you to look up to, then that is 110% fine. I am totally okay with that. Here are some creators that I would really recommend that are on a bigger scale than me. Here are some creators that I would recommend that are on a smaller scale. You know what I mean? Really just like finding somebody that you enjoy watching. For me, I know that I was just really happy when I first started because I was a middle body representative. That term got used a lot in my comments and saying, "I haven't had anyone to relate to until you came around," and which is really nice for me to hear because I'm short and I'm curvier, and having people that can relate to that is very for me.

**Lily:** Especially growing up around people who didn't necessarily look that.

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**Sienna:** Yes, definitely. I've definitely looked up to so many beautiful women, but it's hard when there's not one person that you can see yourself in. For me, getting comments that people see themselves in me is-- This is such the best feeling because I feel I'm doing something good.

**Lily:** Of course, because you are doing something good. [laughs] Of course. That's what drew me to your platform in the first place because I am absolutely middle body, I'm not super skinny, and I was around a lot of people that were a lot thinner than me growing up in the same way. That's something that definitely impacted my mental health, and not in the way that they did anything wrong or I did anything wrong, it's just a societal thing. That's what I think young women especially you're taught to do or to look at other young women and compare yourselves and be like, "Why don't I look them?" or "Why doesn't she look me?" I think I love that, I love that idea about body positivity that it's positive for everybody, no matter what you look like, and you're supposed to look like you.

**Sienna:** It sucks. There's been such a stigma around who can talk about it, but it's like only positivity is such an amazing niche to have because everyone can talk about it. It doesn't matter who you are. Everyone has a body.

[laughter]

It's such an amazing thing. I think that some people will turn it, like "Only she can talk about it. Only he can talk about it," but it's like, "Everyone can talk about it." That's the whole great thing about it.

**Lily:** On your Tiktok too, you publicly support The Trevor Project, which is a non-profit, suicide prevention for LGBTQ youth. I was wondering if you could speak to that a little bit, the importance that you see in that and the importance of supporting it publicly.

**Sienna:** I learned what The Trevor Project was through TikTok and Sam Smith. I was familiar with the name, but I wasn't really sure, as in much detail, what it really was about. Then I became educated on the whole suicide prevention hotline especially for LGBTQ plus. My very, very best friend just came out as bi a month ago. So many people don't feel accepted. They don't feel they have anyone to talk to. The stigma around-- I personally believe that it's getting so much better and our world is becoming so much more accepting, but for people that don't have anyone to talk to, I think the Trevor project is such a great number that they can call and just talk to and have somebody understand them.

So many people just need to be listened to. Some people, they don't even want advice. They just want somebody to listen to them, and they need to rant. That's the amazing thing about The Trevor Project. Growing up in the dance world too, I had so many friends that were part of the community. We're raised in super religious families or not accepting families. I've been around people that are part of the community my whole life just being involved in the dance world. It's been difficult for me to see some



of my best friends just have to lie when they get home or not be able to accept themselves or say, "Well, maybe I'm not because my mom says I'm not."

Supporting organizations and projects that are important and make a difference is so important because I have a platform, and why would I not use that? It only makes sense to, if you need help, please, this is The Trevor Project, give them more income, support it. I just don't see why I wouldn't do that. For me personally, I just have so many close friends that are part of the community, and I'm not sure that I would-- I just want to be there, be able to help people as much as I can.

**Lily:** Absolutely. It's similar, different obviously, but similar, just in the sense of what we're talking about with body positivity, when you're not accepted by the people around you, when you're not accepted by the people you love or even by yourself. The toll that takes on mental health is unimaginable. To be able to have something like The Trevor project and have someone like you promoting that, that's amazing.

**Sienna:** For me personally, also, my DMs are filled with people that will DM me, and they're like, "Sienna, I don't know what to do. I need to come out, but I don't feel comfortable in my own home. I have no one to talk to. Please respond to this DM." Those messages are heartbreaking to me because there's millions of messages. I personally, I can't respond to everyone and give everyone advice.

First of all, I'm not a professional. Second of all, there's so many people that reach out, and it's like I want to help so bad, but it gets to a point where I can only do so much, and that's where an organization that can help and can be there for people to call and answer the phone and get a response. That's why I push that number and the importance of having somebody to reach out to.

**Lily:** Absolutely. Very last question, what is something that is giving you hope right now?

**Sienna:** I think that during quarantine and during this time at home, I've had a lot of time to figure out more about myself and become more confident in who I am, and the things I like and the things I don't like, and the people that I am willing to surround myself with and the people that I'm not. I think that I'm excited and I'm hopeful to when the world starts opening up again and I'm able to go and meet new people. I have this new found love for myself and respect for myself that I'm excited to just see how that blossoms into public socializing.

[laughter]

I'm very happy with who I've become and all this time alone and figuring out who I am. I'm just hopeful for the world to come back to normal. I think we all just need a little something in our lives.

**Lily:** Definitely. No, definitely. Thank you so much. I completely agree. I think this has been a super, super tough time, but if anything's come out of it, the ability to feel



comfortable being by myself and being in myself and in my own body, and I can handle shit on my own. [laughs]

**Sienna:** Oh my gosh, no, 100%. I used to hate being alone.

**Lily:** Yes. No, me too.

**Sienna:** It was the worst for me. I remember I would always have friends over. I would always have my best friend here. Past boyfriends, I'd be like, "No, you need to come over now." I can't be alone. I don't like it. It makes me scared. Now, I was like-- If I'm out for two hours with my family, I'm like, "Okay, we need to go home. I need to go in my room."

[laughter]

It's so weird how that whole-- that shift. Honestly, I love it, I love being alone.

**Lily:** The first six months of quarantine, we're brutal because of that because I was like, "I hate being alone and I need to see someone." Yes, the ability to feel more comfortable being by myself is like a silver lining and something that's been so intense.

**Sienna:** Definitely, me too. [laughs]

**Lily:** I know you have to run. Thank you so much, Sienna. It's been so lovely to meet you. I'm so happy to have had you here and to talk to you.

**Sienna:** Thank you so much. I really appreciate it. Everyone watching, "Hi."

[laughter]

Thank you.

**Lily:** Of course.

[music]

**[00:18:58] [END OF AUDIO]**