



Frankie: We can't affect the world around us by loving our child self but we can affect our relationship with the outside world by loving our child self.

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Interviewer: Hi everyone. I'm Lily Cornell Silver and welcome to Mind Wide Open, my mental health focus interview series. Today, I am talking to Frankie Jonas, who is using his platform in many amazing ways, including for mental health advocacy and today we're going to talk about his TikTok, FrankieJonas Therapist, how he is coped in his darkest times, and what it means to be vulnerable. Thank you so much for watching and I hope you enjoy. Hi, Frankie. Thank you so much for being here.

Frankie: Hello. Thank you so much for having me. I'm so excited to be here. This is awesome.

Interviewer: You have a fantastic TikTok account. Your main TikTok account is amazing, but FrankieJonas Therapist.

Frankie: I can change it as of today, actually

Interviewer: Today's the day, but FrankieJonas Therapist. It's an amazing TikTok account where you talk about your own mental health, but you also answer questions from people that are struggling with their mental health. What inspired you to start that account?

Frankie: I had a separate account. I have many accounts called FrankieJonas songwriter where it was like a spam account and someone asked me to sing them a song for their birthday and then people just started asking me to sing songs for them. I started doing that and then I made one video, which was like a song about mental health and someone said I should make an account called FrankieJonas Therapist and I adored the idea. I made the account and pretty quickly people were into it.

I just wanted to create a space where-- mental health is something it's very important to me and I've had my own recovery journey that I'm still on and I wanted to create a space where I could talk to people and sort of express my experience because it was other people's experience that helped me to find my peace and my growth and in so many ways, vulnerability affects other people's vulnerabilities so much. I wanted to create that space.

Interviewer: Completely, that's beautiful and that's what this series has definitely been for me, is realizing that-- Taking that first step to be vulnerable, like on a social platform was super freaky but once I did it, I realized so many people respond to that vulnerability with their own vulnerability. You never know when you present your experience, how that's going to affect other people.

Frankie: Absolutely. No, absolutely. I think it's just to create a space, you have to be the first one to take the step forward, I think.



Interviewer: What made you feel comfortable taking that step?

Frankie: I lived in the shadows of my own like demons for so long and tried to hide from everything, especially the public eye and especially being my honest self in the public eye and, and this TikTok extravaganza that has flourished in the past few months. It came out of me sort of being my honest self, and it came out of me just being who I am without any opposition of my own mentality and it created-- that made me feel like I could be myself publicly and it could be who I am. I'm someone who, if you get to know me outside of an online space, I'm very quick to open up because I think that that creates-- I think it sometimes bothers people how open I can be about my experience, but because I expect the best in people and I expect-- I hope that they bring that same level of vulnerability in the same, because that's how we can communicate and connect empathically as humans.

Going into that TikTok it was once again, no one was watching at the time when I started it and now that account has like 250,000 followers or something crazy. A lot more people are following it now and each video that I talk about my experience with mental health gets 50, 60,000 views and it's a bit overwhelming, but I just felt-- I knew when I started it that if I was helped by people who were willing to help me, and if I now can be that for other people, even if I'm not, I don't want to be someone who expresses all my advice and all and pushes my will on to others, but I make note to try and express it from my perspective and my experience and hopefully, it helped people.

Interviewer: Absolutely. No, and that's huge. I think that's one of-- In doing this series and getting into mental health advocacy, I've learned that I feel like one of the main things that causes mental health stigmatization is people think you can only talk about mental health if you're a licensed professional and so being able to share your-- That's been a weird pushback I've gotten just on the series is, "What makes you qualified to talk about mental health?" I have a brain, I struggle with mental health. Exactly the same, I'm not trying to tell people, give people clinical advice, but just being open about your own experience is such a huge thing.

Frankie: Absolutely. I think, there are so many layers of say like a mental health degree and qualifications, and you have experience in a subject, you have a voice in it in some capacity.

Interviewer: Absolutely. The advice that you give, because I'm totally the same way. I'm hyper open about hyper vulnerable about my experiences but the FrankieJonas Therapist account reminds me so much of my friends and I and the way we talk to each other and share advice with each other, but sometimes it can be so much easier to tell your friends what to do then to take the advice that you're giving. Is that something you struggle with?

Frankie: Oh my God. Yes, absolutely. No, I'm someone, I have this encyclopedic knowledge of DVT and different techniques. I get in a situation where I have to use it I'm like, "Maybe not today."



Interviewer: I'm always telling my friends, "Just do some tapping."

Frankie: Finger breathing.

Interviewer: Do you feel like your knowledge-- are you able to regurgitate information that you've learned in therapy, or is it more from personal experience, or is it both a combination?

Frankie: I think it's a combination of both. I've had a very complex journey of therapy and therapy techniques and whatnot, and all within the past two years if I'm being perfectly honest, and although they were all intensive. That's why it's so intensive of my experience with it. I think the biggest, I guess, attribute to my perception of it and my experience with it is that I really like two years ago, I had to remake my life and had to restart from scratch essentially and taking these techniques and applying them, relearning things and really getting to a place where I am changing the fundamental connections of my synapses to reconfigure the world. I think having that experience was important for me to be able to have the voice that I feel like I do now.

Interviewer: Absolutely and that changing of your synapses. There's another word that my neurofeedback lady always says to me, but you might have to retrain-- the retraining your brain, and especially when you've dealt with things that are traumatic your brain stores and that's going to be your response. Even if you're not experiencing something traumatic, you're going to have a trauma response. Being able to have access to those modalities that change your brain is so huge and something that I work a lot within mental health advocacy is so many people don't have access to those kinds of modalities. What's been most helpful to you, and do you have anything outside of therapy that keeps your mental health going?

Frankie: Self-care is so important. Just like that's for me. I think honestly the biggest part that I had to learn is the thing that I can do for myself. Especially when I'm like, for lack of a better term, triggered or whatever else is honestly just compassion and it's such a hard thing to learn, especially for oneself. I think that for me, being able to say, as cringey in metaphor as it can be, to be able to see that 11-year-old kid in your head and try and have that conversation. If you're familiar with parts work at all and being able to see the parts that are affecting this and creating that imaginary space like psychodrama literally, but seeing that and being able to affect change in that situation. We can't affect the world around us by loving our child self but we can affect our relationship with the outside world by loving our child self.

Interviewer: Parts integration. It's such a real thing. It's a real thing. We've had very different experiences, but relatively the same just in that I lost my dad very publicly to mental health and addiction issues and having my biggest trauma be something that made headlines before I was even able to process it. That adds such a weird layer of the experience and being someone who's always been very vulnerable it made me rear up a little bit to have that experience. Did having your mental health make headlines make you reticent to talk about it at all?



Frankie: I think it definitely gave me pause. When I went to treatment two years ago, I came up with an alias because I was terrified that my experience would make headlines or affect my-- because my brothers were in the pivotal moment of the second leg of their career together. I didn't want that to affect them. I was cognizant of it. Having this experience now where I'm just talking to people about my life and what's helped me and what has hurt me in a lot of ways, having that reach the public space, it definitely was a moment of, "Oh my God. Let's just take a second and breathe and really check in with ourselves. Is this okay? Are we okay with this? How can we address this in a way that we're honest with ourselves?"

Upon that addressing, just to realize that if there is a space in which I can enjoy being publicly known for the troubles that I've experienced, at least it's on my terms. At least I may be able to help people by saying, "Yea. When I was 18, I got sober." Being able to say that, and I in no way want to be a poster child, but I do want to be an advocate.

Interviewer: Totally. To be able to share your own experiences. What you said about it being on your own terms is such a huge thing because I think anyone who's dealt with mental issues, with addiction, if that's something that they're forced to deal with or forced to make public before they're ready, that's when the advocacy isn't going to be helpful to anyone including yourself.

Frankie: 100%.

Interviewer: Do you ever deal with impostor syndrome? I feel that come up for me very often, like, "I'm not the person that should be talking about this. Why do I a-- I don't know." Is that something you deal with ever?

Frankie: Oh my God. Absolutely. I have impostor syndrome every day of my life. Everything I do, I feel like I'm the wrong person to do it. Especially in this field, before I went down this path. I spent years, in a way, I was so trapped in my cyclical mentality that was perpetuating my traumatic experiences and so locked in that. Really in a self-preservatory nature, I mocked mental health. I couldn't accept it as something that I needed. I thought if I needed it, I would be weak.

I think that looking back now, I can feel guilt and shame for having those mentalities and having those stipulations and feeling like I may have strayed other people away or made them feel, like I said, weak for asking for help. I think now, I can feel that shame, but I can also know that I was hurting and I couldn't understand what my words or what my actions meant for me, too.

Interviewer: I have a lot of family members, my dad included, that have dealt with addiction, dealt with mental health issues. Is there a moment you can point to that was like, "Okay. I have now reached this place and I need to change. Something has to change."?

Frankie: I struggled with self-harm growing up and a lot of suicidal ideations and a few attempts but nothing that ever came to light. Even within my circles and my

family, no one really knew. Then when I was 18 I tried everything to try and be happy. I was really struggling with addiction and didn't know it. I just came to a place where I had the conviction to just end it. I just collapsed on the ground in fetal position. I'm not one to cry but I was sobbing. That was a moment of, "Oh my God. I need help." There's other people who were willing to help me and be there for me. It changed my entire life. I'm alive today because I was able to break through that façade and stop lying for 30 seconds.

Interviewer: It can be such a universal experience to really struggle to ask for help because everyone deals with mental health in some capacity in their way. I think we've been so conditioned to be like, "You need to deal with this on your own. If you're strong, that means you can handle it." Is there something you would say to people who are struggling to ask for help and be honest about how they're feeling?

Frankie: I think asking for help is the most difficult-- Honestly, in a lot of cases for myself, I feel shame about asking for help. I feel shame for coming to someone and saying, "Please, I feel alone and I need assistance," but simultaneously, there is a reason that that feels that way. Usually, the things that are most powerful and the most impossible tasks to accomplish are the ones make us feel the worst.

In a lot of cases, the advice that I've been given through my experience, the ones that make me choke on my own spit at the thought of even doing that, those are the things that helped me in my life. To ask for help, it is the strongest thing someone can do to accept the humbling moment of, "I cannot do this myself." In time, those moments usually turn to the most beautiful and most powerful changes. It just takes that moment of acceptance.

I like to think of desperation as a positive thing because it is the precipice of change. In those situations, there is a beautiful desperation that if you have it and you are willing to accept it and accept that you can't do this alone, you will be rewarded in full by yourself however many days, however many months away from now.

Interviewer: That's beautiful. That is beautiful. Desperation, that's such a beautiful way of putting it because I feel like in that sense, desperation can be honoring the truest part of yourself. Sometimes it takes desperation to get there to that honoring place.

Frankie: 100%. It takes a cognitive amount of self-love that is unimaginable to most people to be able to say, "I can't do this alone." That love transmutes and transforms not only in the balance that is created by it but the self that is asking for it.

Interviewer: We talked a little bit about self-care, but are there things that you do on a day-to-day basis now to keep yourself in that place of vulnerability and being true to yourself, and maintaining health and wellness?

Frankie: Yes. I have a support system of people that I talk to on a regular basis. I like baths. Being able to take those moments and breathe and get air. I have a puppy now. That's pretty rocking. Although puppy blues are intense. Those can get



overwhelming at times. I just try and maintain a steady level of cognizance about my body and what's happening in it. It's a weird one, but when I'm stressed or anxious or whatever, I just pound Altoids because the sensation keeps me present.

Interviewer: That's a thing they took, because I struggled so much with detachment and dissociation, and that's one of the main things that my therapist told me is like, "It's okay for you to eat candy." You can take cinnamon something or just bring yourself back, but it is that not when you have those big emotions, not allowing yourself to detach from them being like, "Okay, I'm going to feel this," but also come back to myself and know that it's not permanent.

Frankie: Walking, bilateral stimulation is such a great way to just re-inhabit my own space and it's so important for my brain to get the blood flow and get life working.

Interviewer: Totally. On a similar note of positivity, what is something that is giving you hope right now?

Frankie: It is so fucking beautiful to watch, just the world start to go back a bit right now. We've seen the most primordial exhale of the human race. It's awesome to watch. My brother and sister got fully vaccinated the other day like, rock on. Rock on. I'm going to get fully vaccinated in two weeks. It's so exciting. Thinking about the potential that we endure, we're alive and we're moving forward. As challenges come and we face them we may not win every battle, but the ones that we get to watch us win. That is the appreciation right there. That is the thing that is so powerful.

Interviewer: Thank you so much for being here, Frankie. It was so awesome to hear your perspective and all the beautiful things you have to say. I appreciate it so much.

Frankie: Thank you so much for having-- I love what you're doing on this podcast. I'm so grateful to have been invited on here. If you ever want me back, I will gladly come back. This is awesome. You're fantastic. This is so cool.

Interviewer: Thank you. Thank you, Frankie.

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