

The Committed Podcast - Intro Episode

Kristen: Hello, I'm Kristen Abell, co-founder and executive director of The Committed Project.

Sue: Hi everyone! I'm Sue Caulfield, co-founder of The Committed Project. Behind-the-scenes magical worker of all the visual things, too.

Kristen: All the things. The Committed Project is an organization created to help share the stories of professionals in higher education experiencing mental illness. By doing this, we hope to educate our fellow professionals about mental illness, increase support for those of us with mental illness, and stomp out the stigma associated with it. In the past, we've done a lot of our storytelling through written posts, illustrated primarily by Sue, and this year we're doing something a little bit different. We've decided to start doing a podcast.

Sue: Yeah!

Kristen: Sue, do you want to tell us a little bit about that?

Sue: We decided on podcasting this year partially because we're just all so trendy with everything going on. But we've discovered, too, that an audio format is really interesting for folks to talk about and share their stories with us because it is a little more personal, I think? Than some of our written or visual posts. It actually, it literally gives a voice to mental illness in higher education, and it is more of a, I guess we use the term "raw" feeling to some of these stories. You know, mental illness is not an easy thing to talk about, and I think we really like the fact that spoken word has a lot of power behind it, and that folks that are choosing to share with us really do get to do so in their own unedited words. Which can be scary but wonderful all at once. And

Kristen is the host - which is super exciting - for all these podcasts because I love listening to her, so, you know, we're just assuming that you would, too.

Kristen: Well, I hope. Yeah,, I mean a little bit more about that because I've already started doing some of the um, the podcasts with a few of our guests. It really has been an amazing experience hearing their stories, um, and hearing kind-of a more full story than what we often get when we do a post which usually picks up one piece of their story. And so it's been really powerful to hear those stories. In fact, I have messaged Sue after every single one to let her know how amazing each one has been.

Sue: Which is really awesome, and I am jealous. But I'm also excited because I get to listen to all of them and edit them together so I will, but excitement will continue as we move along this process.

Kristen: So you'll notice that throughout the series some of our posts are anonymous, and some are not. We did originally intend for this to be a fully anonymous series because we wanted to

give folks who hadn't shared with us before, or who had-hadn't shared about their mental illness maybe at work or were scared to, the chance to share their stories. And talk a little bit about why they were scared to share their stories. That being said, we did have a couple folks who said, "No, I want to own this, I want to tell my story, but I think it's important that people know who I am and what my role is so that that story has some more power behind it. And so we did allow for a few of these to be with names and then others to be anonymous.

Sue: The other thing that we wanted to share is that we are really trying to get, um, different backgrounds and populations and areas of higher ed and really everyone represented because you know mental illness does not really discriminate in the way that it affects everyone. However, we're really aware that, you know, underrepresented populations sharing about their mental illness can be extra detrimental for those populations sometimes, so the anonymity factor we felt was really important for some folks in particular. And, you know, I think in general, we're just really grateful for anyone sharing, anonymous or not.

Kristen: Absolutely. One of the other things that we are asking each of our guests to do is to contribute one idea for changing the conversation around mental illness in higher ed. So what is one thing that we can do as a community to decrease that stigma around mental illness. So, we're really excited to hear some of those ideas and maybe even see some of them implemented after folks listen to the podcast.

Sue: And that, that tip at the end was Kristen's idea, and we're so excited to have voices - I think we're particularly excited to have voices other than just the two of us, too, you know, talking about this.

Kristen: I mean, we like to hear each other talk, but...

Sue: We do, we love it. However, you know, changing the conversation about mental illness in higher education, we're so excited that we're gonna have more ideas and more, I want - I don't want to say action items, but I'm gonna say it anyway - more, you know, action-y items for people to really think about and just think about how to implement them in their own workplaces or in their own lives.

Kristen: Absolutely. So, we're really excited to bring this podcast to you, and although we originally had planned for this to be a May event, as has sometimes happened with The Committed Project, more folks have stepped out of the shadows than we expected. Which is actually great news. So this may be an ongoing series - we're not sure what the timeline is for this at this point, but we are hoping to release one every few weeks for a little while here. So we're excited to see where this takes us and hope that we'll get some new folks listening in.

Sue: And if you are interested in contacting us or interested in submitting a story down the line, Kristen, where can - where can everybody find us these days?

Kristen: You can find us on Facebook, you can find us on Instagram, you can find us on Twitter. All of those are under The Committed Project. You can also email me, which is Kristen@thecommittedproject.org. That's K-R-I-S-T-E-N. You can also find our website at thecommittedproject.org. Did that sound official enough?

Sue: Super official. Yeah, and just, you know, leave us feedback however you're comfortable doing so on the podcast. You know, we're always eager to not only share stories of others but also let those who have shared know that their stories are making an impact in our community, as well. So, you know, we do circle back around to folks now and then and say, "Hey, we just want to let you know that, you know, we got - we got responses from your post," or "A lot of people like this thing that you shared through us, and, you know, we really appreciate it." And the idea, you know, is to get more people talking about this and for everybody to realize that mental illness is something that is more common than people think, especially in higher ed.

Kristen: Absolutely. So listen in, and let us know what your thoughts are. We're looking forward to sharing these stories with you.

Sue: See you...soon. Hear you soon? Whatever. Talk to you soon.

Kristen: Talk to you soon. Bye.

Sue: Bye.