

Episode 2 Transcript: When Relationships Don't Feel Okay

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Announcer: In this episode counsellors Aarti and Heidi explore; when relationships don't feel okay. Join them as they discuss issues around safety, boundaries and other helpful ways to manage during Covid-19.

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Aarti: Hi everyone. Thanks so much for tuning into our podcast and for Constantine doing such a great job introducing us. I'm here with one of our counselors Heidi. Hi Heidi.

Heidi: Hi Aarti.

Aarti: How are you?

Heidi: I'm good, thank you. How are you?

Aarti: I'm good as well. I'm really excited about our topic today.

Heidi: Me too.

Aarti: Yeah, it's something we both talked about that we're really passionate about. We have a lot of information to share and I hope that it will be helpful for the listeners.

Heidi: I hope so too.

Aarti: You know, what does an unsafe relationship mean, like how do our students know Heidi? and I'll be chiming in as well, what an unsafe relationship is or what it might look like.

Heidi: Mm-hmm. Yeah, it's definitely a really important question to talk about what we mean by unsafe, right? For example, you know, sometimes we might be experiencing recurring patterns in our relationship and you know, they could be things like, like, hitting, it could be things like yelling, it could be things like pressure to have sex and taking away our power and control around things like money or custody of children.

It could even be things like really several things like trying to isolate us and take us away from our friends or you know, making rules that are controlling for us. And yeah, I'm so sorry that um, you know, like some people might refer to these things as physical, sexual, emotional, or financial abuse.

Aarti: Yes, thanks Heidi, like definitely labels is something we'll definitely talk about, because when relationships don't feel safe, sometimes it's really hard to know, like I mean, I don't like you know, before I became a counselor, I didn't really know what financial abuse or emotional abuse means. And I think a lot of our students may not necessarily relate with that, but they hear that language, so I'm really glad that you kind of mentioned that those are some different things and it is like the spectrum, right?

Like, sometimes it's confusing. Maybe you don't feel like we're experiencing an abuse type situation, but we're not feeling really that comfortable in the way the things are going and, I wanted to also say that this is something I've seen in my work with students as well, and I often get the question around,

well how do I know it's from healthy or abusive? And a lot of people when they think of abuse or violence, they think that it's a lot more serious, you know, compared to what they might be feeling or experiencing in their situation so...

Heidi: And those feelings are valid right? and we have a right to trust our gut, we might feel sensations in our body that tell us things are not okay, for example, you know, maybe my roommate is giving me certain looks and, I feel like I want to avoid my roommate, or you know, like I noticed that and the family that I'm staying with were hosting me as an international student, they seem to be putting rules on me that seem to be different and I think it's because I'm Asian and it's Covid right now, but it feels kind of, it feels controlling, it feels off.

Aarti: Yes, thanks Heidi, yeah, thanks for sharing those scenarios and you know every, we'll be sharing some scenarios today that are not based on real students, but those are definitely examples of themes or things that might be coming up for people when we're looking at, you know, how does this play out for people during covid? I really like those examples that you gave. Are there other ones that you were, that came to mind when thinking about how this might be with Covid?

Heidi: Oh yeah, around information about what's up what's out there and, sometimes people might use that against us, or to their benefit, so for example, you know, maybe we have maybe we have a partner or you know, like a friend with benefits and they're kind of pressuring us to have sex and we like, we're not sure like what we can or can't do under the pandemic. They're telling us is fine, maybe we live with them and you know, it's really awkward because it's really hard to find housing in the pandemic you know, you know, there might be like my only option and it doesn't feel okay, it feels like really, really confusing because they seem to have escalated the behavior.

Aarti: Yes, thanks for sharing that and we know that a lot of people are in situations that are not as ideal because of the pandemic, right? and I really, really appreciate that you shared that you know for the students or other people who are listening to this podcast that might be finding themselves in a situation where they feel more restricted, even as things are opening up.

Heidi: Yes, it's a concept I learned a long time ago and I used to teach women self-defense in Montreal, a program called Action, and one of the concepts in that program was that we all have a line of justice, and our line of justice is that line that we know when it's crossed and it's something that can change with different people, with different situations etc, so for example, you know, maybe I'm okay with you know, with my friend kissing me but if I drink alcohol, I'm not comfortable with them kissing me.

Aarti: Thanks for sharing that. I think that when you talked about that, that really spoke to me, because I think a lot of times when we're talking about, does something feel okay?, does not feel okay?, does this feel safe? does not, like and even what do I mean by safe right? Like, that's what we're talking about, and I think that listening to our body, like our body will tell us right, like, um, maybe not for everyone all the time, it depends, you know, if other things are going on, but we can get this reaction or that feeling when that line is being crossed, like our boundary the kind of our body tells us a lot of the time when something feels not right or not okay or it's not exactly how we would want the situation to unfold.

Heidi: I hear people complaining that you know, they get tension in the neck or in their shoulders, or maybe they feel like they're getting headaches, like migraines, maybe an upset stomach. The urge to step back and claim more space.

Aarti: Yes, that's a really good example. I know that people have shared with me, you know, maybe feeling more agitated or heaviness in their chest. Maybe noticing if you're feeling more hot all of a

sudden, right those are some really good examples of knowing when you're feeling unsafe in your line of justice is being crossed

Heidi: And we have a right to have people respect our line of justice.

Aarti: Yes, and so that that brings me to another thought that I had. Heidi, why is this important now? Like why is this even more important now to kind of know what, when I feel I'm safe or how to notice if a relationship feels I'm safe for another person like if I'm a friend supporting my friend right?

Heidi: So that's a really good question right? We know that domestic violence and I'm just I'm just giving that name to, to give a wide variety of examples to any kind violence that we're experiencing in our living situation and I just want to say that right now we are living under a pandemic. I know it's always changing however, they have found that the statistics around domestic violence went up 20 to 30 percent since Covid-19, since the pandemic started so it's become I mean, it was already a present issue but you know, this has been very, very serious for a lot of people and yeah, you want to do this work shop to give information and support.

Aarti: Thank you. So I guess that brings us to our next option which is gonna be about boundaries being crossed and how to be kind of, how do we kind of manage that?

Heidi: Sure, yeah, I think just one thing I want to say to cycling to the next session is that there's a lot of silence in our culture and we hope that in this podcast we're going to help bring an end to this silence we want to empower a community whether, you know, you're the helper, you're the survivor, or you're both and so I'm gonna ask you Aarti, some questions about you know, what we can, basically what we can do in these situations, right, whether it's ourselves or whether we're helping another person and so can you tell me like what are some of the red flags that you might see in someone experiencing a relationship that feels unsafe.

Aarti: Yes, no, I really like this question because there are so many red flags and we won't be able to go through all of them, but we will definitely share a link in the episode notes so that anyone who's listening can then take a look at this for themselves.

But generally speaking, like the line of justice like you talked about giving things are not feeling okay that's our first red flag. That's very important, you know? and also recognizing that there may be somethings that could be happening, for example, if we're thinking about a loved one or a friend or a roommate or whomever that you know, we're concerned might be going through this and maybe like you said there's a lot of silence around this in our culture, so maybe they're not aware or maybe they're not able to really talk about it really. One thing we can do is kind of notice with compassion and without judgment and when they're ready to talk about it, you know be a support person. So, some of these yeah, so some of these things that we might look for is for example something that we might notice on our own anyway I think the key thing here that's important is what impact this is having on the person, right? Like is this is a stressing them out? Are they feeling more isolated? or do they find measures that are happening in the home for example. It's helping them. So, I think the key is, not putting our judgment aside and kind of looking at, is this distressing the person I care about? is this isolating?

Heidi: Could like, what could be some signs from them that maybe you know, they want help from you?

Aarti: Yes, so there's a lot of other things that could be happening as well, so for example, if they don't seem like themselves, or their mood is changing, or they seem more unsure of themselves. They just don't really seem like, I'll just use myself as an example, like Aarti just doesn't seem like Aarti. Does that make sense right? And so, that's why it comes back to how were they experiencing this situation? Yeah, and another thing to look for, is someone always around when they're talking?

Is it hard for them? Is it hard for them to get any privacy? For example, if you're on a group project with them, is someone always covering around in the background or chiming in and that they're not able to get their alone space? Yeah, and sometimes maybe it's not that obvious but you notice that there hesitating to talk more freely or they seem preoccupied or distracted.

Heidi: Right. Yeah, it had sometimes students even asking things like, you know, do you think I'm overly sensitive? Sometimes that can be a sign.

Aarti: And that talks to me emotional peace that can happen. And I definitely want to talk about that, but before I talk about that, I want to mention just a couple more things to look for in terms of being restricted is there an issue happening there around their technology right? Like right, they could be limited from knowing what help is even out there to support them with Covid. Maybe they're not able to have access to their phone or computer, maybe they're being forced to share their passwords. This is called digital spying or monitoring. A lot of people talk about this being something that they might have experienced, especially with the pandemic Heidi, I think you had mentioned a really good example when we were preparing for the podcast around monitoring you on social media, right? Like how many, how many of our students have talked about like, you know, a partner, a loved one a parent, like paying attention to every post you like.

Heidi: Yeah, I think that and you know, like they seem to be on everything. Every social media you're on or they you know, like or they even bring things up that you posted on social media that weren't really related to anything to do with them.

Aarti: And I'm just going back to what you said before, like, and when the person who is being questioned reacts and says, this doesn't feel like okay, like why does it matter if I liked this friends post, or they took a picture with a friend, those kind of things, they can be made to feel, you know, they're too sensitive or something is just a joke, or sarcasm can be used as a way to cover up.

Heidi: Yes. Sarcasm can have anger behind it. Yeah and so something that you know, might be said in you know, like as if it's a compliment but it's said in a condescending tone, like somebody saying you appear to have lots of friends, for example,

Aarti: Yeah and the tone is so important right? "Oh you have a lot of friends". Like they don't believe that you deserve to have them in a way, right? like back in being very, very detrimental to the person because this is probably not the only thing that's happening right, so when there's..

Heidi: ...different from someone just saying like, oh that's nice, you have so many friends.

Aarti: Exactly and I think the piece to know is usually when these emotions...comments are being made if it creates doubt for the person, you know, and another important red flag relationship to that is the do you find this person care about is really questioning their strengths, questioning themselves, especially questioning their own opinion or over-apologizing.

Heidi: Yes. I find that often and I wonder to like if some sometimes like sometimes it seems to go in patterns, I notice them too.

Aarti: Yes, and I think the hard thing with this is something called gas-lighting or the way we can talk about it is basically like an outburst right? like the person who is making these comments can make you feel like it's your fault right? like oh, I'm really upset and because you left the house and forgot to wear your mask and so this is your fault that you know, I am having with the, I'm yelling right now, for example.

Heidi: Right, so it's really blaming it's really blaming me every person

Aarti: yeah, it can't look like that sometimes you know, it can also look the other way which is important in which we may not always be aware of it's appearing to be really helpless.

Heidi: Can you give me an example of that?

Aarti: yeah, so for example, I'm around if I start to feel like I have to take care of this other person all the time that they can't function emotionally they'll fall apart if I don't prioritize their needs over my mine right?

Heidi: Right, so like walking is it like walking on eggshells?

Aarti: It can be definitely like, you know, if I leave for example or if I don't make breakfast for this person, you know, I'm just throwing out a scenario right? Then they're not gonna be to take care of them and I want to I want to be very like mindful to recognize there are people who are going through mental health and different struggles where they really genuinely need support and are struggling, but I think this has a flavor of you know...

Heidi: Making you responsible...

Aarti: Exactly. Thank you, making you responsible a hundred percent for the other person's well-being to the point where you feel guilty for having any needs or feelings of your own.

Heidi: And that's a scary place to be in a relationship, because we can't control somebody else.

Aarti: Yes, especially if you notice a consistency like one moment the complete they're able to do things and then when you want more freedom, they're having an issue and need you to stay back.

Heidi: So when it's selective like that, yeah. I think that's why it's so important as a support person to remember, which was going to lead us into our next topic, but to really remember to not be judgmental to be compassionate and to hold space and be someone that. Your friend or loved one can come to because the thing is, just like you said, this can be such a confusing and even lonely experience. Like if someone I really trust and care about says to me, "you're treating me poorly", of course. I'm going to think about it if care for them and I want to be a good person and a good partner or good whatever that relationship is, right?

Heidi: Yes, absolutely.

Aarti: And I think that's the key thing is how, when it comes down to the gist of red flags, is going back to that line of justice that you talked about right? And are there inconsistencies where it's a, it's really about power and control, right? Like I'm not allowed to have feelings, or I'm not allowed to have needs.

Heidi: And we know that that's lines crossed, we feel it.

Aarti: So, although there's a lot of silence around this topic I think I would conclude this section by talking about this list is not exhaustive, right? At the end of the day, if there is a power imbalance that doesn't feel right or makes it so bad your needs and your emotions don't really have a space and you don't have privacy or you can't have relationships with other people. Those are just some examples. The key to know if it's a red flag is if a) doesn't feel okay to you so then it could be a red flag, and b) there isn't room left for you to be you know.

Heidi: Thank you Aarti. That's an excellent summary of what we just discussed.

Aarti: Yeah, thank you. I hope that helps.

Heidi: Yes.

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Aarti: So, as we moved into the next section, we're going to be talking about, how can someone help who is a support person like a friend. I know I keep using the example of a friend, but he could also be a classmate, it could also be a professor right? How do I know what's the best way to support someone?

Heidi: That's a really good question, right? We definitely want to respond to someone who's struggling in a way that doesn't take away their power, that allows them to feel comfortable to reach out to us and to not impose our expectations on them, right? Because we're not living with the consequences, we're not living in their shoes. And we don't want to scare them away from talking to us when we need to get that support. And it can be tempting to jump in and tell them that they're being treated poorly, or how to respond to differently than that can actually make the person feel ashamed and pull away from us.

Aarti: Yeah. I know I hear that all the time. So I'm thinking here that that is so important because I do want to empathize with people when we have someone we really care about and we know they're not being treated properly it's hard not to be frustrated and not to have questions in our head like why don't they x-y-z? why don't they just do this? why are they there? why don't you leave? why don't you wake up with this person.

Heidi: It's because we care right?

Aarti: Yeah, because we care, but as much as we care. I think it's important to hold our frustration with our compassion.

Heidi: Yes, absolutely. I think that means taking good care of ourselves. And the process right? like maybe we support to be able to support somebody in that situation so that we're not bringing our own projections into it and that's a very valid.

Aarti: Yes, so I think that, like we talked about listening non-judgmentally, how can we ask good questions? Heidi, do you have some examples of good questions that we can ask?

Heidi: Sure, and I want to say like, first of all, you know, when we're, asking questions we want to come with a really open like, open mind so we want to be there to support without imposing expectations that the person has to leave the situation.

Aarti: Yes that's so important because we don't want to become another person that this person has to please or is afraid of disappointing right? Then we're truly not being a safe person and yeah, and I think the other piece is that like, they already feel this right like they already, they already know that we're frustrated as much as we try to be compassionate they know anyone that cares for them is going to be concerned for them which I think feeds into the silence. So the more we can see outwardly non-judgmental, the more we can say, you know, I will support you no matter what decision you made.

Heidi: And you know, sometimes when we're reaching out to them, we also want to make that a safe process, so for example if we call someone and we know they're living with someone who is jealous we might want to ask yes/no questions, like we might want to ask if that person is around when we

call and if that person's around they may not be able to speak. If we know the person is not around, it might be an opportunity to have a conversation right? to create co-wards and, sorry, co-create code words and ways of indicating when it's safe to talk or not and you know, for to determine like what's a word that means, "I want you to hang up now", or you know, "I want you to do this to help me be safe", etc., but the most important thing in that, is you know, just supporting the person by keeping reaching out and being around, because like we talked about the silence and the isolation of abuse. We also want to respect that sometimes they may not always respond because it might not be safe for them. But as long as they know that reaching out to us is an option right? And it's not necessarily.. to not take it personally as you know, a rejection of our relationship.

Aarti: Yeah, that's such a good point. Thank you for sharing that. It's hard for us, you know, ghosting's a things so it's hard for us to not misinterpret the situation and think that either something's wrong with our friendship or relationship, or they just want to be left alone. That may be the case...

Heidi: And we can ask, right?

Aarti: Exactly

Heidi: We want to give the person the opportunity to have their consent respected.

Aarti: Exactly, and you know what? Maybe they respond, maybe they don't' but I think one thing we can do is from time to time...

Heidi: Unsafe person to isolate them and I mean, we already discussed the way that isolation can allow abuse to continue.

Aarti: Heidi, is it okay if I shared some examples of open-ended questions?

Heidi: Yes please.

Aarti: So we talked about starting with yes/no questions, so there is a room for open ended questions which basically means, how do I be compassionate? how do I interact and support my loved one or a colleague or friend who's going through this? These are just some questions to give you a flavor of how you can broach this topic right? So, asking them how do they want to feel in the relationship versus how they do feel right? So, what do you think about that Heidi?

Heidi: I think that's really great like, you know, questions, other questions could be like what are your hopes? What are your dreams for this relationship? Do you ever find yourself, for example, comparing it to other relationships? and how do you feel in the relationship when it comes to deciding about things whether it's finances? or where you live? or you know, what, what... how the children are raised? and it could also be things like asking questions about you know, just a relationship sometimes feel like it's getting better with them get worse?

Aarti: Yes, thank you for sharing those thoughts and they're really like them. So we didn't talk much about the honeymoon phase and we're not going to depth about it, but I think it's important for us to recognize that it's a real thing right, you know why people don't leave situations where they don't feel safe is because why wouldn't we have hope that someone we love can change and improve and get better and when we see that improvement and we'll feel like we've been heard or are concerned have been expressed, of course, we're going to want to give some time to see if things improve but if there is this pattern of things improve and then get worse, and then improve and get worse, we can hold space for the other person by allowing them to reflect on it, you know, it's important that what we don't do, and let me know what we think Heidi, is tell them what their experiencing or trying to

educate them on the topic, right? Instead of being like, this is what's happening or this is what I think, yes in other situations that might be helpful, but in this situation... really that could something take the power away. So these open and big questions allow the other person to reflect and come to put language to their experience.

Heidi: Yes. Thanks. Exactly Aarti. yeah.

Aarti: so I'm wondering about we talked about you know, red flags we talked about how we can help how we can be present, what type of questions that we can ask, would it make sense to also know about the supports that are available out there and why would this help?

Heidi: Yes definitely. You know, it could be, it could be really helpful to know what supports exist because the person may want to use those supports but might not feel safe calling and learning about them. The person, you know might have misinformation about them, especially under Covid-19 and you know, we can, we can do so that work ourselves to alleviate that for them like finding out. You know, what our service is that they can call better 24 hours. We know what are [the] options for places to go if they ever need to go, you know. Would they want to maybe, you know, take a picture of their documents and leave it with us and what documents, would they, you know, need to do that with. And things like finding out if there's places where they can keep their pet if they needed to or people could help with their children.

Aarti: So it sounds like Heidi what you're saying, and we'll definitely in the next section talk more about the actual resources and strategies to keep ourselves safe, but like you're mentioning, it sounds like, as you wrap up this section, when we're talking about how we can help, there's a few things that stood out, one is you know, how do I approach the conversation with compassion and non-judgment and not taking power away from the person. Second thing that you said that stood out to me was around open-ended questions. How we can do that, but starting with the yes/no questions, making sure that we have consent, that it's the same time, a good time the person wants to talk about this right?

Heidi: Yeah, very important.

Aarti: Yeah, and then you also mentioned, you know, creating a safe code together if needed and also knowing the supports in advance or even saying, you know what? Heidi, would it help you if I look into this and then if it's, if it's okay with you I need to comfortable I can tell you in the next conversation, or I could text it to you if that's safe, for example.

Heidi: Absolutely.

Aarti: Yes, and we'll talk about that next.

Heidi: Yeah. Like I've been, I think you really summed that up well Aarti and I think that it would be really great if the next thing that you could talk about is safety planning and resources.

Aarti: Yes, okay that definitely... and I'll ask you to help me out as well. Yeah, but well, a safety plan what does that even mean I guess right? That's the first thing I do think about yeah. So every person's situation is unique and like, we've already kind of talked about in this podcast, you know, I think I always try to remember that everyone is an expert in their own situation, yes, that's very important, thank you for saying that Aarti.

Aarti: Yeah and they have been keeping themselves safe and if you're listening and you might be going through this, you know, I just want to acknowledge that you have been working really hard to keep yourself safe.

Heidi: So true. Survivors, or people who are experiencing these situations really know what they're doing and what's best for them and I think it's really great that we can support them.

Aarti: Yes, and so wait a safety tool is something that... a safety tool or safety plan is something that does come to my mind. And we have a really good one that's useful and we're gonna link that down as well to the episode notes, but I do want to share that the safety plan really is just a way to strategize and think about things we can do to keep ourselves... continue to keep ourselves safe, right? But by no means is it gonna be the same for everyone, and any person in their own situation has a usually good understanding of what might happen, how the other person might respond to them if they were to do something.

Heidi: And is there anything from that, that you wanted to like, give an example of?

Aarti: yes, of course, I can definitely share some specific examples. So for example, like, we talked about the monitoring of technology, so that would be one definitely to think about, how can we keep myself safe with technology? so learning how to clear your history, how to use incognito windows right yeah, so for example, if you want to look up supports for yourself, you can open up the incognito window. 2-1-1 Toronto is a good website that can help connect you with any kind of support that you're looking for.

Heidi: And you can phone them or go online for them right?

Aarti: That's right yes, and there are other supports as well which I'll mention a little bit later, but when we're talking about technology, you know, sometimes it may also help to use an encrypted technology, like Zoom is encrypted, WhatsApp is encrypted so what that means is that, if you're making a phone call or using that you know, it can't really be hacked so it may not be something... yeah, we may not think about that, like your partner is going to hack into that, but sometimes that happens and if that's possible and that could be a way to have a little more privacy, and another thing that you mentioned already is taking pictures of our documents and we would want to do that because even though, let's say we feel we can manage the situation, if we ever did need our Health card or our passport information or anything like our SIN card, just having a picture of it can go a long way. So now how to do that safely? You can, depending on your situation you can take a picture and email it to a safe person and then delete it from your phone, making sure that you're going into your settings and checking, you know, even in your deleted items right for example.

Heidi: What about.. I was wondering if I could ask you too, I think all of those points you mentioned about technology are important and definitely there's anything else you want to add I want leave space for you to do so, but I'm also thinking about ways of just being safe in the environment.

Aarti: Yes, definitely

Heidi: That when the tension does build up.

Aarti: I agree that's very important as well. The only thing I would add to that is for example, if you have certain medications or you have, you know, keeping your phone charged and on you if possible, you know, right, those are some things.. even if you just have a little bit of medication just in case the worst case scenario you need that so that it doesn't become something that could be used as a way to control, right?

Heidi: Thank you for that.

Aarti: In the actual home environment now, I know that we're reopening and things are continuing to improve in terms of things we can do but like I said before, that may not always be the case for everyone. So I think some, something would be really important to think about is, "where am I in my home?", Let's say that we know that potentially an argument could happen. Where's the safest place in my home? for example thing away from staircases, balcony or other unsafe places and if there are things like knives or anything like that, or pots or pans or something that in the heat of an argument has been thrown or something like, then think about whether or not it's safe enough for you to move those items to a less accessible place right? For example, putting it putting it in another drawer. If that you know, under the guise of cleaning or organizing if that is safe enough for you to do, so is that something you that you could do and if it's not that's okay too, knowing where is the safest place in your home for some people, it could be the bathroom, the locking the door of the bathroom right? For some people it could be if they have like a home, being in the front yard or the backyard where there is still some potential for passerby's or people kind of somewhat public right?

Heidi: Or even getting away or having the abuser be, or the abusive person or the unsafe person and feeling limited in how they can do harm because of the potential for other people to see.

Aarti: Yes, exactly and I think the other thing is, it can go really scary in an argument to move from one room to another so I wanted our knowledge that it can feel paralyzing. That we're saying okay move to the front yard but maybe it's actually not that simple that you need to do that. I want to acknowledge that and at the same time also acknowledge that there are like, I said, many things that can be part of our safety plan right? So, so for example, are there ways that we can focus on what we can control or how we can build some of our freedom a little bit if it's possible. So some of those examples might be things like, are you able to go for a walk super early or at certain times of the day, so sometimes...sometimes you can be limited oh there's Covid it's not safe you can't leave the home or if you're going to leave the home you have to follow all of these different protocols, right? Which makes you not want to go out. So that can be one example, um, that doesn't necessarily mean that, that situation is always going to be an unsafe situation like that like I said like before, that depends on how it feels for you right.

Heidi: Yeah, thank you for bringing that up because there could be people who have like chronic illnesses or you know other disabilities that can you know, like where they might experience barriers and wondering if you had any ideas around, how could we support or what can we do if we have disabilities?

Aarti: Yes that's a great question so definitely I want to recognize that there are a community of people out there who have disabilities or limitations, or are older and want to take more precautions with Covid so again how do I know it comes back to how it's feeling for you, so some people may find ways like taking a pet out for a walk or we're going for a walk, but some people don't have that option. So, if you yourself are limited and you are having disabilities or experiencing anything like that, know that you're not alone right?

Heidi: Right and as a support person we can definitely contact places and ensure that there's accessibility for the person ahead of time.

Aarti: Yes, and if you happen to be a student at George Brown listening to this, know that accessible learning services is the support for you. If you have any sort of mental health or diagnosis, physical or any other issue where you need to support with school, and then anyone that... we want to talk about this because we want everyone to give safe person and reduce the stigma around the silence. Your classmates, your professors, us counselors, we're here and... and can confidentially speak to you and support you.

Heidi: Right so you name the resource. So there's lots of resources of the college that can help there is also I believe the sexual violence response advisor, the diversity, equity and human rights services, and there's also public safety & security and I wonder too like right now, you know, people aren't on campus so what are some supports in the community that they could access.

Aarti: Yes, thank you, exactly, so I mean, if you're not feeling safe or unable to, have time to make an appointment for the counselor, if that type of freedom is just not there for you, then you know, Assaulted Women's Help line is a 24/7 confidential support that you can reach, there's also crisis text lines if you're able to text you would text HOME to 68-68-68. 3-1-1 is the number for the city, where they can connect you with central intake, basically that's a support for anyone who is looking for resources and/or is maybe thinking of leaving the situation and I want to also share that there is support around if someone was wanting to leave and not be living in that environment even with Covid, there are supports and where you can go to be able to do that and do that safely. And, also for our indigenous population there's an indigenous women's help line, but it's not just for women, you can call even if you're not. A website that I really liked first of people who are supporting other people, it's called "better help" and it gives you a lot of what we're talking about, although it's not specific to abuse or violence or relationships feeling unsafe, it's definitely give you some support on knowing how to talk to someone who's going through a difficult time and how to support them.

Heidi: Right, and I think there's also a couple of resources, other resources that are all gender right? Like the Central Violence and Domestic Care Center at Women's College Hospital, or the one at McKenzie Health, as well as The Toronto Rape Crisis Centre.

Aarti: Thank you. Yes, and also Blackboard Collaborate is something you're likely using for all of your classes and is a way that you can connect and message if something is coming up that you can use to message your instructor or message a classmate if needed. So I think you know, as I think about this, it sounds like you know, this can be such an overwhelming experience can't it?

Heidi: I'm really glad that we also, you know, we're able to provide some tips, some strategies and some resources that you know, could be of support and are there when needed.

Aarti: Thank you. Yeah, so I guess we'll just end off by saying, remember, whether you're supporting someone or you're needing support, you're not alone. You're part of the GBC community and you know, everyone here wants to support you and we're actively working towards making it okay to talk about when relationships don't feel okay and make it so that we're not judging the person, it's not your fault. It's a complicated situation.

Heidi: Yes, thank you for saying that I feel we want to recognize that abuse is not the fault of the person who's experiencing it. That it can't be said enough.

Aarti: Yes, and even if you don't think you're experiencing abuse, if something doesn't feel okay and it's crossing your line of justice, just because, you know, you feel you allowed that person to cross that line does not make it your fault, because there's so many complicating factors and people know what your buttons are and they know, what your vulnerabilities are. So I think I would end by saying if having compassion for ourselves and others and really practicing non-judgement can make it easier for everyone going through this.

Heidi: Yes, and at the same time we have a whole community here to be supportive and we can be we can be part of that circle.

Aarti: I'm feeling some level of hopefulness. How are you doing Heidi?

Heidi: Thank you Aarti. Yes. I agree with you 100%, thank you Aarti.

Aarti: Thank you Heidi and I look forward to another podcast with you.

Heidi: Likewise.

[music]

Announcer: So, this concludes today's episode. Thank you for joining us. If you have any questions, feedback on our episodes, suggestions for future topics, or wish to book an appointment with our counsellors, please send us an email at letstalk@georgebrown.ca. Come by again, and let's talk.