00;00;01;22 - 00;00;06;11

Music plays

00;00;10;24 - 00;00;46;03

Dan

Hello, everyone. This is the introductory episode to Words of Wellness in this podcast, we discuss the ways people think, speak and write about wellness. I'm here with Alex Birmingham, a student from our course, English 89, which is a first year seminar at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. And I'm Daniel Anderson. So we're putting a podcast series together about this course, and I thought I would ask Alex to represent some of the perspectives of the class and help our listeners understand what this podcast series is about.

00;00;46;12 - 00;01;00;21

Dan

So I thought I'd start with the title. I've been pitching it as the ways people think, speak and write about wellness. What aspects of that jump out at you When you think about our class and the way we've been podcasting?

00;01;01;08 - 00;01;23;04

Elise

Yeah. Hello, everyone. Thank you, Dr. Anderson, for having me. I think what really jumps out at me about that is thinking, speaking, and writing. That's all we do, right? As as humans, that's our entire life. So it's really how people live. Wellness and how they broadcast that to others. And I think it's a very succinct way to really summarize what we talk about in our podcast, even though the topics are so broad.

00;01;23;16 - 00;01;48;06

Dan

Yeah, and when we understand wellness, a lot of times there are strategies, tactics people are using. Does this rhetorical lens of communication improve the ability to implement those strategies, or is it take it more into an esoteric research category? How does it fit together? Thinking about communication along with the practice of wellness?

00;01;48;16 - 00;02;12;05

Elise

Yeah, I think the practice of wellness is something that needs to be very relatable for people to put it into practice in their lives. So I think by having student students run the podcasts, obviously we have a pretty limited, rhetorical, complicated, you know, knowledge of this subject since we're just introduced to it. But we can bring our own experiences and bring our own stories, which really make it relatable to the listener.

00;02;12;26 - 00;02;14;23

Elise

I think it's very important to think about.

00;02;15;00 - 00;02;35;22

Dan

I like that. One of the things that I've noticed when we've been doing these podcasts for this series is everyone is contributing their stories talking about COVID experiences or athletic experiences they've had. So I think these personal stories really are important, and I don't know if that's a part of the rhetoric of wellness storytelling.

00;02;36;22 - 00;02;58;19

Elise

Yeah, And I think an important part of wellness is people don't really take to the lessons of wellness because they feel like they're too broad, right? People just say, be present in the moment or be happy, right? But that's hard to tell. Someone who is struggling is in a negative mental state. So I think by hearing all those stories, that that helps it become more real and more tangible for someone.

00;02;58;26 - 00;03;23;24

Dan

That makes sense. And I'm hoping at some point that storytelling can become a strategy in some way. So it's not just stories about how people implemented strategies, but eventually maybe some aspects of how we tell stories or how we understand our connection to the world through language can actually be beneficial as we think about wellness. I know self-talk, for instance, was a category that we looked at in early in our class.

00;03;23;28 - 00;03;50;15

Elise

Yeah, self-talk is is definitely an interesting one because again, it's that that kind of mindset where you think it's easy for someone to do if you're already there, like you're already in a kind of positive mindset. Self-Talk, I can imagine, would seem almost frivolous to someone who is not in a thriving or positive mindset. So yeah, I think the repetition of all the themes throughout the podcast are do a good job of reaching a large audience no matter who it is.

00;03;50;16 - 00;04;20;20

Dan

Yeah, I had this insight the other day about self-talk and related to our podcast series. One of the topics that's come up has been this balancing of positivity and negativity. And we started out thinking about positivity, gratitude, a lot of these things that are beneficial, really important, but quickly realized that there can be this sense of toxic positivity and things are need to be balanced and life is never going to be all rainbows and butterflies.

00;04;20;21 - 00;04;39;12

Dan

So we have to think about the two sidedness of the way that life works. And that became a tenet that I thought people should pay attention to. But then I had this insight where I thought, maybe when it comes to self-talk, it's more important to push that balance a little bit away from the negativity.

00;04;39;13 - 00;05;00;18

Elise

Mm hmm. Yeah, definitely. And I think one thing in this class that a lot of the students found was speaking in absolutes doesn't really help anyone. I think that's where a lot of friction came from. People against just the rhetoric of wellness and how it's discussed online. To begin with, you know, a lot of people think it's kind of kitschy or it's, you know, it's it's not scientific enough.

00;05;00;18 - 00;05;16;01

Elise

And things like that. But I read something the other day that said, why do we tell people, you know, quitting isn't an option when we're trying to motivate people? We say quitting is not an option because it is like realistically, it is an option. So that's that's the kind of self-talk we should avoid, even though it's positive in a sense.

00;05;16;01 - 00;05;24;11

Elise

But we can kind of edit that to say quitting is an option. But if you push through this, then you'll learn how to not quit the next time you smile at that.

00;05;24;11 - 00;05;48;06

Dan

I like that that one particular lesson is really valuable. But then zooming up to the idea that absolutes are also problematic, don't get locked into I have to do X or Y. Think about the situation and its context. And also when you're studying something like wellness or communication. Absolutes don't work either. There's always gray areas and that's where the interesting stuff is.

00;05;48;18 - 00;06;09;29

Dan

So a little bit more forecasting for our listeners. In the class, we did a couple kinds of reading. Two kinds were different than what we typically think of as reading. One. We looked at a bunch of tweets and we coded them. We tried to come up with interpretive schema for how you can understand an online conversation. And then we also used computation.

00;06;09;29 - 00;06;36;05

Dan

We did a lot of linguistic analysis of books and let the computer discover patterns and recognize those. Then we also had books and had readings and we read in our traditional mode of I'm looking at this book and turning pages. Could you talk a little bit about the differences and what you discovered from those modes of reading, or what can listeners expect when they encounter these conversations in our podcast?

00;06;36;10 - 00;06;59;09

Elise

Yeah, I think obviously everyone is most familiar with the book style of reading. You have a certain theme and very specific subtopics. But I think what's interesting about the Twitter analysis specifically was how, how broad the content was. You don't realize that having so many individual contributors really just blows your scope out of proportion. Crazy compared to a book and kind of similar with the podcasts.

00;06;59;09 - 00;07;12;11

Elise

I mean, people said things in our sessions that I never would have thought of just from their own experiences. So I think it's really important to understand the value of everyone bringing their own perspective and everyone becoming an author in that online space.

00;07;12;20 - 00;07;32;28

Dan

I like that we use a conversational metaphor a lot in teaching research skills, so when you're showing someone how to become a researcher, often you'll say you're going to enter into a conversation. But what you're saying is we actually studied conversation a little bit more or practice conversation a little bit more than just using it as a metaphor.

00;07;33;00 - 00;07;54;17

Elise

Mm hmm. Yeah. And then with the computational analysis, I'm not sure how that came out. I don't think it came up in our specific episode, but I'm sure throughout the podcast it did. That was interesting because you you write and then you think, I think and a lot of a lot of times people do that, but doing that retroactively and seeing how what you created can be interpreted by others is very interesting.

00;07;54;22 - 00;08;13;02

Dan

I like that. So you're talking about the podcasting a little bit. Can you say a little bit more about that podcasting experience? What did it do for you? How did it overlap with the content of our course? The study of wellness and the study of communication about wellness. How did that podcast experience feed into that?

00;08;13;08 - 00;08;35;08

Elise

Yeah, I think as a student it really helped me grow because I found that I've been in school for 13 years now in the public education system and we learned so much about how to read and how to write, but we don't really learn how to listen or even speak to it to a certain extent. And so doing the podcast was a really novel experience, and even now we have no notes in front of us, right?

00;08;35;08 - 00;08;51;25

Elise

We're just, you know, going off what we think. And that's that's such an important skill to have just in life in general. And it was very interesting to me because I was afraid going into the podcast that we wouldn't be able to build off a conversation or I wouldn't know what to say, things like that. And it really flowed so naturally.

00;08;51;25 - 00;09;03;28

Elise

And that was a shocker for me, honestly, because I had never done it before. But yeah, the podcast was a great educational experience and I also am proud of what we created. So I think that it'll be a good thing for people to listen to.

00;09;03;29 - 00;09;21;23

Dan

Yeah, I agree. I feel like at the beginning you're thinking I won't have enough to say, and then by the end you have to stop talking because there's so many ideas flowing. I really like that part about it. And you mentioned that as a student, this was beneficial. So who is this podcast series going to be helpful for?

00;09;21;23 - 00;09;30;12

Dan

I know there is a lot of first year students involved in the production of it. So is that the main audience or could you talk a little bit about who would be good listeners here?

00;09;30;18 - 00;09;47;23

Elise

Yeah, of course. I think, you know, college students, of course, are going to relate to this more, but one group I thought might really relate to you mentioned it once that your biking or running buddies or something, you had mentioned that to, you know, people that are very removed from this environment. You know, they're not the same age.

00;09;47;23 - 00;10;06;07

Elise

They're not not in the same, you know, college atmosphere or things like that, just to get a different perspective. And maybe they don't have interaction with people of our age or socio economic status or anything like that. So I think that's the beauty of podcasts overall, and that's the beauty of our podcast because it is all college students.

00;10;06;07 - 00;10;19;20

Elise

It's a very specific demographic and someone from a wildly different one listening to that will get a very, very raw, you know, natural look into the college student life and how they deal with wellness and thrive.

00;10;20;01 - 00;10;50;13

Dan

I agree. I think I've learned a lot from listening to you. Talk to me about your experiences and also the research that you've done. I also feel like the insights you have a really solid, even like you're saying this outside perspective from somebody who is maybe a generation or two removed adds a lot of value. I learned a lot listening to people talking about their COVID experiences and just the insights that everyone delivered about wellness I think will be applicable to a pretty broad audience.

00;10;50;14 - 00;10;55;21

Dan

It's generalizable, I think, because the insights are really valuable.

00;10;55;26 - 00;11;13;01

Elise

Yeah, and another thing being students, I think what's what I liked about this podcast is we we didn't hammer down on things that we had been told so many times. Like you mentioned the COVID pandemic. We're all kind of tired of it. You know, we didn't in our episode, we didn't bring it up a whole ton. You know, we focused on other things.

00;11;13;01 - 00;11;18;17

Elise

You know, it just flowed very naturally as to what we wanted to talk about, and that made people passionate about it, I think.

00;11;19;07 - 00;11;24;02

Dan

Is there anything else listeners should know or expect from this series of podcasts?

00;11;24;06 - 00;11;39;10

Elise

I would just say keep an open mind. I think as much as podcast is about us speaking, it's also about the listener listening, right? So applying these themes and lessons to your own lives and just seeing how you relate personally to the content is really how you going to get the most out of it.

00;11;39;19 - 00;12;02;04

Dan

Yeah, well, I would like to thank Elise for forecasting what words of wellness is about and also for being such a strong participant in all of the podcasts. So if you are listening to this, then you have many episodes of this podcast cued up and I hope you will enjoy them. Thank you, everyone. Talk to you soon.

00;12;02;19 - 00;12;03;02

Elise

Thank you.

00;12;03;10 - 00;12;04;08

Dan

You're.