

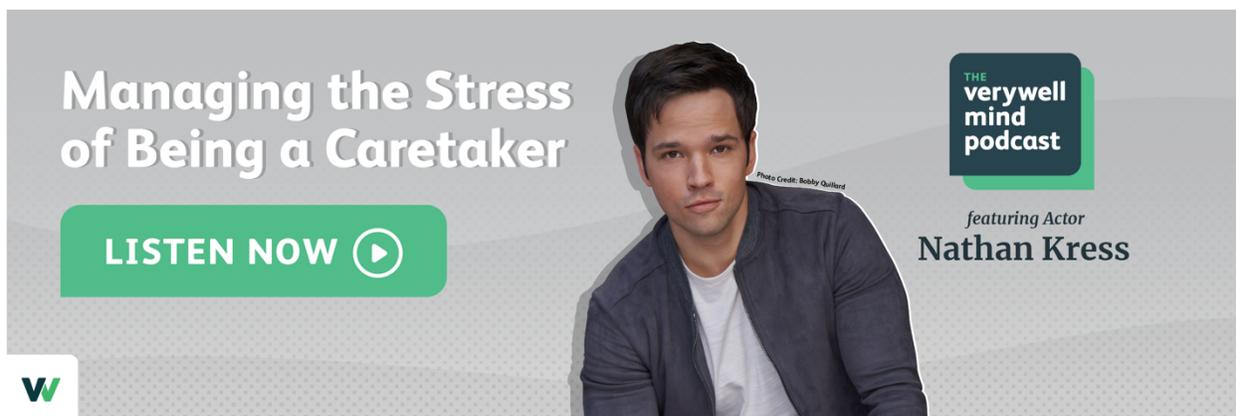


THE
**verywell
mind
podcast**

WITH THERAPIST
Amy Morin

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184 — Managing the Stress of Being a Caretaker with Actor Nathan Kress

Amy Morin:

Welcome to *The Very Well Mind Podcast*! I'm Amy Morin, the editor-in-chief of Verywell Mind. I'm also a psychotherapist and a best-selling author of four books on mental strength. Every Monday, I introduce you to a mentally strong person whose story and mental strength tips can inspire you to think, feel, and do your best in life. And the fun part is we record the show from a sailboat in the Florida Keys! Don't forget to subscribe to the show on your favorite platform so you can get mental strength tips delivered to you every single week. Now, let's dive into today's episode!

Today, I'm talking about what it's like to be a caregiver. It's estimated that about 17% of Americans are caregivers to another adult with either an illness or a disability. That means a significant amount of you are helping someone else, like an elderly parent with dementia or a partner with cancer, yet we don't talk much about the stress of caregiving. And many people who are caregivers feel kind of alone and isolated as they try to navigate all the complexities that come with being a caregiver. Finding help accessing resources and managing day-to-day life gets really complicated when you're not just managing your own affairs but when you're also responsible to help somebody else. Years ago, I had a therapy client who was this really kind man who had decided that he was going to help his friend who had ALS (or Lou Gehrig's disease). As the friend's health deteriorated, my client stepped up and helped him even more. His friend used to

say, "I'm sorry to be a burden on you." My client would say, "Actually, it's a burden I welcome." He didn't want to deny that it was a huge responsibility to help care for his friend.

He acknowledged it, but he also made it clear that there was no other place he'd rather be than right there helping him. Eventually, the friend had to go to a nursing home, and my client still showed up faithfully to visit him and help take care of him. In the therapy office, he acknowledged how difficult it was, but he also said that not helping his friend would be even more painful. I think that's what a lot of caregivers experience. Yes, it's hard, but it would be harder not to be right there helping a loved one who needs help.

So today, I'm talking to actor Nathan Kress. He's been in lots of TV shows, but the one that he's probably best known for is his role as Freddie Benson on *iCarly* which recently underwent a reboot. What you might not know about Nathan is that he's a caregiver to his wife.

She has endometriosis, and there are times when she's doing well and times when she struggles to manage her symptoms. Nathan recently began talking about what it's been like for him to be a caregiver to his partner. Some of the things he shares on the show today are how he manages his stress, why he started talking about this in the first place, and how being vulnerable is helping him as well as other caregivers out there. So whether you're a caregiver or someone who is sick, stick around to hear Nathan's story, and make sure you stick around until the end of the episode for The Therapist's Take. It's the part of the show where I'll break down Nathan's mental strength-building strategies and share how you can apply them to your own life. So here's Nathan Kress on how to stay mentally strong when you're a caregiver!

Amy Morin:

Nathan Kress, welcome to *The Very Well Mind Podcast!*

Nathan Kress:

Thank you. Thank you very much for having me. Happy to be here.

Amy Morin:

So, congrats on the ICarly reboot. I hear not only are you starring in it, but you're also doing some producing and directing.

Nathan Kress:

Yeah, yeah, wearing a lot of hats, especially this season. I started directing last season for one episode, and then doing two this season, and then also producing this season this time around too. So, lot of lot more involvement than there was, and certainly a lot more than on the original version of the show. And that's something that I've really enjoyed now as a grownup, getting to have a little bit more of the say in this character and in the course of the show. And it's just been so fun having a real collaborative environment on that set between me and Miranda, Jerry, and the writing team. Everyone's just working really hard to lend their own perspectives, but also kind of have a meeting of the minds in the middle and look at it through this framework of what do the fans want and how can we make that into a cohesive show.

Amy Morin:

How long had you guys been talking about a reboot? How long was this in the works?

Nathan Kress:

I don't know when it really first started. For me, I got the first call in October, but I think the first rumblings had been right around when the lockdown started in March or April, maybe in February. So, I think there was a lot that they needed to figure out before it even got down to the point of asking if I wanted to be involved, because a lot of things probably could have gone wrong that would've just made the whole thing go away in general. So, it was a long process. And then I think in January of 2021, I saw the first draft of the script. And then after that, it was only a couple months later that we were in production. So once it started going, it started going pretty quick.

Amy Morin:

What were you doing up until that point, or what did you think you were going to be doing until you got that phone call?

Nathan Kress:

Well, so after the show ended in 2012, I had been invited to direct. Because I think when that conversation happened, the general line was, "You've obviously been paying attention as an actor, you're thinking from the perspective of behind the scenes, you're helping directors when they have problems. And for that reason, we think you'd be a good director. So if you ever want to try it, you know this crew loves you and you could totally direct a show in the future." And I went, "Sure, okay," with zero intention whatsoever of doing that because I wanted to be an actor, not a director. And I had it very set in my mind what I was going to do with my life. And ultimately, it got to the point where I was still acting and everything, but I realized I had to try it just one time, just to know for sure that I hated it and that I would just never have to do it again.

And it just so happened that I ended up really, really liking it. And pushing myself to do it, it was by far the most stressful thing I've ever done, ever. And it's so funny because when you're in production, you kind of have to get out of your head a little bit and realize that you are having fun because you can get really caught up in the stresses and the struggles of it. But then as soon as the episode's done, without fail, you look back on it and go, "Oh my gosh, that was so much fun. I can't wait to do that again." So, that was something that I was doing from 2014 all the way up through 2020, and then the lockdown happened.

So, that was kind of starting to become more of a passion for me even in a sense than acting for a while, and I was really looking forward to expanding that out. And then of course, the world stopped and we had to just sit around and wait to see what would happen next. And then lo and behold, I certainly wasn't expecting the next thing to be iCarly, but here we are.

Amy Morin:

Right? Comes all the way back to the beginning. I love that you said that you tried it to sort of prove that you hated it.

Nathan Kress:

Yeah.

Amy Morin:

I'm a social worker. And in the social work field, they'll often say, pick the population or the type of job that you know don't want to do, whether it's you work in a school, you work in a prison, you work with a nursing home. There's so many things you can do as a social worker. And they'll say, as an intern, pick the one that you think you want to work with least. And then nine times out of 10, people find out, actually, I actually like this. I thought I was going to hate it, but it turns out to be something that I enjoy a lot more than I thought I did. So, I think that that's a good principle in life. Sometimes when we think we're going to hate something, try it anyway.

Nathan Kress:

Yeah, I think what it really came down to, at least for me... And I don't know it really pertains to social work, but for me it was because it was the thing I was most scared of, and that was why I thought I was going to hate it, was I didn't want the pressure. I didn't want to fail in front of 200 crew members that knew me. I didn't want to fall flat on my face. And so I just didn't even want to try because it wasn't worth the risk to my pride, my sense of career accomplishment. And forcing myself to stretch and be able to be vulnerable and take that risk was necessary. Otherwise, I would've just stayed in this acting box forever and I would've never forced myself out of it. I'm a big fan of my comfort zone, Amy.

I like my comfort zone. I don't want to leave my comfort zone. And that was one of the first times in my adult life that I really had to get out of it. And luckily, it really paid off and it has been a whole new branch of my career that I have truly, truly loved, and I'm excited to keep going on.

Amy Morin:

So speaking of stepping outside your comfort zone, you did a project with one of our former guests, Justin Baldoni.

Nathan Kress:

Ah, yes.

Amy Morin:

Which we love Justin on this show, but-

Nathan Kress:

Me too.

Amy Morin:

Can you talk a little bit about this project that you did?

Nathan Kress:

Yeah. So, the project is called Man Enough. Justin's been doing it for a while, and he tackles different topics of manhood and sort of deconstructing what that is and how it has changed and how to reframe it in our minds. And the episode that I did was centered around caretaking, which can... Boy, that can mean a ton of different things. It can be in your family relationships, parent to child, it can be your spouse or partner relationships, it can be child to parent as they head into older age, or being a person being taken care of. And so the whole episode was just this very incredibly delicious dinner that we were all invited to enjoy together, and each person had a different perspective of what it was, what caretaking meant to them. And I didn't realize just how bottled up I was about my perspective on caretaking until literally...

I think almost everybody else had talked. They had sort of gone through their background and their process, and I think I was the last one. And I think Justin said just something very simple like, "So Nathan, how about you? How are you doing?" And I just started crying. And it hit me in that moment, wow, I didn't realize that maybe I wasn't doing so good, or that there was just things that I wasn't processing. And that me as a hulking, macho man who was taught to compartmentalize and compress and put these things away because they're not manly enough and you should just buckle down and

deal with it, those were all things that I was still feeling. I just wasn't talking with anybody about them.

And all it took was someone just truly, not in the casual, flippant, so, "Hey, what's up? How are you way," but the, "How are you?" way, as soon as that avenue was opened up for me, everything just started flailing out with incredible speed and intensity. So, that was a really great night. I processed a lot. And I'm pretty sure I was the only one who cried, but that's okay. I'm an actor. I have to be very in touch with my emotions after all.

Amy Morin:

That's why we love Justin on the show because he was talking about that and about his book and the difficulties that men have with sharing their feelings. So, I'm so glad that you had that opportunity to do that.

Nathan Kress:

Me too.

Amy Morin:

And up until then, had you really talked to anybody about your experience? I know that you've sometimes had to help out your wife.

Nathan Kress:

So for context, to explain that a little bit, my wife has a condition called endometriosis, which is incredibly common. By some estimates, it affects one in 10 women across the world. So, we're talking about a lot of people dealing with this, and essentially it's where uterine tissue grows outside of the uterus and it turns into scar tissue lesions. As it progresses in various stages, it gets onto other internal organs and it becomes almost a biological glue and it sticks to muscles. It ravages your entire body. And it travels like a cancer, and there's no cure for it currently. They're still obviously working on that, so fingers crossed, but it's incredibly common and it's incredibly painful. For some women, it can be minor. For some, it can be absolutely disabling. And I would say my wife is somewhere in the middle. It doesn't necessarily affect her every moment of the day, but

when it's bad, it's bad, especially the biggest time for most women is around their period.

So every month, there's just a several day stretch where they are down completely and pretty much. And that was something that I knew before we got married, as we were getting ready to... As we were getting to know each other, I was aware of it, but I didn't think at that point that I had realized how much it was just going to affect everything. You can't even make plans. The amount of times we had to bail out on people just because of this stinking disease, it invades every part of your life. And so I think it slowly and subtly worked its way into every facet of our life together in a way that I didn't even really notice until someone really asked the question. So, to answer your question, no, I wasn't talking to anybody, for one, because I didn't really have anybody in my life to relate that to.

No one else that I knew had wife with endometriosis, so there wasn't really much that anyone could understand. And it's a very frustrating disease because it's invisible. A lot of people... For so many women, they'll go to their doctor and say they're having all these issues, and their doctor will say, "You're just stressed." They will dismiss it as some kind of psychosomatic hormonal imbalance, prescribe anti-anxiety medication and Tylenol and scoot them out the door for the next patient. So, it's infuriating because it's hard to make people understand the disease when they haven't actually encountered it. But then on the few times where... It was almost never men, because I feel like women often feel so isolated with their ability to talk about their health, especially with men. It just seems like there's kind of a disconnect there where a lot of men just don't want to hear about it, which is really unfortunate because it affects a lot, and it really would behoove them to know if they would just be willing to hear a little bit about it.

It's a disease that's hard for people to understand, so it is very isolating, not just for the women, but for the men who are involved enough to know about it and care about it. And it's hard to watch. I've been there for my wife when she can't make it out of the bathroom and she's [inaudible 00:15:42] around on the floor. There's just nothing you can do. There's no medication you can take. There's nothing, and you just have to be there with them. It's a scarring experience. And especially just relating to general issues about women's health, no one really seems to want to talk about it.

Amy Morin:

Right.

Nathan Kress:

It's hard. It's a weird middle ground place to be. It's very hard to relate to people unless they're really at the forefront and currently dealing with it.

Amy Morin:

And as a therapist, I find that other people, when they're dealing with something... When they're a caretaker, a couple things happen. Sometimes, whether they're caring for a parent or a child that has special needs, sometimes they don't tell their friends and family about it because it's sort of like it's just a private thing we're dealing with at home, and they don't want to burden other people with the information or the troubles that they're going through. So, they tend to grow more isolated. And sometimes they'll come to therapy. And I'll notice when I say, "How are you?" sometimes the first thing they'll do is they'll tell me about the person that they're caring for because all of their time and energy just goes into, well, so-and-so had a good week this week, or we had a good day today. Because it's almost like so much of their energy goes tied into that one thing that they're doing that they kind of lose sight of who they are and how to take care of themselves.

Nathan Kress:

Yeah. Yeah. That's totally true. I definitely think there's been those moments where I frame, "How are you?" as just, "How are things? How is your wife? How is that progressing?" And it's discouraging when the answer is never really, "Oh, good. She's good." It's, "Well, actually it's terrible." And to your point too, I don't know if it's just an American thing or a western thing or a guy thing, but it also feels like when someone says, "How are you?" you're not allowed to say anything other than, "Oh, I'm good. How are you?"

Amy Morin:

Right.

Nathan Kress:

"I'm great. Thanks for asking." It's like no one really wants to know how you are or not, because then it leads to a vulnerable real conversation. So, I feel like we're sort of programmed now to just say, well, no matter what, just say, "I'm good," and leave it at that. And I know that that was a big thing for me too. And that's why that man enough thing was different, because we were there knowing that we were all going through stuff. It wasn't just a casual conversation. We had sort of set the stage for saying, "Okay, this is your space for a real conversation," and that was I think, what set the tone for me and made me so instantly ready to say, "Not great." Because I would never say that to just a bro who came over for a beer. That's just not part of the male mentality.

Amy Morin:

Has anything changed for you then after opening up? Do you do anything differently now, or has it changed the way you see things? Obviously now you talk about this publicly.

Nathan Kress:

Yeah, I think that has been... One of the best things is because of that public display of breakdown and the fact that my wife has become very open about it too with her struggles. And on social media between the two of us, whenever we post about it or share about it, what has gotten me so much is seeing in the comments so many people saying that they're dealing with it too. And like I was saying before, it was really hard to deal with just in daily life because we weren't really experiencing that many people who were dealing with it or who just were open enough to talking about how they're dealing with it. But through social media, through Man Enough, I got connected with so many people who were dealing with the exact same thing as me, and a lot of women who were saying, "I don't know what to do for my husband, because he's dealing with this and I can see it tearing him apart, because he cares about me and he wants to fix it, and he just can't."

That was one of the hardest things. My dad was the same way. I'm the same way. We want to fix. We don't want to sit and talk about it. We want to fix it. And this is currently an unfixable disease, so all you can do is sit and process it with other people, and at the very least commiserate and know that you're not alone and that you're not isolated. There's a lot of other people that had to cancel on their friends last weekend too, and they're sitting at home going, "Who else is there?" because it just feels like I'm on this island. So look, I'm not a big fan of social media in general, but that's one of those examples of ways that it did really bring people together and it kind of inspired me to go, okay, talking about this is creating a dialogue with other people, and it's letting people know, "Hey, this person that you watched as a kid, they're dealing with very real problems too, and it happens to be your problem."

I think it has created this sort of, I guess family-like environment of people who are going through similar struggles, and that has inspired me to want to be much more open about it and just do things like this. Normally, I don't think I would just sit on a podcast and talk about how it makes me sad.

Amy Morin:

Right. Right.

Nathan Kress:

But here we are. And I think a lot of that started with Man Enough, and continued because the reaction to that was so strong and I identified so much with what people were saying, and it has made me want to just keep going with that. Because especially as a guy, it just doesn't seem like something that people are willing to talk about, and I want to try to change that as best I can.

Amy Morin:

There is this fear of, when we share our issues with other people, that we're either burdening other people or that we're drawing attention to ourselves. I don't know. There's all this weird stuff that comes up with admitting, "No, I'm not okay or this is what I'm going through."

Nathan Kress:

Yeah.

Amy Morin:

But it's rare that I ever hear somebody say, "I wished I hadn't talked about that thing." Once I started talking about it, it's like it, other people could then get the courage to talk about what they're going through as well.

Nathan Kress:

Right. Yeah, exactly. And that that was the other thing. There would be not necessarily people saying, "Yeah, I have endometriosis," but it'll also just be, "Yeah, I have this condition, I have this syndrome, and it has altered my life in very similar ways to what you're talking about." And I think that really is kind of a similar thing. And in a very loose sense, that's kind of been the motivation of the podcast that I started doing with my buddy Brett. It was originally kind of centered around just two young dads who are dealing with young dad stuff, but young dads usually don't talking about it. They just want to kind of say, "Yeah, I'm good. I got it all under control like my dad did, and so I'm just going to tough it out and deal with it."

It's the same idea that you have to be able to have people in your life that you can say, "I'm dealing with this thing," and them say, "Me too. Me too. You're not alone. And not only that, but I just finished dealing with this, and this is how I did it. Here's a suggestion for you, something that might help." I think that creates a layer of trust and relationship that a lot of people are missing, and that was one of the things, from just at least the dad perspective, that we wanted to be able to lend. So, I think the whole thing in general has just encouraged me to be willing to open up more and not have this big facade. I think people in the industry, public figures and actors and celebrities and stuff, they have to present this image of perfection and that nothing bad happens in their life, and that everything is just Instagram perfect and you're not allowed to let people know that you're having real human issues. I don't like that.

I don't think that that's right. I don't think that that's fair. I think it's contributing to a lot of weird comparisons that people have where they say, "Oh, well, these famous people

don't have any problems, and I do have problems, so something's wrong with me." That's not fair. That's not right. I feel like if we're going to be public figures, and if we're going to put out content about our lives in these grammable moments and all these Kodak snapshots of all the best parts, it's only fair that we talk about the issues and stuff that we're dealing with too. In my opinion, it's kind of a duty.

Amy Morin:

And I think that's so important because we tend to... Sometimes you're sitting at home doing laundry on a Saturday night, and you look around and it looks like everybody on social media is out doing these exotic, wonderful things and start to question like, gee, how come I'm not out there doing cool things? We have all these ideas about what everybody else's life is like. So by sharing real life, "Hey, we had to cancel our plans and we're not actually doing anything cool either," I think that's really powerful. It tells us all, yeah, we all have problems.

Nathan Kress:

Yeah, absolutely. And I've gotten largely better at that to the point that now I just don't even like the grammable moments. I like poop and the ins and outs of diaper changes and dealing with mouthing off toddlers, and all the fun stuff that comes along with parenting. That's way more fun for me to talk about than a trip to Cabo.

Amy Morin:

Do you ever have moments where you think, I shouldn't have shared that, or you wake up the next day and think, I said too much?

Nathan Kress:

Probably. Probably. I think the key for me is I try not to listen to the episodes after. I just record him and let them post, and then the feedback is the feedback. And honestly, I don't know if that's a good thing or not. I've probably overshared. I've actually almost definitely overshared. But I don't know, man, it might just be worth it, just to have the conversation. I don't know. Maybe that'll come back to bite me at some point, but at

least so far, the reaction has been, thank you, because I'm going through the exact same thing, and it's really great to know that you're going through it too.

Amy Morin:

Yeah, I guess the risk of oversharing is what somebody, I don't know, gets offended or somebody doesn't like what you say, but the risk of not sharing enough is that you're not authentic, you're not genuine. And what do you gain from not sharing it?

Nathan Kress:

Right. Exactly. And you're not helping anybody anyway. All you're doing is contributing to that comparison game that's so toxic and can be literally deadly with social media and distilled life and this persona that we're able to present to people. Obviously, there's a balance. And I don't even know if I'm hitting it or not, but I just think that at this point, the world is so fake online, injecting a little bit of reality into it, even if maybe it's a little bit too much reality, at the very least, it's refreshing

Amy Morin:

Did you and your wife have a conversation about, "Okay, let's make this public," or is it something that just kind of happened slowly over time?

Nathan Kress:

The endometriosis thing specifically?

Amy Morin:

Yeah. Yeah.

Nathan Kress:

I don't know if there was ever necessarily a specific conversation. I know that we never said we don't want anybody to know. I think it was just maybe at the beginning of question of, do people need to know about this or not? But then I think, especially the more that we learned about it... Because actually, my wife didn't know that she had it. She suspected that she had endometriosis. But that's how insidious the disease is. You

can deal with all this stuff and do ultrasounds and imaging and all that stuff. The only way to actually know is to go in for exploratory surgery, have someone cut you open and see it for themselves. That's the only way. And so she didn't do that until after we were married. So, she was living with all of this stuff and saying, "I'm pretty sure I have this," but no one's ever really confirmed it.

And so it was about a year into our marriage that it even was an official thing that we even knew to talk about it. And very quickly after that, that was when she got pregnant for the first time. And that sort of kicked off, I guess, the beginning of us being sort of open on social media. And I really appreciate my wife for... When she was doing social media posting, especially after the baby was born, a lot of stuff was not pretty. It was the not as fun side of postpartum. And I think that sort of just set the stage because it was around that time that the endometriosis conversation really came up. And the things that she was posting, the feedback that she was getting, a lot of people saying that she was helping them cope with their own condition was very motivating.

So, I do think it was kind of a slow and steady thing. I don't think it was a reveal, and we also weren't trying to hide it. I think it just inevitably sort of came up, especially when we started having miscarriages too. Because that's a big part of endometriosis, is it affects fertility. And if you do get pregnant, it makes it harder to retain a pregnancy. So, that was when it really started getting vulnerable, was telling people about that, being willing to say, "Hey, this happens, and it's devastating. But then again, it's the same thing. People would comment and say, "We had a miscarriage too. We had five miscarriages." And it just helps to know someone who's going through it as well. So every step of the way, there's always been that group of people who got something out of it, even if it was just a little bit of comfort and relief, knowing that they had somebody out there who they knew who was going through similar issues.

Amy Morin:

Yeah. I guess one last question for you then. How do you take care of yourself as you obviously have this very busy life between the TV show and your podcast and being a dad and helping out your wife sometimes. How do you manage to take time to take care of yourself?

Nathan Kress:

Yeah, I think that's a great question and one that I'm still working on. I think my time management is vital, making sure that you are taking time. For me, I do my absolute best to have my quiet time, my reading time in the morning just to be away, be in the quiet, pray, start the day, do it right. And those days are the ones that go the best. When I don't, I am behind the eight ball all day long. I feel like I'm just trying to catch up. So, one of the best things that I started really trying to do was...

We have our daughter on a little bit of a clock where she doesn't come out until a certain time. So, I know if I set my alarm for 45 minutes before that, it's going to be quiet in the house. So, I think it was hard for me because I'm not a morning person, but challenging myself to wake up earlier and not just get every possible minute of sleep, but actually sacrifice a little bit of that so that I can have some quiet to calibrate the day and really prepare myself and settle myself has been really, really important and has made a huge difference since I started doing it with my wife just in the last few months. So, highly recommend. Even if you're not a morning person, try out the earlier morning thing because it really does make a difference.

Amy Morin:

Yeah, putting time out for yourself, it's an investment. So many people say, "I can't do it. I don't have time for it." But when you make time for it, your day just gets better, right?

Nathan Kress:

Yep, absolutely. No question. And I was very skeptical at first. I was like, how is getting less sleep better for me? That's exactly how. And the other thing is you start realizing how little the things that kept you up the night before really mattered. Watch one less episode of Ted Lasso. Just give yourself the time to sleep too, because you realize how not that important that part is when you're able to have a great day because you started it the right way, rather than trying to comfort yourself with potato chips and TV.

Amy Morin:

Yes.

Nathan Kress:

It changes a lot when you start it the right way.

Amy Morin:

It does. Well, Nathan Kress, thanks for sharing your wisdom with us on The Very Well Mind Podcast.

Nathan Kress:

Absolutely. My pleasure. Thank you for having me.

Amy Morin:

Welcome to The Therapist's Take! This is the part of the show where I'll break down Nathan's mental strength-building strategies and share how you can apply them to your own life. Here are three of my favorite strategies Nathan shared.

Number one: talk to someone. Nathan shared how tempting it is to just pretend like everything's fine, but he stresses the importance of talking to someone about what you're going through. I've worked with a lot of caregivers over the years who wanted to be respectful of the person they were caring for by not talking to anyone about the reality of the situation. After all, it might feel like you're being unkind to your loved one if you tell another friend or a family member something like, "Mom's dementia makes her say mean things." And you might not want to share the physical duties you're doing either by telling somebody that you have to bathe your loved one.

But first and foremost, know that it's okay to talk about your experiences. You can do it in a respectful way without betraying your loved one. Remember, you can always share your thoughts and feelings. Those things belong to you regardless of your caretaking experience. It takes courage to open up to someone. And sometimes it's hard to know how to start a more meaningful conversation if you're used to just keeping things superficial. But take a deep breath and give it a shot. You might just start by saying, "I have to tell you things have been kind of tough lately." You might find opening up to someone else helps. It's something that we discuss on this show a lot, but just telling someone about what you're going through can help you sort things out and start to feel

better. And if you know someone else who is a caregiver right now, give them space to talk to you.

Invite them to share their experiences and focus on listening without offering advice.

Number two: share your story. Nathan also talked about the importance of connecting with other people who can relate to what you're going through. That's one of the joys of the internet. If your loved one's battling a rare disease, you might not know anyone personally who has it. But thanks to the internet, you can probably find someone. There are support groups for caregivers on tons of different subjects. Some are generic to just caregiving, but others are specific to the problem or the situation. It might do you a lot of good to connect with other people. In addition to sharing your story, you can hear other people's stories. You might learn about resources you weren't aware of, or you might find that just knowing you aren't alone is really helpful.

And number three: make time for yourself. You've heard this before, but hearing it and doing it are two really different things. So often when we're caring for someone else, we think we don't have time for ourselves, or we feel guilty for taking just a few minutes. But it's really important to charge your batteries. We all know that our digital devices need to be charged, but we don't always accept that we need to do the same for ourselves. So I appreciated that Nathan said he wakes up 45 minutes early just to have a little quiet time to himself. Having just a little bit of time to do whatever it is that you want to do, like read the paper, drink a cup of coffee, or just watch your favorite show can go a long way toward helping your mental health. And when you're feeling at your best, you're better equipped to manage all the responsibilities of being a caregiver.

So those are three of Nathan's mental strength-building strategies that I highly recommend. Talk to someone, share your story, and make time for yourself. Check out Nathan's podcast, *Radioactive Dads*, and go watch him in *iCarly* on Nickelodeon.

If you know someone who could benefit from hearing this message, share it with them. Simply sharing a link to this episode could help someone feel better and grow stronger. Do you want free access to my online course? It's called "10 Mental Strength Exercises That Will Help You Reach Your Greatest Potential." To get your free pass, all you have to do is leave us a review on Apple Podcasts or Spotify. Then, send us a screenshot of

your review. Our email address is podcast@verywell.com. We'll reply with your all-access pass to the course.

Thank you for hanging out with me today and for listening to *The Verywell Mind Podcast!* And as always, a big thank you to my show's producer (who's good at taking care of other people), Nick Valentin.