

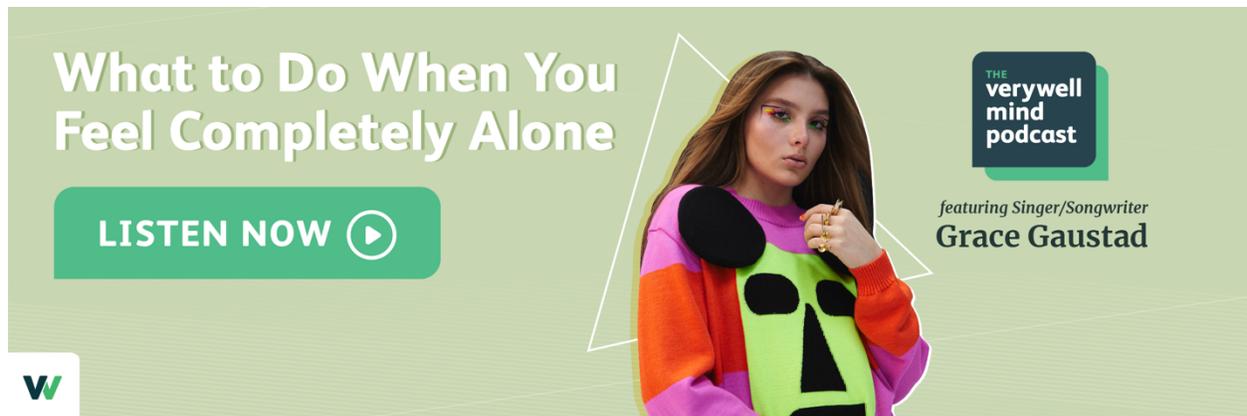


THE
**verywell
mind
podcast**

WITH THERAPIST
Amy Morin

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182 — What to Do When You Feel Completely Alone with Singer/Songwriter Grace Gaustad

Amy Morin:

Welcome to *The Verywell Mind Podcast*! I'm Amy Morin, the editor-in-chief of Verywell Mind. I'm also a psychotherapist and the 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!

Do you ever think you don't fit in? Do you think no one else could possibly understand what you're going through? Do you ever feel completely alone? If any of those things sound true, today's episode is for you.

I'm talking to singer-songwriter Grace Gaustad. Grace was bullied in school, and she felt completely alone. But she turned to music and found that listening to music (and eventually creating her own) helped her feel better.

Now she creates music that reflects the struggle she's gone through, and she's even created a website dedicated to helping young people who also feel alone. Grace is only 20, but as you'll hear, she's wise beyond her years. In this episode, she opens up about some of the struggles she endured, what she learned from her pain, and what she's

doing now to take care of her mental health. Make sure to 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 Grace's mental strength-building strategies and share how you can apply them to your own life. So here's Grace Gaustad on what you can do when you feel completely alone!

Amy Morin:

Grace Gaustad, welcome to *The Verywell Mind Podcast!*

Grace Gaustad:

Thank you for having me. I'm so excited to be here.

Amy Morin:

Well, I'm excited to talk to you about mental health. I know that you have come out to talk quite a bit about your mental health journey, and you've done a lot of things to help other people. What made you decide to start making your story public?

Grace Gaustad:

I struggled really badly when I was a kid dating all the way back to when I was five years old. That was the first time I ever saw a therapist because my social anxiety was severe. I had a really hard time going to school. I would cry almost every morning. I didn't want to leave my mom. It was really hard for me. And so that was my first experience, really struggling with anxiety. Then by the time I was about 12, I was diagnosed with depression. And those are two really young ages to have those two pretty big things go on in your life. And by the time I was in high school, I went through a lot of really severe bullying, which definitely increased and exacerbated the anxiety and the depression already. And I think mental health, there's such a stigma around it, which I can't stand.

So as an artist, it's my goal to do as much as I can to share my own story and show other people that there are so many individuals who are going through the exact same things. But if we don't talk about it, there's no way to know just how many people are in your exact same situation. But it's a cause I'm very passionate about just because I

have struggled so severely with it in the past and still to this day, I'm in a much better place now with the right therapy and doctors and medication and things like that. But it's a really hard thing to deal with and I just hope that I can sort of erase the stigma and make it a more comfortable topic for everyone to talk about.

Amy Morin:

Well, I'm grateful that you're doing this. How did the adults in your life know to get you help? So many of us, I think, who struggled as kids, I was right there with you, I was anxious and cried before school every day. But my parents I think sort of thought, oh, you'll grow it. And I grew up to become a therapist, but they never took me to therapy as a kid. How did the adults in your life know that therapy was an option? We didn't really talk about it as much a few years ago.

Grace Gaustad:

Yeah, I think my mom has also struggled with a lot of anxiety in her life. So I think she recognized the early sort of symptoms in me. A lot of people in my family just also struggled with it in general. So I think sometimes those things can be a bit genetic. And I think my mom just sort of saw those certain signs and was like, okay, wow. Grace might be having a really hard time and let's try to get her some help.

Amy Morin:

And have you always been open about it with the people in your life or was it after you became a star that you started talking more about it publicly?

Grace Gaustad:

I've been open about it to an extent with close friends and family. It was much harder in school, especially when I was getting bullied quite a bit. I was pretty quiet. I tried to stay out of trouble. It was like my goal to just be sort of as invisible as possible to sort of take the target off of my back. But I really found a lot of strength in my music to be able to talk about really hard things, but in a beautiful artistic way. So when you take something like depression or anxiety or body dysmorphia, any of these topics that I spoke about in Black Box and you make it a song, you've turned it into a digestible piece of art that

people can consume without it feeling overly heavy. So I love music as a tool to sort of talk about important things without stressing anybody out or making them uncomfortable. It's like an easy way to communicate a message.

Amy Morin:

And at Very Well Mind we did this study on the pandemic and how so many people used music to cope, and they said that they found it really helped them when they felt lonely, when they felt sad. Sometimes people used it as a way to reinforce whatever mood they were in, if they were sad, they wanted to listen to sad music. But at other times, people said, when I was anxious, I listened to something happy and it shifted my mood. So clearly we know it's a tool that a lot of people love to use to cope with uncomfortable emotions. But interestingly, we also know that a lot of people in the music industry struggle with mental health problems, as do many of the listeners. But what do you find about music that makes it so helpful to those of us who are struggling?

Grace Gaustad:

I can think back to when I was a child and Lady Gaga's Born This Way came out. And for a kid who felt very different, like I didn't fit in, I had no place to belong, her music and her fan base gave me a place to feel safe. And so I think often we find sort of solitude and peace within music. It gives us a place to sort of express our emotions. It gives us a place to be vulnerable. And then I think for the artist, it's almost like this outlet. I always say that creating music is almost like a free therapy session because you get to sort of unload all of your emotions and turn it into something that people can listen to and relate to. So I think it's overall just a great tool, especially when you have to talk about such important topics and heavy ones as well.

Amy Morin:

What role do you find loneliness plays into mental health issues?

Grace Gaustad:

A really big one. I think that a lot of people are lonely. I think the last two or three years, everything that's gone on with the pandemic, I think people feel more alone than ever. I

know that I certainly did. I think what I try to do, at least with my music, is show people just how many others are going through the exact same thing. So for example, I've put out a song called Red on my album Black Box, and I got probably a thousand messages that day telling me how Red was this anthem, how it's going to help them come out to their parents, how they feel less insecure about their sexuality now. And within that, I was trying to show people, look how many people are listening to this song and going through the exact same thing. It's easy to feel alone, but if you actually look at what you're going through, the odds are that if you're going through it, there's thousands and thousands of other people who are going through the exact same thing. You just have to find that community. And I think music and fan bases are a really good place to sort of find that space where you can find people who are in your same situation.

Amy Morin:

I think so too. So as a therapist, I would see people who would come into my office and they'd think, I'm the only person in the world who feels like this. Well, I can't tell them the person who you just saw in the waiting room said nearly the same thing. They're struggling with very similar issues, yet they don't know because we often don't call our friends and family and tell them exactly what we're going through. We often want to say, no, I'm doing well, or we feel too isolated, or maybe you don't have anybody supportive in your life. So I love that idea of having a fan base of people who can say, gee, I relate to this song and here's why. And to realize that so many other people relate to it too.

Grace Gaustad:

Yeah, no, for sure, it's a very cool tool to be able to connect people on a global scale through a tool like music. Definitely. I feel super blessed to be able to do it every day.

Amy Morin:

Can you talk a little bit about the Black Box project?

Grace Gaustad:

So blackboxproject.org is a sector of Black Box that is kind of our nonprofit sector. We paired up with therapist Jazz Robbins, who did all these incredible videos based on all

the topics discussed in Black Box. So if you go to the website, you can find Jazz talking about self-love and body dysmorphia and trauma therapy, all these different things that can often feel very overwhelming and very heavy. And she's sort of in these little five, six minute videos, she breaks it down and she makes it simple for you, and it's almost like a free resource. I wish I had something like that when I was in high school because I think it would've been super helpful. So my goal with blackboxproject.org was really to give people, especially teens, a place to go where they could feel like they could find proper information, find proper resources through some of our partnerships that we have with Teen Line, and then also the Born This Way Foundation. So we offer those resources as well. And ultimately, I think my idea for blackboxproject.org really stemmed from the fact that I think it would've been incredibly helpful for me when I was younger and I would've loved to use it. So the best thing that I could do was make it available to the next generation.

Amy Morin:

And it's free, right?

Grace Gaustad:

Yes, totally free. You can just literally log on. All of Jazz's videos are there, all the resources are there. All of my music is also on this site and everything like that. So yeah, it's a really cool platform.

Amy Morin:

That's amazing. What kind of a response have you gotten since you started it?

Grace Gaustad:

I mean, the response has been so positive. So many people have been just incredibly grateful for the information being out there. I think sometimes it's really hard to find the right information, to find the right space to go, to know who to call, who to talk to, things like that. So I think the response has just been that people are grateful that with this project I chose to do sort of just a give back sector. And I think that I'll always be an

artist like that. If I can do something that's going to make anyone else's life a little bit easier, I'll always do that.

Amy Morin:

And way to turn what happened to you, the pain, the struggles that you went through into something positive to help other people.

Grace Gaustad:

Yeah, I mean I think that's what you got to do if you've gone through something hard. My mom always says the only way out is through. You kind of just have to power through it. And once you're on the other side of it, I think you can look back and think about how to make it, how to turn it into something that can be useful for others. I was thinking when I was creating Black Box, I was like, I never want another kid to go through what I went through. That doesn't mean that's never going to happen again, but I certainly can take as many steps as possible to try to lower those numbers of bullying or lower those numbers of suicide and self harm and things like that. So my entire message will always be one that gives back and attempts to change the world for the better.

Amy Morin:

What would you say to somebody out there who says that they still feel really alone in whatever it is that they're struggling with?

Grace Gaustad:

Gosh, it's a hard one because I've been in that place where I feel completely isolated, completely alone. And even though I have my family, I've got friends, I think when you're in that space where you're feeling very alone, it's very easy to isolate yourself further and you don't even really realize you're doing it. But I've gone through those periods of time where I've been in my room for two and three weeks, not wanting to come out, not wanting to talk to anybody. And the best piece of advice that I could offer is, it could be as simple as calling your grandma, talking to your mom, talking to your dad, calling a childhood friend, taking your dog for a walk, just something that's going to

give you a bit of purpose, something that's going to maybe get you outside. I think that you've got to be kind of aware that when you're in that bad space, you're going to do things that are actually self-destructive as opposed to helpful.

And a lot of times you don't realize you're doing self-destructive things until you're on the other side of it. So as easy as it is to get swallowed into that hole of loneliness, I think that I would just say there are people who love you. There are people who care, there are people who want to be there for you, and you just have to have the courage and willingness to reach out and say, you need help. Say you're feeling alone. I'm 20 years old and I still sometimes will go crawl into my mom's room if I'm having a hard time. That's just, it's what family's for and it's what loved ones are for.

Amy Morin:

Things like depression and anxiety are strange. They'll tell us, your depression will tell you just stay in your room. You're not good company anyway. You don't want to drag people down. Your anxiety will say you can't handle it. And they try to convince you to stay all completely isolated or it will convince you that nobody cares, nobody else understands. And then the more isolated you are, the worse you feel and it's a vicious cycle that's hard to break. So just as you say, sometimes you have to push yourself to say I'm going to step outside. I'm going to call somebody even though I don't feel like it right now. And trust that taking those steps, changing your behavior might shift how you feel.

Grace Gaustad:

Exactly. And I also think that there are things that you can do when you're alone as well. Like, oh my gosh, perfect timing. My dog just ran into the room and is now trying to play with me, but I hang out with my dog all the time and he makes me feel less alone whenever I'm having a hard day or anything like that. I think having a pet is great. I think you can also practice different forms of self-care, whether it's just getting up, taking a hot shower or a bath, maybe doing a meditation, which I often do. There's just little things you can do even if you're not with other people that I think can sort of lift those feelings of loneliness and just overall put you in a better mindset.

Amy Morin:

That's a good point. You don't physically have to be around people. During the pandemic, a lot of us weren't around a lot of people, but there were still things we could do. Get up, get out of bed.

Grace Gaustad:

Absolutely.

Amy Morin:

Get dressed, take a shower, move around, get some exercise if you can. And all of those things help. Sometimes we just want to stay on the couch and binge watch TV for days on end, and nobody ever says, boy, I spent four days in bed and now my depression is better. But depression will tell you to just stay in bed. And so it's hard to find those things or it's hard to push ourselves to figure out, how do I take care of myself today?

Grace Gaustad:

Yeah, I mean, it is really hard. And I think that during the pandemic, we saw all time highs of people feeling depressed and things like that. But I think there was a bit of a blessing in disguise because at least I have found in my everyday life and my professional life that because of the pandemic, so many people were forced to sit with their thoughts. And I think that it helped a lot of people understand the importance of mental health because I had friends of mine who had never really struggled with anything. They were really happy people, they didn't really struggle with anxiety, depression, anything like that. And then this sort of period of time where we were all isolated and alone and the world a very scary place, I saw those same friends find this appreciation for people who do struggle all the time because they found themselves in the same boat. So I think that was the blessing in disguise is I think the pandemic showed a lot of people who maybe don't traditionally face those things, that it's very real. And when it happens to you, you're like, wow, this is horrible. So I think it creates just more respect and understanding for people who go through it every day.

Amy Morin:

I think so too. I think it gave all of us more empathy for other people in the past. It was so easy to be like, well, if you're struggling, just do X, Y, and Z. And then we realize, gosh, sometimes we're just, mental health is this continuum. We fall anywhere on the continuum on any given day. Take something like the pandemic where a lot of our coping skills were taken away from us. Suddenly we were like, oh wait, what am I going to do? My mental health is slipping and I don't even know what to do about it because a lot of the things I used to do like go to the gym or hang out with my friends, I can't do anymore. So I do hope that people found new coping strategies, other things they can do, and to realize that we should take care of our mental health just like we do our physical health.

Grace Gaustad:

Yeah, I always say that mental health is almost like a, think of it as a broken arm. If you had a broken arm, you're going to go to the doctor and you're going to get it fixed and you're going to have to wear a cast and you're going to have to take the proper steps to heal your arm. And that's easy for people to understand because they can see it. Mental health, on the other hand, nobody can really see what's going on with your brain. They can watch, you know, you, and see externally what's going on a little bit. But it's very hard to comprehend when someone's struggling, especially when they're doing a good job at concealing it. So I like to think of, I always tell people who maybe don't have a great understanding of mental health is they have to think of it exactly like a physical injury. It takes time. You have to heal it. You have to take certain steps to make sure you don't re-injure yourself again. It's a process forever. And I think that that's a really helpful way of looking at it, is just because you can't see it doesn't mean it's not there.

Amy Morin:

And you bring up a good point. Sometimes we look at people, we think, no, they don't look like they're that depressed. A lot of people with mental health issues have gotten really good at masking what's going on inside. They paste on a smile. They look like they're doing okay, but you never know what somebody's battling on the inside.

Grace Gaustad:

Yeah, I mean, I find that a lot as an artist. I think people see me out, they'll see me do a show or a music video or an interview. I'm always in hair and makeup. I'm always dressed up. And I think it sort of creates a little bit of a false narrative that maybe I don't have those days where I'm having a terrible time and my mom's trying to console me and get me to leave the house and things like that. And I think it's really important for people who are especially in the public spotlight at all, to showcase that it's not always all that you see. I still have many hard days. I'd say there've been periods in my life where even if I'm doing incredible professionally, I'm having more hard days than easy ones personally. And it's just all about getting through. And I always resort back to my music when I find that I'm having a really difficult time. And I think for anybody who's struggling, it's always good to have something you can go to as an outlet. For me, it's music. For another person, it might be writing or painting or cooking. I think it's good to have a hobby that you can channel your energy away from the negativity and put it towards something positive.

Amy Morin:

That's something we talk about on this show a lot. I think so many people don't have a hobby these days because we spend so much time on the internet or we work a lot and people have forgotten that those simple little things like painting and cooking can really help your mental health when you have those sorts of outlets.

Grace Gaustad:

I think so. And I also think just getting outside. When I say that to people, they're like, oh, come on, that's like, that's not going to help. It really does. If you go take a walk, if you live near a park or a beach or anything like that, or just if you go and walk out on the sidewalk, I think just getting outside, getting fresh air, exposing your body to sunlight, things like that, I actually think it helps me quite a bit. So when I'm feeling down, I definitely try to get out of the house, change my environment, maybe run a simple errand, whatever it is.

Amy Morin:

And do you feel like you're somebody who's still battling depression and anxiety? Do you feel like you've worked through it? Do you think it's going to be an ongoing battle for you?

Grace Gaustad:

Yeah, I think it'll be an ongoing battle probably for most of my life. And it's a battle that I'm willing to fight, and it's one that I'm willing to fight for as well. I don't think it ever really goes away. I think that for anyone who struggles with depression or anxiety or any sort of diagnosis of any kind, there are going to be days where it's easier. There's going to be days where it's harder, there's going to be days where it feels near impossible. And it's just about kind of going with the flow and telling yourself that you can get through all those different periods of time. And when you are having those hard periods, it's important to prepare yourself and have tools and have resources that work for you to help you get through and get out of that hard period.

Amy Morin:

And what role has therapy played in your life to help you get to where you are now?

Grace Gaustad:

I love therapy. I've been in it since I was younger. I think that it's always really helpful to talk to somebody who doesn't know you, doesn't know anything about you, because I think sometimes people feel unsafe sharing with a family member or a sibling or a friend because it feels a little personal. And so for me, I think it's been really helpful to talk to somebody who has no agenda whatsoever in my life. And they can just be a listening ear and offer advice and things like that. But I also know that therapy can be a super expensive thing and not everybody has the resources to go to therapy. And so organizations like Teen Line, who Black Box Project partnered with, offers a way for teens and kids to communicate. And there's so many online resources where people can go and talk to others. It doesn't always have to be a doctor. You can literally get on a chat room now and you can talk to people who are going through the same things. And I just think it's a really good place to be able to vent and feel like you, I don't know, can just express yourself freely.

Amy Morin:

There's something powerful about being able to talk to somebody who doesn't have any preconceived notions. Your siblings, your parents, your childhood friends, people around you, know you a certain way. And as you grow up, or there's sides of you that maybe you didn't necessarily reveal. So to be able to talk to somebody who doesn't know those things about you and then you get to tell the story from your own eyes, your own version of events in life can be quite powerful. And for people who can't afford a therapist, absolutely. Sometimes just connecting with somebody else who says, yeah, I've been there, I know what you're going through can be really healing too.

Grace Gaustad:

And even if you don't connect with someone live necessarily, I think there's on Black Box Project, we have these incredible videos that Jazz Robbins did to get people through different periods of life. And I think there's lots of resources on just social media or YouTube of people who will share their experiences with certain things. And I often find that it's really helpful to watch someone else talk about the same thing that you're going through, because it always makes you feel less alone. You never know. Maybe that person can share some coping mechanisms that will work for you. So I think it's always good to try to do research on whatever it is you're going through and search for those resources. Because a lot of them are out there and a lot of them are free.

Amy Morin:

So what do you do now when you have a day where you feel maybe alone or you're feeling down? What kinds of things do you do?

Grace Gaustad:

I spend a lot of time with my dog. I spend a lot of time with my girlfriend. I always find a way to talk to my mom if I'm feeling down, whether or not in person or if she's somewhere else and I always write music or I always go to that place and somewhere where I can be creative. I find that writing really helps me sort of express myself, get my feelings out. I'm a person who notoriously bottles everything up inside and then just

explodes. And so if I can just sit down and write for an hour, it's often I feel like I can just, wow, release and just get it all out there and sort of reset my system.

And then I also think it's important to highlight that some days are just not going to be great. You're going to try to get up, you're going to try to go do something, try to be productive. And I never want to set this idea that like, you know, you have to get out of bed. Sometimes you don't. Sometimes that's okay. Sometimes you don't have the strength that day to get up and face the world and you want to try to have as few of those days as possible. But as someone who struggled, I definitely know that those days are very real. And I think it's just about trying again the next day to do something that might be a little bit better for you.

Amy Morin:

Yeah, absolutely. To give yourself some slack when you are having those days and to know you don't have to be happy all the time. There is pressure, I think, for a lot of people to think, well, today wasn't a good day because I wasn't happy all day long. Or there's something really wrong with me because I don't feel happy. But to know that we all have those days, and that's okay too. How do you know? Do you have warning signs if you're headed into a slump, maybe it's just not one bad day, but if your mental health is on the decline, are there things that tell you, okay, I really need to do something?

Grace Gaustad:

Yeah, absolutely. I think we as people always have little signs. The body keeps score, the body tells you a lot of things, and you kind of have to make a conscious choice to see those things as opposed to ignoring them. So I know for me, whenever I find myself really fatigued or very tired, that's always a sign for me that my mental health is maybe declining a bit. Or if I find myself canceling a lot of things, whether that be professional obligations or personal ones, I always know that if I'm taking things off my plate, sometimes that's a sign of me trying to self-isolate. So I think you learn. I think it's different with everybody. Everybody does something a little bit different when they feel like maybe their mental health is declining a bit, but recognizing your own patterns is

super important, and that way you can hopefully get in front of it as opposed to fall behind. And then it's much harder to climb out of.

Amy Morin:

It's one of the things we try to work on in therapy with people is to recognize down the road when your mental health starts to decline, what can you do? How can you catch it before it gets to be terrible, horrible and awful? How do you catch it in as it's slowly declining? I'd like to know what do you do when it is on the decline? What steps can you take? You might not necessarily need to come back to therapy, but maybe you can do some self-help strategies at home. You can implement some different things. You can push yourself a little harder to do something, or maybe it means taking a step back. So I like that you said that, that you recognize what your personal warning signs are. And then you know, bing, I got to take some action.

Grace Gaustad:

And I think action could be different for any given person. Some people's action could be laying off, taking time for themselves, resetting. For someone like me, I start working. I go right into work mode. I start creating anything. I mean, I also love to cook. I love to write. I love to do music. I love to fish. So I'll do, I'll start keeping myself super busy because for me personally, I find that an idle mind is a dangerous place to be. But some people could have the total opposite of that. And I think it's just about learning your body, learning your brain, and what's going to work for you.

Amy Morin:

Absolutely. I have plenty of people I've worked with who will say that when I start going into work and staying there all day long and all evening long, then I know there's something wrong that I'm avoiding in my life. But for other people, pushing themselves to do something is helpful. So what's next for you? What can we expect next from Grace?

Grace Gaustad:

Well, I just wrapped up recording my second album. I am in full-blown pre-production mode right now. We are shooting another 12 music videos in May that will sort of roll out for the duration of this year. My next project is called Pillbox, What's Your Fantasy? And, you know, Black Box was something that was very realistic. It was like my sort of traumatizing teen years that I think a lot of people go through. And this next chapter sort of follows me into adulthood and all of the different challenges now that I face today that I face as a new adult in a big world, a scary world. And Pillbox is also a project that took on a bit of a fantasy approach because I think just given how the last two years have been especially, I think that people need to feel a sense of magic, a sense of hope. It doesn't always have to be so heavy, so big, I think. It's my job as an artist to ultimately create something that's going to make somebody's life better. And so I'm really excited about the next project. It's some of my favorite music I've ever written, and I think it's all come from a very honest place. And of course, just because of who I am, there will always be some sort of mental health component attached to any album that I ever put out. And we've got some different topics that we're talking about on this next album.

Amy Morin:

Awesome. Well, we look forward to it. And in our show notes we'll link to the Black Box Project and in your music so that people know where to find all of this cool stuff that you offer. So thank you so much, Grace.

Grace Gaustad:

Awesome. Well thank you so much for having me.

Amy Morin:

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

Number one: turn a painful experience into an opportunity to help others. A lot of people say things like “everything happens for a reason” or “something good will come out of this.” Well, sometimes it's possible that nothing good is going to come out of

something bad or that you'll never find a reason for what you're going through. But I like that Grace talked about how she turned her painful experiences into an opportunity to help other people. Since she's been in a really dark place herself, she understands what it's like to feel all alone. So she created her website to help other people feel less alone. I think there's always an opportunity to do just that. It's not to say that you need to become a public spokesperson for a particular issue, but you might find there are plenty of people who would feel inspired by whatever it is that you went through. Reaching over to give them a helping hand might remind you of how far you've come while also giving other people hope that they can get through whatever it is that they're going through right now.

Number two: when you're in a dark place, act contrary to how you feel. I like that Grace shared how depression tries to convince her to do things that reinforce her depression. This is something we tackle in the therapy office often. When you feel anxious, your anxiety will try to get you to avoid anything that's going to cause more anxiety. When you're feeling depressed, your depression will tell you to stay home by yourself. Sometimes the key to feeling better involves behaving contrary to how you feel. You might have to push yourself to go for a walk, call someone on the phone, or just take a shower and get dressed. But sometimes when you change your behavior first, the feelings will follow.

And number three: go outside. As Grace says, don't underestimate the power of going outside. Sometimes just a change in scenery goes a long way toward improving your mental health. Go for a walk, sit on a park bench, or just spend a few minutes looking at the clouds. There's tons of research behind how getting some natural light, being in green spaces, or just moving your body can be good for your mental health. So give it a shot when you're in a rough place. It won't hurt anything to try.

I'm a big fan of doing behavioral experiments. Try something and see if it works, like going outside. If it doesn't help you feel better, mix it up. Maybe go for a walk in the morning tomorrow and see what it does for your mood. If that doesn't help, try eating lunch outside to see if that helps.

The point is, you won't know what's going to work until you try. And I know it's hard to push yourself to go outside when you just don't feel like it. But doing it might give you a boost in your mood, and it might help you feel better.

So those are three of Grace's mental strength-building strategies that I highly recommend. Turn a painful experience into an opportunity to help others. When you're in a dark place, act contrary to how you feel. And push yourself to spend time outside.

To hear more from Grace, check out her website, gracegaustad.com. You can check out her music as well as the Black Box Project.

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 likes Grace's music), Nick Valentin.