

NBA Newsmaker

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Kathy Behrens

Gayle King

Common

CJ McCollum

Dr. Vivek Murthy

Doc Rivers

A'ja Wilson

Adam Silver



But for this morning, here at our Newsmaker Breakfast, we want to take a step back from the hoopla, if you will. See what I did there? Hoopla.

(Laughter.)

And we're going to talk about -- we're going to talk about mental wellness. We're going to talk about how we can learn from each other, support each other, grow and understand what we can all do to have a better, stronger, more positive outlook on life.

And we have assembled a fantastic panel. This is an issue for the NBA, thanks to Adam's leadership, that has been central to how we support members of the NBA family. The Pacers organization and the city of Indianapolis, as well, working with the mental health roundtable, have been very instrumental in providing leadership here.

But this is an important topic and one that we think is really timely.

We've assembled a great panel. They have had unique, spectacular journeys. They have done their best to not only learn but to share the lessons of their lives, and we're delighted to have them here today.

And, of course, as always, our host is fresh from the Grammys, fresh from the Super Bowl, the one and only Gayle King.

(Applause.)

GAYLE KING: Thank you so much, Kathy. I got it when she said "hoopla."

I'm so glad to be here, guys. You know, last week was the Super Bowl. We all know how that turned out. It was a great event. No question about that. But there's something about NBA All-Stars. I've been coming since favorite son Will was a sophomore in high school. He's now 36, a grown-ass man, potty-trained and employed, and we still come to the All-Star Game. I love this event.

In Indianapolis, I know it's a little cold, but our hearts are warm. I got in the car this morning, and the guy who

KATHY BEHRENS: Good morning, everybody. Welcome to this year's NBA Newsmaker Breakfast. I'm Kathy Behrens. I'm the president of Social Responsibility and Player Programs at the NBA.

(Cheers and applause.)

It was a little louder in Salt Lake City, but okay.

It's really great to see all of you here this morning. As you know, having All-Star here in Indianapolis has been years in the making, and the wait has been well worth it.

The Simon family, the Pacers organization, and this terrific city have been fantastic hosts. So it's been really wonderful, especially for those of us who participated in our 24-hour Day of Service. Over 6,000 volunteers preparing over a million meals for needy families throughout Indiana. It was a truly inspiring moment. And all of the community events that we've been doing, all of the basketball events, it's really just been special.

So if everyone could just join me in thanking the Simon family and the Pacers organization, the City of Indianapolis.

(Applause.)

And obviously the best is yet to come as the best players in the world gather this weekend for spectacular basketball. Tonight will be really special, All-Star Saturday Night always is, and then obviously the All-Star Game.



picked me up, he had the car really toasty at 78 degrees. He said, "We just want everybody to feel good," so we have warm hands and warm hearts, and we are really glad to be here today. Welcome, welcome. Welcome.

So I want to start with when we talk about mental health, it's something that affects all of us, whether we acknowledge it or not. If it's not us, it's somebody we know. And we have the perfect panel.

Going to start with you, Dr. Murthy. Vivek Murthy, as you know, is our Surgeon General. He's the nation's top doctor, serving under both the Biden and the Obama administration. And he's focused on terms, solutions for this mental crisis.

He says in this country, guys, we have a loneliness epidemic.

And I asked everybody backstage, before we came out here, what is a song that makes you, when you're feeling down or you need a boost, that every time you hear it, you just feel good?

His song is U2's "It's A Beautiful Day." I agree.

Doc Rivers, we know him well. He's head coach for the Milwaukee Bucks. Go Bucks. I love the Bucks. I love Wes Edens. I love Doc Rivers very much.

He played in the NBA for 13 seasons before coaching across the NBA for 24 seasons. And as you know, he's now with the Bucks. His song is "God Has Smiled on Me" by James Cleveland. I know that one too.

CJ McCollum. You know where they say really needs no introduction in this room? He really needs no introduction. He's a proven leader on and off the court, played in the NBA for 11 years, currently plays for the New Orleans Pelicans, and is president of the National Basketball Players Association.

His song that makes him feel good is "Wishing on a Star" by Rose Royce. Remember that one? I like that, CJ.

A'ja Wilson, badass, wears many, many hats.

(Laughter.)

She's two-time WNBA champ, two-time MVP, Olympic gold medalist -- I could go on and on -- and as of this week she is a bestselling author, thank you very much!

(Applause.)

Her book -- I have it right here -- "Dear Black Girls: How to Be True to You," was just released 11 days ago, guys, and already she's a New York Times Best Seller. That's quite an achievement. Congrats, A'ja, congrats.

(Applause.)

Her song that always makes her smile, mine too, is "On My Mama," Victoria Monét. "I look good, I look fly." I like that. I love Victoria Monét. Who, by the way, just won the other day for best new R&B artist. She won a Grammy. I know, Common, you know that.

COMMON: Yes.

GAYLE KING: Then we have another bestselling author on the stage, Common. Also needs no introduction. He has a Grammy, an Oscar, he's an Emmy award-winning artist, an actor, and an activist. He's got five books. His latest one -- Common, may I hold up the book?

COMMON: Yes, please.

GAYLE KING: The book, Common, "And Then We Rise: A Guide to Loving and Taking Care of Self," also on its way to the Best Sellers List. This is his fifth book, as I mentioned.

And his song that gets him going is "Zoom" by the Commodores. I remember that one too.

I believe in ladies first, A'ja, so I'm going to start with you. Ladies first. Listen, we've got Caitlin, we've got -- no last name needed -- Taylor, Beyoncé, Barbie. Ladies are having a moment.

So, A'ja, we're going to start with you, because I like what you said in your book, there was a time you talked about externally you were at your highest, but internally you were at your lowest, but yet you put on the face.

What was going on in your life at that time?

A'JA WILSON: At that time we were -- COVID happened, obviously, and everything was paused, and we entered into the WNBA bubble where we were in Bradenton, Florida, and it was just me and basketball, and I had no outlet.

And it was a space where I had really nothing to do but stay in my thoughts. And it was very hard for me because I feel like as a professional athlete, we don't stop moving, we don't stop going. And as humans as well. We just -- we feel like we're just so rushed because life is just getting in the way and we're trying to execute everything.

And at that time I won my first MVP, and we made it to the Finals. And it was a great season for us because we were at an 8 seed, and we got to the Finals. So snaps to us there.

And I was at a high. It was like it felt great. But then once I got out of the bubble, it was like I -- I couldn't understand life. It was like I was -- I was reborn in the bubble, and everything was just so different.

And it caused me to go have extreme anxiety. And that's when I had my first panic attack. And it was a space where I was like, you know, I'm on my high. I got MVP, got to the Finals. It was a great thing. But at the same time I was battling with so much. I thought I was a failure, I thought I was a loser.

And I was people-pleasing. And it was a point where I was just like, I have to stop that. There's no way I can be the A'ja Wilson for every fan.

And that's when I kind of had to come within myself and kind of went from within and say, no, it's okay for me to have days where I don't feel like A'ja, and the world has to accept that, and I can't kind of do that.

GAYLE KING: And A'ja has to accept that.

A'JA WILSON: Yes. And I have to.

GAYLE KING: Yeah. I want to follow up on your panic attack in just a second, because A'ja says in her book that it turned out to be actually one of the best things that ever happened to her.

And I always marvel at that. I always hear people who go through messy breakups, you know, there's a -- you know, they lose their job or they get a disease or there's infidelity in the marriage, and they say something that was so painful turned out to be the best thing.

So we'll get back to you in just a second on that.

Common, you know, like most of us on this stage, I don't recall a time when anybody says: How's your mental health? How are you feeling mentally?

And I know that's the same for you, but you say when it comes to mental health: Self-care is a revolutionary act for everybody, especially for Black people.

What do you mean?

COMMON: Yeah, well, like growing up, you just don't hear the terms "love yourself" or "care for yourself." And it's so

important, even as what A'ja was saying, because we're so goal-oriented.

And it's not just in the world, because in many places, you know, I've -- I've had the opportunity to spend some time in London, and they don't -- just don't go as hard as we go.

And that, to me, the self-loving is a revolutionary act because it's an act of, like, saying I need to take care of myself to be at my best, to be at my highest, and then I can go out and actually change the world if I need to, if that's what my purpose is.

But just being at our higher selves, automatically it's like it has the osmosis effect, it has like the example effect of, like, man, when I'm at my best, other people see that, I treat other people well, it's the light that's within that other people respond to.

So I look at that as part of the movement to me. Like, how I change my community is like reaching my higher self being and my higher self with God, being in my highest self with health and wellness, being in my mental and emotional higher self, so -- and wellness.

So that's why I look at it as revolutionary. And it's necessary every day to work towards it like we work towards our game, like we work towards our work. Working on self and loving self is an everyday thing.

GAYLE KING: Yeah, loving self is an everyday thing, and it starts with you.

Doc, I'm fascinated by you because you're now back into coaching and you say many people just think the coach is just coach, but when it comes to mental health for the coaches and the players, you've noticed what?

DOC RIVERS: I don't know coaches are prepared for what they have to deal with. You know, we're hired to draw up a play for CJ to make a shot.

GAYLE KING: Yes.

DOC RIVERS: You know? And try to get your team to win games. But you're not qualified for when a player walks in your office and shares with you that he's been sexually abused and you're the only one he's telling this to.

GAYLE KING: For the first time.

DOC RIVERS: Yeah, for the first time. I've had that happen twice.

GAYLE KING: Whoa.

DOC RIVERS: And you are the one who have to guide him now, and you're really not prepared for knowing -- there's no manual for that. And let alone your own life, you know, that you're dealing with or just your own emotions as far as coaching all these guys and trying to get them to, you know, buy into things and, you know, you're on a public stage.

So, no, there's a lot there.

GAYLE KING: So how do you handle something like that, honestly? Somebody walks in your office, you're not a doctor, and you're not prepared to receive that information. What do you?

DOC RIVERS: You know, Gayle, the first thing for me is when I first decided to coach 100 years ago, you know --

GAYLE KING: No, it was 102.

(Laughter.)

DOC RIVERS: Yeah. But I remember an old veteran coach told me not to get too close to them.

GAYLE KING: Really? And he said "them"?

DOC RIVERS: To them, yeah. And, you know, for me, when I hear "them," I mean, that means a whole 'nother thing. We're not going there.

(Laughter.)

But I thought the exact opposite. I thought that, as a coach, you have to open your heart up to every player, to every person and realize that at times you're going to get your heart broken, and that's okay. But you got to love them as much as you can, and sometimes that can be hard, you know.

But I think that helped me. Especially with that first time, you know, my thought was on him -- not on us winning a game -- on getting him help. You know, when I first started back then, there was no such thing as help, you know? It was a sign of weakness, you know? And so I've been an advocate of mental health through then, you know.

But my first thought was find someone to give this player help, even if it meant that he was going to miss games. It didn't matter to me because who he was was far more important than what we were trying to do at that time. And so that's what you do. But every case is different.

GAYLE KING: I'm so glad the player came to see you,

Doc.

Because, CJ, I think if a player needs help and they go to see a coach or they go to see a therapist, I think many of them feel that they're going to be judged or that people will look at the vulnerability as a weakness or how will this affect me on the court.

What do you say to players to let them know that it's okay to open up and be vulnerable? I think that's extremely difficult, and certainly difficult on the job that you guys have.

CJ MCCOLLUM: Yeah, I think I talked about this with you on our prep call. The biggest thing that we're taught as men, especially as Black men, is to suppress oftentimes.

And I was raised by a woman who taught me what goes in this house stays in this house.

GAYLE KING: Yes. We don't air our dirty laundry, yes.

CJ MCCOLLUM: Yeah. So I was not really comfortable with speaking to strangers, not really comfortable with sharing personal things that may have affected me or impacted my life, definitely not comfortable with sharing childhood traumas and things that have really shifted how I look at things.

And as I got older, as I began to experience things and really just speak to, you know, my mentors and people who have been in similar situations to me, the biggest thing was: You need to get help. You need to talk to a professional. You need to speak to someone about some of your problems.

Your family can't relate to these problems. They don't play in the NBA. They're not married. They don't have kids. They don't understand the life that you're going through, the balancing act that you're trying to display consistently.

And I think that was helpful for me, just realizing that I've gone through a lot of different life changes. I grew up in a certain neighborhood. I went to a certain university that had a different demographic than what I was exposed to. And then I went from being the only kid ever drafted from Lehigh University to the NBA.

So that was just a different, unique experience that my peers that I was around in college couldn't relate to. You know, my friends work on Wall Street. And they come to the games in New York City, and the cool part is I don't have to get them tickets.

(Laughter.)

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

But some of the things I've experienced, they can't relate to. So it was helpful.

And the thing I tell players all the time is you lift weights, you do proper nutrition, you get your sleep; but if you don't take care of your mind, your body will fail you.

And I think it's -- we're at that point now where people are understanding that we need to carry ourselves with a sense of urgency when it comes to protecting our mind and our peace.

GAYLE KING: Yeah. If you don't take care of your body, your body will fail you. That's true.

Dr. Murthy, you've been traveling around the country. You've been talking to young child- -- to college kids, not young children, trying to get -- trying to get a handle on what you call the loneliness epidemic in this country.

And you're encouraging people to speak up about their mental health, but I still feel stuck sometimes because I think people think once they reveal themselves, they'll be judged.

And what is your message today? I think it's good that we're having this panel, by the way, but what is your message that could really maybe make a difference to someone who's listening to you right now?

DR. VIVEK MURTHY: Well, you know, like many people, like everyone here, I think, on this stage, I come at this first and foremost from my own personal experience.

As a kid, I struggled a lot with my own mental health, but I didn't even know what those words were.

GAYLE KING: What was your mental health issue?

DR. VIVEK MURTHY: Well, you know, one, as a shy, introverted kid, I had a hard time sometimes just making new friends. It took me a while. And so there were long periods where I felt lonely and isolated.

And they were -- when I look back on it, I realize I had periods of anxiety as well. I likely suffered from bouts of depression, but I don't know for sure because it was never diagnosed because I never saw anyone because I never asked for help.

And in those times I just felt a real sense of shame. Like if, hey, I was struggling with this, I did something wrong, I failed, I was weak in some way.

I grew up in a culture, I think, like a lot of us did, where this wasn't something you talked about very much.

And my parents loved me. That wasn't the question. They loved me unconditionally. But just culturally, when you talk about this -- I had an uncle who took his own life when I was in high school, and I just remember the sense of shame that kind of came over the family. Like, we didn't really talk about that --

GAYLE KING: You didn't talk about it, yeah.

DR. VIVEK MURTHY: -- with other people outside the family. Like CJ was saying, it stayed at home, you know, and we kept it at home.

So I think about all that. And I just realize now, having the privilege of being able to go and talk to people around the country about this, I realize that we all have our own stories like this. We've all struggled in some way with our mental health. Maybe we've talked about it. Maybe we haven't.

And when we are able to come together and open up about that, we realize that we are not alone.

And that's what we have to do. And I think one of the most important things, I think, to realize about mental health is that we -- that it's not just therapists and psychiatrists who can be sources of healing. We can actually help each other heal by -- not by fixing each other's problems, but by showing up for one another, by listening and not judging, by being supportive, by sharing our own story at times.

And when we do that, we help people see that, you know what, we're in this together and that you're not defined by your lowest moments or your worst struggles; and that, in the end, mental health is health, no less important than our physical health, and we better treat it as such.

GAYLE KING: You said -- Common, you talk about -- in your book you talk about a mental diet. What is that, a mental diet? You also talk about how important food is to your own mental health.

You know, my comfort food is cheeseburger, but after reading your book, a cheeseburger is not going to touch your lips anytime soon.

COMMON: Right. Well, the mental diet is important just from the standpoint of, like, when we get up in the morning, what's the first thing we bring into our minds, into our souls? Is it what's on Instagram? Is it what the news is reporting? And I know you're the news, but we --

(Laughter.)

GAYLE KING: Careful, Common, careful.

COMMON: I know, but I think it's important that we --

GAYLE KING: But I hear you. I hear you. Continue, yes.

COMMON: -- that we go within at the beginning and take in what we want and set our intentions for the day instead of digesting what others are putting out there.

I find it very helpful for me throughout my day if I start my day with thanking God for the day and setting my intentions and not letting my mental diet be about what is going on out there.

Not that I don't care about what's going on out there, but in order for me to get there wholly and as a whole person, I need to first take care of self.

And also just conversations you have with people. Like, I have people that have called me, and they're negative, negative, negative. I got to have boundaries with that.

And even, you know like --

GAYLE KING: When it's negative, negative, negative, you do what when that happens?

COMMON: I mean, I say, "Man, listen, I really ain't trying to talk about that right now."

I actually am able to say that to people.

GAYLE KING: Really.

COMMON: And even, honestly, if it's my mother -- my mother, as we talk about our families, when I first told her, I was like, "Yo, this therapy," I was telling her about one of my books coming out, like, "I'm revealing a lot of stuff in therapy," she was like, "We don't do that."

Now, I'm an adult man that's, like, growing and doing it. And she's like, "We don't do that."

I'm like, "Yes, we do."

(Laughter.)

"Yeah. We do."

So, like, to me, the mental diet is about, like, having boundaries, also just deciding, being intentional about what you're taking in.

And I don't mean, you know, you don't go have fun and kick it when you need to, but it's like being aware of it is what's important to me.

GAYLE KING: Yeah, I like too, the social media, as great as social media is, it can take you in such a dark place.

A'ja, I like what you said about social media, that you said it's -- for Black women in particular, that you can go down a rabbit hole that you sometimes can't get out of.

And I don't think people realize how damaging and devastating it is. She said, you know, young women shouldn't walk around with magic wands; we should walk around with a helmet, is what we need.

Tell us about social media for you.

A'JA WILSON: Yeah. I mean, for me, and I think for all of us, the way I see it, social media is just a false reality. Like, I honestly -- I have to take it piece by piece. And kind of like Common was saying, it's crazy how we just -- we don't even know that it affects us in that way because it's kind of what we see. It's the first thing. We wake up in the morning, we're grabbing our phones, we're seeing what the world's talking about.

And that's not always good. And for me, I always say, like, life is hard. We don't need something that's giving us a false reality. Like, it's going to be hard. Nothing's easy in this life. And it shouldn't be.

But at the end of the day, I have to take that -- I like that you use that mental diet because that is huge. And it's so true. It's something that I've really kind of input into my game routine and everything.

Because I'm like -- I remember I saw this tweet, and it was just like, "Mom, I'm depressed," and the mom was like, "Well, you go depress the dishes."

(Laughter.)

And it's like that's how it was. Like, that's our community. Like, you couldn't be depressed because it was like, "Girl, go lay down and wake up 'cause you gotta go to work." And it's like, "No, I am depressed and I need -- I need to talk to someone. I need help."

And that right there was like -- I pinpointed. I was like, yes, that is our community, and it needs to be talked about more because it's real.

GAYLE KING: But even, A'ja, when you talk about your panic attack that you had with your family in the car, your

mom -- your mom and dad are here too, great people, who said, "But, A'ja, I thought you were all right."

A'JA WILSON: Yeah.

GAYLE KING: And you said that's why the outside says different things than what's happening on the Inside.

A'JA WILSON: Yeah. And it doesn't -- kind of like, yeah, it's real. Like, it doesn't -- it's not always what it seems.

And that's the thing. I feel like sometimes we have to be -- it's okay to pull that mask off and be like I'm -- it's okay to not be okay. I'm going to feel these feelings.

And every single day we're all healing from something, and we have to give ourselves some grace because it is hard, and it just gets harder. And that's why I'm like don't -- it's not a magic wand. You can't just make it go away. You got to click that helmet on and be ready to take it on first hand.

DOC RIVERS: Gayle, I grew up as a player before cell phones. Swear to God.

(Laughter.)

And, yeah --

GAYLE KING: Doc, we believe you.

(Laughter.)

We believe you.

DOC RIVERS: It's interesting, though, I remember when cell phones came out, like, as a player. And my first nine years of an NBA player was no cell phone.

GAYLE KING: That was your rule?

DOC RIVERS: Yeah. No. There was no cell phone.

(Laughter.)

GAYLE KING: Oh, oh, oh. Oh, I thought you said that that was your rule.

DOC RIVERS: No. No. There was zero cell phones as a player.

GAYLE KING: Okay.

DOC RIVERS: And what was great about that --

GAYLE KING: Yes, yes, yes.

DOC RIVERS: -- was we talked to each other.

GAYLE KING: Yes.

DOC RIVERS: We talked to each other.

If you got on the team bus, it was lively. After a game, guys were talking to each other. If CJ scored 40 on me as I'm walking to the bus, I know I had to deal with the players when I get on the bus. They're going to talk about it.

Now when you get on the bus, it is silence.

GAYLE KING: Because everybody is on their phone.

DOC RIVERS: They're on their phones. They're looking at Twitter and Instagram or their individual coach.

You come in at halftime, guys are putting their phone up, they see you, because they're -- people are looking at Twitter --

GAYLE KING: Wow.

DOC RIVERS: -- and things at halftime.

GAYLE KING: In the middle of the game they're looking at?

DOC RIVERS: Or they're looking at -- they have a coach --

GAYLE KING: Wow.

DOC RIVERS: -- from outside the team. And people -- you know, Pat Riley used to talk about, you know, the peripheral opponents, keep the peripheral opponents away from you.

COMMON: Yeah.

DOC RIVERS: Right? Well, you can't do that anymore. The peripheral opponents are in your locker room all the time, they're present. And that's something we all have to deal with, you know, just communicating.

GAYLE KING: So I'm curious, CJ, how you help your teammates who have to navigate what we're talking about, the social pressures that fans might not understand.

I think it was the kicker for Buffalo who missed the goal, he got so much hate, death threats, and the vitriolic things that were said to him, he had to shut down. He had to go off -- he had to go offline for a couple of days.

I don't think people realize how insidious it is. How do you -- what do you say to your teammates? Because, really, maybe there should be a you can't use your cell phone during the game.

CJ MCCOLLUM: Yeah, I've been texting my brother and my wife at halftime since I was in college, so I'll be on my phone for sure.

(Laughter.)

GAYLE KING: And wait, wait, wait. What are you saying to them at halftime? What could you possibly have to say in the middle of the game?

CJ MCCOLLUM: Well, first of all, halftime is too long, but that's like a whole 'nother story.

(Laughter.)

But my brother watches a lot of my games. He's in southern Turkey. He plays abroad. But he's usually sending me like, "You got to see your man and the ball." Like, you know, "When you come off the screen, like you got the corner pass, you know, look at the tag roll" --

DOC RIVERS: So he's being honest.

CJ MCCOLLUM: Yeah. He's like -- he's -- he's getting at you, like, "Get a stop."

DOC RIVERS: Oh, that's good.

CJ MCCOLLUM: And then --

GAYLE KING: Is that helpful?

CJ MCCOLLUM: Yeah, because it's like he's seeing the game, you know, through a different lens. And that's my brother, right? So he's been around my whole life, and he understands me.

Mentally, maybe I just need a pick-me-up, and maybe it's just like, "Yo, like, use your legs on your jumper, you're coming up a little short" or "Great shots, you're taking the right shots, you're making the right plays," like, "It'll turn around." So that's the first half of it.

I'm not a Twitter guy at halftime because that's dangerous. And, you know, some people love you, some people hate you. And you can't really control that, but it does affect your mental.

So I tell my teammates two things, right? I say, "Use social

media, don't let it use you, first and foremost, you know? Use it to make money. Use it to monetize. Use it to share your story, your journey, things that you care about, things you're passionate about. But don't read into the comments too often."

And they look at me and they say, "Why?"

I say, "Because sometimes them comments gonna be ugly, and it's going to really affect you."

The last thing I'll say is I'm a big block guy. I be blocking people all the time.

(Laughter.)

I block. I mute. I'll report you.

(Laughter.)

Yeah, I got time. I got a lot of time on my hands on flights.

(Laughter.)

My block list is over 300 people now. Some people, like, it's just I don't like what they're talking about. I block.

So that's how I deal with it. Like, I try to keep the right people around me.

GAYLE KING: Yes.

CJ MCCOLLUM: I try to keep encouragement. I try to really nurture my mind and my soul to be as positive as possible because that's when I'm most happy.

GAYLE KING: I like CJ: "I block. I'll mute you. I'll report you."

(Laughter.)

CJ, by the way, is the father of a three-month-old baby and a two-year-old. So he's got two under --

(Cheers and applause.)

Yeah. So he's going to --

CJ MCCOLLUM: I earned these bags.

(Applause.)

GAYLE KING: So he's with us, and then he's going to rush right home.

COMMON: Gayle, I want to say something because it's amazing to me to hear that y'all would -- that y'all would tweet or get on your phones at halftime. It's just -- it blows my mind.

And I remember early on when we were working in the studio, and this was when social media first started. And I was working with Questlove in the studio, and he was saying to me that we should do something with the music because people online are saying, yeah, you -- that we -- we've done this type of music before.

And I stopped him, and I said, "Wait. When did we let the people decide the direction we going? We are the creators. We the leaders. And if they don't like it, they don't like it. If they do, that's cool. But they can't direct the way we're going."

And for me it's like, to hear y'all, y'all the leaders. Y'all the leaders. And to know that like -- and everything within this, in your team, you got all you need at that moment for that game. With all due respect to your brother; he knows the game and everything, I know.

But it's amazing for me to hear that because they, you know -- the people who are commenting, we on the sidelines. We haven't earned what y'all earned.

GAYLE KING: Right.

COMMON: From everybody from the coaches to every -- assistant coaches to trainers, they've worked. You all have -- it's -- you know how many people want to be y'all, like, and want to get to where y'all at? Like, and to -- to even pay attention to that while you're in the middle of your purpose, your mission, your game, is just -- it's just distract -- it's a distraction. It takes us away from -- it messes with our mental health.

GAYLE KING: It really does.

I know, Dr. Murthy, you have some thoughts about social media. You've done a lot of research about the good and the bad. What can you say about this topic and how it relates to mental health?

Because you can get a hundred good compliments, and you get that one from a cranky Yankee, and it will take you down. I don't know why it is that we tend to focus on that one as opposed to all the other positive incoming.

DR. VIVEK MURTHY: Well, look, I mean, this is really interesting to hear everyone's experiences here. And I suspect everyone in this room has struggled in some way, shape, or form with your relationship with social media.

Social media been around for 20 years. And last year I issued a Surgeon General's Advisory on the impact of social media on mental health. And just to bottom line it, it's not good. Okay?

(Laughter.)

If you look at the association between adolescent use of social media, it turns out -- and adolescents use social media for three hours a day, three hours or more. They are facing double the risk of anxiety and depression symptoms. It turns out that nearly half of adolescents say that using social media makes them feel worse about their body image.

And this is not, like, shocking to anyone in this room I suspect.

GAYLE KING: Right, right.

DR. VIVEK MURTHY: Because we've all seen it, maybe even experienced it ourselves.

What has happened is that there was a promise that social media made 20 years ago. And I remember the original Friendster platform, remember, that people used to use? And any Friendster users out here? You don't want to admit it. I know you're here.

(Laughter.)

But it was like the -- you know, preceded Facebook and even Myspace. Myspace, also an old-school platform --

GAYLE KING: You're kind of old too.

DR. VIVEK MURTHY: Yeah, I'm old too.

(Applause.)

I got the white hair to prove it.

But the bottom line is it's been around for 20 years. And the promise in those early days was, like, hey, it will bring us together. It will reconnect us with old friends. It will help us make new friends.

GAYLE KING: Yes, yes.

DR. VIVEK MURTHY: And in the early days, you know, it kind of felt like that. I remember reconnecting with old high school friends, seeing old buddies from grad school and going and meeting them in person.

GAYLE KING: But then it took a turn.

DR. VIVEK MURTHY: It took a big turn.

And I think right now what has happened, it is -- as A'ja said it beautifully, it's created a false reality. But even though we know that reality is false, we are still affected by it.

Even though I know that the posts I'm seeing in my feed of people's perfect lives and their amazing vacations and their great accomplishments does not reflect the totality of their experience, even though I know that, I will still often feel worse about my life. Right?

And this is when -- this college tour that I just finished that Gayle was referencing, this is what young people were telling us everywhere across the country. They say, "I feel great about my life, and then I go on social media and look at my feed, and I feel worse about myself. I want to stop using it; yet I'm on it all the time, and I can't stop. I feel like I'm addicted to it."

So I think that what we have done as a country -- I'm not talking about as individuals, as a country more broadly -- is I think we have failed to protect people from the harms of social media technology.

With cars, when we had a lot of motor vehicle accident-related deaths in the '80s, I remember that growing up, and we didn't just say that's the price of modernity, we just got to live with a lot of car accidents and deaths. We said, you know what? We're going to actually put safety standards in place.

That's what got us seat belts and airbags and crash testing and other safety measures that reduced deaths. We've done that. We make sure that -- like, I've got small kids too, they're in, you know, car seats, boosters. We made sure that, you know, not anyone can just sell those things. You have to make sure that they're actually safe for kids. The same is true for kids' toys.

We have to have actually put in place safety standards for social media. It's one of the things I've called on policymakers to put in place.

(Applause.)

And I'll lastly just say this about individuals. You know, the thing that, like, hurts my -- literally, like, hurts my heart as a parent is that we have -- I talk to parents all over the country who see their kids struggling with social media, and feel like they are failing as parents.

They say, "Gosh, no one else seems to be struggling with this. I guess the other parents have it figured out. I don't know what to do. I'm not sure what my child is doing in their bedroom alone at night with their device. I'm not sure even how to monitor it properly."

GAYLE KING: But shouldn't they know? Shouldn't they know what their child is doing?

DR. VIVEK MURTHY: Well, so, yes, I think parents should know. But how can they know is the question. Because I've also met many parents who have gotten the passwords for the kids' phones, they check their phone every night, they look at what their kids are doing, but it is so -- these platforms are evolving so rapidly that it has become easy for kids to hide apps, to have multiple accounts that parents don't know about.

So the tech is evolving much faster than what parents --

GAYLE KING: And the kids actually know more than their parents.

DR. VIVEK MURTHY: They know much more than their parents.

And so this is why I worry. Because we've hoisted the whole responsibility on the shoulders of parents and young people to manage this. And like Common is talking about diet. What we put into our body in terms of food matters; what we put into our mind matters just as much.

GAYLE KING: As much, yeah.

DR. VIVEK MURTHY: And that toxicity that many people are experiencing on social media is weighing us down. It's taking away from our sleep, our in-person interactions. It's eroding our sense of self-esteem.

Imagine if I put CJ on the basketball court and tied two sandbags around his legs and said, "Hey, just don't pay attention to it, just keep going." That seems ridiculous.

That's actually what we're doing with social media. You're saddled down with all of this negativity, this erosion of self-esteem, and you're still trying to plow through your day.

We need to free ourselves of that toxicity.

GAYLE KING: Common, you write in your book that therapy is like -- I love this description: Therapy is like opening a window in a closed-up room and letting the sun and the breeze come through.

COMMON: Yes, yes.

GAYLE KING: How did therapy change you? What did you get out -- well, first tell us why you decided to seek therapy, if you don't mind sharing.

COMMON: When I was in, like, one of the darkest moments in my life, like I released some music that wasn't received, it was really one of the first times like -- I wasn't a big-selling artist, but this was the first time I also was getting criticized by the hip-hop community for the music I did. So it was like my base audience was like, No, we don't want to hear from you.

And I was going through the toughest breakup I've been in in my life. It was like the person I thought I was like, man, this is -- I'm going to spend the rest of my life with, it was over.

And I just remember being in this hotel room, staying in there for a week and sometimes just, man, not feeling -- just feeling in the darkest place. And I started just wanting to be better. And I started to work -- you know, I was reading and doing my prayers, but I still needed more.

And, ironically, I was looking to buy some property, you know, just to try to get a new start, and this real estate person was a licensed therapist. So as we would go look at properties, she would talk to me, and I was telling her what was going on in life.

(Laughter.)

And I started to feel better. I started to feel better. And I was exploring some things that were deeper that I thought was about the relationship and about my success in music, but it wasn't about that. It was really about that love for self and things that had happened in my life earlier where I felt abandoned or not worthy.

And to learn those things allowed me to work on healing them. As A'ja said, you work every day to heal something, right? So I started to work on it and be intentional with that and be conscious of it.

So it kind of opened up things and allowed me to be my truest self. And the more and more I dug deeper and the more I revealed things and dealt with them, the stronger I felt and the better I felt and I wasn't, like, hiding things.

And it just -- and I didn't care about the judgment at that point. It's just like, yo, this is who I am.

GAYLE KING: Yes. Isn't it great --

COMMON: And I felt great within myself.

GAYLE KING: -- to get to the point where you don't care about other people's judgment?

COMMON: Yes.

GAYLE KING: I care about what I think about or the people who are closest to me.

COMMON: Closest to me, yeah.

GAYLE KING: As long as they're okay, then I'm okay.

COMMON: Yes.

GAYLE KING: Who is this person that broke your heart? What shall we do with her?

(Laughter.)

COMMON: Hey, just keep supporting her music.

(Laughter.)

COMMON: She's an amazing artist.

(Laughter.)

GAYLE KING: And, Common, how is your heart today?

COMMON: My heart is great. That was -- as you said before, like, a lot of people talk about the most difficult times in their lives, that was -- man, it was like one of the greatest blessings because it taught me that I was willing to dim my light for others. And that showed me that. That relationship, that breakup showed me that.

And I was afraid to wear my greatness. I would get on this stage or get around other artists, get around my friends and be like -- you know, just didn't want to be, like, great.

Because we were taught -- I was also taught, like, maybe CJ said, certain things within the house. For me, it was like I was taught, yo, don't be bragging, you're not like -- you're not that good. You're not that.

GAYLE KING: Yeah. Yes, yes, yes.

COMMON: So I had to learn that lesson. So it's been the greatest blessing.

GAYLE KING: And I'm glad your heart is really good these days.

COMMON: Yeah.

GAYLE KING: I can't help but smile about that.

COMMON: Thank you.

GAYLE KING: A'ja, I like what you said -- not like what you said, but when you said the panic attack, what turned out to be a blessing for you, set the stage for us. Because you were with your mom and your dad -- also, A'ja, you are now -- you know how when you were a kid you had posters up in your room of people? People now have your poster up in their room. That's your -- you have a -- you have a freaking statue at the University of South Carolina. You have a statue.

DR. VIVEK MURTHY: I love that.

GAYLE KING: Yes, yes, I love that.

(Applause.)

A statue of A'ja Wilson. I think that's very cool.

But tell us how the panic attack, which was one of the darkest places for you, turned out to be one of the best things that happened to you.

A'JA WILSON: You know, God has ways to slowing us down. And I think that was a moment for me to really just slow down and be human.

I think a lot of people see me in my basketball uniform and see me on court and see the accolades, and, like, oh, my gosh, she is amazing. I think I have some days. But some days I'm not. And I'm human.

And I just -- that was my human. It was kind of like I took the cape off and I could just be me. And it was just a lot of anxiety. It was a lot of depression because I was so caught up in people-pleasing.

And that's when my parents, over there, they really just kind of poured themselves into me. And I was so grateful for that, that they allowed me to be me.

And we were just talking about it backstage, was sometimes I had to touch that stove to know that it was hot. And that was my moment. Like, okay, I'm never going to do that again. I'm never going to people-please. I'm going to take time for myself.

And that was that moment. And it was such a blessing because I feel like if I didn't have that, I would have never been able to address it and live with it and understand that

I can still heal.

I mean, I'm still healing from my grandmother passing in 2016, and it's real. Like, I think sometimes we overlook, just because we're putting one foot in front of the other, we grieve. We have sadness. And we live through that, and that's okay.

GAYLE KING: And that's okay.

A'JA WILSON: And that moment there changed me forever.

GAYLE KING: I like some of my favorite A'ja quotes: Adversity is a fertilizer for greatness. Sometimes you have to go through things to grow through things, and it's not always easy, and it ain't always pretty. I like that.

Doc, I remember very vividly there was a shooting in Kenosha, Wisconsin. Jacob Blake was his name. And you were at a press conference, and you became very emotional when you were talking about that and the lives of Black men that are lost.

And I sat there watching, and I was so touched by your vulnerability. And I'm wondering, in that moment, because it didn't look like you planned it, certainly, and did you regret being that vulnerable on such a nationwide stage? Did that -- were there any repercussions for you, either personally or professionally, that you opened up that way?

DOC RIVERS: Well, it was interesting because they asked me about it before the game. And I've always tried to compartment -- put things in compartments, and I made the statement: I'm not talking, I got a job.

You know, people forget, for all of us, you still got to do your job.

GAYLE KING: Yes.

DOC RIVERS: You still got to go out and do your job and try to do it well.

And then we won the game. And after the game, I'd forgotten that I said I'd talk about it afterwards. And someone asked me about it, and then that just kind of came out.

You know, Gayle, when I did it, I didn't think much of it. I just said what was on my heart. And, you know, my players are getting on the bus, and they kept, like, giving me -- I didn't know what it was about. I didn't know that it had --

GAYLE KING: Had gone viral the way it had?

DOC RIVERS: Gone viral.

GAYLE KING: Yes.

DOC RIVERS: The only thing I regretted is that I didn't want it to be about me. It wasn't about me. It was about how I felt about a situation. And it started to turn into that, and that I didn't want that light on that.

You know, I've been through a lot with that kind of stuff, you know, going through the Donald Sterling stuff and going through a lot of stuff.

And what you want is for the light to stay on the person or the people who've done something. And I think often, especially with you guys when you're celebrities, it's no longer about the evil or the bad. It's about how we're dealing with it or what's your reaction to it.

You know, with the Clippers, we were starting to be judged about how we were going to react?

GAYLE KING: Yes.

DOC RIVERS: And I was like, We didn't do anything.

GAYLE KING: Yes.

DOC RIVERS: It shouldn't be about us.

GAYLE KING: I remember that.

DOC RIVERS: It should be about the person that did something and let's keep the light there.

I think we get distracted so much in that, and that's how I felt.

GAYLE KING: Common, I want every -- we're going to wrap this up, and we're going to go to Q&As. But, Common, you're no stranger to this NBA All-Star. You played in the Celebrity Game many, many times. And you were talking about, a story you talked about, Dwyane Wade, that you hadn't had a great game, and he said, "You got to just ignore the" -- what did he say, the blank --

COMMON: Well, he was basically -- he basically was just saying, like, "Man, if -- NBA, if we hit half our shots, that's good."

GAYLE KING: Yes, yes.

COMMON: And I was thinking, like, man, because I

thought I did pretty good in the game, but I was like, man, I was missing shots. And then he was like, "Bro, that's what -- some of the best players miss shots. Like, you gotta forget that and keep moving."

And it just was a lesson. It was kind of he just was saying it in passing, but I took it with me in so many things that I do. Because I used to be on the movie set, and I have a bad take, and I just -- it would sit with me for, like, the rest of the scene.

And then in life it was like -- my mother used to always say, "You're going to worry yourself sick." Like, I would just hold on to things.

But I started like -- that simple statement, basketball, it's crazy how basketball, like, can be so impactful to your life and, like, change the way you think about things.

In fact, the Commissioner was talking. We were talking, like, how -- when we -- for me, when I see you all play and your greatness and operating in your greatness, it just impacts my life and make me want to be better, you know?

So it's like you doing your thing so --

GAYLE KING: But you're saying ignore the bad takes. That's the thing. Ignore the bad takes.

COMMON: Yeah, ignore the bad takes.

GAYLE KING: We're all going to have bad takes. Ignore the bad takes.

COMMON: Yeah.

GAYLE KING: That was one of my takeaways from your book.

A'ja, what can you leave the audience with in terms of getting through, being better, feeling better?

A'JA WILSON: Yeah, I mean, I think you said it. Just grow through what you go through. Every single day we're learning something, we're growing. And learn that and take that to the next step in your life. Because we're all here. We all have a purpose, and we can all fulfill it.

GAYLE KING: CJ?

CJ MCCOLLUM: I would just say that it's okay to be vulnerable. It's okay to get help. It's okay to talk through problems with people. Historically, we kind of suppress things, and eventually it comes out, and as Common kind of referenced.

We all got our own issues that have, you know, grown with us as we've continued to get older. And it's important that we address issues, especially from our childhood, that are affecting how we behave as adults. And as you start to have kids and pass things down, you pass down traumas too.

So it's important you address some of the things that you have go on in your life so that you don't affect the next generation of people or the people around you.

So I think that's -- that's just my advice, and that's what I tell my teammates: Fix yourself for yourself but also for everybody else around you.

GAYLE KING: Fix yourself for yourself.

Listen, I know that we all have issues, but I would like to meet somebody that has issues fit in a toiletry bag, not in a steamer trunk. Just saying.

Doc Rivers?

DOC RIVERS: Well, I just think you got to be the best that you can be and that's all.

GAYLE KING: Whatever that is for you.

DOC RIVERS: Whatever that is. Be you. Do your best. Believe in yourself. And you can't be anyone else. You got to be the best version of you. And then be happy with that.

GAYLE KING: Yeah.

DOC RIVERS: Is what I would say.

GAYLE KING: Dr. Murthy, everything they said, we all seem to know that, but yet we still don't get there. You know what I mean?

DR. VIVEK MURTHY: Well, I think that's true, and I think we're all on this journey to try to be better, to be our best selves, as Doc was saying.

But we can't do this alone. We do need each other. We need to help one another. Because we're all going to fall off the wagon at some point.

I have found that if you can do three things in your life for your mental health -- if you can reach out to friends or family members, reach out to one person each day just to tell them you're thinking about them, that you love them; second, if you can help somebody each day, it could be in

a big or a small way, be offering a kind word or being there when they're struggling; and third, if you can limit the influence of and renegotiate the influence of technology in your life so that you're keeping the elements that distract you from your worth and your relationships away -- if you can do those three things, you can do a lot each day to improve your mental health and well-being.

And what A'ja is saying -- and I just talked to -- I spent some time with A'ja's father just a little while ago, earlier today. He's an incredible man.

And so proud of you, by the way. He is just so proud of you. It comes across.

But one of the things that I'm just struck by is that it seems like your parents, A'ja, helped you not only not listen to other people or be driven by other people but remember the light that you had inside of you.

And I think a big part of this journey around mental health is about that. It's about understanding who we are, it's about seeing our light, and it's about loving ourselves.

That doesn't mean we're perfect. It doesn't mean we don't have to grow. But it means that we recognize that our value is fundamentally intrinsic.

I think about this as a father. I want my kids to grow up in a world where they don't think that their fundamental worth as human beings is based on whether they're wealthy, powerful, or famous.

But that is what society is telling our kids. That's what young people tell me all the time around the country; that they feel that is what society is defining as success.

But our kids' self-worth, our self-worth is intrinsic. It's based on our ability to give and receive kindness and compassion and love to one another.

And I was reminded of this just last week when I was at home with my kids at the dinner table --

GAYLE KING: How old are your kids?

DR. VIVEK MURTHY: My son is seven, and my daughter is six. So they're small.

GAYLE KING: Little guys.

DR. VIVEK MURTHY: Little guys, yeah. And I had this, like, shoulder situation I'm dealing with, and I was reaching for something that my daughter was offering me, and I had this lancing pain that, like, went through my shoulder. And

it was like that literally dropped me to my knees on the floor, and I was just holding my shoulder.

And when that happened, I felt this hand that came over my back and was placed on my shoulder, and I felt this head lean against my head. And I looked up, and that was my son who had quietly gotten off his chair and who had held me because he knew that I was in pain.

Nobody taught him how to do that. He didn't -- wouldn't think of himself as a healer if you asked him what are you. But his instinct was to respond to pain with love and with compassion.

The seeds of that are within each of us. That light shines brightly in our kids from the moment they are born. But as we go through life, we forget that. We start to listen to those outside voices that tell us that doesn't matter, it's a sign of weakness.

And this effort to work on mental health is more broadly an effort to return to the core of who we are and what makes us valuable. It's about reclaiming our light.

GAYLE KING: I would disagree that you said no one taught him that. He's raised in a house that clearly there's compassion and empathy. If he's raised in a house where people are told shut the blank up or, you know, sit down and you know -- or you're belittled, your instinct isn't to go and offer somebody comfort.

So something is happening in his house that made him do that. Just saying.

DR. VIVEK MURTHY: Well, that's so kind of you, and I appreciate that.

GAYLE KING: Just saying.

DR. VIVEK MURTHY: But I will just say that even like -- I mean, just thinking about CJ's kids who are three months and two years of age, even at the really youngest of ages, we can see these, like, threads --

GAYLE KING: I agree.

DR. VIVEK MURTHY: -- of empathy and compassion that our kids extend and express. And we got to nourish that.

GAYLE KING: Nurture that.

DR. VIVEK MURTHY: We got to nurture that. And we got to find it again within ourselves and nourish it in each other. Because that is what makes us strong, that's what makes us fulfilled. That's what's going to make us ultimately thrive

together.

GAYLE KING: All right, Doctor.

We have time for a couple of questions. Where is the microphone? Turn up the lights.

QUESTION: Hi. Good morning.

GAYLE KING: Good morning.

QUESTION: This is so necessary. Thank you so much. My name is Nurse Noel, and I have a question for the doctor. We see --

DOC RIVERS: The real doctor.

(Laughter.)

QUESTION: We see the connection between mind and body. As a health professional, I see it every day. And, you know, being the daughter of someone who was actually diagnosed and taking medication, where do you feel like the line is from counseling to medication, and especially when neurotransmitters are involved and, you know, it's a physiological event instead of an emotional event?

DR. VIVEK MURTHY: Well, first of all, thank you for your service as a nurse. I think COVID, if it taught us -- it taught us many things, but one of the things it taught us is that we need more nurses in America, and we should be grateful for the ones we have. So thank you for everything you did.

(Applause.)

And I love what you're bringing up, which is a really important truth about health, which is that there is a powerful connection between our bodies and our minds. And what happens and starts, perhaps, as a physiologic event -- maybe it's a car accident that we're in or maybe we're hit or attacked by somebody -- that can very well impact our mental health and well-being.

We know that that line between mental and physical is not as rigid and firmly demarcating as perhaps when I was growing up or when I was going through medical school.

To me, what that means is that we have to recognize that there's often an emotional and a mental component to physical injury.

And I think about it with athletes in particular. I mean, those -- you all know that very well, but like -- like, I think about the young athlete that I met, high school basketball

player at the University of Minnesota, who is struggling with -- it was either an ACL or an Achilles injury. And he had been sidelined from play as a result of it.

And that took a real toll on his mental health and well-being. It impacted his identity, his sense of self. It impacted the community he had because he wasn't around his peers nearly as much.

And if we're not attending to that and caring for the mental component of his injury, then we're only treating half of him. And so I think that this is important for us to recognize in each other.

And the opposite is true as well. There have been a number of studies now telling us that when someone has a heart attack, how well they do after it is affected by their mental state. So if they're struggling with depression, their outcomes are actually worse after a heart attack than compared to people who are not struggling with depression.

So this is why we always say that mental health is health. It's part of overall health. And the more we treat it that way, not just in our hospitals and clinics, but in educational settings, you know, in sports teams, I think the better off we'll be.

GAYLE KING: But I heard her say how do you know when you can just do counseling or when you need medication?

DR. VIVEK MURTHY: Well, with the med- -- so that's a good question. So medication is one of the tools we have in our toolbox. But it's not the only tool. And we shouldn't assume that just because you give someone a pill that you're all set.

GAYLE KING: Yes.

DR. VIVEK MURTHY: I think that is a mistake. We know -- and we know there's actually, even with other concerns, like with opioid use disorders and with addiction more broadly, that it's not just about the medications. It's about the counseling and it's about the community.

You know, I have at this point -- you know, when I was serving as Surgeon General on the Obama administration, I spent a lot of time working on the opioid epidemic. And I met thousands of people across this country who struggled with addiction.

And I'll tell you this: There's not a single person I met who came through that dark tunnel of addiction and emerged in a recovery who didn't have someone or a group of people at their side to help them.

So that community is incredibly important from a therapeutic standpoint. It's why I say, like, for all of us, if we know people in our lives who are struggling, whether they're on medication or not, please know that you as a friend, as a family member, as a well-wisher, as part of their community, you are an important part of their healing.

COMMON: Can I say something to that? And I'm not a doctor or Doc Rivers, but --

(Laughter.)

But I'll say that a friend of mine, just her daughter was suffering from depression and anxiety. So she took her to a therapist, and the therapist eventually took her to a psychiatrist, and she started getting on four meds. She was on four meds. Four meds.

GAYLE KING: Wow.

COMMON: Right? And she started taking them, and she told her mother, "You know what? I'd rather feel depressed. I feel numb. These meds are not doing it."

So her mother was researching and researching. She went to another friend, and her friend said, "You need to check her iron and vitamin D."

And she was like, "What? What are you talking about?"

She said, "Check her iron and vitamin D."

She took her to an integrative practitioner -- integrative doctors use the mind and body and emotional healing, you know, for healing -- and she told her that she was low in iron and vitamin D.

And they started upping that in her diet, and the young lady no longer suffers from depression. That doesn't mean she doesn't go through moments, but she's not dealing with depression and anxiety. And it was iron and vitamin D.

I think sometimes when we get on pills and pills, pills, pills, it's not always working, some of it is not actually the solution. Doctors are quick to sometimes, as soon as you go to the doctor, give you a bunch of pills to take. And they may not be the holistic way to solve the issue. Because emotions do have to do with those things and your mind have to do with those things.

So I just wanted to give an example too of a human being --

GAYLE KING: Another way to look at it.

COMMON: Yeah.

GAYLE KING: Thank you. Yes?

QUESTION: Hi. My name is Lucas Postolos. Thank you all for a great discussion.

My question is mainly for CJ and A'ja. As you guys consider your -- the impact that the players have on our youth, and that's, you know, as me growing up, right, we don't just look at the way you shoot the basketball, but how you treat your teammates, how you treat your coaches, how you interact with referees, the music you listen to, the clothes you're wearing, your use of social media, do you guys feel like there's a healthy dialogue among players to acknowledge that and to say this is the impact we're having and how can we make the most of that?

GAYLE KING: Good question.

CJ MCCOLLUM: I thought it was ladies first, but it's cool.

(Laughter.)

She gave me permission.

I would say there's more conversations being had than ever before. This is my 11th season in the league. When I first came in, I was young and I didn't say much. I listened. And most guys didn't talk to each other because the new iPhone had come out, or the Android at that point in time and we were doing BlackBerry Messenger and stuff.

But I think as we've kind of gotten older, as we've seen some of our vets retire and some of the OGs that come back and talk to us about things they wish they could do differently and things they wish they knew now that they didn't know then, I think the conversation not just around our responsibility to follow the golden rule, do all the things that I teach at my kids camps and in my household, which is to treat people the way you want to be treated, show respect, and understand that people are watching not only what you do but how you do it consistently -- and that's in all phases of life, you know, whether you're in the hotel on the road or, you know, going to eat a meal that's being cooked by the catering service team -- like, how you treat everybody matters, I think we pay more attention to that.

But it's also the mental health side, is the conversation that we're having, and then the finance side. I think we're much more willing to have discussions because we've seen players struggle with, you know, mental health issues, players struggle with financial issues that cause more mental health issues.

And then just the physical aspect of the cycle of stress, trauma, play a sport, get hurt, play through the injury or recover from the injury, still think about the injury. All of those things.

So I think we do have a better understanding of our impact.

You know, she's in her 20s, and she has a statue. Right? So, like, just keeping it real. Like, that's crazy to think about. Like, the amount of people that look up to her, the amount of people that understand who she is.

And someone told me the other day like, "I pay attention to your tweets." And they said, you know, "I know you're a faith-based person, you post a lot, and it means a lot to me that you share that because a lot of people wouldn't want to share that."

And me, I'm just, you know, doing my daily verses, living my normal life, you know, meditating in the mornings and trying to stay sane with two kids. And he's telling me the importance of some of the messages that I'm putting out that I may not think are important but are really hitting differently with him.

So I would say, to answer your question -- and that was, like, a six-minute answer -- we have a better understanding of the power that we have. We're still kind of learning and growing and exploring, and we're human.

So all the songs I listen to aren't going to be, you know, "Wishing on a Star." Some days I ain't feeling like that. You know what I mean?

But I think that the moral of the story is to do your best to put out, you know, a genuinely fair image of who you are. Like, I'm not selling y'all movies and dreams. Like, I am what you see. I think that's important too.

A'JA WILSON: Yeah. I mean, just to go off of that, I think it's huge for us in our locker room, we just want to be real and be genuine, like you said. Because I think it's very hard to come by. I think everyone's just trying to be this different person or what they see on social.

And for us that's hard because, especially on the women's side and on the young girls' side, they drop like flies because they just had a bad day at practice or they don't like the way the coach is talking to them, and they lose the gems that sport brings to us.

And I think for us at the professional level and the platform that we have, we want to make it as real as possible.

So, yes, I feel like our team is like an AAU team. We do everything together. Those are my sisters. Which means some days I may not like them, and some days I love them and I'll never let them go.

So I think we are more open to having the conversations and making our locker room a safe space where we don't judge. You can go in there and talk about boy problems, you can talk about anything that you want, and we're there. And we're going to hold you accountable at the same time if we feel like that you're not holding your end up on the stick.

And I think that's what makes us better, and that's why the young girls -- I always say: If you could see her, you could be her. Representation matters. So I love to show my true self because I'm like, you're going to get what you get, now.

Like CJ said, some days I might want to be a little ratchy, a little petty, because I'm human. I'm a person. But at the same time, I'm always going to be here for you. So I think we are growing just together as one.

GAYLE KING: I am curious, guys, as athletes -- this has nothing to do with mental health, but watching the Super Bowl the other day, that interaction -- the athletes on the panel -- between Travis and Andy as coach, you know, all the athletes I've talked to said, you know, that people that aren't athletes don't understand. It can get very heated. The emotions get very intense.

As a lay person watching it, I cringed a little bit because I just thought is it an anger issue? Is that okay to talk to him that way? Is that the way -- is that the message you want to send?

As athletes, what did you all think watching it? Lay people, are we making too much about it? Or, athletes, you say, look, that's how it is on the sidelines?

CJ MCCOLLUM: I'll let the MVP go first.

A'JA WILSON: Yeah, I mean, I've been -- I've had my fair shares where I've been kicked out of practice. I think it's real --

GAYLE KING: Because of the way you talk to the coach?

A'JA WILSON: Yeah, or the way that I didn't like the way the coach talked to me.

GAYLE KING: Oh.

A'JA WILSON: And I was just like, well, no, like, you're not

going to say that to me.

GAYLE KING: Oh.

A'JA WILSON: And I think what I saw was just real. Like, that is sport. That is what we go through. Those are having those real conversations. And then we chop it up because we about to head to a championship parade.

Like, I feel like that is the separation between good and great, is allowing your players and that coach to have that conversation with you and in the heat of the moment and knowing that you put a lot of hard work and passion into it.

So I didn't see anything wrong with it because I've had my fair shares of conversations with my coaches.

GAYLE KING: Okay. I know, because --

DOC RIVERS: I've had a lot of those.

(Laughter.)

GAYLE KING: You have? With athletes yelling at you or you yelling at athletes?

DOC RIVERS: Listen, I was both. I was a player too, you know. I -- I -- so I --

GAYLE KING: It was so unsettling, though, to watch.

DOC RIVERS: I have -- I have both. I've had -- you know, we won a title, and it wasn't always roses, you know? There's fights in the locker room, player-player. I'm watching film and -- in the year we won it, during the playoff I'm watching film, and I see a remote control go flying by my face.

(Laughter.)

And hit the screen. It wasn't at me. It was at the screen. And you deal with it. But --

GAYLE KING: But in any other profession, though, guys, you'd be fired.

DOC RIVERS: No, I said that too.

GAYLE KING: You'd lose your job.

DOC RIVERS: I told someone in our profession I can yell at CJ, "CJ, you gotta get back down the floor." And I wouldn't say it that nicely. Right? But in the office, if I said that, someone is getting fired.

GAYLE KING: Yes.

DOC RIVERS: It's just a different thing.

I saw that as a coach, player. Everything is individual, though, right? It almost -- it still comes back to the love and what you have for each other.

You got to invest equity in each other. Like, you just can't keep taking. And so if I have a relationship with Common and we talk and I get inside, we talk to each other, then when we have that bad moment, we can get through it.

GAYLE KING: Okay.

DOC RIVERS: But if we don't ever talk and we don't have any relationship, when we have that bad moment, it's going to be a bad moment.

GAYLE KING: Okay. This may surprise you, but I was never an athlete. Nobody ever wanted me on their team. So when I looked at it, I was like, "Yowza."

Do you want to comment, CJ?

CJ MCCOLLUM: Yeah. The thing is the dynamic matters. Right? Travis and him have a history together, have a rapport.

DOC RIVERS: Yes.

CJ MCCOLLUM: They've been in each other's house, they've been around each other's families. They understand each other at a level and in a way in which we'll never truly understand them. So for that to happen to them, it's different.

Now, if you don't have that relationship, if you haven't built that time, you don't have that sweat equity. It really matters. Like they wouldn't have been able to recover from that because there's no -- there's no true love, there's no true bond, they're not -- they're not walking the same path.

So I think it's like me and my brother fight all the time, but nobody else better fight him. You know what I'm saying? Like, that's the way it is.

And I've been kicked out of practices. I've done a lot of things that, you know, I probably shouldn't have done, but it's because of passion. When you're passionate about something, you care about something, you do whatever it takes to hold on.

And the last point I'll make is a lot of us aren't built for office culture right now.

(Laughter.)

GAYLE KING: It has definitely --

CJ MCCOLLUM: We've been drilled a certain way.

GAYLE KING: -- sparked a conversation. I hear you.

CJ MCCOLLUM: We compete a certain way. Our lifestyles are a certain way. And it's not for everybody. And I think that's the key.

But I had -- I had a problem with the timing. I didn't have a problem with the fact that he did it. And I think Andy Reid said the same thing: I know how we are and how we get along, but there's way too many cameras for you to be putting your hands on me like that right now.

GAYLE KING: Okay.

CJ MCCOLLUM: That's how I would've handled it.

GAYLE KING: Okay. Okay.

DR. VIVEK MURTHY: Gayle, can I just say --

GAYLE KING: Yes.

DR. VIVEK MURTHY: I mean, this is such, I think, a powerful point, especially, I think, the way you said it, Doc, was if you -- because you know Common, there's certain things you can say to him, right?

That's just true, I think, even beyond, like, sport, right? Like, when we know, like when we know other people and have a relationship with them, that we can disagree with each other, even fight with each other, but not disown or cast each other off.

And that, I think, has broader implications for our country right now. Like, a lot of people are worried that it feels very polarized and divided in our country right now.

GAYLE KING: It is.

DR. VIVEK MURTHY: And it is. And I don't think that that -- it's a coincidence that that is happening at the same time that we're going through an epidemic of loneliness and isolation.

Because when we're separated from each other, when we don't know each other, it makes it very hard to dialogue. It makes it -- we tend to misinterpret differences of opinion as being differences in character and values, and we tend to

cast each other aside and say you don't count, you're not part of my country anymore, you're not part of my group anymore.

And that's why part of this effort to rebuild community and connection in America, and it's one of the issues we've been focused on, that's why I think it's so important for the fabric of our nation. Like, we know from families that we can have that crazy uncle or aunt, like, at the dinner table at Thanksgiving and we don't agree with them on half of the bunch -- a bunch of things, but if they were sick and were in the hospital, we'd show up. And they would show up for us.

DOC RIVERS: That's the definition of Ubuntu.

DR. VIVEK MURTHY: Yeah.

DOC RIVERS: I use that all the time. Common, you brought it up to me today.

COMMON: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

DOC RIVERS: A person is a person through other people. I can't be all I can be unless you are all you can be. And you can't live in isolation. We need each other to be great.

And the best part of Ubuntu, you can never be jealous of anyone's success because their success will eventually connect you and you can be successful through that. It literally is. And, you know, it's saved Africa, that word, that way of life. And we need to get there.

GAYLE KING: That will wrap it up. Common, are you game for a freestyle to wrap this up for us?

(Laughter.)

GAYLE KING: I didn't discuss it with him ahead of time.

If you're not game, it's okay. If you're not game, it's okay.

(Applause.)

COMMON: Okay, okay, okay.

GAYLE KING: But I've seen you pull stuff out of the air in a way.

COMMON: Okay, I'll pull it out of -- okay, you got a beat.

(Laughter.)

COMMON: Okay, check it out, Common sense, I be a MC and a guru. Yes, Doc Rivers was just talkin' about Ubuntu.

And that's how it is, Common sense. I came to say on a Saturday this is live for the NBA. We at the All-Star. I'm right here. Yo, I ain't a playa, but still I give respect to CJ and A'ja. Of course they champions, they did it, we figure. Yo, I flow and I flow like my man Doc Rivers. That's how it is. I'm with us all togetha. I got a rhyme and it's all supreme. I say I'm giving love to Gayle King. Of course she's the queen. You know I rap Adam, next on the stage will be our brother named Adam. Silva. Yo, I came to build a new type of thing when it comes to --

(Commissioner Adam Silver enters stage.)

(Laughter and applause.)

GAYLE KING: That is -- bravo, Common, bravo. That is the perfect introduction for Adam.

And I had asked Adam, what's a song that would sort of -- that makes you feel happy, that makes you smile when you're feeling down, and guess what he said? You'll like this, Common. "Golden Slumbers" by Jennifer Hudson.

(Laughter.)

Who, by the way, is the entertainment for the game tomorrow night.

Adam Silver, everybody.

(Applause.)

ADAM SILVER: Thank you very much.

Gayle, panelists, that was absolutely fantastic. Thank you very much.

And, you know, one of the benefits of being Commissioner, Gayle said, "What's your favorite -- you know, what's one of your favorite songs?" I said, "This is a song that my wife" -- Maggie is here -- "and our daughters listen to, 'Golden Slumbers.'"

You know, it's a cover of a Beatles song, of course. And I said, "But one of the fringe benefits of getting to be Commissioner," I said, "and, oh, by the way, and the woman who sings that song, she's the halftime singer at the All-Star Game on Sunday."

So, anyway, a few thoughts I had. I mean, this is such an important topic. And incidentally, many of you have been coming to these Newsmaker Breakfasts for many years. Again, this was a program started by David Stern's wife, Dianne, many years ago. And we've dealt with so many different topics, and one of the things I was thinking about,

this topic is -- some of the topics have been esoteric in certain ways or topics that didn't necessarily impact on everyone's life.

I was thinking, you know, Dr. Murthy, you were talking about, you know, social media over the last 20 years and how social media at this point impacts all of us.

I think, though, I would broaden it and just say mental health, of course, impacts every single person in this room. Who isn't, hasn't been sitting in this room and thinking about moments in their own lives?

And one of the things, I think, these folks know, as all the various celebrities in their own right that you're talking about, that I think often there's a misnomer and part of, I think, the reluctance for people like this to talk about some of those issues, you know -- and I know, CJ, we've talked about this -- people say, well, but, come on, you got books and bestsellers and Grammys and this and that and awards. How can you all possibly have those kinds of issues? You've got money, you've got resources.

But these issues cut across all socioeconomic lines. And I think that's one thing that Vivek has been out talking a lot about, how -- I mean, this issue, I can't think of an issue more than anything we've ever covered that so dramatically impacts every single person's life, and everyone in this room is thinking about the issues they've gone through in their lives.

And I think that's why for the WNBA and the NBA, for us to be out talking about this issue, I think it's one of the areas that we can have the greatest impact.

Because I think, in addition to this notion that maybe if you've been successful in certain ways you don't necessarily struggle with these same issues that others are, that historically, I think, at least in sports -- and, you know, Doc, you touched on this, CJ, you touched on this -- that there was a stigma, frankly, I don't know how else to say it, around raising issues.

Even, you know, the low-level sports that I played as a kid, that the last thing you were going to do, if you want to be on the team, was raise your hand and say, "Coach, I feel really stressed when I have to shoot a free throw" or "I'm super nervous" or, you know, maybe "I didn't sleep so well last night."

Or even better yet, Doc, the examples you gave of somebody coming to their coach and raising issues completely outside of the bounds of what you're doing on the court or the playing field or anything else.

And I think where so much credit to, I think, particular NBA players and WNBA players who've been willing to use their notoriety, at great risk at some times to themselves, frankly, to come out and say that "I have been struggling," and some cases been with very detailed issues that they've had in their lives.

And I think, CJ and A'ja, I think your Players Associations have done a fantastic job bringing these issues to the forefront and have dedicated a lot of resources to it, to the point now where I think initially, I know from some of the conversations I had with the young players in this league, there was a little bit of confusion between being public about issues and getting help.

And I've often had to point out to them that, you know, that's incredible that Kevin Love would've chose to talk or A'ja wrote a book and is including those examples, but that's their personal decision. More importantly, if you want to get help for issues you're dealing with, you have team doctors, you have Players Association, aides and private folks that are available to you that nobody ever has to know.

But the wonderful news is, and we're beginning to see the change -- and even, you know, my wife, Maggie, and I, we have two young daughters, and this may seem strange, but just the different world we grew up in, one of our daughters said the other day, she said, you know, "Mom and Daddy," she said, "I'm so unhappy."

And there was part of us that was like, oh, geez, she's so unhappy. And then when she left the room, we're like, "Yes! She said out loud, 'I'm so unhappy.'"

(Laughter.)

What? We never were able to do that when we were kids. Like, look at the -- her, like, you know -- her emotional, like, you know, awareness that she could actually talk about those things.

And I think that, to me, is an incredible change that we're seeing. And, again, I think not just the NBA but all sports leagues are in a position to pave that path and the way to change the dialogue.

And, Dr. Murthy, that what you're doing nationally is absolutely incredible, using that platform you have, talking on college campuses, and I'm seeing it firsthand. So thank you very much for that.

And I'll just last say that just sports in general, you know, I know I've heard, you know, Dr. Murthy and others say about this before, that you do, you know -- what can we do

about this issue? I mean, the impact that social media is having, the epidemic of loneliness that you've talked about, of social isolation.

And, frankly, one of the answers is sports, and it's one, you know, I've heard others say it's the closest to a wonder drug, and that is, and I think we've all had that experience when we're down, it's just physical activity. I mean, putting aside, you know, sports as a team or on a professional level, but just physical activity.

But then beyond that, and this is what Common mentioned, he and I were talking about before, he was talking about even as a kid he had been a ball boy and that watching Michael Jordan and other athletes play at the highest level.

And he said his response, and I felt the same way as a kid. I can't say when I grew up in New York as a Knicks fan I was necessarily thinking that I'm going to ever play at that level, but when you see greatness, it inspires you.

And even to this day, when I'm at an NBA or WNBA game or watching an athletic endeavor and people are playing at the highest level, it inspires you to want to do more, to think "I can be great," because what they're doing by being the best at what they can do, by pushing their bodies, by pushing their minds to overcoming obstacles, I just think that at the end -- and, again, this is for all sports -- it's, I think, the best antidote to many of the things that Dr. Murthy is talking about it.

It demonstrates that we're alive; that there is a sense of belonging; that we are, you know -- have those greater connections to everyone.

So just I'll end with that. Thank you to the City of Indianapolis and Indiana, the Simon family for being such incredible hosts, and enjoy the rest of the weekend. Thank you.

(Applause.)

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