

## Love What You Love Podcast

### Episode 44: The Enneagram with Joy Pedersen

#### July 27, 2021

Welcome to *Love What You Love*; I'm Julie Rose. I'm insatiably curious about people and the world around us, and absolutely in love with passion and unselfconscious enthusiasm. Every other week I geek out with someone about the thing that they love, and then I share it with you.

Welcome back! Or, Welcome! As you can probably guess from this podcast, I'm really interested in what makes people tick. And this week's guest is definitely of that same ilk. Dr. Joy Pedersen has a Master's in Counseling and Guidance from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, and a PhD in Educational Leadership from UC Santa Barbara. She's also a certified Enneagram instructor for teams and individuals.

But what the heck is the Enneagram? It's a personality typing system but, as we'll hear from Joy, it's a lot more than that. In this chat, we talk core motivations, reducing suffering by recognizing patterns, self-compassion, your inherent value, not getting stuck in your type, nature and nurture, and so much more. So find out why Joy loves the Enneagram and why you might learn to love it too.

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**Julie:** Hello, Joy! Thank you so much for joining me!

**Joy:** Hello! Thanks for having me.

**Julie:** I'm super excited to talk with you because I see Enneagram everywhere, and I have kind of a general idea about what it is, but you are an expert in it. Maybe we can start with what is the Enneagram, and who developed it, and when, and why.

**Joy:** Absolutely. So, at its very basic level, the Enneagram is a personality assessment or tool like the Myers-Briggs or StrengthsQuest, or True Colors, or WorkTraits. You might be familiar with some of those. So, it does help explain nine different personality types, but it's also much deeper and richer than some of the other tools that I have used in the past. There's definitely a spiritual component to it.

It dates back several centuries. We're not exactly sure where it came from, but we know it was introduced in Europe in the 1920s, and then it made its way over to the United States in the '60s. And some of the early books on the Enneagram were written in the late '60s and '70s. So, it's not a proprietary tool like some of the other things that folks might be familiar with, like StrengthsQuest. Anyone can really adopt the framework. And beyond just the nine personality types, there are many different levels of the Enneagram.

Another thing I love about it is it's very deep and rich, and like I said, it can even take on a spiritual element, which I think makes it unique from other personality assessments.

**Julie:** As someone who is working with a client, how would you use the Enneagram differently than you would administer, like, a Myers-Briggs?

**Joy:** One of the things I love about it is, with the nine types... It's kind of like Goldilocks's porridge, I say. So, the Myers-Briggs has 16 combinations. Something like WorkTraits only has four types. So with the nine types, it's a nice number and also the different

types really capture what I believe to be the essence or the core motivations of most people.

So, I would use the Enneagram with a client or a team to help them identify their natural worldview. So, how do we tend to see the world based on our core motivations, the strategies that we typically use to get our needs met? And then when does that trip us up? When does it get us in our own way and prevent us from achieving either our full potential or from living in alignment with our values?

And for each of the nine types, there is a way that we have a self-defeating behavior. So, the thing that we want more than anything, we actually push it away based on the strategy that we're using to try to achieve that thing. So when people recognize that, then they're able to name it and identify when it's happening by being present, and grounded, and mindful. And whether it's improving a relationship, or having a deeper connection with their child, or their partner, or their teammates, or even just reducing their own suffering as they move through the world by recognizing some of their patterns and then having really deep compassion around our worldview.

There's a lot of benefits to it. So depending on what my client is hoping to achieve, whether it's better communication on a team, or a better partnership, or even just less suffering... I work with a lot of clients who are in transition. Whether it's a divorce, or a career move, or moving geographically. I think the Enneagram can help people deal with stress, and challenges, and uncertainty.

**Julie:** How do they go about figuring out what number they are?

**Joy:** There's a lot of different type tests out there. I like the one by the Enneagram Institute. You can do it online. It's about \$12. It gives you a very comprehensive full report on your type, and wings, and levels of integration. But that's not necessary. There are also some free tests out there. Or you can just read about the nine types and... Even if you take a test, I would only say it's partially accurate. It might give you your top three types. But then it's really through self-exploration and discovery that we are able to identify and nail down our types.

So, the tests are great as a starting point or a launching-off point. Lots of Enneagram books have some form of a test or assessment included in them that can help someone who's looking to just get introduced to the Enneagram. But even after a test, I would still encourage people to do a little more research and then decide for themselves what feels like the best fit.

**Julie:** What's an overview of the types?

**Joy:** Well, I can go through them quickly if you want.

**Julie:** Yeah!

**Joy:** They're in different triads. So, like I mentioned earlier, there's a lot of layers to the Enneagram. So, at its basic, the nine types are either referred to by number or sometimes by name, and the names can vary slightly but they're all, sort of, similar or related.

So, the One is the Perfectionist or the Reformer. They're motivated by improving the world and the things around them, so they're very keyed into "How do I make this better? And what is the right way to do this?" They're one of the types that often has a very strong social justice lens.

The Two is the Helper and they're motivated by connection. They really want to be in relationship with others, so their superpower is knowing what others need. And the joke about the Two is, "If they want to be your friend, you don't stand a chance," because the Two will know what you need and they'll help you get it.

The Three is the Achiever. And they're motivated by success, accomplishments, recognition. All of the different types put their value in some external thing; the Three puts their value in success. Part of the growth of the Enneagram is to recognize that we all have inherent value and that our value's not based on how perfect we are or how accomplished we are.

The Four is the Individualist or the Creative. They are searching for meaning and they have an ability to hold really deep emotions for themselves and for others. So if you're grieving or struggling, the Four does not shy away from that. They're great at being there for people in times of really deep and strong emotion. They also have... They're very tuned in to authenticity, so they have a radar for people who are being inauthentic.

The Five is the Investigator or the Observer. And they're motivated by understanding. They really want to put all the pieces together. They love to do research. They're one of the withdrawing types, so they tend to retreat. And in particular, they retreat into their mind. So, the Five goes into their mind palace, and they're one of the types that can get stuck in analysis paralysis, where they feel like they just don't know enough to act. So the challenge of the Five is to recognize that they are enough, they know enough, they are capable enough to go ahead and move through the world.

The Six is the Loyalist or the Loyal Skeptic, and they are the only type that has two manifestations. Both of them are in relationship with fear. So, in the Phobic Six, the fear will cause them to have anxiety or anxiousness and create self-doubt. The Counterphobic Six actually appears more like an Eight and can be very bold, confident, and they're not going to let the fear overcome them. So their approach is more like, "I'm the only one I can trust so I'm going to do everything myself." But both types of the Sixes are in some relationship to fear.

The Seven is the Enthusiast, and they are looking for fun, a good time, stimulation, freedom. They're great at thinking outside the box. It can be hard for them to finish things because they love to just move on to the next new thing. They don't really like deep emotions. They don't want to go too far down into feelings of negativity because they actually feel like those things would drown them.

The Eight is the Challenger or the Protector, and they're motivated by control and respect, and they want to have power and be in control of their environment. They're very protective of the underdogs, so they're another type that's in tune with social justice. They're very sensitive to weakness so they can, sort of, sniff out weakness in a room.

And then the Nine is the Peacemaker, and they're motivated by harmony, keeping the peace, avoiding conflict, making sure everyone is getting along. They're great on a team because they can see all sides of all issues. It can be hard for them to make decisions because they do see the benefit of all different options. And sometimes when they're asked for their opinion they have a hard time even knowing what their opinion is because they don't want to marginalize anyone.

So, that's a quick and dirty of the nine Enneagram types. I hope that's helpful.

**Julie:** That is! That's very helpful. So, I'm curious about... How were these different categories derived?

**Joy:** Yeah, I think that they sort of evolved over time. Nobody... There isn't one singular source to say or point back to where they came from. There are different versions of the Enneagram. I honestly don't know where it came from originally and I would say I haven't found someone who can clearly articulate it either. We know it came to Europe, maybe by way of North Africa or the Middle East. But its exact origins are not clearly known or documented.

**Julie:** Interesting. So, have you always been interested in personalities? Like, what were you like as a kid?

**Joy:** Yeah, I majored in psychology in college, so I have always been interested in understanding people and understanding people's motivations, which I think is very strongly connected to our personality. And I've always been interested in communication and how to better communicate with my family, with my friends, at work. So yeah, this has definitely been something that has pulled on me my entire life. And I think when I found the Enneagram it just all, sort of, came together; it culminated in this, like, perfect framework that really helped me understand a lot of different things I had been interested in throughout my life.

**Julie:** Enneagram is kind of like the Goldilocks. Why is it more interesting or impactful for you than, like, a Myers-Briggs?

**Joy:** Regarding the Myers-Briggs specifically, I think just the fact that it had so many different combinations, it was hard for me to remember. I do think the Myers-Briggs is an excellent assessment tool. It just never resonated with me because I couldn't remember the four variations and the 16 types, and it just... That was a little overwhelming for me.

The Enneagram also has a spiritual component of it that really calls to me. The idea is, not that we get stuck in our type, which I think a lot of personality tools stop at that level. It's like, "This is what you are. This is what you're good at. This is what you're not good at. And this is how you might interact with other people." But the Enneagram really calls us to move beyond our personality and helps us see the humanity in all the types and encourages us to try on different types.

And ultimately, when we are grounded, and present, and mindful, we can access all nine types. And all nine types are within us, it's just when we are on autopilot, we're tired, we're hungry, we're stressed, then we fall into these certain patterns that really don't do us any service. So I think about a BOSU ball, the metaphor of a BOSU ball. It's like a ball on the bottom and then a platform on the top. And when we're balanced we can move around on that ball freely and access all points on the Enneagram. But when someone throws us a curveball or pushes us off of our axis, then we dip into our type. So we don't really want to get stuck in our type.

And it's really tempting for people to want to know. It's one of the most common questions I get, like, "Am I a Three or an Eight? I have to know my type." But the goal is just that we want to know what our patterns are and then be able to recognize, have enough self-awareness to move beyond those patterns and not get stuck there.

**Julie:** We talk about the personality types and what you fall back on, is that, you know, family-of-origin stuff? How do we derive those initial personality types?

**Joy:** Yeah, it's both nature and nurture. If you watch some kids, their personality is emerging very strongly. We're born with a disposition. And you can see that if you work with babies or young children, that there are just natural differences even within the same family. And so, part of it is that; part of it is just our natural disposition.

But then the other part is our experiences as we move through the world. Young people are trying a lot of different coping strategies and trying different ways of getting their needs met. They might yell and scream, and if that gets their needs met then they'll continue to yell and scream, and then that becomes part of their personality or their pattern. But if yelling and screaming doesn't get them anything, then they try to withdraw, and then if they find that that actually meets their needs better, then they continue that pattern and that sets the tone for how they move forward in life.

And then part of that, again, is overlap with their disposition. So, if I withdraw and that feels good to me because of my disposition, then I'm very likely a withdrawing type. So it's both, and I caution people not to type young children too quickly. And really, we shouldn't type anybody because there are similar behaviors in the different types that are common but we never really know what someone's core motivation is.

So, if somebody walks into a room and they kind of hang out in a corner and they're withdrawing, it could be that they're one of the withdrawing types, or it could be that they're an Eight and they're just trying to assess who has the power in the room before they take action. So, we can't assume based on people's behaviors what their type is. But if we know their type, I think that can help us then better understand how they see the world.

**Julie:** And it's how they see the world at a core level...

**Joy:** Yeah, because somebody who's highly integrated, it would be difficult to know what their type is because they would choose a behavior that's appropriate for the situation. So, if a situation calls for a certain action, they would be able to, again, pull from all nine types to know what interaction is going to be most appropriate.

**Julie:** Got it. So it's a starting point to understand how you get your needs met when you're not feeling integrated. Okay. Thanks. I'm just trying to make sure I understand.

So that's another question. You caution that it's hard to know what number Enneagram someone is, but can you, having done this for a while, can you fairly quickly suss that out?

**Joy:** I can usually narrow it down to, like, two or three that I think it might be. But again, you have to really ask anybody what their dominant... Like, I might think someone is between a Nine and a One, so I would have to ask them, "What do you want more than anything? Do you want perfection and rightness? Or do you want peace and harmony?" And that person might have to think about it for a minute before they even have the self-awareness to say, "Actually, if I had to choose..."

One of the examples I love to give is that the Two and the Nine are often mistyped. They're very similar. They're both people-pleasing. So the question I use to help someone try to determine if they're a Two or a Nine is: If you had to go on a dating site, would you be more worried about being rejected, or would you be more worried

about having to reject someone? And the Two is worried about being rejected, while the Nine is more worried about rejecting someone.

So, it's those kinds of ultimatums where it's like, "What is the thing that you feel more compelled to do or against?" And that can sometimes determine what your actual type is.

**Julie:** It says on your Instagram profile, which is @EnneagramClarity that you are a 5w4. So what does that mean?

**Joy:** So, I'm a Five Wing Four. The wings are another layer of the Enneagram. And they can only be the types on either side of you. So, they're not your second type or your second-leading type. They are, by definition, the types on either side. So for the Five, you can either be a Wing Four or a Wing Six. And your wings are the types that are very easily accessed by you. So again, if the goal is to be able to move around the Enneagram and access all nine types, the wings are an easy starting point because they're close to your type.

And many of us will have a more dominant wing, but it's possible to be balanced. So, a Five could have Balanced Wings Four and Six. But for me, I'm very strongly a Wing Four, which means I lean heavily on my creativity. I really need a creative outlet and I often find myself searching for meaning, and authenticity, and feeling disconnected if I don't feel like I'm having a meaningful interaction or in a meaningful relationship with someone. So that's why I define myself as a Five Wing Four.

**Julie:** So when people are looking, doing these tests, or reading through books, they should be keeping an eye on their wings as well as their number.

**Joy:** Yeah, and also their direction of integration and disintegration. Each type is connected to four other types. Two wings and two other types that are either their direction of growth and health or direction of stress and disintegration.

So for the Five, when the Five is in growth, they move toward the high side of the Eight. And that's why if you look at the Enneagram, there's all these different lines connecting the types together in that symbol you see. And the direction of stress for the Five is the low side of the Seven. So, I can assess myself. When I'm thriving and doing really well I feel confident, which is, again, the high side of the Eight. I feel empowered, in control... Not in a negative way because control is an illusion but... Just feeling, like, strong.

And then the Seven, you know, when I'm stressed I move to the low side of the Seven, and that can look like having a lot of tabs open on your computer, feeling really distracted, restless, dissatisfied, looking for something external for validation or pleasure to get out of those low feelings.

**Julie:** The Enneagram really draws you because it's got a spiritual component. Maybe you can talk a little bit about that and what that means for you.

**Joy:** Yeah, so for every type we have a narrative about our value, our worth, what we're supposed to be doing. And ultimately, to release or reduce our suffering, we need a lot of self-compassion and we also need to be able to question our either limiting beliefs or the thoughts that cause us suffering. So, it just kind of blows my mind that not everyone thinks the way I do, so when I feel like I need clarity - as a Five, that's my need - and then I encounter someone who really doesn't need that at all but they need connection, and I think, "Why did they need that? That's not something I think is a

priority,” then I can question the thought that I have that I need some, for example, clarity.

Do I really need that? Why do I need that? What would that do for me, and could I get that need met in a different way or with some other strategy that reduces my suffering? And can I find examples of places in my life where I actually don't need clarity to feel like I'm enough or to feel good about myself?

So the Enneagram helps us identify those blind spots, and then the spiritual growth comes when we're able to have great compassion for ourselves and then question our thoughts that cause us suffering.

**Julie:** Does the Enneagram get used in combination with things like cognitive behavioral therapy and the automatic thoughts activities that you do in CBT?

**Joy:** It can. I think it can. I haven't really... There are a couple of therapists that I follow on Instagram that I think use the Enneagram in that way, although I'm not totally certain. It's an interesting framework because it can be applied to so many things. Lots of people have applied it to leadership. I have a friend who even has applied it to clutter and organizing. She has a home organization business and she uses the Enneagram to help her clients understand their relationship with their clutter. So, there's a lot of different ways you can take it.

I do think it works very well alongside therapy and cognitive behavioral therapy. I'm also a Martha Beck life coach, and we use The Work of Byron Katie a lot. I'm not sure if you or your audience is familiar with The Work, but it has a lot to do with questioning your limiting beliefs. So, the Enneagram can actually point us to the thought. The first step in The Work is to identify the thought that causes us suffering.

So for example, for a Three, they might have the thought, "I need to win to be loved." And is that really true? And for other types, that is sort of a no-brainer, like, "No, of course I don't need to win to be loved." But for a Three, that can be an entrenched thought that's very difficult to get beyond. So the work by Byron Katie helps you to question the thought. The Enneagram helps you to identify the thought.

**Julie:** Oh, okay. That's so interesting! So, I want to back up a little bit. What made you go towards getting a degree in counseling and guidance?

**Joy:** Well, I live in a town with a big public university, so I had the opportunity to go back to school. And one of the things that I was interested in that they offered was this Master's in Counseling. And with that degree, I was able to get a job at this university, which has really been a great career path for me because I get to help students achieve their full potential, get connected to resources.

And I think my life calling has been helping people achieve their full potential. I think there's a lot of things in life that can prevent us from being our full, and authentic, and true selves, and I love helping people find ways to move beyond those barriers, whether it's financial, or trauma, or systemic oppression, or mental health. It gives me a lot of pleasure to help people remove the barriers that are preventing them from living a full life.

So, working at the university has been great. It's very inspiring to be around young people who have a lot of visions, and dreams, and aspirations, and energy. I feel like

they stay the same age and I just keep getting older. [laughs] So I definitely draw on their enthusiasm and enjoy that part.

And I think there's a bit of... We haven't talked about this, but our upbringing can interplay with our Enneagram types. So even though I'm a Five, I have a lot of Three ingrained in me. The way that I was raised was to prioritize education, to get good grades, to be the top of my class, to win, to be competitive. So, if you look at my résumé I have a lot of Three in me. So I think that's another level of the Enneagram that can be explored; our heritage, or our cultural upbringing, or our family values and how that manifests in our behaviors. So a lot of people think that I'm a Three. I think that's just more based on the way that I was rewarded in my upbringing.

**Julie:** So you got a certain need met in that way, but your core needs are really around being a Five.

**Joy:** Yep. Exactly.

**Julie:** Okay, got it. Now, it seems like Enneagram has had a real renaissance, I guess, maybe in the last ten years even, so what's driving that? What do you think that's about?

**Joy:** Well, I know it's been picked up by a lot of faith-based groups, so it could be that that's driving the popularity, but it could be something else too. I think it's kind of funny that the Enneagram is so popular on Instagram. I have a theory that the nine types play really well into the Instagram feed that is laid out in threes. There's something about threes and nines that we like, that feels comforting to us. I don't know if that could be backed up by science or anything, but the Enneagram is super popular on Instagram.

There's a lot of books that have been written lately about it. Like you said, it's definitely a renaissance, a resurgence of it, and I think being at home, sheltering at home or in quarantine these last 15 months, people have spent a lot of time online and these communities have grown. I think other communities have also grown online in the last year and a half, but the Enneagram's definitely one of them.

**Julie:** What are some of the misconceptions about the Enneagram that just drive you crazy?

**Joy:** Oh gosh. There are some common misperceptions. They don't necessarily drive me crazy, but I know the wings is something that folks struggle with understanding, by definition that the wings are only the types on either side. I think what maybe drives me crazy more than anything is the idea that we would identify our type and then that would be the end of our journey.

I see when people really feel like they've nailed down their type, it's like a security blanket. It feels good. It feels like, "For the first time in my life I'm finally seen, and understood, and valued, and somebody has been able to put words to my inner thoughts," and that is such a good feeling. So we kind of scroll through Instagram looking at all the... I might look at all the Five memes and posts and be like, "Oh my gosh, that's so me. I'm totally a Five!" And if we stop there, then we're really missing out on the full breadth and potential of the Enneagram because there's... I don't see a lot of people talking, at least on social media, about the spiritual growth that can happen when we integrate and our ability to see humanity in other types.

I think when we start to get entrenched in our type we have the temptation to view our type as better, or... I mean, a lot of people don't like their type when they read it. They're like, "Oh, this is the worst type." But to some degree, you know, just accepting "This is the way I am. This is how I see the world," isolates us from connecting with

other people and other types. So, I think the first step of that journey beyond entrenching ourselves is learning about other types so that we can better understand other people, and then trying to integrate all of those strengths and values into our own way of moving through the world.

**Julie:** Have you had a situation, either with a team or with a client, who's like, "That's not me," that just won't accept the results or won't buy into it?

**Joy:** Yeah, there are definitely people who don't like to have any labels put on them. That's the most common resistance that I've found. Most people who come to the Enneagram or seek my services are wanting to either change or become more self-aware, so it would be rare that someone would seek self-awareness and then reject information.

But I do know, like when I go to present to teams, where it's like someone's hired me and then told the team, like, "This person's going to come in and work with us," there are often folks who are like, "I don't put labels on myself," or "I don't believe in personality tests," or "nobody can put a label on me; I'm totally unique." So, some people are at that point. I think, again, beyond the label and the type, the most important part of the growth is building self-awareness.

So, I might not be able to nail down my type, but if I recognize that when I'm faced with a conflict I tend to raise my voice and other people think I'm yelling and I don't, that's really valuable information. That's information that we typically give or share with an Eight, or maybe this person's not an Eight or they don't want to have a label put on them, but they can still benefit from knowing how they are having an impact... an unintended impact.

And I think that's the key to our motivation for change is, "Where am I having an impact that is unintended?" Because if it's our intended impact to scare everyone and drive them away, then great, we don't need to change. But if our intended impact is to bring people together, and be respectful of each other, and build community, and then we don't realize that we're scaring people away by yelling and raising our voice, then we have a problem, and that can be addressed through the Enneagram.

**Julie:** It seems like there's a lot and it could be intimidating for someone who wants to get started. So, how would you recommend somebody gets started?

**Joy:** Yeah, when I started out researching... The books that were written in the '70s are very dense and highly academic, and they use very technical language, and it *is* very intimidating. When I first cracked those open I really did not... It was very difficult to understand all these different levels and everything. So, there are some great books out now that are much more accessible, user-friendly, reader-friendly.

I really like *The Honest Enneagram* by Sarajane Case. She takes a very compassionate approach. The Enneagram is a little bit like a brutally honest best friend. It can kind of sting. And the way she presents it is very gentle and, again, with a lot of compassion. So I like her book, *The Honest Enneagram* and I recommend that to anyone who has never heard of Enneagram.

And then I also like the book *The Conscious Enneagram* by Abi Robins. Abi has taken a different approach. They don't use the nine... A lot of authors, they have nine chapters and one chapter on each type. Abi doesn't do that. They have an appendix

with a lot of background information, and then they talk about how to use the Enneagram for transformation.

So if you want to learn more about the nine types, I would say pick up *The Honest Enneagram*, and if you want to take it to a new level of growth and transformation, then pick up Abi's book.

**Julie:** Awesome. Well, Joy, thank you so much for taking so much time. This has been super eye-opening for me. And it's been driving me crazy; I'm like, "What is Enneagram all about, really?" So, this has been super helpful. Thank you for joining me.

**Joy:** Thank you for having me. I can talk about the Enneagram all day if anybody ever wants to connect with me on a deeper level, the best place to start is on my Instagram. I have all kinds of links, and resources, and ways to connect with me directly and I would love to talk to anyone who's interested.

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You can find Joy on Instagram [@EnneagramClarity](#). I'll put a link to her socials in the show notes, of course, along with links to the books and websites she mentioned. Plus, I'll include a list of her favorite nonprofits and mine too. Huge thanks to Joy for sharing her passion with us.

Just a reminder that you can find this podcast on Instagram [@LoveWhatYouLovePod](#), on Twitter, [@WhatYouLovePod](#), and the website is [LoveWhatYouLovePod.com](#).

All of the transcripts for *Love What You Love* are available for everyone on the website. Thanks to Emily White, transcription magician and proprietress of The Wordary. If you need transcripts, reach out to her at [Emily@TheWordary.com](mailto:Emily@TheWordary.com). The music for *Love What You Love* is called "Inspiring Hope" by Pink-Sounds. A link to that artist is included in the show notes.

As always, thank you so, so much for listening. Let's hang out again soon.

### **Links:**

Find Joy on [Instagram](#) and [Clarity Collective](#)

### **Related Links:**

Byron Katie [TheWork.com](#)

[Enneagram Institute](#)

[The Honest Enneagram: Know Your Type, Own Your Challenges, Embrace Your Growth](#) by Sarajane Case

[The Conscious Enneagram: How to Move from Typology to Transformation](#) by Abi Robins

### **Joy's favorite nonprofits:**

[San Luis Obispo Food Bank](#)

[Transitions Mental Health](#)

## **My Favorite Nonprofits:**

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