Hello and welcome to the west meeting room, a new weekly show from Hart House student podcasting team. Today we are broadcasting live from the CIUT map room studios in her house, and we are grateful to live, work and study on Dish with One Spoon Territory. I'm Mica, and I'll be your host for today's episode. Today's episode features a conversation hosted by Hart House student podcasters Sabrina, Tony, and Sabahat they were joined by UT students Savy Aqeel Rebekah who share their thoughts on failure productivity and what it feels like to be a non traditional student.

Tony  1:04
Amazing. Thank you so much, everyone. And so I guess to get started, we were just talking about crying, and how healing that is. And so kind of in a similar nature, we're going to start off by talking about why things that we want to start talking more about as failures and how to normalize that experience because it's such a normal part of learning and growing as human beings. And so we'll start it off, like we'll just share, like something that we failed at and in a way that we're celebrating. So I guess you can think of it as kind of like an introductory rapid fire round. And with that, who would like to start?

Rebekah  1:48
I'll go next. Okay, so I, I was taking the introductory courses for international relations, because I thought that that was something that I really wanted to do. That's kind of the reason why I came to U of T too because I was like, Oh, I want CIR. And then was taking the econ courses and I realized this isn't really for me, I don't care enough about it to actually study it to seek help when I was actually struggling in it. And so when at the end of the first year, and I was looking at my grades, and I was looking at how I felt about my courses, and I decided, I was like, Look, I don't even care enough about econ. There's no point in like forcing myself to keep doing something I don't actually want to do. So I kind of rerouted myself and did history in Russian, which is something I was actually passionate about. So yeah, I don't know, I feel like it worked out and like it was a much more niche department. So I feel like I know a lot more people in my department now and it feels like more like home rather than doing something I definitely did not care about. So

thanks for sharing that, Rebekah. And I think it's nice to know that sometimes you have to just figure things out as you go and to really find the things that are meaningful and that you're passionate about. And I like that you talk about sense of home. That's really nice.

Savy  2:55
Yeah, I know. I'm like very hard on myself. Even when other people are telling you Oh, you know, you did a great job, it wasn't really a failure, but maybe we kind of it like blows up in our mind and we tend to ruminate over little things. That's what I do at least I like ruminate over something a little and think it was maybe bigger than it was. Yeah, and labeled as a failure would maybe other people wouldn't say it was a failure. But

Aqeel  3:23
I can actually relate to that a lot. Um, I guess my instance of failure is a bit more like every day. And this usually like when I'm like going through my to do list for things to do, like school related or just personal tasks. Usually, I find myself like, I've been making it a point to make more realistic task lists. But even when I haven't been able to meet all those tasks, you know, I just feel like that I am a failure and that I haven't really been able to like, live up to the standard that I sort of create for myself, but something I didn't really realizing something that I'm like coming to terms with now is that oftentimes when I do take my time to do Certain things you focus a bit more on do things a bit more purposefully, or even when I actually don't end up doing things that I intended to do, or things that I've written down. But I've realized that maybe I actually needed the rest that I took between the time that I was doing tasks or things like that. And making the point to be like, yeah, you know, it's okay, they didn't really actually do all those things. You know, my productivity doesn't have an impact on my self worth, is something that's really hard to do, especially when everything seems to be there, monetize and waiting grades, things like that. So it's really difficult, but I relate to that a lot. Because I think, you know, that everyday sense of failure can sort of accumulate and then at some point, you just realize that you haven't done X amount of things and then you look back and it's like, what do I do with my time and it's really easy to catastrophizing, for sure. I

Sabrina   4:49
think that's a really big thing, especially that point of like, grades or monetization, kind of like these values that are quantifying what we're doing and a big one that It's very hard to kind of put a value next to, but it's very important as health, both mentally and physically. As someone who tends to, you know, go, go Go and then I realized I haven't eaten at all at until it's like five o'clock. That's not something that you can put a price on until maybe it's too late. Or until you run yourself so thin that you're like falling asleep in class or like you slept through an exam or you're so hungry, you can't concentrate. And productivity isn't the most important metric. But if that's what you're measuring your success on, then running yourself on empty is counterproductive, you know, because then something important is going to come up and you're not going to be useful or able to come to task at all. So it's really important to remember kind of those other things that you might not readily assess the value to. So then you don't necessarily think that it's important or Oh, it can wait later, I can sleep less or I can eat later on or I can I don't need water right now. Those are things that catch up to you. And when your body says it's done, it's done.

And that's just something really important to remember. I think
you can fill from an empty cup

Sure, um, so this is actually just last week so we do recording session usually every Thursday and last week like I had a meeting in the morning where we were just learning editing and stuff and then so like you said, like running out of energy, just like working, working, working, forgetting to eat and stuff. I think it got to a point where with with wonder, when it came time for the recording session, I did not have the energy to come and so I was like, I can't make it and I did come and i still regret it. Like I feel like this is I really enjoyed this space. I find comfort in the space people. But I couldn't get myself to do it and I just see it as a failure, but I also So thing which is usually something that happens with failure is that in hindsight like when time passes by, you tend to realize that maybe that was important.

Yeah, thank you for sharing that. I think a lot of things that we're touching on is this idea that like, you know, you don't need to be quote unquote productive all the time like the human body it's like we have limited capacities and it's just something I've been reflecting a lot on because doing like a full time Proctor comb where it's like an expectation to do like 35 hours a week and I was like, Oh my god, the body is not mad to work the full 35 hours like it's just not like your body's just like

struggling practical, like it's so real. So real. They thought

Rebekah 7:50
a lot about how like, yeah, like to kill you were saying unproductivity is actually in itself, like very productive. You know, like, similar to what Sabrina was saying. Like, you need to like rock Stop and like, allow your body to not be under constant like stress and like, and and yet there's like all these societal messages or like, structures that remind us that, you know, we have to be productive in order to, like be seen as valuable. And yet so there's like, really, it's really interesting about how like being on clinical unproductive as a way to, like, you know, take care of taking care of ourselves is actually a really can be a really radical way of responding to those kinds of messages, right? Like it's very like, No, I'm going to choose to like take care of myself and not instruct myself then until I burn out. So yeah, I think that's like a really important point to bring up. And so thank you for all of you for like sharing those thoughts. And I think a natural transition could be that we can go into a question that Rebecca highlighted earlier and which we can talk about About when was a time you felt you didn't fit the traditional mold or the idea of the student path slashing since that's because I think it kind of touched on some of the things that we talked about during that rapid round her folks feeling about thoughts.
I think we're talking about when you don't feel like you're fitting the traditional mode. So I think for me,

Rebekah  9:20
Sabrina, can you also maybe talk about what is a traditional mode? I mean, that's something that we can talk about, like what is the traditional model of a student,

Sabrina   9:28
um, as someone who has worked in the tour guide, in the recruitment center and I tour for upcoming students, I can give you kind of like a Wikipedia definition of what a non traditional student is. And from there, we can kind of extrapolate, you know, a traditional student and a non traditional student for a post secondary interest, institutional standpoint as someone who didn't go to post secondary right after high school, someone who may have a family, someone who may work full time and bus goes to school part time. Yeah, someone who may be married someone who may be over, over 21 or over 25. You know, if you think of an older student or an adult student, those are kind of when we say the words non traditional students, that's kind of what what it embodies. And traditional student usually embodies. 17 through 19, coming to post secondary, you know, two months after graduating. This includes students who also take a gap year after graduating, coming in starting in first year, and going through their degree kind of that way. And a traditional student as well, which is a big pressure for a lot of people is a student who graduates in four years. And I'm going to do a little pause, and then I'm going to go into my story and then we can maybe come back to both defining and going to our stories, but I'm going to segue is I think, for me, feeling like I fit into the mold started when I realized that I might need to take a fifth year and when I might have to take you know, four and a half years. I came in thinking that I wanted to study French, Spanish, Spanish and then philosophy. But really I wanted to get into like a type three restricted program didn't get the marks to get into the type three restricted program. So I was stuck with philosophy, French and Spanish, failed second year Spanish because I really never learned how to study. So then I was stuck with philosophy and French. So now I'm trying to figure out you know, do I want to do a double major? Do I want to do two minors in a major and what would my new minor be? And in adding this new degree, kind of in my third year, realizing that I have to take another year and I kind of came into school thinking, you know, I'm only going to take my four years, I'm going to work through summer and then going to go to graduate school and I'm going to take the bar exam and that you know, like all these prescribed ideas, and that's not happening. And it felt weird for a while kind of thinking like I might have to take a fifth year especially because it's Some family pressures there that are kind of like you're going to graduate in two years, and you're gonna apply to law school, and this is what you're going to do. And it's like, yeah, that's what I said I was going to do when I was 16. But I'm 20 now, and maybe I want to do something different. And it's kind of feeling comfortable with that. And feeling as though this is another journey that's just as valid as the journey that I set myself on two years ago, and that I'm growing and evolving, and not as though I'm settling because I put myself on a path of failure, because I didn't try hard enough two years ago, or I was too lazy or as you know, so that's kind of my two part to that answer the definition from my experience of a traditional versus non traditional student and where I felt non traditional.
Yeah, thank you for sharing that Sabrina. And I think it's, it's like helpful to start to think about what is considered a traditional or non traditional student because I think it's also like, I like that you provided a very like objective sort of definitely And because it is important to think about that too, and the ways that we navigate academia. When I think about, like, the things that come to mind for me with this question is, I think a lot about how sometimes I'm like the not even just like the only person of color in my class, like, sometimes I'm the only actually like a lot of them, like the only queer person in my class and like, how it makes me feel sometimes. And it's weird, because it's not even just like, the physical presence of that to it can also be like sometimes feeling like this pressure, like, Oh, so you're the only person that can talk about clearness and being racialized, and we expect you to, like talk about those experiences. And this is something that I realized I was like, Oh my god, how can this happen? But also, it also made me feel like some so for me like that traditional mold is feeling like I may not necessarily belong in those spaces, and there's like reminders of guides. And that's what I think about what I think about like, Oh yeah, like I don't feel like a quote unquote traditional student because the way that the structures were built to have me in mind historically when they built them, like we have done a lot of changes in terms of inclusive it, but I think it's important to be mindful that like, there's a lot of historical impacts that still lingers on today, like, and I think that's really important to acknowledge. And so yeah, that's like I just kind of want to offer that sort of like other understanding of traditional students and feeling not like you might fit our for me like not feeling I fit in the mode, either. So

yeah, I can really relate to that. Like I identify as a black woman and especially studying in like the Slavic department, like, I've definitely experienced being like the only racialized person in a classroom and not being like the only queer woman of color in the classroom as well. So that's something that I'm always grappling with, especially like, when people question my ability to speak Russian or my ability to even learn Russian or ask me Oh, like yc direction like you don't look like you would be a kind of person who would want to do that. But it's something I'm passionate about. It's something that I feel like I'm relatively good at. So that's kind of what I wanted to continue doing. But the other thing that I thought about in terms of not being a traditional student in terms of being a student here at U of T is that a lot of people like to call it you have to have tears, like something that's a place that's really stressful, really sad all the time. And I don't necessarily feel that all the time. Like there are definitely moments when like, towards the end of the semester when I am stressed, but during the course of the school year, and maybe it's just because of the program and my the program that I'm in or the way I've choose, I've chosen to build my schedule, but I don't like to be stressed and I'm going to take all of the ways and make my schedule around a way that doesn't make me feel stressed. So even though I've taken a lot of courses and I give myself a heavy course load, I like to give myself breaks during like the day to hang out with my friends or play sports, that kind of thing. I had a girl messaged me on Instagram. She's like, Wow, it looks like you're actually enjoying you have to And I'm like, well, because I'm trying to like, I don't want to be sad here. for however many years I am like, I want to enjoy my time here and make the most out of my experience here and
make some really cool connections and meet some cool people. So if that means like, I don't know, even though I've lived off campus, like making more of an effort to be on campus, and like be involved in clubs or be involved with like, student life, then it makes me feel like feel better. Like I don't want to be sad So, and like, I know that there's some people who, like, genuinely have a hard time doing that. And maybe that's just my own personality. Like, I like to reach and grab those opportunities, but that's just something that's made me feel better. And I feel a little bit weird when people always tell me how stressed they are like, well, if I didn't get that paper done, it's not done. So I'm just gonna have to go to sleep now and because I would sleep over everything, so

Sabahat  16:48
yeah, so while we're talking about definition, the mic what's traditional for me, I think when I came here because I'm an international student. That's what kind of set me aside. I want to I think you don't realize it until you're in that space when most of the people are local people like they're from here. And having an international kind of even like small things like having a national passport like that, how difficult it makes for you to get the visa, like I was supposed to do, like I started semester later to what I was supposed to actually initially start, because I had my visa got laid. And it's just like these little things that you're struggling with. It's like, your energy goes into those things where other people don't really think about it.

And so in a way you're kind of

spending a lot of energy and doing the same kind of work like explicitly doing the same work that like let's say your class is doing, but you have all these pressures and then something like finances is also a issue because international and free is ridiculously high. And yeah, I mean, I'm lucky to be here. I'm privileged enough to be here, but not everyone can. And people who are on scholarships, like it's the whole bureaucracy and red tape of that is just ridiculous. I feel like someone in a one number position should not be expected to do all that by them by themselves, you know, they should be advisors or someone should like, walk them through the process. It should not be up to the student to figure that out. And that goes even for like someone struggling with mental health. You know, you're like, oh, if you want to leave, you have to go get this papers. I'm like, Yes, but if someone is struggling already, how do you expect to do that? You know, and so there's little things that you're expected to do with the whole process like bureaucracy form filling, which I feel like if most people are able to do it should not be expected of everyone. Because not everyone would have the energy or the capability to do that or just not be familiar with the process honestly. So yeah, I don't

Savy  19:08
know I feel like I have had traditional

undergrad and like I went straight from high school and I did undergrad in four years and then I did my masters and then I graduate from my masters. So
yeah, so I got a very traditional

Unknown Speaker  19:27
review big

Savy  19:28
journey but but I can definitely relate to just kind of feeling that pressure with stress and feeling like you need to kind of keep up like an undergrad, I would always maybe study too much and stay up too late and put self care bit on the back burner but sounds like in my like, sounds like you are figuring it out, like in your undergrad, which is great. Yeah, and then in my master's, have more focus on self care, which was really great and still kind of felt that pressure to study and kind of get perfect grades and I don't know, I just always felt that pressure but I feel like it's the pressure that I put on myself and then also from peers and from professors but just trying to focus more on self care and yoga and seeing friends and doing different activities on campus and trying to get more involved. I was part of the black public health student collective at dilana which was great and I was also in my year I was the only woman of color in my program dilana so like definitely feeling that as well like feeling kind of out of place but also having having that safe space with everyone Adele Anna to share stories and meet new people. So yeah,

Tony  20:54
Thanks for sharing.

Aqeel  20:56
I'm so for the traditional student for me. Good question. I mean, like, I feel the I feel like we kind of touched on it already. But the idea that a student should always be stress what they do in their spare time is just like, shop online between lectures and just complain about like celebrity gossip and turn out papers, study for tests, do a hobby and like that's it from, for me, I found it really difficult to attend classes and go to lectures. Because I felt that like, we could have been doing so much more with the authority that we do have in university so for me, it just, it was really troublesome to have to just write about things when one I was also not only this, but when I was only in the China like process stuff that I was directly involved in. So like being the object of study of also trying to study is really difficult. Some people don't, sometimes academia structured in a way that is meant to exclude people and, and that sounds like, I find it really difficult to just be able to write down things and just like, you know, essays and papers, when we could have been like, for example, like organizing or things like that. I feel like for academia, there's only so much you can do to sort of write, like process things, right things sort of like bad ideas around and critique them, when that's only really like half the battle. I think that knowledge is important, but it's only realized when you meet it with action. So being able to just solely focus on like doing these mental exercises of writing and like turning out papers and setting for tasks and that grind. I find it really difficult, like for me, I think was really important to sort of like remind myself that I was not just a student at an institution, but just in general, a student of knowledge and that knowledge extends beyond the institution, but also just kind of like beyond the classes that I'm doing, into just trying to learn about the world like on my own terms. So in that sense, I
felt like I sort of deviated from that traditional mold of student where they were just sort of like, okay, with just passing through the sort of structures that are already in place when I feel like there's a lot more work that has to be done to make them more accommodating to people that would like to think outside of those structures.

Sabrina  23:16
I think your point on writing is really important too, because in the discussion of, you know, traditional versus non traditional, the way that we are assessed, and the way that we learn, kind of create some creates a mold of a traditional student as well. Not everyone's writing is their strong suit. And sitting in a room listening to someone talk at you is not the best way to learn for everyone or most people. And it's kind of unfortunate that it's not until third or fourth year that you get into a more intimate kind of relationship with your professors and with your peers to where it's more relational. I remember in first year I did a ones program and the classes are a lot smaller and I went to those classes so much more than my larger lectures because I just had a higher relationship with my peers and with my professors, and they would ask me, you know, why aren't you here? If I didn't go to class, so it's like, oh, other people notice if I'm gone, you know, whereas my lecture 500 no one, no one cares. I mean, I'd someone cares. But no one's chasing after me, you know. And it was nice to kind of walk into a class of 17 plus my professor after you not going for a week and having pulled me aside and say, Hey, something, something going on. And I think that's another big thing you're talking about to being the subject of a lecture also learning about things and an institution that can acknowledge colonial pressures to kind of hide certain histories of racialized people or of queer people or what have you, and then prides itself on you know, uncovering these histories and we're going to learn about them and like all the things that happened to First Nations peoples or to black people, or to gay people, or what have you, but then not realize that the narrative that you're proliferating also means that racialized students are called students in your class, this might be the first time that they're hearing stories that relate to them on more than just a textbook level. And it might be, you know, they might be using this to realize, you know, this is why my mom acts like this or this is why someone acts like that and it becomes a more real lesson. And then you have to sit there write a 2500 words paper on like, you know, the Stonewall Riots or the Trail of Tears or whatever, and you're, like crying thinking of your grandmother. And there's, there's not a lot of support for that. And there's not a lot of room to, to kind of work through that because the institutions are made for people whose histories are told and who kind of have confronted and understand where they come from, and aren't necessarily ashamed of it and also made for the people who wrote the history in the first place. So it puts them in a good light. So I think those are really good insights.

Sabahat  25:49
Yeah, so I'm just continuing like so speaking about being like, feeling I've played in classes. I think one thing that I would just like to mention is that it is as high It is I feel like it's kind of a sign that you're probably thinking more and you're probably more like, I don't want to use the word smart. But you know, just like engaging more with the material that people who are just like passive because so I remember my one of my undergrad Professor saying to us that you know,
in a class if you're not uncomfortable, you're not learning, you know, and because with learning all these things about how structures were have systems of oppressions, where you're, you're making sense of, Oh, my mom or my grandma was part of this oppression and just like historically making sense of it, but it's so personal to you. And I feel like that discomfort should not like it's unfortunate that it has to be there. Man, I also see value in that because if You are uncomfortable, you're learning things. You're, you're learning how to navigate the systems, how the systems work, and I think you're more likely to think about it in a very contextualize way, then someone who cannot relate to the history and just, it's just there to like kind of produce the paper. So I feel like there's value in that.

Unknown Speaker  27:49
Oh, let's get us where we're going, what's on target and CIUT what's going on 89.5 and again, to an unknown calendar, Toronto, Ontario.

Rebekah  28:02
I think sometimes when we think about academia, like it's, and we touched on it, how there's like definitely like this one way of doing things, one way of learning, one way of gaining and producing knowledge, without recognizing that there's so many ways, there's so many learning styles, but there's also so many knowledge is produced outside of academia, that is just as valuable, if not even more valuable, that we don't even have access to or it's often like cut off and I think a lot about how I think sometimes even this pressure of feeling like you need to, like get to like learn knowledge in a certain way can be a very making and when you're not able to do it, it can feel like we're placing the onus on the individual. And yeah, I like that we talk a lot about like the different structures are play like the different systems because it's true, like I think they're those are very much It informs the ways that we're able to like access knowledge and gain knowledge and share that knowledge. And while recognizing like the larger forces that play, we do talk a lot about personal agency. So like, how do we like navigate these structures because structures don't change over time, unfortunately. And so, I was thinking for their next transition, we can do like a really quick, rapid fire round because, you know, I kind of heard some folks talk about, like, you know, self care, like things that we do to, you know, not just survive, but also thrive as well. Like things you do to like, take care of yourself, your body, your soul, your mind.

I play on my colleges intramural volleyball team. That's something I was super passionate about volleyball all throughout middle in high school, I've played for like eight or nine years and that's when I'm not playing volleyball is like when I'm sad. Actually, when I'm playing volleyball and my best self, I'm feeling the best about myself. So, yeah, this we won our championship for semesters. It's like this past year. And I was like, really, I felt really proud of that team because it was a new team and we a lot of new players and the fact that we were able to like put in the work and like see actual results and like see people improve over the course of the season was really cool. And I think that was like, not super common in new colleges of intramural history or for volleyball at least. So that also felt really good to be a part of that team that made that happen. And it just gives me a break in between like studying all day to like, actually not be
sitting at my computer and like actively doing something. So going to drop in volleyball at the ACA or the gold ring is like the highlight of my day because I get to leave the library and actually, like, run around and do stuff and sweat even though I hate sweating, but like, I don't know, like volleyball is where it's at. So I try to get as many people involved in like internal sports because I think it's a really good way to release tension and all So need a lot of new people like I feel more part of new colleges community for it. So that's that's really nice.

And it makes you happy. It makes me so happy like I'm happy. You know that's really lovely. Thanks for sharing.

Sabrina 31:15
Following the thread of athleticism.

varsity cheerleading has been I didn't do it in first year because my joints and my wallet and I was Saturday for it and I wasn't as active. So that's kind of what keeps me going. It's kind of like that small class that I had in first year having a team of people and as a team sport, having a team of people that really rely on you things can't really go forward. If someone's missing. It's nice when people check in on you when you're not around and it's nice to kind of work as a group towards a goal. Aside from that, I think just I've been for rain more into sustainability and kind of a zero waste lifestyle and a minimalist lifestyle and like Taro and energies and things like that and kind of connecting with spirituality. And also connecting with the earth I find a lot of the technological and industrial advances that we've had, that are slowly killing the earth are also negatively affecting us like physiologically just as human beings. So in trying to give back to the earth and be nicer to end you know, and produce less waste, I've also been flooring and you know, cleaner eating and cleaner habits and doing less of things that are also self destructive for me either mentally or to my eyes or sitting too long things like that. So that's been really nice, because I feel like I'm taking care of something else. Because it can be hard to take care of yourself. But indirectly, I'm taking care of myself.

Aqeel 32:42
and trying to like recall the things that I do. I guess for me, this is more seasonal, but I really like garden so I spend most of the year just waiting for gardening season just waiting for you know, it's not the best in Canada but like, it's something that I do really enjoy, like being able to connect with the earth but also Literally seeing the fruits of your labor makes you really happy. In addition to that, like getting into fitness is something that was like really was really important for me, like just being able to go for walks between like, classes in a way sort of became fitness because fitness is not just going to the gym and lifting weights, it's just being able to take time to do things at your own pace, and enjoy it. As long as it gets your heartbeat like up. I think that's something that's like more fitness oriented to something like that. Being close to my family, I think was something that was really important to me, like they really do ground me. In addition
to that this is more of like a spiritual practice, but I really do, because I'm Muslim, I do pray. And that's something that, you know, I find extremely healing and being able to actually connect with more people that do that on campus was something that was very gratifying. I never really actually grew up around people that make it a point to like, hey, just, you know, gotta go to the side and like pray or something. So, it was Nice to be able to like be affirmed that it's okay to be able to, you know, just take a few seconds and pray. It's hard to do that at school though. Because, you know, school isn't really both, for example, like being able to take breaks like that, but it is something that's like very, very healing for me.

Sabahat 34:16
Yeah, I feel bad. I feel like so I identify as Muslim as well. And I think praying is something that has become like a softer thing. I should prob like, I should probably do it more often than I do it now. But I think religion holds a very important place in my life. And I think it gives me a lot of peace in times of chaos, which is literally every day. So something for survival. I think something that I've been recently like I've learned to do, which was really hard is that when you're at a very low point, it's really hard to reach out to people and ask for how but I have been I've been able to do that lately. And I just I'm just really proud of myself for doing that. But I think yeah, that's like a survival thing for me. And something that I took up like a month ago was I've always wanted to learn how to swim, but I never got the chance. So I enrolled in a class and now I have a class every week and it's amazing. I am. That one hour is like, amazing. So yeah, just doing different things.

Sabrina 35:27
Can I resort sidebar? Do you all know about the fifth floor and Robarts? So there's a prayer and meditation room on the fifth floor. There's yoga mats, there's prayer mats, pillows, yoga blocks, it's super awesome, serene, if you can, like make it up there.

Sabahat 35:44
Okay. Yeah. And there's also a multi faith center in Colorado. So yeah.

Rebekah 35:50
Amazing. Thank you for sharing all those lovely tips. Oh, okay. I guess I'll quickly share one. So one thing I've been doing is I've been going to a Sexy dance class. So it's actually a particular it's taught by a lovely instructor who identifies as queer trans as a person of color. And it's like, dance class that's meant for just queer trans people of color and it feels so nice. Like, I know just to have a space where other people share your, like, identities and lived experiences. And also for me, like find your sexy is like, you know, when we're dancing and, you know, yes, it's about feeling sexy, but it's also feeling more at home in your body, which is something that I've been thinking a lot about, and the ways that I need to feel at home is like being able to reclaim you know, parts of me that you know, that I've been taught to feel ashamed of, and actually now it's like, nice to celebrate those parts where I'm like, yeah, I'm gonna celebrate my fatness, like Rick weirdness and like reclaiming that has been like really healing for me. And to do that, and just share that story. with other people who, you know, yeah, so like, we are different and a lot
of ways, but we're also like, you know, we do share a lot of like similar experiences and we're able to like kind of grow and heal together and like celebrate each other. And I think that's pretty rad. So yeah. Great. And did you want to share something looks like it looks like you to we would love to hear you.

Mica  37:26
I was just curious. I have been thinking because, you know, you've talked a lot about dance and as a place of healing and returning to your body. And I've been thinking about that a lot, because I feel I feel pretty disembodied at times. So I wondered if you would have a piece of advice for someone like me to like, like, what's a place to start to sort of like get to know my body again?

Rebekah  37:53
Oh, my God. That's such an amazing question. I think giving yourself time to figure things out, because I know for me, I didn't start dancing till, like three years ago, but it was always something that was really interesting doing. And part of it is like cultivating that self love. And that looks so different for everybody. And I think for me, it was like intentionally taking the time to spend it with myself. And whether that's like, kind of really like, really looking at, okay, what are the needs that I have? And those can change. I think in a lot of ways when we do self reflections, they definitely like can fluctuate and change over time. And that's absolutely okay. Because I think there's something really meaningful about reflecting on how what you thought you needed or who you are, like a year ago can change so much today. And like, I think there's some meaning like some really meaningful insights that can be gained from that. I think for me, I just found dancing to be something that was such a Powerful outlet for me because it was something that Yeah, like, I think a lot of complexities around feeling like my body wasn't quite my own. And a lot of that was like I've internalized a lot of things growing up and, and then me like being able to express those frustrations and like, as I think part of reclaiming your body, it's like not, it's not like this. Definitely, it is a beautiful journey. But there's also a lot of moments that don't feel beautiful. And I think it's important to take, like, hold space for that. I think that was really important for me was to be really honest about the ways that I haven't felt like what are the reasons that made me feel like I needed to reclaim my body. And that can be really hard. And I think it's important to and not just like, and that's not something you have to do on your own. I think part of it for me, I've been really lucky to Like a community, friends who kind of like helped me along the road to do more of that healing work. And so this is a great segue into our next question. So thank you rated, cuz I know we just talked about self care. And something that we also want to focus on is not just about things that we can do for ourselves, but also ways that we can practice community care. So going beyond just the South because it can feel very like a lot of pressure to feel like you have to take care of yourself all the time. What are ways that we can reach out to our communities, and why is this important? And that's the hard question because I it's like, why does Community Care look like?

Sabahat  40:46
I think, I think for me, I think it's important I see it as important because when you are dealing with it yourself and isolation, I mean, it could very well work for you. But I think there's a different kind of comfort to be in a support group and to hear people talk about their experiences, right. And it's literally what we're doing right now. So I think community care for me is sharing experiences being there for each other. And being there again, does not mean that you have to provide advice, or you have to provide a solution. Being there can literally look like you're sitting with them, listening to them, what they have to say, and sometimes honestly, just asking what they want, because people don't really know what they want, they just don't know how to ask. And so that's what community care looks like to have a system where if you're feeling isolated, you know, you can go to this particular group, you know, and just talk about it. And yeah, have like regular meetups basically not so that you don't go to that place of isolation.

Rebekah 41:54
You kind of like mentioned before, a conversation about being like a social person and like being an isolation can be really hard to I feel that totally and I find that happens a lot during the school year, especially when you're like trying to crank out papers or you're trying to do readings. And a lot of the times I would end up doing it by myself, but then I would spend so many hours by myself during the day either just like looking at my computer or with I don't know, books and stuff like that, that I felt like I wasn't, I wasn't getting enough out of my day, like I would just go home and like spend an entire day not talking to anyone, because I'm just reading all day or writing all day. And so I made a point to reach out to my friends, especially during the school year, because a lot of them had mentioned to me that they felt the same way. Like I spent a lot of time in the library just by myself. And it's like, well, if we're both studying the minus will study together, like why do this in isolation. And even if you have to take breaks and it might take a little bit longer to get that reading done. You feel less alone doing that or less alone doing that work. So yeah, I try to reach out to my friends more during the school year, especially during times of stress, like peak stress during midterms season and stuff like that, just to make sure that hey, I know you're probably going through this too and I'm going through this, let's go through this together. So we're not alone in doing this because that doesn't feel good.

Aqeel 43:06
I think what's really interesting about how we navigate University is this idea that the real world sort of exists, there's school and then there's like, you go move on to the real world, when in fact, like, the real world is very much in touch with school. Like, for example, when you look at, like worker conditions, or like, why people are organizing and labor unions, like, you know, capitalism sort of like alienates workers and in a sense, the University alienates its students, and, you know, with that, it's like, when you atomized like, people into like, just individuals, it's really difficult for them to, you know, Foster, like, collective action and take care of each other, which I think is like really important, and I really grappled with this question, I think this year, I just finished my term with my term with the Muslims in association as an executive. And the work that we do there is, to me like absolutely crucial, you know, just given not only the rise of Islamophobia, but more like more subtle forms of it or just, and being able to create room for each other to just kind of look after ourselves to sort of reconnect with, you know, with our faith.
reconnected, people of knowledge was really important to me, because, you know, you can go through the motions and when people have, you know, identity crises, faith crises, it's really difficult, like we were saying earlier, it's a struggle, you know, by yourself. And in that sense, when, you know, an institution like the university fails to cater to the individual. Their responsibility unfortunately falls on the students stuff to create their community for each other. And I think what was absolutely amazing was just watching us, organized for around the mental health crisis. Like that was something that you know, All our this is going to sound very, like liberal platitudes. But across all our differences, we are able to, you know, reach a consensus around the fact that there really was a crisis on campus and the university really had to grapple with the students voice as essentially became a voice to be reckoned with, where, you know, we were able to organize among ourselves, we were able to pass your admin by disrupting by calling to the attention of media, which really kind of threw off the do the math in the sense that like, perhaps, you know, perhaps EFT is not just only known for their research, they actually known for creating, we lead to mental conditions for their students. So things like that, like community care, in a sense, is, is essential. And I think you can kind of find that in clubs, you can kind of find that in just your so your peer to peer networks, your interpersonal relationships, your family, like things that move beyond like, just the ordinary, isolating activities like we were kind of talking about earlier.

Sabrina 45:56
Yeah, I think it's interesting how you're talking about the ice Relating experience and also, you know, leaving baggage at UFC if you have baggage at UFC, but I kind of wanted to challenge that notion because I feel like a large portion of why the systems work, the way that they do is because the students are transient. And despite the fact that we're the ones paying for a product were probably some of the least permanent aspects of this entire institution. So it's really easy for those who create policies and who create systems and who get paid to kind of change infrastructure and architecture and renovate things and change course Roman selection in ways that are counterproductive and counter intuitive to student needs. Because we really aren't here that long to do much. And while we're here, we're working. We're studying or forging relationships, we can't spend all of our time of fighting administration. But some of the people who are best equipped at fighting administration, our alumni are people who have worked through it are people who have graduated are people who, you know, they protesting may not directly they don't fear that they're protesting will directly affect their marks or their standing or whatnot and they have the capital to back it up. You've t raised What was it? over 3 billion and their boundless campaign and a lot of that came from donors and alumni. So when donors and alumni, especially alumni, you've had that experience, turn around, and they say, why am I funding you? You know, it took me six years to graduate. Not that that's a problem. But what is the problem is it took me six years to graduate because I never met adequate mental health services. Or when I was struggling this in this structural issue, this part of the paperwork, messed me up or I didn't get my degree because of that, why would I give you $200 or $2,000? So I think that's kind of a way of creating community as well is not leaving your baggage at the door. And that's not to say, you know, don't move on from it, like move on from it live your best life, you know, forget about u of t, you know, leave your baggage at the door and forget about
youth team when UFT comes a knockin and they want you know, a $20,000 endowment because you became the next second VP of, I don't know, Google or whatever, turn around and say, why would I? I forgot about you. And I want to forget about you, and why would I help you out? You didn't help me out. And I think that's a big part of community that that's difficult for university students and students, even in high school is if you think about dress codes or sexist practices and things like that is that the individuals who are permanent in, in, in these institutions are not necessarily the individuals who these institutions are meant to serve. And those who are meant to be served our transition, and it's hard to hold a foot loaded have a foothold. If every year you have a new cast of characters and a lot of your your greatest advocates have graduated and then you need to bring all the first years up to speed and by the time they understand what's going on there and third year and you're graduating and you know,

Rebekah  48:54
no, I just relate so hard.

Really, yeah, thank you for bringing that up something that was like, really, really important, so far are closing where it's not really a rapid fire, but it's basically a nice question to end on. So after just like, you know, sharing holding space together and being able to like listen to all the different wisdom that's been shared, and also the wisdom that you shared with all of us. Now, think back to your younger self, whether that's the person that was making that transition from high school to first year, or for us, Avi and I like either thinking about that transition right before grad school, or just like any transition in your life where you're thinking about your younger self and some things that you might say to that person, knowing all the things and all the experiences that you've gained now, what are your What is your older self now going to say to your younger self?

Sabahat  49:57
The only thing I would say to my younger self is it's not your fault. And that applies to a lot of things. I feel like my childhood was surrounded by guilt and me blaming myself for every single thing that was happening. And it's only just recently that I've decided that okay, no, like other other factors involved in the situation also, yeah, I would just say, girl, it's not your fault. Yeah.

Rebekah  50:24
I think I would tell myself, it's okay. like not to have a plan.

If you told me five years ago that I would be sitting in Toronto, because I'm from the States, I would like why, like, why would I be there? Wait, how did I end up there? And there's a lot of different things that you can't foresee and a lot of variables that like happen that you can't predict how things will turn out. So I'm very interested to see what 25 year old Rebecca will be doing because it's definitely going to be something that I can't predict right now. What that will look like. And I'm working on new job right now. And every day we have like a plan like a schedule of things that are supposed to happen, but every day, something doesn't go according to Plan and something is happening. And you just have to kind of figure it out on the spot and
you can't predict that, like a kid's going to go missing or you know, you can't predict that the
buses are going to show up late, but you just have to like, take it as it comes and like make your
best outcome out of that. And so, I think that that's been a really valuable lesson I've learned,
especially these past couple of months, because I'm like, the type of person who likes to plan
and then like to know, what I'm getting into and what kind of options are available for me. But
going forward, even looking at graduate school, I don't want to limit myself because I don't even
know what things I'll be interested in in like a year and a half or so something like that. Or even
like what kind of options or people I will meet that will influence the way or influence where I
might want to go. So I don't know I'm just open to like as many opportunities as many
possibilities as possible. And I don't think that 16 or 18 year old Rebecca even really understood
that.

Aqeel  51:50
Um, advice that I would give to my younger self would probably be to trust in incremental
change the idea of moderation. I know for me, something that I have, I've always had like really
bad like perfectionist tendencies. And with that came like a really a very, like negative internal
monologue. So I'd always be like really hard on myself for not, you know, like living up to the
goals that I had, when I was younger and also taking, you know, whatever knowledge I did have
being able to put it at service to people around me. Something that I always send, like kind of
grappled with was the idea of like, a revolution I'd have the term for at the time, but now I sort of
have it now, the idea that, you know, at one point in time, change is going to happen for the
people that deserve it. But in some cases, it definitely does work like that. In other cases, it's
small moments that eventually galvanized into change and postponing my ideas revolution not
abandoning them was something that I probably should have told myself when I was younger
because I always thought, you know, if you just worked hard enough, things would change and
things will be better. But and again, we're it kind of relates to the idea that everything is your
responsibility and you have to achieve it on your own. But like being able to remind myself that I
do need more people to be involved there. If we do want change for the better and like being
able to teach myself that change happens and increments and like, being able to, for example,
challenge negative self talk, it takes learning to really appreciate things that you are good at, so
that you could eventually use the good that you experienced by treating yourself well to create
good for other people, you know, in the long term or even like in in smaller like effort. So it's I
would teach myself that like incremental change is really important and that things may not
come as, as fast or as quick as you may like. But it doesn't mean that it's not possible.

Savy  54:04
Something I would tell my younger self, probably in first year would be to really just try and
enjoy the process a little bit more. And don't be so focused on where I need to be, or what I
need to be doing. Just be more present and just try to enjoy the moment I definitely had a lot of
imposter phenomenon, right? Yeah, I felt like, Oh, I need to be studying so much. And I just, I
spent so much time studying and didn't enjoy, I think a lot of experiences where I could have. So
I learned that more. But yeah, I would definitely tell myself try to be more present and enjoy the
moment. And even now, like in my job, people will ask, well, like, what do you see yourself
doing? And I just think well, like, this is what I'm doing now. Like, I want to be present now and be grateful for what I have now. Right? So there's always so many places that you could be or possibilities and opportunities where you could work and where you could do grad school not but just, I'm grateful for where I am now. So I'm trying to focus on being more mindful, practicing, like gratitude, like making meaningful connections with other people community and trying to focus on how I'm feeling in the moment and not on is this what I want to do? Like, this is what I'm doing and I enjoy it.

Unknown Speaker 55:27
So

Unknown Speaker 55:29
Yeah, thanks for sharing.

Rebekah 55:31
Sharing that I love that so much being grateful for the moment and that's actually going to be something similar to what I would tell my younger self and something that I've been trying to remind myself is like, I think it can be really easy to get wrapped up in the uncertainty of the future. I think sometimes it can be really scary to think about things that I have literally no control over and cannot project and at the same time also just reminding myself of all the dreams. I used to have like I'm living those right now in this moment and thinking a lot about how, yeah, like I've always wanted to, you know, dream of being like trying to live in a different city, doing a Masters, continue to explore and find myself and also like, challenging myself like this whole podcasting gig. Like, there were a lot of dreams that I've had that have come true. And I think I'm just like, taking a moment to really appreciate that and just like remembering like, how much I used to dream of being where I am right now. And for me, like, I don't know, I think that's really beautiful. And I and like, of course, we can continue to dream of other things too. But just taking that moment to really be grateful

Mica 56:42
And be proud

Rebekah 56:44
To be proud of ourselves.

Mica 56:57
Thank you to Seby Aqueel and Rebekah for sharing their insight and wisdom with us and thank you to Tony, Sabrina and Sabahat for fostering the safe space for this meaningful conversation. And a special thanks to Carly Stasko, Braden Doane, and Day Milman for their help in producing today's episode. These conversations were recorded as part of the Peer Wisdom Talking Walls exhibit. The West Meeting Room is a production of Hart House Stories our intro and outro music was produced by Dan Driscoll. To find out more about our team and the Talking Walls exhibit. Please visit harthouse.ca and be sure to follow us on Instagram at Hart House.
stories. I'm Mica signing off as your host for today's broadcast of the West meeting room.
Thanks so much for listening and we'll see you next week.

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