WEBVTT

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jodi jenkins: Hello and welcome to the second I'm Doing Fine podcast. This is our second episode of Grand Valley State University's counseling center’s podcast. And we're so happy that you're listening in today.

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00:00:14.280 --> 00:00:23.940

jodi jenkins: Today, Alonda and I are going to be discussing finding community while at college, especially during that first semester of college when it can be extremely difficult.

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jodi jenkins: And first things first, though, we do want to introduce ourselves. My name is Jodi Jenkins and I'm a sophomore here at Grand Valley. I'm a peer educator for the Counseling Center and

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jodi jenkins: we talked a little bit more about what peer educators were, what we do, what that means to us in our first episode which you can find on our Facebook page and

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jodi jenkins: we're working on putting it on other platforms as well. So feel free to check that out. But, um, yeah. It's my first year as a peer educator and I'm working. I'm going to be doing this podcast with my coworker Alonda.

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Alonda Smith: Hi, I'm Alonda. I'm a junior here at Grand Valley. I'm also a

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Alonda Smith: first year peer educator and I study psychology and sociology. But today, Jodi and I wanted to talk about something I'm sure most college students are very familiar with, which is homesickness.

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Alonda Smith: I know for me personally, I was so excited about leaving my hometown and meeting new people and becoming more independent.

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Alonda Smith: And I would have never expected to feel as lonely as I did those first couple of weeks. It was just really hard on me and I had just never been thinking about it, but I had to quickly learn how to adapt.

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jodi jenkins: Yeah, definitely. I agree. Um, I was so excited to go into college, especially coming from a smaller town. I was so ready to leave, to get out, to meet new people who didn't know anything about me. But I think in all of that excitement I sort of forgot about

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jodi jenkins: The difficulties that it brings... so yeah

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Alonda Smith: Yeah, I can definitely relate to that. I think I just forgot how long it would take to build such meaningful friendships that I had back home.

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Alonda Smith: And I had to find opportunities to meet people who had my same interests and that was a lot harder than I thought it was going to be. And I remember feeling like I was such an outsider when I got here.

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jodi jenkins: Yeah, I kind of had a similar feeling. Um, what ways - like - I know you used the word outsider. What do you mean, like, specifically by that?

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Alonda Smith: Well, I was one of the very few black people in all of Niemeyer, let alone the freshman on my floor.

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Alonda Smith: And I also realized that I had to come out all over again to the new people that I would meet, so I will go to the LGBT Center sometimes to study or to eat my lunch and try to meet new people.

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00:02:33.870 --> 00:02:43.980

Alonda Smith: But even there, I felt left out a lot of the time. After going to one of the events they had, I realized that there was a club on campus, though, for people of color who were in the LGBT plus community.

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00:02:44.280 --> 00:02:52.740

Alonda Smith: So once I joined colors of pride that really helped me out with making more friends and getting myself to branch out especially during quarantine over the summer we kept having meetings just because

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Alonda Smith: we all became really close friends. And that was really nice to maintain that social network that I know a lot of people struggle to keep over that time.

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jodi jenkins: Yeah. That's really cool. Um, and talking about social...social networks, I know the first, like, few weeks of - like - your orientation week and even the first week of classes, while you move in here on campus

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jodi jenkins: you meet so many different people, but even during that time when you're meeting all these new people, you can still kind of feel like you're on the outside.

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jodi jenkins: I had an experience kind of similar to yours, Alonda.

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jodi jenkins: I also joined a group in the LGBT Center. It was called first year queer alliance - FQA - and it was the group that was just designed for

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jodi jenkins: Students that...where it was their first year on campus in the LGBT community, and I really enjoyed you being in that group because like I got to be an active part of the LGBT community, which was something I never really had a chance to do before, especially

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jodi jenkins: In my own high school. But yeah, I definitely agree that it just takes so much time to build and maintain strong friendships with people. They don't happen automatically, which is really hard, especially

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jodi jenkins: If, like, you're coming from a smaller area and you're almost forgotten how to make those new friendships and you don't quite have those to like lean on yet.

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Alonda Smith: Mm hmm. I agree that can really be so hard when you feel like you don't have people to turn to in such a difficult situation.

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Alonda Smith: And in those first few weeks, or even months, what is something that you did to combat those feelings or was there anything at all that helped you through that time.

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jodi jenkins: Yeah! Definitely getting more involved on campus was extremely helpful for me. So for example, I joined the running club here on campus, which

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jodi jenkins: I, which I love doing. And it was, it was fun because you didn't have to be a super fast runner, but it's how I met some of my best friends.

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jodi jenkins: In fact, I actually met my best friend there, who is now my roommate. So, um, I really enjoyed that last year. And so it’s something I still participate in this year as well.

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jodi jenkins: And let's see. Last year I also started working at the library here on campus.

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jodi jenkins: Which I remember I was, I was like, really nervous for my first shift because I had barely even gone into the library as a user yet alone, someone who is supposed to be helping other users at the library.

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jodi jenkins: But it definitely boosted my own confidence and I got the chance to meet other like older students here at Grand Valley, which was great.

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jodi jenkins: In terms of jobs here on campus. If you're trying to find a specific one, I know you can go to the Career Center, which is a great stepping stool for finding jobs.

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jodi jenkins: It's located in the Student Services Building and it just helps you explore different job opportunities and also opportunities like within your area of study or major as well.

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jodi jenkins: I guess for me, joining organizations, putting yourself out there, are probably my own personal best tips for overcoming that feeling of loneliness or homesickness.

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Alonda Smith: Mm hmm. I really like everything you just said, but I know a lot of people are just worried they won't have time to attend any events or even just your regular weekly club meetings.

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Alonda Smith: On campus. And I'm not sure what else they could do

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Alonda Smith: And then I realized I really liked going to the events on campus. And after I made a few friends here, it was kind of hard for me to motivate myself to go to the events on my own, even when they sounded interesting to me.

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Alonda Smith: I felt like it was just going to remind me how lonely I felt, but once I started, I couldn't stop. It ended up feeling so natural, and I made so many more friends. But like I said, I'm not sure if other people are like, aware of the flexibility that exists with all of these club meetings.

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jodi jenkins: Yeah, you definitely don't want to overextend yourself and that would only add to your stress, but

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jodi jenkins: Like you said about flexibility. I think lots of the groups and organizations on campus offer like flexible schedules in terms of like their meeting times or dates or their hours of commitment because they know that

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jodi jenkins: College students are busy. And so, I bet it's really nice that you can hopefully you're, you should be able to find a group that matches a time that you have available throughout the day.

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jodi jenkins: I think too, it's never a bad idea to like reach back out to an old friend or a family member or just someone in your life.

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jodi jenkins: Who you miss and check in with them and give them a phone call, because in college we're all told to be independent, but I don't think that doing any one of those things makes you less of an independent person.

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jodi jenkins: Um, yeah. So in terms of flexibility, going back to that, for me at least, it was really important for my mental state and for my social life to have one other thing in my life besides school and work.

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jodi jenkins: And I found too that like college operates on such a different time schedule than any other time of my life. So those days where I didn't have

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jodi jenkins: A lot of class hours or I had hours throughout the day where I was looking for something to do, being part of an organization was super helpful to me.

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Alonda Smith: I really like what you said about how wanting to find that community doesn't make you any less independent of a person.

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Alonda Smith: Because it really is, also, as you said, really important to be able to find those different interests and to be able to have something else, some kind of leisure time

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Alonda Smith: And one way I found more opportunities to branch out was student life night at the beginning of the year...and Grand Valley has so many different clubs that it was just really easy to walk through and become so interesting.

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jodi jenkins: Yeah, student life night was huge. I think... doesn't Grand Valley have like 400 plus clubs?

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Alonda Smith: That's what I've heard.

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Alonda Smith: I believe so.

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Alonda Smith: I just remember walking around and seeing so many things that I never heard of or even thought of, honestly

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Alonda Smith: And I got so excited. It's really nice to find new hobbies and it was perfect. Since I was struggling so much and feeling like I had nothing to do, and no one to hang out with. And I got to see all of these opportunities. Finally,

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jodi jenkins: Yeah, yeah. And with what you said about feeling like you're struggling. I think those feelings, they don't just happen to one or two people. I mean,

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jodi jenkins: Those feelings happened to a lot of first year students coming into college and trying to find a community.

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jodi jenkins: I think it's super normal. And in fact, when I told my own friends about the podcast that you and I were filming today.

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jodi jenkins: They were all like super quick to agree and to talk about times they felt the same thing.

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jodi jenkins: One of my best friends in fact that that her biggest worries about going to college, which was actually one of my biggest worries as well was never really being able to find like her group of people.

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jodi jenkins: Um, she actually told me recently that she considered not coming back to Grand Valley after her first semester. But then she decided to stick it out for a little bit longer. And I'm really glad she did.

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jodi jenkins: I know she also joined an organization here on campus to help that really helped her and helped her find a community and she joined a religious group here which Grande Valley offers a ton of various different religious groups and she met some of her good friends there. Yeah.

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Alonda Smith: I had a friend in a pretty similar situation.

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Alonda Smith: As you were saying how I was like also telling my friends about how we're going to film the podcast and a lot of them had different ideas about how they found community because I feel like it really is just a very common situation that we're talking about right now.

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Alonda Smith: But this particular friend that I wanted to discuss, she was really worried about finding a new passion because she had played a couple of sports in high school and was part of a lot of clubs and she just really wanted to find something new in college.

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00:10:26.730 --> 00:10:28.650

jodi jenkins: Did she find a new sport that she liked?

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Alonda Smith: She's actually really interested in the belly dance club of all things.

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Alonda Smith: She was never a dancer in high school, but she thought it looks so fun that her and a couple people just decided to go to the first meeting just to see what it was about. After she saw it at campus life night.

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Alonda Smith: And she ended up loving it. She did it a couple nights a week and practiced all the time, and she's actually the President now, which is really nice. She really liked how positive the group is and how supportive everyone was of each other. So just kept wanting to get more and more involved.

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jodi jenkins: That's so cool. Um, did she teach you any belly dance moves?

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Alonda Smith: Yeah, actually, last year, she got me and a couple of my friends to join the club last year and then this year she wanted me to audition for the main group and I made it. So now every single week we practice belly dance together.

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jodi jenkins: Oh, that's awesome. Yeah. One of my friends tried to convince me to join her club too. But it was the French club and I don't speak any French

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jodi jenkins: So,

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jodi jenkins: That really didn't work out.

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Alonda Smith: I mean yeah just sometimes it doesn't work out, unfortunately, sometimes, I don't know if you have ever done this, I would like to scroll through Laker link and try to see if there's any new clubs that I could be interested in

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00:11:38.520 --> 00:11:48.390

jodi jenkins: Yeah, yeah. If you go on to Laker link, you can see like a ton of different ones. Things that I didn't even know existed, but, um, it's really cool too, because you can

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jodi jenkins: If you just click on like one of the organizations listed there. It gives you an email and contact info and so that's super helpful. Mm hmm.

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Alonda Smith: I also really liked the Office of Student Life. They approve and organize all the events on campus. So when you go on their website they have lots of information about various ways to get involved. It's so helpful but

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Alonda Smith: Besides participating in clubs. There's also a lot of areas on campus, you can go to to meet new people and just make it even simpler when you want to find people in the same community as you

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00:12:17.520 --> 00:12:27.420

Alonda Smith: I know, earlier we talked about how we like to go the LGBT Center in Kirkhoff and there's always information about different events they have in the center. But, you know, there's definitely more. There's also the Women's Center.

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00:12:28.650 --> 00:12:41.730

jodi jenkins: Yeah, I've never actually been into the Women's Center. Like, I know that it's in kirkhoff and I walked through Kirkhoff quite a lot, but I've never gone in there. I've never like studied in there. And I've always wanted to

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00:12:42.900 --> 00:12:45.630

Alonda Smith: I actually study in there all the time. I find it really relaxing.

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Alonda Smith: I also really liked going to their feminist film Friday's that they had freshman year, and I would try to convince some of the girls on my floor to come with me. They had a lot of different events, but that one in particular I remember just being really fun.

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00:12:57.840 --> 00:13:05.910

jodi jenkins: Yeah, I, I saw that advertised quite a lot last year, the feminist film Fridays and I really did always want to go. They seemed very fun.

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jodi jenkins: But in addition to the Women's Center. I think you were earlier telling me about how you've also participated in the Office of Multicultural Affairs.

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Alonda Smith: Yeah, right. There's also the Office of Multicultural Affairs, which gives students of color space where they can celebrate and express their culture and participate in heritage celebrations and take advantage of the different programs that they have. It's really nice.

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jodi jenkins: So what kind of like, more specific programs, do they offer.

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Alonda Smith: Just to name a few, off the top of my head. There's the black male scholars, and there's the Native Student Success Program, Laker Familia, Asian student achievement program. There's lots of different ones. But i’d be here just all day

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jodi jenkins: Yeah okay cuz I knew that they have lots of different programming, but also something that I know that they do for sure is they host what's called conversations of color.

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jodi jenkins: Which are just open conversations between students that go here about like race, cultural identity, and what's going on in our world today and like social justice.

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Alonda Smith: Yeah, I really like those. I actually just recently participated in one over election week because I'm sure you can imagine how stressful that time was

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Alonda Smith: So it was really nice to get together and just try to process all of it.

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00:14:19.080 --> 00:14:29.280

jodi jenkins: Yeah, for sure. I know that the Counseling Center in general was also hosting student open discussions during election week just because it was an extremely stressful week

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jodi jenkins: And it had like specific election process groups which are really nice. Um, but the center actually does lots of groups, kind of like that like that same discussion type style.

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00:14:41.430 --> 00:14:42.300

jodi jenkins: Which is really cool.

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00:14:42.870 --> 00:14:51.810

Alonda Smith: Yeah, I really love how the UCC so many different groups. I know we talked about that a lot in our last podcast but like just to discuss a few again.

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Alonda Smith: There's a circle of support for survivors of sexual assault and there's adult child of alcoholics and there's one for veterans. There's just so many different ones.

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jodi jenkins: Yeah, I know there's one on body image, which I think is really cool and it falls into our category of skill building group, right, which

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jodi jenkins: I know that the UCC has a ton of so like those skill building group therapies offer students that have more specific coping strategies where the hardships up I might be facing

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Alonda Smith: Yeah, there's also one called How to Worry Well, which gives a lot of information about self help exercises for issues like anxiety or stress or depression but you know there's many it's especially helpful for a time like this.

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jodi jenkins: Yeah, yes, obviously.

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jodi jenkins: Yeah. And I mean, group therapy.

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jodi jenkins: Can sound kind of daunting at first, just because like

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00:15:42.240 --> 00:15:48.240

jodi jenkins: You're not entirely sure if you want to go into a group of people you've never really met and started talking about your problems, but

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00:15:49.200 --> 00:15:56.220

jodi jenkins: It's not, it's not exactly like that and it can not only can it benefit someone in the same way that individual therapy could

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jodi jenkins: But also the Counseling Center here at Grand Valley just has so many types of group therapy available that the chances are you will be able to find a group that you feel comfortable with and that's best for you. If you choose to attend one here at Grand Valley.

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00:16:12.240 --> 00:16:23.580

Alonda Smith: You know they've definitely put in a lot of time and effort in trying to perfect that but I also find it really beneficial because there's no limit to the amount of sessions that someone can attend and I know there's, you know, the limits for the other ones, but this just

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00:16:24.630 --> 00:16:26.700

jodi jenkins: So that you can just keep going. As much as you might need.

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00:16:27.750 --> 00:16:30.900

jodi jenkins: Right yeah I also think that's super helpful.

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00:16:32.550 --> 00:16:43.890

jodi jenkins: And I mean, from both of our experience like working with the counseling center here. We know that we'd love to offer our services in terms of like

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00:16:44.370 --> 00:16:55.200

jodi jenkins: Individual therapy if that's what's best for you or group therapy to anyone in need of a community like how we were discussing earlier or anyone just in need of counseling here at Grand Valley.

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Alonda Smith: Yeah. We want to let anyone struggling with loneliness or homesickness right now to know that Grand Valley has many different resources to help

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00:17:01.770 --> 00:17:08.610

Alonda Smith: We have a large variety of services that helped Jodi and I find community when we needed it most. We would love if our services are able to help you as well.

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00:17:09.570 --> 00:17:15.210

jodi jenkins: Yeah. And I mean, we’d also love if even something as small as listening to this podcast helped you.

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00:17:15.630 --> 00:17:26.340

jodi jenkins: Alonda and I really enjoyed writing it and putting it together. So we just want to thank you for listening and tuning in to what we have to say about communities here on campus. Thank you so much.