“Even though the people I am talking to are in distress, I just love hearing their story and trying to imagine myself in their shoes.”
- James Bolton, Psychiatrist

Dr. James Bolton works with people in their darkest moments. And when he sits with the people who are struggling, what does he see? He sees a human being that he can relate to. He sees an opportunity to help. He sees hope for the individual, even if they can’t see it themselves.

Dr. Bolton talks about the complexity of mental health. How many are scared or worried about what others would think about them if they admitted they need mental health help. How many people are unsure of what mental illness looks like. That there is a lack of awareness of what mental illness might look like, of when someone should access care, of where someone could access care. Dr. Bolton shares that we may not always know how a person finds themselves in the place of being mentally unwell. In fact, there are often a complex set of life experiences and genetics that lead an individual to a point of mental health struggle or crisis. These are sometimes chronic concerns and many times outside of someone’s control.

Dr. Bolton recognizes the importance and benefit of human connection. He is passionate about human beings and their stories. He sees beyond the problem they present with and he embraces the entire human that sits before him. If someone we know or love is struggling, what can we do? Many times we feel like we do not know what to do or say to make it better, and that can make it hard to check in with others. But what if we enter in a different way- what if we don’t try to say ‘the perfect thing’ or ‘try to fix it?’ Dr. Bolton shares what he thinks is important: you can listen. You can converse. You can connect. And you can be there for others, just where they’re at.

Do you know the story of the people you work with? Do you share who you are with others.

In this short animation, Bréné Brown talks to us about the difference between empathy and sympathy, and helps us understand that empathy allows us to truly and deeply connect with others.
Do you find it hard to sit with people in their pain? How would you work towards doing this?

Sometimes life is hard. And emotions can be powerful. This animation reminds us that we do not need to make it better; but rather witness it and help someone know they are not alone as they struggle.

Dr. Vivek Murthy has a powerful book where he shares with us that human connection may be the most powerful medicine we can take.

Are you or someone you know struggling with mental health during COVID? Check out this fantastic resource.

You can also search for local supports at mb.211.com by clicking on the ‘mental health and addiction’ tab.