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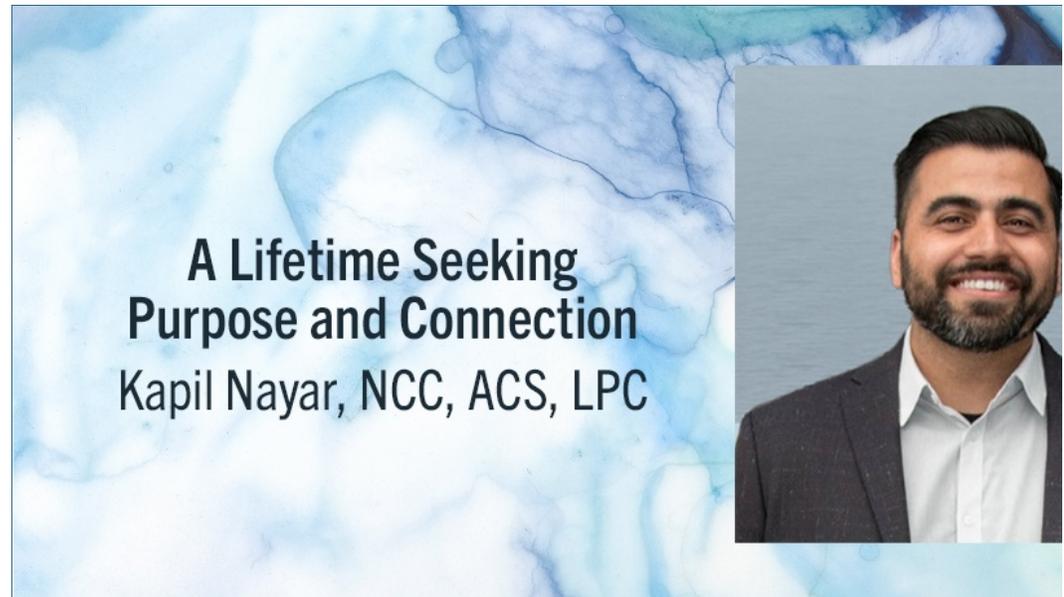
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SPOTLIGHT: A Lifetime Seeking Purpose and Connection

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Kapil Nayar, NCC, ACS, LPC, believes every conversation can lead to an opportunity to learn, grow why he surrounds himself with the top professionals in the field of mental and physical wellness.

Throughout Nayar's career, he has sought answers, clarification, and enlightenment through the support of his colleagues and mentors. He notes that they have "always given me the opportunity and support to dive into an area I'm interested in." And that support started very early in his life.

"From a very young age I felt like I was imprinted to be a doctor," says Nayar. Both of his parents wanted him to be a doctor, but it was his own determination and curiosity that propelled him in school. His parents were pleased when he was accepted to Temple University, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where he studied biology, health care management, and psychology with a goal of pursuing a career in psychiatry, like his mother.

"At Temple University, I just loved learning," says Nayar. "I feel like biology is one of those subjects that I'm finding that it parallels really well with psychology." However, in his final year at Temple, Nayar applied to several medical schools but was not accepted. Frustrated and disappointed, but also undeterred, he decided to pursue a different path and entered an offshore medical school, St. Matthew's School of Medicine, in the Cayman Islands, Caribbean, where he studied biochemistry, anatomy, pharmacology, and similar courses. This had a clarifying effect for Nayar that while he was interested in the brain, he was also very much interested in the human mind. He made the decision to leave medical school to pursue counseling psychology.

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Nayar was accepted to La Salle University, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where he earned a master's degree in counseling psychology, while simultaneously completing a master's certificate in psychopharmacology from the Neuroscience Education Institute in Carlsbad, California. It was during this time he began exploring certifications in hypnotherapy and mindfulness.

Much of Nayar's current practice centers around mindfulness and psychopharmacology, but he incorporates various healing modalities throughout his sessions. With a majority of Nayar's clientele seeking help with addiction, the complexity of each case draws him. "I think the thing I'm most fascinated with about addiction is that the answer," he says. "So that goes back to the concept of constantly learning and trying to figure out what works."

His early interest in addiction counseling was nurtured by a mentor, George Koren, who fueled Nayar's passion for the field. "I'm fascinated with the psychological and the neurochemical aspects," says Nayar. "When you see someone with an addiction meet sparks a whirlwind of mental health issues. While medications are important, it may become a conversation point with their physician."

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Nayar believes just as important as seeking out knowledge is the experience of sharing that knowledge with others. In addition to counseling in a private practice, Nayar dedicates time to teaching in collegiate settings. He has taught at Valley Forge Military Academy and College, in Wayne, Pennsylvania, as well as Rutgers University-Camden, in Camden, New Jersey. Today, Nayar lives in Arizona and teaches courses in ethics, neurobiology, and psychopharmacology at the Grand Canyon University in Phoenix.

"Clients approached me feeling completely disgruntled with their life process. They were flourishing then picked up a drug, and then felt their life collapsed," he says. "The intent behind this lecture was to provide a road map so they can see they aren't alone in their journey and to give them hope and show they have traveled this road—feeling connected to others who have struggled in addiction."

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Nayar continues to consult with doctors in all fields of wellness in a harm reduction support group. This group is comprised of patients, psychiatrists, harm reductionists, addictionologists, medical doctors, and nurses. "Being able to have these supportive dialogues, hear their insights, and get in depth with it is so fascinating, and it's an educational experience that just keeps going. And I feel that at my core, I'm a learner."

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Nayar experienced a steep learning curve in transitioning his practice to telehealth. "What's thrown me throughout this transition has been the disruption of rapport," he says. "I've had to work with nearly every client and help each other to recognize that while we are seeing each other, there is some distortion in this vacant space that telehealth programs like Zoom unintentionally create."

Nayar offers multiple approaches, including recorded mindfulness exercises. One of those was recorded for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* (<https://www.inquirer.com/health/wellness/breathing-exercises-coronavirus-co-20200507.html>). "Many clients like to do my recorded sessions right before they go to bed," he says. "It's a quiet and comfortable time of their day, helping them get into that restful state, so that they can ease into their day."

As Nayar practices his own daily mindfulness exercises, he's had much to reflect on with the current state of the world and the civil unrest fueled by the murder of George Floyd and systemic racism. Nayar says, "Over the years, I've reflected over advice from my own mentors. They taught me 'if not me, who?' That pushes me to keep learning and sharing that perspective with clients helps."

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While disheartened, he understands the vital role he plays in his clients' lives and in society as a wife determined to be a better ally and advocate for social justice. "Counselors are the glue for a large part that press on and fight the good fight. Maintaining that mindset and relaying it to our clients reinforces their destiny, all the while being present at every misstep or hurdle that comes their way. I think that composite wellness and connectedness."

It's a trying time for all of us, but that's why the counseling profession is so important. Continuous contact with people from different backgrounds have helped Nayar learn about all aspects of life. It helps to clarify meaning and to see shared purpose and connectedness. "Part of the beauty of this profession," he says, "is to deliver this in session, when the moments come, pay that forward. In the wise words of Dr. Anthony Robbins, 'It's the time to care selflessly about one another.'"

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