Adebisi Adebowale:

It's important to take care of others, but we can only give what we have. If we don't take care of ourselves, school nurses, teachers, parents alike, if we ourselves are not in good health, we cannot pour out into others.

Narrator:

Join us for the Virtual NASN 2020 Annual Conference. Starting on Monday, June 29th through Friday, July 3rd, 2020. We are hosting a panel discussion this year on the impact of technology on school aged students and families called It's a Balancing Act: Technology and Today's Youth. Panelists for the session include Filmmaker, Director and Physician Dr. Delaney Ruston, School Nurse Expert, Jamy Gaynor, Millennial Life Coach Upliftologist ™ and international Speaker Adebisi Adebowale, and moderated by National Speaker and Consultant, John Krieger. Sign up today for Virtual NASN 2020 via www.NASN.org.

Donna Mazyck:

Welcome to the NASN school nurse chat podcast. This is Donna Mazyck, Executive Director for the National Association of School Nurses.

Jade Bland-Slaffey:

I'm Jade Bland-Slaffey, NASN's Nursing Education and Practice Specialist and Lead Nurse Conference Planner.

Donna Mazyck:

The focus of today's podcast is the topic of a virtual NASN 2020 annual conference session. That session is called It's a Balancing Act: Technology and Today's Youth. Our guest today is one of the panelists. She's Adebisi Adebowale, and we are so excited that she's here today. Adebisi began her career as a business technology consultant. She later transformed her career and founded a company Upliftology. That company provides higher education and student transition coaching and consultation. To date, Adebisi has helped college bound students earn over $3 million in education scholarships. They've earned internships and full time employment with large companies. Welcome Adebisi Adebowale.

Adebisi Adebowale:

Hello, Donna. Thank you so much for having me for that wonderful introduction.

Donna Mazyck:

It's a pleasure to speak with you on this school nurse chat today.

Jade Bland-Slaffey:

Yes.

Adebisi Adebowale:

Thank you so much.

Jade Bland-Slaffey:

Don and I have been really excited and looking forward to our chat with you today, especially given the current situation that we're all experiencing and living in today, as you know. We're all working so differently, more virtual technology usage today to virtual meetings, to connecting with family, you name it. Right? And so using technology more than ever before, we recognize that this actually could have the potential to become an issue for our students and families who could actually be possibly heavily or even overly consuming technology during this COVID-19 pandemic. So as a life coach Adebisi, what advice would you give school nurses who are connecting with these families or for those school nurses that are preparing for reconnection with families in the fall when schools reopened?

Adebisi Adebowale:

Like you said, this time is very difficult and very interesting for us all. What I love to point out is that probably for the first time where we're having a national, and even at this point a global crisis, this is the first time probably ever that parents and children alike are equally informed at the same time. What I mean by that is we all have access to technology at the same time. The same platforms that parents are on or the same platforms that children are on. The same accessibility to news that parents have as the same accessibility that their children have.

Adebisi Adebowale:

Unfortunately, it's causing a lot of children, a lot of students, to consume information that typically in years past has been filtered off and preserved for parents preserved for adults to understand and then, at their discretion out, they're choosing, to be able to decipher and to disseminate information that their children can handle and what they want their children's to know about the world, because we've protected our children for so long in these bubbles and in this protection of protecting their mind, but now they're being exposed to all these different things. And the reality of it is that when schools do get back up and running and we're having in person classes, we're going to see a shift in the way students have been interacting.

Adebisi Adebowale:

I'm speaking more so, of course, from the COVID-19 perspective, but even still before this crisis happened, we started to see the shift of technology usage and students being able to access things that usually have been only adult privied. Not necessarily X-rated content, but just anything in general, because now we have LinkedIn, we have Instagram, Facebook, there's Snapchat, there's TikTok. There's so many different platforms, and even just news outlets that students have access to that their parents once were only consuming and then choosing what information.

Adebisi Adebowale:

So school nurses are going to have an interesting shift and this upcoming fall in the years to come because now they're dealing with students aging quicker. Working as adults, thinking like adults, because now they have access to the same information that their parents have. And now they're trying to play the balancing act of, have they done enough? What should they be doing with themselves? What have they done to keep with the Joneses and their friends who have the latest sneakers and have the latest outfits and the latest gadgets? But they're comparing it based on social media, and social media, what I like to tell people, is only a snapshot. A reality. It's not the whole picture. So school nurses are going to have to deal with this comparison syndrome.

Donna Mazyck:

It's interesting Adebisi, you're referring to this shift in the way children and adolescents interact in this time in our world with technology and with other things going on, how do you believe this will impact the mental health and the mental wellness of students?

Adebisi Adebowale:

I think it's definitely going to have a negative impact on the mental health of students. Because like I stated earlier, we're seeing students age mentally, think about things that typically should not, or would not have been, accessed by a 13, 15, and then even in some cases, 17 year old, where they're not able to understand what's going on. Talk less of actually process it and digest and have to give solutions. But now that they have access to the world, literally in the palm of their hands through cell phones, they're reading all this information. And some kids are going to think that they're the cause of certain situations. They're going to think that they haven't done enough in their life and they're comparing themselves to adults who lived these full lives, who are showing them how to do it, but they're taking it as, I haven't done enough yet.

Adebisi Adebowale:

But the reality of it is that they haven't even had the chance to explore their lives yet. And they're looking at someone else's day 30 versus their day 1, or someone else's year five versus their year one. And that should not be the case because they haven't even had the chance to explore your life yet. And this is a time for exploration when you're a child. It's a time for opportunities. But unfortunately, when people are looking at social media, they're looking at a snapshot. They're looking at a 15 second reel. They're looking at 30 minutes of a day long journey that's been condensed for entertainment reasons and thinking that someone's real life. But that's not the case. So people with mental health, even adults alike, if they don't play a good balance, they're going to consume information that they should not consume and take on that burden for themselves.

Donna Mazyck:

I've read recently that adolescents are growing and younger children in anxiety and depression. And in fact, school leaders have often cited student mental health and wellness as topics that concern them. What are you hearing about mental health and wellness from the students you consult with and the students you coach?

Adebisi Adebowale:

In short, students are just overwhelmed. They're overwhelmed with life with academics. I don't like to bring up the COVID situation too much, but it's unfortunately a reality that has impacted everyone in every family somehow, some way. We see the students who have been impacted because of the shift in their education, going from in-person to online. And then not every student is ready or prepared to learn solely online. I'm hearing what the isolation I'm hearing about now. Parents not understanding the demands they have in school. While I was hearing that before, now it's different because now students as well as their parents are all home at the same time trying to get things done using up the bandwidth on the internet, trying to figure out who can do their work right now. They're being exposed to the livelihood of their parents that they may not have been exposed to before because they don't typically see their parents work during the day because they're in school. Right?

Adebisi Adebowale:

Now, they're working from home and they're studying from the students are studying from home. Everyone is under one roof trying to do their own respective activities. They're now seeing a different side of their family that they may not have been able to see before. Whereas, when we had our former normal, because we're not going to go back to that, even when we do go back to going outside. When we had our former normal, the students were overwhelmed. But now that the pressures of being an adult has come to the forefront, it's almost as if they're trying to play, who am I supposed to be right now? What role do I play right now? But the reality of it is that they're still supposed to be children. The unfortunate reality is that they have access to the same information as adults.

Jade Bland-Slaffey:

Adebisi, as school nurses, all this information is so important for us. We love working with our students, our families and our school communities. That's one of the joyous things about our job. However, we're always trying to seek new and innovative ways to engage students, to engage our families and our school communities. And especially, as you mentioned, with the mental health piece where some are thriving and others are lagging behind, we recognize that trying to reach families and engage them isn't always as clear cut or easy for us at times. That's for various reasons and circumstances, as you know. But we know that you're connecting with young people all the time. So can you give us or share with us, what are some of the challenges and opportunities you've encountered in working with the youth today that school nurses might find helpful to know as we're trying to reach out and connect with these students, especially during these times?

Adebisi Adebowale:

It's important for nurses and any adults of influence, like I like to call them, that's a parent's school nurse, educator in the classroom, a principal, a vice principal, that people love community. People love to be wanted. They love to be heard. They love to be seen. They love to be acknowledged because everyone wants to belong. No one wants to be isolated. It's important for school nurses to understand what is the community that child belongs to. How do they think? How do they interact? How do they engage with information?

Adebisi Adebowale:

Every child, like you stated earlier, is different and it's on a case by case basis. And the one way that I always love to build a community is take the time it's for one-on-one connections. That one-on-one dialogue is so crucial. It's so important because the way I can divulge information to you at a given time, Jade, maybe different than I'm maybe able to divulge information to Ms. Donna. And you have to be able to build community based off of different strengths and capabilities and abilities. Not everybody is tasked to do the same thing. Not everybody's capable of doing the same thing. So it's important for students to see that you can hear them, that you can listen to them, that you can receive and understand the information that they're putting out and that you understand how to communicate with them.

Jade Bland-Slaffey:

Now, Adebisi, I just have one more question for you. Because you brought up a really interesting point of taking the time to make one-on-one connections. Our school nurses, they're able to do that, some of them. But then some of them say, you know what? I have so many students, how am I going to be able to connect with them one on one? If that isn't a possibility, what strategies would you give to those school nurses?

Adebisi Adebowale:

I believe that school nurses need to have a resource or packet or a go to area for them that they can point students to whether it's mental health, advocacy, and different organizations and groups that they can point students to, or even their peers. I think that there's something to be said about students being able to engage with one another, because there's some students who are strong at A, and then some students who are a strong at B. Where they're able to connect and interact with each other to, if you will, sharpen each other. That is a huge understanding. That's where mentorship and partnership comes into place. I think that it's something that hasn't been necessarily thought about around students being mentors towards one another. It's not necessarily big brother, little sister. It might be literally equal pairs. People who have gone through certain experiences or who have championed a certain type of mindset towards an activity, towards a result ,towards a process that can help their classmates understand how to get to the next level.

Donna Mazyck:

I was curious about the term you used, adults of influence. Whether they be parents, guardians, school staff, community workers, they all have a role in partnering with the school and with students to make sure that students are supported in mental wellness that they are doing okay. So tell us more about this community. When we're talking about, you mentioned, just having the mindset as an adult, working with young people, what is their community? What do they belong to? How do you foster that kind of mentorship and partnership? And even with peer helpers?

Adebisi Adebowale:

Students need to be able to see themselves in the people who are interacting with them. That's the underlying golden nugget, if you will. They need to be able to relate to whoever's giving them the information. If you see a student who's struggling through math, you keep earning C's, but you see that they're keep struggling, they keep struggling. They need help and they need a mentor. When they get a tutor who tells them I used to be exactly where you are, and then I decided that I need to spend more time studying math. I needed to spend more time studying these types of equations so I can master these problems. So this is what I've done. It's easier for that student to relate to that person who has that type of story versus someone who is just good at math and getting A's.

Donna Mazyck:

So you're actually taking them out of that, what do you call a snapshot. A hundred percent of people grapple with different ways of growing and living. And we grow in community, so that way it's not a beautifully placed social media link, but it's a, Hey, I've been there and I've been able to grow.

Adebisi Adebowale:

Absolutely. That's why the story is so important. That's why people's truths are so important. and often enough, often and more than not, you see parents, adults of influence,. I don't want to go through the whole list, but adults with influence who tried to hide their truth, who tried to hide how they messed up, who tried to hide the process that they went through to get to the success that they've gotten.

Adebisi Adebowale:

And what we see is that people see the results and they don't see the process. Unfortunately, people can't relate to the result because they see it as that is unattainable for them. They see it as high and mighty. They see as so far off, unfortunately, because the process hasn't been told. The process hasn't been shown. The story hasn't been shared. And that's why the story is so important. That's why the story is so resonating. When people can see themselves in that story, going through their journey, that they can see that their mentor, that their adult of influence went from A to Z in three years, and they're still at point B trying to figure out how to get to point C in the past two years. When that story is told, even if it takes them five years, they're able to connect with the one who told the story versus the one who's just sharing the results.

Narrator:

More than ever, students need encouragement to keep pushing forward. Not only in their education, but in life in general. That's why speaker and coach Adebisi Adebowale has authored uplifting words. 180 Days of Encouragement for Students. You can pre order your copy for your children or students right now at www.upliftology.co.

Jade Bland-Slaffey:

So Adebisi, based on what you shared with us today, you've definitely shared some golden nuggets that I think Don and I definitely will keep in mind. When we're thinking about technology and that it can have a negative impact on the mental health and youth of our behavior today, we also don't want to get lost in the fact that sometimes technology or healthy use of technology can be a good thing, too. There is some advantages to having technology in some forms. Otherwise, we would or could be potentially socially isolated from family and friends in some instances. So can you share with us, what are some technology strategies or ways that school nurses can encourage a healthy balance of technology with the students they encounter, the families, or even with their school communities?

Adebisi Adebowale:

It's a catch 22 to be quite honest, because now that technology is being used to teach students through all grade levels and through all disciplinary fields, it's important that parents be hands on as well. It's very important because students will be on their technical devices in school, even as we're getting ready to go back to the fall semester. I, honestly, foreseeing that what's happened in the past two months is going to shift what's going to happen going forward. I think that more technology will be incorporated, will be used, to create more hybrid educational platforms for students and parents. So I think it's going to be important, like I stated earlier, the parents be involved with how much technology their children are consuming.

Adebisi Adebowale:

First and foremost, understanding how much they will need to be using in their schools. Are they going to be on computers all day? Are they going to be using technology? How much is it going to be a lecture from the professor or the teacher in front of the classroom? Then having strategies on timing out the screens. What that means is that every three hours or two hours, the screen will black out causing students to get up, causing even parents and nurses themselves, because we all use technology somehow, some way, to get up.

Adebisi Adebowale:

As far as social media, because that's where the sticky part is, right? That's where it's a lot of time is wasted. That's where a lot of comparison comes into place. Spending no more than 30 minutes, an hour, a day on social media. And even that's a lot. It depends on what the student's needs are, but having a schedule to make sure that students and parents alike are not going over that limit.

Adebisi Adebowale:

And one thing that I would hope, and everyone's story is different, that this quarantine time has taught us is to spend time with our loved ones. To place that time that you're using on social media, that you're using to play video games, spend 30 minutes, an hour, two hours just catching up with your family, asking questions. How was your day what'd you do today? What did you learn today? What are you looking forward to doing tomorrow? Let's go for a walk. Let's go for a hike. Now that summer's coming along and many school activities and after school and summer programs are being canceled or postponed or augmented, let's use that time to actually build the family core, build the family relationships. This is the time to get to know one another, literally. So taking that to everyone's advantage.

Adebisi Adebowale:

But building a schedule that people can stick by. And I know that one thing that's happened is that, with all the time trying to figure out what's going on and how to build a online course for students, now's the time for students to actually figure out, okay, what do I want to be learning? And using that time to self-develop because not everything that's taught in school per se is going to be something that a student one wants to learn, or there's different skills that students have outside of school. So using that time to self-develop and making sure that you keep yourself to schedule is literally going to be the ultimate pinpoint feature where students can thrive in school. Nurses can help support their students, make sure that they're not consuming too much technology and too much information that has nothing to do with their mental wellbeing.

Jade Bland-Slaffey:

Yeah. No. I just had a quick follow-up question for you, Adebisi. You mentioned something really important, that parents need to be hands on. That is something that comes up pretty often sometimes with school nurses is that they may have a student on board or the school community on board per se, with the student, but maybe the parents not invested or unable to be involved or unable to be engaged. What kind of strategies do you use as a life coach and dealing with young people? How do you get them to be able to get their parents invested or involved?

Adebisi Adebowale:

Whatever topic you're talking about, you have to get the student excited. And that can be difficult depending on what kind of child you're dealing with. If they're on the quiet side, it goes back to one on one engagement. Depending on what I'm doing to serve my community, whether it's a workshop or a repetitive class workshop series that I'll be doing with the organizations that I partner with, I try to make sure that I take time for each student at least to understand how they receive information. There's some students who will be more vocal. There's some students will be more on the quiet side. Hopefully most parents know how their children are because every child can be different. So you have to know how to relate to each child.

Adebisi Adebowale:

When I see students who are more on the quiet side, who are less vocal about their questions, I make sure that I go up to them, that I interacted with them one on one to ask them, are they learning what I'm speaking about? Is there anything I can do to help them with that information? Is there anything that I can do to support them? But then also parents seeing what their children come back home with, and I know it's easier said than done because each parent has their own varying level of responsibilities at their job, how many children they have, their spouses. There are so many things to juggle. However, taking interest in what your children are interested in, seeing what they thrive in seeing what they respond well to, and then seeing what they don't respond well to.

Adebisi Adebowale:

I know that there's a big hype around people strengthening their weaknesses. And I don't necessarily agree with that. I agree more so on becoming the subject matter expert. Becoming the strong person who we go to for whatever skill set that child is strong in. Because when we try to make... I'm not saying that they should fail at anything, but when we try to make students great at every single thing, and they're not able to keep up, they feel incompetent. They feel like they haven't been able to achieve it.

Adebisi Adebowale:

This is where mastering learning comes into place. This is where I've taken the time to figure out why aren't you understanding the subject? What is it that we can do to help you get better at? How much more time do you need to get better at this subject or this skillset? Parents involvement is going to be key with that because educators, teachers, school nurses unfortunately only have them for a third of a day, five days a week. Whereas parents have them for two thirds of a day, seven days a week minimum. So that's where parents understanding their children and being involved comes into play because parents are the first leaders that their children see and witness.

Jade Bland-Slaffey:

Thanks, Adebisi. I appreciate that.

Donna Mazyck:

Adebisi, this has been fascinating and you've given us so much to consider and certainly have given us a taste that we'd want to really listen to your session when you're on the panel in the conference. One final thought: You've spoken a lot about building community at home, building community and schools, building community among peers. What do you see as one next step that school nurses can take to make what you're saying to that connection, you're talking about relational connection, what one step could school nurses take as they interact with their students?

Adebisi Adebowale:

Making sure that they're taking care of themselves. Self care is important. It's important to take care of others, but we can only give what we have. If we don't take care of ourselves, school nurses, teachers, parents alike, if we ourselves are not in good health, we cannot pour out into other people. I think it's important that school nurses are healthy, that they are taking care of themselves, that they're connecting with fellow school nurses outside of their schools and understanding what's thriving in their school and what's not thriving and what's failing and how they can change the narrative around that and support their students, but also support themselves.

Adebisi Adebowale:

They don't need to know everything, but they need to know who to go to if they need to know something, and who they can connect with. These school nurses themselves need to make sure that they have their own community of resources and tools that they can pinpoint to because it's impossible, it's unfair, to think that someone can know everything about everything. And that's why community is so important because we're able to build each other up. We're able to support each other. We're able to encourage one another. We're able to teach one another what we don't know. So school nurses need to make sure, at the forefront of everything, even before they take care of anybody else, their students, their own families, they need to make sure that they are taking of themselves and that they're able to serve from a place of fullness.

Donna Mazyck:

That's great, Adebisi. Wonderful. Well, to our listeners. If you'd like to hear more from Adebisi on this topic, you can join us for the Virtual NASN 2020 conference session on Wednesday, July 1st. And it's titled, It's a Balancing Act: Technology and Today's Youth. It'll be a panel discussion from 2:16 PM Eastern Daylight Time to 3:46 PM Eastern Daylight Time.

Donna Mazyck:

Adebisi, thank you so much for being our guest for this NASN School Nurse Chat Podcast. You've taught us a lot. You've left a lot of pearls, and we want to hear more. Thank you to all our listeners for joining us today.

Narrator:

Virtual NASN 2020 is right around the corner. Come and learn about the latest topics and trends that are impacting school nurses around the world. Earn up to 15 plus contact hours of continuing nursing education, CNE, credits highlighting our theme. A Seat at the Table: Winning Together for Student Health. School nurses are navigating unchartered territory with school re openings, more distance learning between students and schools, mental health considerations of students, families, and school communities heavily impacted by COVID-19. So let NASN help you prepare for the upcoming 2020-2021 school year with our conference learning. Save your virtual seat today! Register via www.nasn.org.