Episode Two

Thu, 5/20 11:15AM • 25:09

**SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

mental health, disaster, folks, community, people, populations, natural disasters, lindsay, impacts, extension, prepared, bit, resources, farm worker, crisis, hurricane, extension agents, area, valentina, florida

**Ricky Telg** 00:04

This is Science by the Slice, a podcast from the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Center for Public Issues Education. In this podcast, experts discuss the science of issues affecting our daily lives, reveal the motivations behind the decisions people make, and ultimately provide insight to solutions for our lives.

**Michaela Kandzer** 00:25

Hi, this is Michaela Kandzer, communication specialists at the PIE Center and the host for this series of Science by the Slice. We are back for part two of our series focused on rural mental health. And in this episode, you will hear a conversation between Valentina Castano graduate assistant with the PIE center and our guest Dr. Angie Lindsay. Keep listening to her Valentina tell us a little about Dr. Lindsay and how her work with Extension has led her to study and learn more about rural mental health.

**Valentina Castano** 00:53

Hi, everyone. I'm Valentina and thanks for listening to this episode of Science by the Slice. In just a few minutes, you'll hear my conversation with Dr. Angie Lindsay, and assistant professor in the Department of Family Youth and Community Sciences here at the University of Florida. I wanted to take a minute just to tell you a little more about Dr. Lindsay before we get started. As I said before, Dr. Lindsay is a faculty member in the family youth and community sciences department. She's also an affiliate faculty member of the PIE Center and his us point of contact for the Extension Disaster Education Network or EDEN for short. Dr. Lindsay's unique appointment means that she frequently works with communities that have been impacted by natural disasters. Her work with natural disasters actually started at the Jacksonville Zoo here in Florida, where she worked as a public relations agent. The director of the zoo was looking for someone to help with a crisis communication plan. And Dr. Lindsay had some experience in this area through undergraduate and graduate work. She helped develop this plan and became a part of the disaster team at the zoo. Later on, Dr. Lindsay returned to UF for her PhD. And this was around the same time as the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. her PhD research actually looked into how nonprofit organizations were able to communicate during this technological and complex disaster. These events drove her interest in disasters in crisis communication, and led to her current position at the University of Florida. I tell the story to give you an idea of Dr. Lindsay's career and disasters in crisis communication. And to show you what I mean when I say it seems as though she always tends to run towards the disasters instead of away from them.

**Angie Lindsey** 02:31

Thank you for having me today. My name is Angie Lindsay, and I'm a faculty member in the Department of Family, Youth and Community Science at the University of Florida. And I'm also an affiliated faculty member with the PIE Center. So I have a pretty unique physician at the University of Florida, and that that I work with disasters and then communities that have been impacted disaster. So I am the point of contact for the Eden network, which stands for Extension Disaster Education Network has a nationwide network of extension professionals throughout the nation that work together for disaster preparedness, mitigation and recovery. We share resources and best management practices throughout the year. And so I'm the point of contact for IFAS Extension. So a lot of my job is working with the extension folks throughout the state preparing for and mitigating and recovering from all different types of disasters.

**Valentina Castano** 03:24

Do you mind telling us a little bit about how you became involved with that? That's really interesting.

**Angie Lindsey** 03:28

Sure, it is actually pretty interesting. So before I came back to school for my PhD, I worked in the nonprofit industry. And then particularly I worked at the Jacksonville zoo in Jacksonville, Florida, and I was the public relations person. But as the public relations person, the director of the zoo came to me a couple at one point in time and said, Hey, we need somebody to help us with a crisis communication plan. We have a disaster plan for the zoo, but we really need somebody with a crisis communication plan. And this was something that I loved in school. I loved this area when I was getting my master's and my undergrad. And so I jumped on it. And so I really got interested in it and became part of the disaster team at the zoo. So when I came back for my PhD and started looking at what I want to do my research in was right around the time of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, which was 10 years ago, actually coming up in a couple of weeks. And so what I looked at is how nonprofit organizations were able to communicate during such a technical logical disaster and complex disaster such as this and so I became very interested in that crisis communication, especially during unique disasters like that. And so a couple of years later, after I took this position within the family, youth and community sciences, the extension Dean came to me and said, Hey, we really need someone to serve as the point of contact for EDEN. Is this something you may be interested in and I jumped Get the chance because it definitely took some of my passions of working with crisis communication, but also working with communities and being able to be within communities kind of boots on the ground and put them together.

**Valentina Castano** 05:11

It makes me laugh a little, because I feel like most people run in the opposite direction when we hear crisis communication or disasters or things like that. And it seems like no matter where you've ended up, if the word you know, crisis management or disaster was near, you kind of ran towards that. So I just think that's really interesting.

**Angie Lindsey** 05:26

Yeah, you're right. I mean, most people realized, wait, what you want to be involved in that. And and I think one of the things that I have really liked about my job is seeing how people tend to come together in times of crisis in times of disaster, and that coming together and really mitigating a crisis and mitigating a recovery. And that working together. I've seen it work so many times and the ability for people to come together. It's is really cool. But you're right. Sometimes I'm like, What have I gotten myself into?

**Valentina Castano** 05:59

I didn't realize that you're experiencing disaster and crisis management went back so far. So it seems to me, you know, we want to talk a little bit about mental health and May is Mental Health Awareness Month. And so he really wanted to talk about mental health as it relates to agriculture. And also, I know that you have so much experience in natural disaster management, those types of things, right, imagine that mental health preparedness and wellness is a big factor when you're talking about natural disasters. Do you want to talk a little bit more about that?

**Angie Lindsey** 06:28

Sure. And absolutely, and, and getting into this realm of looking at the mental health impacts from disasters is something that I kind of tripped into and I tripped into because I'm not a clinician, I don't have psychology or psychiatry background at all. I'm a communications person by trade. And so I I really did kind of trip into this. And just to give you a little background of how I got into this after Hurricane Irma, which we know devastated summit so much of our state. And I as being the point of contact for EDEN, a lot of the extension agents throughout the state would call me and and I would try to get resources to them, what are the needs, what are the gaps, we were just trying to work as quickly as we could to help folks help the people within their communities. And one of the things that I was getting requests for was mental health resources. And several of our extension agents were going to check on their farmers and their stakeholders and folks that they work with on, you know, daily basis, and they were hearing things like I just want to commit suicide. And our agents felt completely unequipped with how do I help somebody who says something like this to me, and it was heartbreaking. And luckily, I worked with a few doors down from Dr. Heidi Radanovich, who is a clinical psychologist and said, help, you gotta help me here. And so we basically, you know, tried to get resources out to folks as quickly as possible so that they could help folks within their community as well. Fast forward a little to the next year. And we had hurricane Michael, which was devastating to the Florida Panhandle. And again, we had those issues within our communities where we were trying to get those resources out to our agents. But we also had a situation where so much of our extension family was impacted. And so instead of providing those resources that they can also get out of the community, we reached out to them personally as well. These are things that y'all need to do, your home has been destroyed, it was really hard to see. And you've almost kind of felt helpless, a little bit of like, what can we do to help these folks, they are really, really struggling not only physically, but you could also hear it mentally. You know, I had one very good friend of mine, who she called me and she said, I don't even know how to put a claim in through FEMA, and I sat on the phone with her and I had my computer in front of me. So we're gonna do it right here together, you know, it was just trying to help them through some of that. And so definitely there was a need that the that the mental health impacts after natural disasters was something that was a need. And so when we started thinking about what can we do to help our extension agents, we started thinking about different programs and partnering with different organizations, because there's a lot of great resources already out there. And so we developed the disaster mental health workshops, which included the National Council of behavioral health, Mental Health First Aid program. And then Dr. Radunovich and I also did kind of a half day like individual family and community impacts after disaster. So looking at not only individual mental health, but also how does it impact the family and how does it impact community as well. And moving forward to kind of get back to your question, I feel like you know, we as Floridians, we know what to do in the time of the desert hurricane, we know what to do with the natural disaster. We know how to prepare, you know, most of us have at least have some supplies in the back of our pantry that we know you know, we're gonna save those In case there's a hurricane, but I think you also really need to plan for the mental health impacts as well. That was particularly so important last year when we were trying to prepare for hurricane season in the middle of a pandemic, you know, so I think trying to plan for the mental health impacts of disasters is just as important as trying to plan physically as well.

**Valentina Castano** 10:21

Absolutely, absolutely. Being a farm worker comes with its own set of challenges. And experiencing a natural disaster is inherently very difficult. I would imagine that working on a farm impacted by a natural disaster just adds another layer of difficulty to what a complex problem is already.

**Angie Lindsey** 10:37

Yeah, absolutely. And you're right, with the some of the farm worker population and some of our farming populations here within Florida. They're pretty resilient. You know, it's interesting, because after, after Irma, I reached back out to one of our agents, one of the ones that called me and said, I need some mental health resources. And I said, hey, we've got some stuff, you know, I've got some folks that are willing to come down and talk to people and and guess I, you know, farmers were pretty resilient. They just started working again, they're doing okay. And yeah, you hope that that bounce back does happen. But what if it doesn't for some, so I think it's important just to think that we do think that we're all pretty resilient. And we do hope that farm workers and agricultural workers overall are very resilient in times of crisis, but be prepared for when it's something that's very hard to overcome as well.

**Valentina Castano** 11:29

And I know that you've worked a lot with coastal populations as well, as well as farmworker populations and, you know, related to natural disasters or not, but are there any stories that kind of stick out to you, since you've worked with so many different people, you know, talking about the importance of mental health and kind of how that works? Is there anything that kind of comes to mind?

**Angie Lindsey** 11:47

you know, we, when we started doing the workshops, we did, um, we worked with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, as well as SART, which is the State Agricultural response team. And so they wanted us to go throughout the state and their different regions, and actually host some of these workshops. And it was mind opening for us the response that we got from these now, these were open to the public. Now, granted, we targeted the extension population and the farm population, agricultural industries, and each one of these areas. But we were shocked at the response that we received, you know, not only from those folks that are within the agricultural populations and extension agents within these areas, but people from all over we had some first responders that came in took it, we had some clergymen that came, but we just had folks that were more than willing to be there and wanted to learn the information.

**Valentina Castano** 12:46

Yeah, definitely. And I keep thinking about when you said, you know, US Floridians, we're so used to getting hurricanes, that we always keep extra cans in the back of our country, which is so true, you know, and, and so I think to myself, we're always, we always make sure that our houses are prepared, and things are ready. But do we ever really take the time to know that we're ready, you know, like, you're also an important factor in this whole equation. And that's something that I think not many people tink about.

**Angie Lindsey** 13:12

And I think, planning for your good mental health is just as important as planning for your physical health as well. And when I say that, I think about, you know, we talked about it last year, and looking at, again, the global pandemic, and with a hurricane season on top and one of the busiest hurricane seasons that we've ever had on history. And understanding what your queues are like, for instance, watch how much you're watching media, of course, we always are watching media, when it's time of a hurricane season and what storms are coming. But that constant information coming at you and some of the doom and gloom that we get sometimes from some of the stories that we read, either on social media or some of the things that we get off of TV, just be mindful of how that's impacting you personally, you know, are you noticing that your heart rate goes up as you read some of these things? Are you noticing that you're depressed after you listen to some of these things, just some of those, just notice how you're feeling as you look at this and take some time away from from the media and from the social media. I'm not saying it's not good, and especially in the recovery period, as well. You want to let your family and friends know that you're okay. But be mindful of how much the media is impacting you because that can impact your media, your mental health as well. And then also, like you said, you know, take time for you like because there's something that you enjoy that occupies your time. We were talking about folks evacuating, we were saying, you know, take something with you, do you like to crochet, do you like to knit? Is there something that you like to do with your hands, puzzles, things that kind of give you a brain break, so to speak a little bit to give you time away. And then there's lots of really good apps like the calm map and some of the mindfulness apps that are out there that are really easy to use, and it kind of walks you through some of these relaxation techniques that could possibly help times of when it's really crazy or when this times you really don't know what's going to happen.

**Valentina Castano** 15:06

So you mentioned briefly, I just want to go back to it COVID impact on mental health, you know, it's something that I think we're obviously going to be talking about for a long time. But is there anything that you've seen over the past year that you feel like COVID has added just this additional layer to all these issues, both in farmworker populations, coastal populations, just anything that you said?

**Angie Lindsey** 15:27

Particularly when we were talking, you know, hurricane preparedness last year, we were still kind of in the thick of COVID-19. We hadn't had a vaccine come out yet. And so one of the things that, you know, folks were talking about last year is people were saying, Well, I don't want to I don't want to go to a shelter if you know, like, what if I catch COVID. So it was the some of the fear of COVID was kind of overcoming some of our natural, not natural, but what we know as Floridians to do in the time of our hurricane, basically, it was interesting that I will say that one of the things that we found is that as far as preparedness in hurricanes, some folks were pretty much prepared, because they all stocked up for COVID. So like, they were like, I don't need hurricane supplies. I have COVID supplies. So we were hearing that from some folks as well. But you did hear a little bit, we did get some questions from some individuals regarding, well, what should I do if my area evacuated? You know, I don't, I don't want to go to a shelter. I'm, I'm scared about going to a shelter on. But in addition to kind of some of that fear and the you know, on top of a hurricane, I think from a mental health standpoint, I think it's just we saw a lot of folks that are just like, seriously. Is a global pandemic, not enough. We've got to have however many 30 named storms in one year, I think it was last year. SYou know, in the academic world, we talk about compound disasters and the cascading disasters. And I think just the overall large basket of both those types of disasters just weighs on folks, mentally as well. People were tired. We're still tired.

**Valentina Castano** 17:14

Right? Yeah, I definitely get that. I feel like when COVID started, it was like that. That was what everybody was talking about, because that was the big thing in the moment. But then life kind of just kept happening. And then we realized, Oh, we still have to deal with all these things that we normally deal with every year except there is COVID involved. Do you know, I'd like to talk a little bit about the workshop that you are going to help put together? What What is exact school about? I know you said it's for families mostly. So is that like with an intervention standpoint or protecting yourself more?

**Angie Lindsey** 17:48

it's still geared towards the same population, which again, that was extension and agricultural workers within again, general public is welcome as well. And, again, Dr. Radunovich is the expert here. I just follow on her coattails. But she is a clinical psychologist, so she gets a little bit more into whereas Mental Health First Aid actually kind of goes into some of the tools and tactics that individuals can use when they're when they're out working or talking with folks. She kind of talks about what some of those impacts may be and what some what some folks may see when they're talking with folks after a disaster. So she talks specifically about individuals, she actually talks a good bit about first responders as well. She gets into families and children and how some of these disasters impact children, she uses some case studies as well. And then my section is more of some of the things that I've seen in kind of from a mental health standpoint, and what communities have done after disasters to try to bring communities back together, as well as to help them through a crisis after the Deepwater Horizon oil spil we were still working on a lot of the areas of the panhandle. And you saw a lot of the the communities that we are working with start community gardens, and they started pottery classes, and they started Zoomba classes, community based programs or putting together these things for folks to come and go to kind of get away from what was going on, basically. So kinda, like you said, like, a mental health break a little bit.

**Valentina Castano** 19:23

Something that has come up a bit in a couple of these interviews that we've done related to mental health is that this sense of community is so important, right? We often feel like we're alone, you know, and after natural disasters or, you know, farm workers, that sense of community is so important to improving our own mental health, protecting our own mental health. And it seems like no matter what population we're talking about, when you when you get into improving our mental health or you know, doing our self maintenance, as we said, that sense of community is always there and it looks a little different every time But it's there. And knowing that we're not alone in your struggles, huge, huge, that's something that we've we've thought about a bit among farm worker populations who often struggle in silence, because it's not something that we talk about very often, and there's a bit of a stigma around it. And so yeah, knowing that your community is there for you, but knowing that you're also not the only one feeling that way, you know, it can be very uncomfortable.

**Angie Lindsey** 20:22

And I think that's very true with some of our extension folks that work so closely with some of these farm worker and agricultural populations, as it's making sure that they look for the signs of maybe depressed or lonely and, and getting them the help they need so that they do know that they're not alone. And this is not just them.

**Valentina Castano** 20:42

And so I want to give you a chance, again, we have touched on this a little bit, but I'll just bring it up one more time, if you want to talk about a little bit why mental health awareness and training is so important.

**Angie Lindsey** 20:53

You know, again, it's something that we kind of stumbled on as an organization, but we quickly learned very quickly that it was it was a gap. And it was a need, in even not only within the communities that have been impacted by the natural disasters, but by the folks that were trying to work within those communities. And so I think a lot of times that we get so focused sometimes on, you know, the physical, physical aspects of preparing and responding, that we forget about that mental health. And then it's not until we sit down later on that it kind of hits us, you know, that, Oh, my gosh, what did I just what, what did I just go through. So, I think it's so important for us to, to keep in mind that, you know, when we're preparing and when we're thinking about it to, to think about our own mental health and the things that we may need to do and plan for those things. It's okay to take a mental break, you know, to take and to plan for those things. Because I think in the long run, when everything kind of starts settling down, having those those tips and tools and trades that are things that you know, that you need to do is going to be really helpful for you to continue on to help others, and also help yourself and your family recover as well.

**Valentina Castano** 22:11

Definitely, and I just always think it's interesting. You mentioned earlier, that when you started making or being involved in some of these resources, and making those available to the public, the huge response that you received, right, and even though this is something that, like I said earlier, is a little bit stigmatized at times, and not many people talk about, it seems to be and I've heard this already several times from several different people, that when you do make these available, and someone says it first someone makes it available first, that it's like everyone comes flocking to it because there is such a gap

**Angie Lindsey** 22:41

It we were amazing. The people that were there that were like, no, my boss made me come and there was like six of them all from the same organization. And so yeah, I mean, they they said no, a boss made me come. And that was like, that's great. You know that that is awesome that your boss made you. I mean, you may not think a day and a half long training is a good thing. But it just made us feel good that other folks were really seeing the importance of this and, and the first responders and the folks that were working in the emergency operation center, were coming as well. And they said, you know, we're the ones that answer the phone like in sometimes we're the first person or like you said they just want somebody to talk to. And we don't know how to respond to some of this. So there was definitely a need out there. And there's a lot of great resources out there and just focused on look for some of the ones that are maybe even in their local communities as well, that they can reach out and get some training and some tips that that they can be better prepared as well.

**Michaela Kandzer** 23:40

Rural agricultural communities may have limited access to health and mental health care services, which can make it difficult for farm and ranch families to receive support when they are experiencing extreme stress, anxiety, depression, or another mental health crisis. If you or someone you know has an immediate mental health need, please contact one of these national hotlines, the farm aid hotline 1-800-327-6243 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-8255, or contact 211 a comprehensive hotline that connects callers with local resources. For more information and resources, please visit www.RuralHealthinfo.org. That concludes part two of our series on rural mental health. I want to sincerely thank Dr. Angie Lindsay for being a guest on this episode and for sharing her perspective with us. Don't forget to subscribe to Science by the Slice wherever you get your podcasts. You won't want to miss our next podcast series on the topic of hurricanes and natural disasters. I want to again thank everyone who worked so hard to make this podcast possible. Phillip Stokes, Rachel Raybon, Valentina Castano, Ricky Telg, Sydney Honeycutt, Ashley McLeod-Morin and Alena Poulin. I'm Michaela Kandzer. This is Science by the Slice. See you next time.