

Content Warning: Hi, there. Before we get started, I wanted to let you know that this episode gets into some sensitive conversations.

MEGHAN: If you or someone you know is struggling, or in need of assistance, we have some resources in our show notes. And, by the way, if you find that this is too heavy for you to carry today, just tune out. It's okay. I'll still be here next week.

Raise your hand if you've ever been called "crazy" ... or "hysterical" ... ooo, or what about... "nuts" ... "insane"... "out of your mind"... "completely irrational." Okay, you get the point. Now, if we were all in the same room and could see each other, I think it'd be pretty easy to see just how many of you out there have your hands up... by the way me too.

And it's no wonder, when you consider just how prevalent these labels are in our culture...

[ARCHIVAL WATERFALL]

I feel like you guys think we choose to be crazy, like it's an active choice

A girl is allowed to be crazy, as long as she is equally hot. Thus, if she is this crazy, she has to be this hot

I don't think that men can control crazy women

Carla I cannot hide the crazy a minute longer. I'm just this big mountain of cuckoo who's about to erupt and spew molten crazy all over and he's going to die like this

She doesn't shush you, that b*** is crazy. Lemme tell you why...

MEGHAN: The use of these labels has been drilled into us from movies and TV, from friends and family and even from random strangers. And the fact is, no one *wants* this label.

Jenny: Somehow I've known ever since I was little that, you know, to be called crazy, like th- that's like a big, big threat, you know.

MEGHAN: That's comedian and writer Jenny Slate. She's known for characters who are intentionally messy and complex. Women who don't have it all "figured out." They fail in public, and still, still they keep trying. She's been thinking lately about the usefulness of this word, "crazy" – oh, and its cousin, *hysterical*.

Jenny: Oftentimes you can feel, quote unquote, hysterical or crazy and not wonder or not stop to think like where that definition came in. You know, now I've started to be, you know, instead of being like, oh, god, I have PMS, and I feel crazy today and throwing that in there as if it, it doesn't have this, like, really brutal history behind it.

MEGHAN: Jenny raises a great point because I didn't know this and I learned this when we were doing this episode. The word, *hysterical*, it comes from *hystera* – which is, wait for it – the Greek word for **womb!** *Plato* himself was actually amongst the Greek philosophers who

believed that the womb would *travel around the body*, adding pressure to other organs... which would then lead to erratic and unreliable behavior.

By the way in the DSM – *the book used to diagnose mental health disorders* – *Hysteria was an actual medical diagnosis* until 1980.

Jenny: Hysteria, craziness. Like, it's a disease of the people with the uteri, like the people with the, with the emotions. You know, first of all, like I have a child. She's, she's a year and a half. I, I have a womb. I don't think of it as like, the origin place for like, for things like going out of control. I actually think of it as like a place where like, the most controlled thing ever occurred. In that like, you know, like I made a human in there.

It is a definition created by a man. It is a definition meant to shame and limit a certain type of experience.

And that "experience"... let's just call it what it is: emotions. Cause that's it. It's just the *emotional experience* of something. *Scared, sad, angry, stressed, jealous, surprised, worried, insecure*. Take your pick. Calling someone "crazy" or "hysterical" completely dismisses their experience, it minimizes what they're feeling. And you know what, it doesn't stop there... it keeps going... to the point where anyone who's been labeled it enough times can be gaslit into thinking that they're actually unwell... or sometimes worse – to the point where *real* issues, of all kinds, get ignored. Well that's not happening today...

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INTRO

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<< INTRO THEME BEGINS >>

MEGHAN: I'm Meghan. And this is ARCHETYPES – my podcast about the labels and tropes that try to hold women back.

I feel pretty strongly about this word... this label – "crazy"... the way that it's thrown around so casually, and the damage it's wrought on society and women everywhere – from relationships to families being shattered, reputations destroyed, and careers ruined. The stigma *surrounding* the word – it also has this *silencing effect* – this effect where women experiencing real mental health issues, they get scared, they stay quiet, they internalize and repress for far too long. Look, there's a lot to unpack here... And so I wanted to speak with – not one, but *two* women.

Constance: You're taught that ladies don't make scenes or like if you make a scene, you're crazy.

MEGHAN: That's actress, Constance Wu... and...

Deepika: Our mind is very much a part of our body. But somehow, when it comes to mental illness, we start treating our minds like outside of our bodies.

MEGHAN: Activist and Bollywood star, Deepika Padukone. They're both joining me, right after the break.

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ACT 1

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M: It's um– Are you cold? It's chilly.

Constance: It is.

M: We just warmed it up a little bit.

Constance Chilly. But you know what? Sometimes when I get on a roll talking about stuff, I like, get, heated.

M: Yeah. Me, too. You start to sweat. *(cute banter as they settle in. M says "bup bup bup bup" mimicking chatter)*

M: You ready to chat?

Constance: Okay.

M: It's gonna be great.

MEGHAN: It was a little chilly that day in the studio when Constance Wu and I sat down to talk.

Now you may know Constance as Rachel Chu, the fish-out-of-water American who meets her Singaporean future in-laws in the film *Crazy Rich Asians*.

Archival: Crazy Rich Asians

Nick: Mom, this is Rachel Chu.

Rachel: Omigosh, I...I'm so happy to meet you, Mrs. Young. Or, um, Auntie, right? I'm just learning the lingo.

MEGHAN: *(laugh)* Or you might recognize her from the ABC sitcom, *Fresh Off the Boat*, where she played Jessica Huang...a woman with very high expectations for her kids...

Archival: Fresh Off the Boat**Teacher:** Great job, EV.**Jessica:** Ev? No, no his name is Evan. Trust me, I named him myself.**Evan:** It's a new nickname I'm trying out.**Jessica:** Did your new friends put you up to this? Lose it. Presidents don't have nicknames.**Evan:** What about Abe Lincoln?**Jessica:** Dead.**Evan:** Teddy Roosevelt?**Jessica:** Dead**Evan:** Jimmy Carter?**Jessica:** Ineffective**Evan:** (sighs)

MEGHAN: (*laugh*) Constance grew up in Virginia, the third of 4 daughters – to parents who emigrated from Taiwan. In her career, she's been a crucial force in expanding representation of Asian-Americans. And her projects, they've been really important to that effect as well.

When *Fresh Off the Boat* premiered on TV in 2015, it was the first sitcom to center an Asian-American family in over 20 years. It lasted for six seasons – and was the first series with an Asian-American-led cast to cross the 100-episode milestone. Which I can tell you, as an actor, from my past life, that's a really big deal.

So since *Fresh Off the Boat* ended, Constance has continued to move forward in her career – starring in indie films, as well as other series, like *The Terminal List*. Plus, she's a new mom, exploring all the wonders that parenthood has to offer. But some of her experiences on *Fresh Off the Boat*, they've stayed with her. Particularly some moments... behind the scenes... and on social media... that she'd maybe like to move on from. But try as she might, she can't fully do that: they've changed her in ways that, admittedly, she's still working through. She's done some of the work in her new memoir, *Making a Scene*. And we're also gonna get into it here today.

Constance: I just turned 40 a few months ago. I mean, that's more than a few months ago. God, it goes so fast, you know, it's like. How did I even get here? I used to think 30 was old.

Meghan: I know.

Constance: (laughs) And now I'm 40. It's, it's interesting because people used to tell me, I mean, they used to tell me more frequently when I was younger that I didn't look my age. And it's funny because I think the standard response when someone says, oh, you look younger, the standard response is supposed to be,

In unison: Oh, thank you.

Meghan: I know.

Constance: And I've actually tried to train myself to not say thank you. But then I encounter this other resistance, which is like, Oh, are you a - an ungrateful bitch? I gave you this compliment. You're not saying thank you. So I want to acknowledge when somebody says something, but not treat youth as though it's a compliment. In fact when I think about my own life and how I was when I was in my twenties versus how I am now, I think that in a way I'd love to look like I'm 40 because that's a reflection of my experiences which have made me who I am today.

Meghan: How were you in your twenties?

Constance: Oh, my God. I mean, messy...broke. I was over \$40,000 just in credit card debt.

Meghan: Oh my god.

Constance: That doesn't even include student loan debt. And I didn't even care about it. I was really reckless about my spending. And I also, like, partied a lot. I drank a lot. I dated around, I did drugs. I did all these wild things under the guise of, "Oh, I'm so free, this is so fun." But a lot of it was fear driven. I just, I was trying to avoid something.

Meghan: What were you trying to avoid, though?

Constance: Oh, gosh, I think, I mean, you you were an actress and um-

Meghan: Mm-hm. Past life. Yeah.

Constance: Yeah. And I - it's something that really meant a lot to me. I'd been an actor since I was a kid. And I wanted it so much, and I was constantly getting rejected and, um, saying that it hurts when you're rejected- that's actually harder than the rejection, admitting that it got to you. And so I think when you're like, "I don't give a fuck. I'm just going to drink, like, whatever. I'm a wild party girl," then it's a way of saying, like, Oh yeah, they can't hurt me when really you're like, I'm really hurt. And I'm really scared that I'm not going to make it, like, in this thing, but um. But, you know, there's even though, like, you know, I'm about to cry. But there's a strength that comes with being able to say, like, you know what? I'm hurt. Or or, I'm scared. And like, people often will weaponize that against you, um-

Meghan: I mean to your point, you have to have the thickest skin, which that thick skin doesn't mean that there's not so much vulnerability and insecurity and all of that under the surface.

Constance: Yeah, I feel like, especially in Hollywood, there's this fairytale idea that your career is supposed to be a "Who Me" moment.

Meghan: (laughs)

Constance: Like I was discovered in a pizza parlor. I just fell into this. Oh, this person wasn't even an actor. We just got them off the street and we thought that they would be great.

Meghan: I know.

Constance: And people love that narrative. Whereas like me, where I've been, like, studying theater since I was ten and I was, like, obsessed with it. People in Hollywood make fun of that type of person.

Constance: They roll their eyes to be like, "Oh, I'm not one of those actors who talk about their craft." As if passion is something to mock in a woman.

Meghan: Yeah.

Constance: Anything that puts herself out there is something to mock. You know, and if I wanted a safer image, I could be very much like, Oh, who, me? Oh, I don't. Oh, gosh, I guess thank you so much for letting me even exist in this world. But uh I don't think that I should have to show an excessive show of gratitude for the very opportunity to exist. Yeah.

Meghan: But that's part of the double standard. Right, For a woman who's striving to be successful. Have a successful career. Oh, my gosh. She must be calculating or have some agenda.

Constance: Yeah. You can exist in this box and if you dare to stray, then you know...you're out.

Meghan: Oh yeah. Yeah.

Constance: You're out of the club.

Meghan: And then you're labeled.

Constance: I mean, there were crazy rumors circulating around about me being the D word, a diva. And it's like if you actually talk to people who really worked with me, it's not true.

Meghan: Yeah. And I think something happens. Look, it happens on a larger scale when you're in the public. And the media is weighing in, as you know. And, but it kind of is a different version - the same thing, because I can remember when I'm in high school and I was lonely or I didn't fit in or there was a rumor about me.

Constance: Yeah.

Meghan: And even then, it feels like actually the end of the world.

Constance: Yeah.

Meghan: And so you magnify that when you become a public figure. But I don't know if it necessarily feels different, even if you're just a 14 year old girl in school.

Constance: In a way, it might even feel worse when you're a 14 year old because it's the first time you're going through it. And, you know, I look at my kid now and it's like, you know, when she has her feelings, she has them large and like she's not embarrassed of them and she's feeling sad because she didn't get her Luca toy or or whatever thing—

Meghan: Right.

Constance: She's obsessed with Luca right now. And it's just like it's so real and raw because no one's told her she should feel any shame for that type of emotion. No one's told her to filter it. But also she doesn't have the tools yet to navigate big feelings. And that's one of the big things that I've had to learn honestly, pretty recently through therapy, is how to navigate big emotions. Because I spent so much of my life trying to repress my naturally emotional side that, you know, it would come out in fits and bursts because, you know, repression, it doesn't just disappear. It goes somewhere, right?

Meghan: Completely.

Constance: And I think rather than repressing it, feeling it and finding tools to allow the feeling and navigate through it, that's something that actually I didn't start learning until I was in my thirties. Late thirties. I mean, a couple years ago, really

Meghan: Yeah, but. But it takes a lot of time to get to that place where you can see it a little bit more clearly.

Constance: Yeah.

Meghan: And even then, it doesn't mean that's going to be the same every day. Right. Like some days I have complete clarity. And then the next day, I feel different. I think social media sometimes doesn't help with that. But I - I look, I haven't been on social media for a long time. And I know that you're, you're back on Instagram now.

Constance: Well, I'm dipping my toe back in. As I said, yes. Yeah.

Meghan: But that's a big— that's a big choice.

Constance: And to be honest, I was really, really resistant to it. But I had a long conversation with my therapist about how much my book means to me and the message how much it means to me. And how I didn't want to regret not trying to reach somebody who was going through something similar to what I went through three years ago. And if social media could be used as a tool for that, I felt grounded enough and on the other side of my traumatic experience three years ago that I felt I'm capable of this, I could try it and, you know, put myself out there, be a little brave. And if it feels bad, then I can just leave again.

MUSIC IN

MEGHAN: So, this traumatic experience that Constance is referencing... it started in May 2019, when ABC announced that the sitcom she was starring in, *Fresh Off the Boat*, was being renewed for a sixth season. And after hearing the news, Constance turned to social media, and tweeted out her... disappointment.

Archive sound of news coverage

ET Canada Host: Fresh Off the Boat was renewed for a 6th season over the weekend. Now you'd think that everyone in the cast and crew would be celebrating that news. But not star Constance Wu. She first cryptically tweeted, 'So upset right now that I'm literally crying. Ugh. Eff.'

Cohost laughs: Yeah and then she tweeted, "Effin hell."

MEGHAN: This was confusing for people. The backlash – both from the public and the press – it was fierce, and it was fast. People flooded her social media with comments and messages, accusing her of being ungrateful, out of line... calling her all sorts of names that I just, I won't repeat here.

And Constance, she would go on to apologize. And to stay with the show throughout its sixth season – which also turned out to be its last.

MUSIC OUT

As we now know – there was more to that story. And we should remember, there usually is. Sure enough... with her new memoir out, Constance has begun to open up about what was going on behind the scenes for her. Why she sent that tweet in the first place... And when we sat down, we talked about it. Just a heads up, this may be upsetting to some listeners.

Constance: Three years ago, my TV show was renewed and I had a - a pretty careless moment where I was alone and frustrated and feeling emotional after having repressed a lot of feelings for like six years on that show. Because even though I loved being on that show and I loved almost everybody on it, I mean, people don't know that the first year I was going through sexual harassment by one of the producers and intimidation and I think part of the reason my outburst on Twitter three years ago over the show's renewal

was so - was so seemingly out of character is because it was the buildup of several years of repressing a type of abuse that I had encountered at the hands of a producer. Literally at the hands of a producer in my first year where I was, you know, I had never done network television. I hadn't even done, like, a guest star on network television. When I got— I hadn't even done a pilot when I got this show.

Meghan: Oh, my gosh.

Constance: So I was so scared that any wrong move I did, I'd get fired. And this producer was like, I'm protecting you, so you have to do everything through me. And if and if you f**k up, you don't know what could happen. So you have - don't talk to your agents, don't talk to your lawyers. Everything goes through me and I sort of thought, okay, because I didn't know what else to think. This was before the MeToo movement, right? So I didn't really have any platform to feel, like, comfortable talking about it. And also, the show was such a shining beacon for Asian-American representation, I didn't want to tarnish the one beacon that we had available to us, you know, in the, in the...

Meghan: In mainstream media.

Constance: In mainstream media, right. I thought, you know what? I took care of it. I, I figured it out how to work around it really well and keep my job. Like I said before, repression. It doesn't just disappear because you will it to— it goes somewhere. And so when I tweeted all this stuff without context, it made me seem really ungrateful and petty, and bratty, I guess is a word a lot of people used. It took, like, a DM from an actress colleague of mine, an Asian actress, who basically said that I had become a disgrace to my race and that (*starts to choke up*), you know, I was basically better off dead. It made me feel like I didn't deserve to be alive anymore. And um, so, you know, I tried to end my own life, and luckily, I had a friend who was able to get me to the E.R. And so I'm...I'm okay. But it really made me realize— I know it seems like I'm not okay cause I'm crying now,

Meghan: No, it's fine.

Constance: But I think I'm always going to cry about this because it was really scary, you know? And even though I do feel okay about it now and I feel like I've not only gotten through it, but gotten better because of it, it's always going to be a scary moment in my life.

Meghan: Mmmph.

Constance: And uh - that was sort of the traumatic moment three years ago that prompted me to get off social media, to put my career aside and to focus on my mental health. Because you know, when I think of what would have happened if I didn't have that type of help back then.

Meghan: Mm hmm.

Constance: You know, it's just... I wouldn't have had my daughter, you know?

Meghan: Yeah.

Constance: So.

Meghan: You okay?

Constance: Yeah, I'm okay. No, it's just I hate that I always cry over it. It's like there are certain things you go through in your life that you're like, why do I still cry about this?

Meghan: Because this is part of your healing process. This is part of it.

Constance: I know.

Meghan: If you weren't crying, I'd be worried. Right. Because so much of it is, especially based on what you're talking about, which is when everything's just building up, building up internalized emotion, whether it's sadness or relief or everything. I mean how - just like when you're talking about with your daughter, when you watch our kids, the most beautiful thing in the world, even though in the moment it might not feel that way, is if they have a breakdown and they just scream and they let it all out. They let it all out and guess what happens?

Constance: And then a second later, they're like.

Meghan: They're fine.

Constance: Yes. Because they -

Meghan: Because they let it out.

Constance: They let it out. You know, they worked through it. They had their feelings.

Meghan: Yes!

Constance: And when - I mean, my book is called Making a Scene. And I think when you're taught that ladies don't make scenes or like if you make a scene, you're crazy.

Meghan: Crazy!

Constance: (*haunting noises*) like, stay away from her. *Warning!*

Meghan: But really, the craziest thing in the world would be to keep all of that inside. So this. You, right now, I mean. I think it's...I think it's beautiful.

Meghan: So even my own version of like, I would love to cry this much, but I'm conditioned to still have some – a different kind of composure. And now you sort of go, ohhh, just relax and let it out. And I see the same thing in my kids as you're talking about in yours, and I'm like, Oh my God, I want to do that. I want to like feel so deeply. It's like an Adele album. Just like sooo much intense emotion. And you just get it out and you share it. And I think that's the - that's the piece though, is the most helpful thing in the world, is being able to use your experience to help other people not be in that same position or to know that it's okay if they were and to take the shame away from it.

Constance: Yeah. And you know, the social media piece of it, because when I think about the actress who shamed me so horribly over DM, a big part of it is that she thought I deserved to suffer and she thought I wasn't suffering enough. And I think that if she had been not behind a computer screen, but she had been, like, in the room and like seeing what I was going through and like, you know, looking in my eyes, I think – I don't think she's a horrible person. I think the Internet does that to you because you, you can't see the person going through something.

Meghan: Yes, it's not human.

Constance: And I think it would have opened up her compassion rather than her judgment.

Meghan: Have you, have you reconnected with her, that actress?

Constance: I have not, no.

Meghan: Yeah I mean, maybe part of your healing will end up being able to get to a place where, as you say, like you can, even though it was the biggest trigger, it sounds like.

Constance: Yeah.

Meghan: That you'll be able to get to a place where you can forgive her for that moment.

Constance: You know, I do forgive her for it. I do.

Meghan: Mmmm.

Constance: Because I know that, you know, anybody who is trying so hard to be a certain way is going through their own battle. I'd probably get emotional if I saw her, but I think I would be able to really stand well on my own two feet.

Constance put out a statement on social media, revealing the depth of her struggle – and the details surrounding her suicide attempt. This was a brave move. Which she also covered in her

memoir. And it's all something her daughter might have questions about one day. And I wondered: How would Constance navigate that?

Meghan: When you imagine when your daughter's older and she reads your book or she learns about this chapter in your life.

Constance: Yeah, mhm.

Meghan: How will you talk to her about that?

Constance: That's interesting, because my mother called me after I put my social media statement out the other day. And, you know, I was so ashamed of my suicide attempt. I actually - my parents didn't even know, until a few weeks before I put out the statement. I didn't even want to tell them. But my shrink was like, you should tell them before you, like go on social media and tell the whole world because in Asian-American families, it's really hard to talk about those kind of things. And so you just sort of don't. You avoid a lot of uncomfortable conversations. And my mom, she called me and she was like, okay, well, think about your daughter. Now that you put the statement out, is this something that you want her knowing that you did? Like you're a public figure now, you shouldn't let these things out. And it's funny because I could see her point, but I said, you know what, mom, I do want her to know that. I do want her to know that everybody, including her mom, goes through a hard time. And when you go through those hard times, people will help you and you can find help and you can get better. Yeah.

Meghan: Um, you know, the - the level of honesty that you've brought to just being in conversation is incredible. And there's so much self-love, too.

Constance: I mean, you have to sort of have that to love other people.

Meghan: Yeah completely. Thank you so much for being here.

Constance: Thank you for having me.

Meghan: It's so great. Look at you!

Constance: I'm sorry... I was like crying. I know I shouldn't apologize either, but-

Meghan: Don't apologize!

Constance: Truly! I get so embarrassed because I get, like, emotional.

Meghan: Emotional is a great thing.

Constance: I know.

Meghan: It's time.

MEGHAN: Constance Wu... What a brave soul for coming forward and sharing your story. She serves as yet another reminder that we really have no idea what a person is going through. And that we have to remember, we have to remember – everyone's mental health journey — it looks a little bit different...

Deepika: It just sort of came out of the blue. I woke up, I fell. I, you know, my blood pressure dropped. And then the next thing I know, my life just felt meaningless.

MEGHAN: That's Bollywood actress and activist, Deepika Padukone. I'm sitting down with her after the break. You don't want to miss this. Stay with me.

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ACT 2

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MEGHAN: Welcome back. Now before we get to Deepika's story, I wanted to connect with two other women in the public eye, who speak openly and freely about their mental health struggles.

Someone who caught my eye recently is comedian Aparna Nancherla – whose work often touches on her experiences with anxiety and depression.

Aparna: I think for me, ultimately, it was just trying to make more sense of it for myself. And then I guess the way it is with most art, like once it's out in the world, people take it as they will or like, spin it into what - whatever the conversation is culturally.

[APARNA COMEDY CLIP] (laughter) And like if you don't have anxiety, the way I would describe it is like, there's an edgy improv group in your brain. And it just needs, like, a one-word suggestion to spin, like, countless scenarios that no one's comfortable with.

MEGHAN: Aparna uses comedy as a way to get people thinking about mental health and talking about it, too. So I wanted to get her take on the word "crazy."

Aparna: Online, of course, you get called "crazy" all the time if you just even say something someone else disagrees with.

It's become sort of a catch all term to just I think both diminish someone - someone's credibility - but also just kind of distance them. Like while we can't take anything, they're saying like as seriously as what we're talking about because they're just erratic and like impossible.

MEGHAN: What Aparna's saying gets at something that feels fundamentally important to understand when it comes to the word "crazy." And that's – the connection between crazy and the concept of *trust*... or perhaps I should say *mistrust*.

Aparna: I was reading about a study that women's pain is like, not taken as seriously as men's pain, like just even their reports of how much pain they're feeling. People are like, oh, well, they're women, they're weak. Like they obviously aren't in that much pain. And it's like, what?

Just the fact that women's bodies are not like we're not even considered the final say on our own bodies. And like, the authorities on what's happening to our physical selves is incredibly diminishing. And, I think just another way for people to be like, "Women don't know what's good for them. We have to tell them."

MEGHAN: This is huge. As in – it's a huge, *real* problem when a person's self-awareness is ignored or not trusted. There's actually a term for it – it's called medical gaslighting. It's such a big consequence of all this "crazy" talk, that I knew we needed to call up an expert. So we spoke to someone that I have tremendous respect for, and I also consider a friend – Dr. Nadine Burke Harris, a pediatrician by training, and the former Surgeon General of California.

And before she starts, I just want to tell you... it must have been a couple years ago, she sent me a Christmas gift, and as I opened the box, there were these two beautiful small glass containers. She'd made essential oil from her home. But it was in this bedding. You know, sometimes you have to put mesh in a gift. And in the card she said, I just want you to know that to make that mesh and that bedding for the gift, I shredded tabloids, because that's all they're good for. (Laughs) It was great. Here she is, though. You should hear from her. Dr. Burke-Harris, take it away.

Dr. Burke Harris: So, you know, when we talk about someone being labeled as crazy or someone being labeled as hysterical, oftentimes that label is put on there simply because the individual who's doing the labeling doesn't understand what those symptoms mean or isn't listening carefully about about what's going on for someone.

Even when we look at research in current day medicine, we see that women are less often believed in terms of their symptoms for things like a heart attack. Right. When women come into a hospital, there's a greater likelihood that their symptoms may not be taken as seriously, that they may not be diagnosed accurately when they're sharing what they're going through. And I think some of that goes back to this notion of the hysterical woman and the exaggeration of symptoms or the, you know, just, oh, she's crazy. And it's all in her head.

MEGHAN: That's a pretty damning legacy for these words – crazy, hysterical – that are tossed around so casually. I mean, when we hear this, I think about my friend, Serena Williams – and what happened shortly after she gave birth to her daughter, Olympia.

Now, Serena has a history of blood clots. She was feeling awful after her C-section, she was in so much pain, she was short of breath, and she was beginning to lose feeling in her legs. She demanded a CT scan to look for clots. And instead, a nurse said, "I think all this medicine is making you talk crazy."

Now of course, Serena – *Serena Williams* – knew her body. She was right. She was *right*. And thankfully, she did finally get the life-saving attention she needed. But my goodness, it took *far* too long for her to be listened to. And it's like that for so many women, particularly women of color. The stakes with this – they're *huge*.

There's a certain stress that comes with not being believed. And on top of the stress that we experience in our daily lives, and how that affects us, this is something Dr. Burke Harris, she's spent a large part of her career studying...

Dr. Burke Harris: We now have a much better understanding of the science of why when someone has experienced trauma or adversity, they may be more likely to have mental health conditions, or they may be more likely to have heart disease or autoimmune disease or something else. And so we're starting to put these pieces together and recognize like, Oh, wait, maybe she wasn't hysterical to begin with. Maybe there is just some things that we didn't know and we should have been listening more carefully.

MEGHAN: I can't help but think about Constance Wu, too, whose story we just heard. How the trauma of what happened to her - both on set, and on social media - how that impacted her mental health, impacted how she understood herself as a person, and her place in the world.

Dr. Burke Harris: Probably one of the most insidious aspects of this dynamic is the way in which the societal mistrust of women's emotions gets inside of us and the way that we mistrust our own emotions. How often does it happen that – we are experiencing something really difficult or honestly, oftentimes experiencing something that we shouldn't be experiencing. And we say to ourselves, Oh, I didn't want to say anything because I didn't want people to think I was crazy. I didn't want people to think that I was exaggerating. And so I think the real harm is the way in which these societal stereotypes lead us to mistrust our own voices and not speak up and speak out. And it's something that we have to work very purposefully to change.

BEAT

MEGHAN: And speaking of change, now we're about to hear from someone who's pushed really hard for it. She's made it her mission to upend societal stereotypes about mental health...

Deepika: Can you hear me now?

Meghan: Yes, I can hear you, can you hear me okay?

Deepika: Oh, lovely. Okay, great. Lovely. Happy belated birthday!

Meghan: Oh, my goodness. Aren't you sweet? Thank you for the flowers.

Deepika: Not at all. I wish I could do more, but yes—

Meghan: That was so thoughtful!

Deepika: Happy belated birthday! (laughter)

MEGHAN: This is Deepika Padukone - actress, model, and activist. And though she may not be a household name all over the world, she is one of the most famous actresses in all of Bollywood. She's known for taking on any role - no matter the genre. Starring in romance films like Bajirao Mastan...

FADE IN ARCHIVAL - BAJIRAO

TRANSCRIPT: I lay my life. At the sword of thee. If love is a crime. Then punish me.

MEGHAN: And heartfelt biopics like Chhapaak...

FADE IN ARCHIVAL - CHHAPAAK

TRANSCRIPT: How wonderful would it be if acid was never sold at all? If no one could buy it, then no one could throw it (at someone) at all.

MEGHAN: It's a career that for her felt like a calling...

Deepika: We didn't watch very many movies growing up, but the few movies that we watched in a cinema. I'd - I'd watch these women on screen and felt like I, that's where I belonged. It was really weird. And I had no idea whether I was talented or not. I didn't know whether I knew the right people to do this. But I continued on my journey.

MUSIC IN

MEGHAN: It turns out – yes, she was and is *very* talented. Her acting skills have earned her three Filmfare Awards – which is sorta like the Indian version of the Oscars.

And offscreen, she's also something of a style icon – gracing the covers of Vogue and Vogue India, and influencing people all over the world with her red carpet looks.

But Deepika's mark doesn't stop there. Recently, she was given a Time Magazine Impact100 award ... for some *other* work that's very near and dear to her heart... her advocacy work: destigmatizing and raising awareness of mental health struggles. Which, given her influence in India, is *incredibly* important work because the stigma surrounding mental health struggles there, as in many places, is very prominent.

This part of Deepika's work was borne out of her own personal struggles with her own mental health, which erupted for her in 2014. And these sort of troubles can come when you least expect them...

MUSIC OUT

Deepika: I woke up one morning and everything was going well. My films were a success. Personally, beautiful relationships, supportive family. Like it just sort of came out of the blue. I woke up, I fell. I - you know, my blood pressure dropped. And then the next thing I know. My life just felt meaningless. I didn't want to live anymore—you know, I just. I didn't want to get out of bed. And I struggled with this for, for many, many months. I would just break down at the drop of a hat. Not be present. Like I'd be talking to someone or be, you know, be at an event or be engaging with someone, but, like, my mind's somewhere else. And I'd, I'd never felt like that before. So just, all of it just felt like, so disorienting. And my parents were visiting me and the day they were ready to leave I was sitting and watching them pack and I started crying again. And my mom was like, what's wrong? Is it your relationship? Has someone said something to you? I said, I don't know. I've been feeling like this for many, many months. I just keep crying. I don't know why. It's feeling of hopelessness. You just feel hopeless. You feel like there's no point in living.

Meghan: You've described it as hollow. Feeling hollow inside.

Deepika: Yeah. Like this pitish feeling like you just constantly feel empty. This feeling of emptiness and hollowness and hopelessness. And - within our family and friends circle. We knew someone who was, who was a counselor. And so I picked up the phone on her I spoke to her. She was a-at an event. She stepped out and she said, Deepika, I'm taking a flight and coming to see you right now. You need to see a psychiatrist. And so literally, from the sound of my voice, she could tell, you know, that I needed help. There's not a single day that goes by without me thinking about my mental health. And so every part of my life today is to ensure that I don't go back into that dark place again.

Meghan: Yeah. And you. And you, look - found the courage to get the help that you needed and to get the help that works for you. I mean, I think at my worst point, being finally connected to someone that, you know, my husband had found a referral for me to call. And I called this woman. She didn't know I was even calling her.

Deepika: What? [slight laugh]

Meghan: And she was checking out at the grocery store. I could hear the little beep, beep [inaudible] and I was like “hi” and I’m introducing myself and that you can literally you’re going, wait, sorry. I’m just. Who is this? Um and saying I need help. And she could hear the dire state that I was in. But I think it’s for all of us to be really honest about what it is that you need and to not be afraid to make peace with that, to ask for it. And for you, I think what’s the most illuminating is that you’re willing to talk about it.

MUSIC IN

MEGHAN: Deepika would go on to *talk* about her struggles – not just to a therapist, not just to her close friends and family – but, seemingly, to her entire country... and beyond.

It was in a moment where she knew, she knew that she couldn’t remain silent, she couldn’t uphold the stigma. She decided to risk whatever labels might come, whatever consequences might flow. And in March of 2015, she decided... to go on live TV in India... and to share her story...

FADE IN ARCHIVAL - Deepika Padukone’s Story

DEEPIKA INTV FROM 2015: I lost a friend a couple of months ago and so for me I think if I can impact even one life in this entire process of speaking up and letting people know that you know what, it’s something that I’ve been through. And something that I could deal with because I had a fantastic support system.

MEGHAN: The reaction was bigger than anyone could have ever expected... She was met with overwhelming praise...

FADE IN ARCHIVAL

“In my book, she is India’s #1 person for courage”

MEGHAN: And the entire thing inspired her to start a non-profit, called LiveLoveLaugh, to raise awareness for mental health struggles, and to provide support for people in need.

MUSIC OUT

Deepika: Ya I mean there's two parts to this. One is. I think where people struggle the most, especially in India, where there's so much stigma attached to mental illness. One is creating the awareness. Most of us don't even know that we're struggling with mental illness. And second, if we are, to destigmatize it, to let people know that it's okay to seek help and to let caregivers know that it's okay for someone to go through this. It's the same way we have physical ailments. Our mind is very much a part of our body. But somehow, when it comes to mental illness, we start treating our minds like outside of our bodies.

Meghan: You're right. You know, my husband works a lot in - with the military community as a veteran and invisible injuries – they call them that all the time. Right. If you suffer from post-traumatic stress, it's the thing that you can't see. And if you can't see it, it is just either ignored or brushed under the carpet.

Deepika: For the most of India, it felt like this huge burden lifted off their shoulders that finally someone acknowledged the fact that, okay, there is something. There is such a thing as mental illness. But with everything good that you do, there'll always be sort of that skepticism. And so there were a bunch of people who felt that either I was doing this to promote a movie, or they thought that I was being paid by a pharmaceutical company. And there were articles on this...

Meghan: Oh my gosh

Deepika: Where they thought that I was being...yeah, yeah, yeah... where they thought I was being paid by a pharmaceutical company. And you know that I'm now going to start advertising, you know, for some sort of medication.

Meghan: And now look, you have normalized one of the most important conversations of our time.

Deepika: Mm hmm.

Meghan: Was there ever a point, though, that, can you remember a story like a moment where you just questioned, am I stuck in this label? Am I going to be labeled this if I do this? As opposed to sit in my truth? And would it be safer to just do it this way instead?

Deepika: Yes. That moment did happen. That moment in 2015.

Meghan: Oh, interesting

Deepika: After I'd come out of mental illness.

Meghan: What happened?

Deepika: You know, for uh - as difficult as dealing with mental illness was, I'm also grateful that I went through that experience because it changed my life forever. My life then on has been about purpose and what is my purpose? I've had this sort of life and death experience. And when you come out the other side, um, there's so much to be grateful for. And It's no more about what is that paycheck that I'm taking home? It isn't about that anymore. It's about, when I leave this place, when I leave the earth, um, what is it that I can leave behind? And how many lives can I positively impact? I've been on that journey for the last couple of years.

Meghan: Which is incredible

Deepika: Finding meaning and purpose in everything that I do.

Meghan: Mhm and I think it's a really good reminder, as you say, that it's not just about these big moments or the things that from the outside are the things that look important on paper. I would imagine when you go from really being in a dire state - And then...

Deepika: Yes

Meghan: oh, you've gotten to the other side and people think it's going to be some big ta-da! Do you remember like where you were when you said, oh, I feel better now, I want to do this? It's never the thing that people expect.

Deepika: Of course. And today it's all about the little things, like just you know, hugging my sister or late night conversations with my husband. Like those are the moments that that really fill me up today.

Meghan: Yeah. And being very present for them.

Deepika: Absolutely. And I can't function today without being present. If I'm here, this is where I am now in this moment. And so I think that's one of the differences between my younger self and me today. You know, when you're younger, you're just sort of trying to do so much and trying to accomplish so much. And the difference is today I'm still multitasking, but I feel like I'm just a lot more present.

BEAT

Meghan: You've been just an absolute delight. Thank you so much...

Deepika: Thank you!

Meghan: ...For taking the time before your, I imagine, very busy day. I appreciate it.

Deepika: Thank you. My husband was at a music festival for a week and he's just come back. So he's going to be happy to see my face.

Meghan: Oh, my goodness. How fun. Oh, gosh. Well, don't let me keep you. Please send my best and take good care and keep in touch and thank you, honestly. It's been great.

Deepika: Thank you so much for everything. Bye!

Meghan: Of course! Bye!

[Music In]

Now, if you've been listening to the series then you know that we end each episode with our *Three Words* moment... here, with Deepika – and Constance...combined...

Meghan: Since so much of the show is about how we are defined by exterior forces, right? One thing, though, is being able to have the autonomy to describe yourself and define yourself. So three words to describe you as a little girl.

Constance: Emotional. Bold and extroverted.

Deepika: I was a tomboy. My mom says you never found me at, like, ground level. I was always climbing chairs and tables and sofas and dropping and breaking things. So a tomboy. I always had clarity of what I wanted to do. I was very clear. And sensitive and emotional.

Meghan: And three words to describe yourself now as an adult.

Deepika: Most of it is still the same. And I think it's important to nurture the child in us. But along with everything else, I also feel like purpose and gratitude and consistency are the new words that I'd add to my life today.

Constance: Emotional. Um...brave. And loving.

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CLOSING THOUGHTS

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MEGHAN: Thank you to these ladies for their honesty, vulnerability and also for trusting me with their stories. Opening up about your mental health, it can be really difficult. But, if you feel like you need to, we encourage you to do so. And we have some resources available to you in our show notes. Just remember, you're not alone.

Before I go, I wanted to share one last thought. So, over a year ago, maybe even more than that, a really close friend of mine - she texted me this piece of writing and it has since remained a north star for me on this show. In fact, I read it on our very first launch call with the team to kick off *Archetypes*. And at the end of this heavier episode, I wanted to share it with you, too.

This is "Breathe," by Becky Hemsley.

She sat at the back and they said she was shy,

She led from the front and they hated her pride,

They asked her advice and then questioned her guidance,

They branded her loud, then were shocked by her silence,
When she shared no ambition they said it was sad,
So she told them her dreams and they said she was mad,
They told her they'd listen, then covered their ears,
And gave her a hug while they laughed at her fears,
And she listened to all of it thinking she should,
Be the girl they told her to be best as she could,
But one day she asked what was best for herself,
Instead of trying to please everyone else,
So she walked to the forest and stood with the trees,
She heard the wind whisper and dance with the leaves,
She spoke to the willow, the elm and the pine,
And she told them what she'd been told time after time,
She told them she felt she was never enough,
She was either too little or far far too much,
Too loud or too quiet, too fierce or too weak,
Too wise or too foolish, too bold or too meek,
Then she found a small clearing surrounded by firs,
And she stopped...and she heard what the trees said to her,
And she sat there for hours not wanting to leave,
For the forest said nothing, it just let her breathe.

[BEAT]

MEGHAN: As ever, I'm Meghan. And I can't wait to be with you again next week.

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CREDITS

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