

Make Me Smart August 30, 2021 transcript

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Kai Ryssdal: I got a little gunk in the back of my throat. Oh, good. Thanks, Brian. Thanks for that.

Molly Wood: I'm Molly Wood everyone. Welcome back to Make Me Smart, where we're trying to figure out what is wrong with Kai's throat and also helping today make sense.

Kai Ryssdal: I don't know, it just, it just happens. You know what I think it is, actually? I have a theory. So I come home and I have a small handful of pita chips as my snack. And I think maybe the pita chips are gunking up my, my vocal cords so I will, I will refrain from pita chips till after we're done with this. That's what I think.

Molly Wood: You should try to have a wheat free snack because some people have a little like, wheat sensitivity get swollen, get swelling in the back of their throat. It's true story. It's true, true story.

Kai Ryssdal: That might explain some things. Alright. Anyway. So now that you know my medical history, my name is Kai Ryssdal. This is a podcast called Make Me Smart. It's Monday today, also known as what did we miss Monday. Some of the stories you might have missed over the weekend and up to and including the taping time of this podcast, which is 3:30 in the afternoon on the west coast of the United States. So there we go.

Molly Wood: Yeah. First, we have agreed upon one and a half shared news fixes because our new thing for what do you want to know--for what did we miss Monday, in case you missed last Monday, is that we have an agreed upon news fix and then some headlines. And as Kai pointed out, there's obviously one big headline today that we just can't ignore in any way.

Kai Ryssdal: Yeah. Yeah. And it's, and it's, it's the end of 20 years in Afghanistan. The last plane was wheels up a C17. Middle of the night, out of Hamid Karzai airport. As, as General McKenzie, the commander of Centcom said the other day when somebody said, hey, you're leaving on the 30th. And we said the deadline was the 31st. And General McKenzie said, yeah, no, it's the 31st over in Afghanistan. So we're out.

Molly Wood: And it's, it's quite a time change.

Kai Ryssdal: It's kind of amazing. It's kind of amazing.

Molly Wood: I mean, when people say the term forever war, this is obviously what they mean, in the sense that this has been the United States's longest war. But I mean, plenty of people are entering young adulthood now having only ever known this war. And in fact, many of the, the service members who were killed in that awful bombing, I mean, so much about that is horrible. And so many Afghan civilians died along with them. And we should not forget that it is really, really hard to see their names go by and realize how many of them are 20 or 21, or maybe 23. That, you know, but that several of the service members killed in that bombing were at, were born the year this thing started. It's a pretty somber day.

Kai Ryssdal: Yeah, and it's, we just want to mark it, I guess, is the deal, right? It's not our standard coverage. But we couldn't not say anything about it. So we did.

Molly Wood: Yeah. All weekend, I was also stressing about my favorite city in New Orleans and all of Louisiana because Hurricane Ida, it was just got, it just really just sort of, you know how you have that feeling of like, humanity can't get a win. Because, you know, here this hurricane was bearing down on Louisiana on the weekend that was the anniversary of Katrina. And that was predicted to be a category 4.

Kai Ryssdal: Same day, same day. 16 years to the day.

Molly Wood: Just bananas. It, I mean, they're, it's a, it's a could have been worse news and bad news. Right? It seems like the levees in New Orleans held, the 14 and a half billion-dollar system of levees that they put into place after Katrina to just keep the water out of the city. And when we say levees, I mean we're just talking about walls, right? They just put up walls to try and keep the water out. They're really technologically advanced, and they pump water out. I mean, it's more than that. But it is, you know, a system that seems to have held and prevented massive destruction in the city of New Orleans. However, you know, when we talk about climate adaptation, levees are one part of it and hardening all of our infrastructure is another and it appears that the, you know, essentially this city power grid and transformers across the state failed, leaving a million people without power and they don't think it's gonna be restored for days or even weeks.

Kai Ryssdal: So, look at this, um, yeah, sorry. So I've got Twitter on my screen right now. Tulane University is evacuating all other students, closing campus, canceling classes through Sunday, September the 12th. And then they're going to go virtual till the sixth of October. So it's not going to be better for a while.

Molly Wood: They don't know when they're going to get power. Exactly. So it's like today it's not as bad a catastrophe as Katrina, but in the coming weeks, if you have people without power for two or three weeks or even a week, things are going to get really, really bad. And this is what I mean, this is what hardening infrastructure against extreme climate change looks like, you got to do it all. Right, because it's just like if one thing won't get to the other will.

Kai Ryssdal: Yeah, speaking of which, actually, that's a very nice turn. And we're gonna stay in the climate crisis mode here and take through a couple of other news items. The first one of which I will point out is on a par with more powerful hurricanes. And that is more powerful wildfires. And I just want to point out that the Caldor fire out here in California, up near Lake Tahoe, if you have not seen pictures of what is an amazingly stunningly beautiful place, under the smoke and ash of this wildfire, it's incredible. It's unbelievable. And now South Lake Tahoe has been evacuated. And it's only going to be more of that. And that was, that was huge story for me over the weekend. Here's another couple that I will just go through very briefly, the European Union is recommending halting non-essential travel from the United States over COVID-19. Hello, this can't possibly be a good thing. And oh, no, actually, it's not. So that's really bad. Not binding on member states, right? Because you know, there is sovereignty left to some degree over there, but the EU can lead the way. And it's going to be curious and interesting to see how that plays out. It's not a great thing. And then here's my favorite. And I saw this this morning in the Wall Street Journal, and I just, it would have been my make me smile had I not had a different make me smile. The Chinese government is limiting online video gaming for young people to three hours a week. So if you're a Chinese kid, and you're used to playing, you know, I don't even know what it is. You can't no more. One hour a day on Fridays, no online video games during the school week. And weekends and holidays in an hour. Holy cow, holy cow.

Molly Wood: This is, I mean, not only is this sort of just interesting. You know, it's being framed as this kind of anti-addiction measure, which has been like, there's, there's a lot of moral panic around video games that, you know, lots of which is not, lots of which is overblown, and some of which I'm sure that we all wish that we could have, like there are parents across America who sort of secretly wish they could have the government come in and be like, you can only play for three, we'd be like, I'm sorry. It's the rule. It's the government. We can't do anything about it. But also as an economic story, this is huge. I mean, Tencent holdings is the world's largest video game company by revenue. Like this is yet another example, in a weird way of China, you know, putting the boot on some of its biggest companies. It's a massive deal. Funny story about that in the make me smile kind of vein is that I, I texted this to my son this morning. And my son has been flirting with communism, like many kids his age, you know, he's like, got the shirts. And he's like, oh, yeah, we're all communists. And oh, yeah. We argue about it all the time. He wanted the Communist Manifesto for Hanukkah.

Kai Ryssdal: Wow.

Molly Wood: Oh, yeah. So I sent that to him today. You know, it announced, it resulted in an immediate renunciation of all his communist beliefs, just like that my little capitalist is back. Worked like a charm. I believe his exact quote was better dead than red. I mean, he went all the way.

Kai Ryssdal: Oh, my God. I love that.

Molly Wood: It was a good exchange. That is a fascinating story. Um, I have a couple of headlines that you may have missed that are on topics we've been discussing. One is I was just looking out the window not that long ago and saying, boy, are all those ships still stuck out there? And they are. 44, a record 44 container ships are stuck outside of California ports. The last record was in February, it was 40. The ports account for about a third of US imports. So if you are wondering if the supply chain issues that are leading to higher prices, that's causing everybody to complain about inflation, are going to get any better. No, apparently. And it is all related to labor, they say. Labor shortages, COVID-19 related disruptions. Of course people having to go home, and then holiday buying surges. So yeah, like maybe start sewing some stuff for your kids for the holidays. Because yeah. Also, PS, this is related to the ever given, like all things in the sense, that part of the problem is that the ships are so freaking big. Because we have supersized the ships as an economic decision like, well, if they're bigger, there'll be more efficient, then they're double and triple the size that they were 10 or 15 years ago. And so experts say you need more trucks, more trains, more labor, more warehouses and all of these places to put the cargo. Fascinating. The, there have been a couple of interesting stories about how one of the effects of this extreme Delta surge is a need for liquid oxygen. That has impacted water usage in all these different places. And I didn't realize that it was a huge deal, evidently, in like rocket launches. Liquid oxygen is a key ingredient for the space launch industry. And because Florida is having such a massive crisis, they are short on liquid oxygen, and it has forced delays or potential delays of launches by SpaceX. And I think at least one other private company and maybe NASA. Yep. In Ohio, and this is all leading to my kicker before we go to make me smile, in Ohio, a woman whose husband was hospitalized there, was so insistent that he be treated with the deworming medication that has been in no way, in no way is like the CDC is like, no COVID-19 is a virus. So a deworming medication meant for livestock is not in fact an effective treatment. And this woman whose husband was in the hospital, sued them to force them to give her husband this medicine, anti-parasitic treatment, and a judge sided with her. An Ohio judge ordered a hospital to treat a COVID patient with ivermectin. Despite the CDC telling the whole freaking country, no, this doesn't work.

Kai Ryssdal: I'm so confused.

Molly Wood: I am so confused, also. And that leads me to my final story, which is that I want us to do a story on mass psychosis. Because, okay, there is this, so throughout, I mean, this is sort of, it's in the like, Carl Jung and psychology category of science. But there is this idea that mass psychosis exists, that there is actually a virus of the mind that can be triggered when people are in a place of extreme fear, it is, it's partly what people have used to explain things like the Salem witch hunts and Nazism even, and the, the kind of like Red Scarem the McCarthyism that happened in the 60s, 60s, 50s? 50s. And that, that, that people develop delusions, they become incredibly paranoid, and they start to live in a parallel universe of information and truth. And behave that way. And that you have this sort of like, mass set of behaviors that are disconnected from reality. And I was reading today a list of all of the like, radio hosts and influencers and, and people who, you know, have railed against vaccines and masks who have died from COVID. And the, and the question that the person asked at the top of the newsletter was like, what, why I think was the Bulwark, was why does this keep happening? And, and why

can no, you know, why can no progress be made in these conversations? And I just was like, dude, I think it's, I think we're in a mass psychosis event as a population right now. It comes here in particular is what can trigger it, a flood of negative emotions, like fear or anxiety, drives an individual into a state of panic. And then they behave accordingly, which I think we can all agree we're seeing.

Kai Ryssdal: Wow. Wow.

Molly Wood: I know, you didn't think it was going there, right? Yeah, totally. Cold water.

Kai Ryssdal: It totally cold water. Holy cow. All right. All right. All right. Let us, yeah, let us go.

Molly Wood: Let us smile. McSweeney's always freaking brilliant. Made a Jeopardy board for determining who should be the next host of jeopardy. It is interactive, you click on it. There are categories such as the obvious choice, other obvious choices, red flags, corporate no no's, LeVar Burton anagrams and white people in which every answer is white people. Just go play the game. It's absolute genius, and so much work went into this. That is, oh my lord, look at this. Oh, it's, it's beautiful. You can play this all day. And then if you just need a pick me up, go to, if you like, I'm going to try not to spoil it. But for those who watched the Bob Ross Netflix documentary, which I think just came out. Okay, first of all, go watch it. Don't worry. It does not like, Bob Ross is not a bad guy. I didn't want to watch it either. I was like, don't ruin Bob Ross for me. And in fact, it's really about the family that sort of like, manipulated away the rights to his name and now is making all this money while his son is not. And you can just--

Kai Ryssdal: You should just, super, quick, remind people who Bob Ross is. Super quick.

Molly Wood: Oh, of course. Yeah. Bob Ross, the PBS, the longtime PBS painting instructor of, best known for happy little trees. That guy and he just made people so happy. Yeah, yeah. And the net, the documentary has like riled people up against this family that, that is taking all the money in his name right now and if you want to just like, see people wholesomely defend Bob Ross, it'll make you feel good because folks are coming for this family.

Kai Ryssdal: Oh man. Alright, mine real quick. People were coming for Al Roker this weekend. Al did what weather people do even at the age of 67, which is what Al is, and he went to New Orleans and he stood on a street corner and leaned into the wind and did his stand up thing, as weather people do. Which, parenthetically by the way, one day is gonna get somebody killed but it was not Al Roker this weekend even though people on Twitter piled on him. They were basically like, you're an old man! What are you doing? Get off the road, blah blah, get off the street, not healthy, can't be good for you. Al goes after them on Twitter and, and posts the thing that says for all those who are worried about me out there on like, number one, I volunteer to do this, it's part of my job. Number two, my crew and I were safe. We're back at our hotel, and number c, number c, letter c, for those of you who think I'm too old to be doing this, try to keep up. And it was a video of him standing in his bathtub taking these boots off and he took his boots off and water just came gushing out from the rain and stuff clearly. So, you know, I'm no

big Today Show weather guy and I hated Willard Scott but, you know, be nice to Al Roker, he's out there working. He's out there working

Molly Wood: He is. He is. He is an American institution and try to keep up is a line for the ages, like that was beautiful. That was awesome. All right. We went a little long today but I think it was worth it. Tomorrow we will go extra long because it's deep dive day. Hey-o! On the creator economy, which is going to be a fun conversation. It's obviously a big buzzword but it really does refer to a major shift in entertainment. Lots of money behind influencers, Tik Tok creators, YouTubers, not just the disinformation part, the actual part where they're entertaining and making a crap ton of money doing it. And that is what we'll talk about tomorrow. Crap ton, it's a technical term.

Kai Ryssdal: For now, send us your comments, questions, makemesmart@marketplace.org is how you can do that, or you just give us call. Leave us a voice message. Our number is 508-827-6278 or 508-UB-SMART. Boom.

Molly Wood: I mean, we got like nine stories and we're only two minutes over. I'm impressed.

Kai Ryssdal: We killed it. Make Me Smart is produced and directed by Marissa Cabrera. Today's program was engineered by Brian Allison.

Molly Wood: Thank you to Donna Tam for filling in last week. Senior producer Bridget Bodnar is back from vaycay and so relaxed and excited. Blowing up our phones. The executive director of on demand is Sitara Nieves.

Kai Ryssdal: There was a vociferous slack train going on this morning with Bridget. I've got things to tell you people, get your phones out and look at them.

Molly Wood: Oh, my goodness. Seriously, you all have to watch this documentary. It's amazing.