

## Tanya Griffiths | Discover Stories Episode 69

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### **Graeme Wyman** 00:54

My name is Graeme Wyman and I'm a program manager with Disability Foundation. Welcome back to Discover Stories on Re-Imagine Radio. Today we're joined with Tanya Griffiths, who's the Vancouver Adaptive Music Society's Social Justice Practicum Student for this term. Welcome, Tanya. And thank you for joining us today.

### **Tanya Griffiths** 01:14

Hi, Graeme. Thank you for having me.

### **Graeme Wyman** 01:16

How are you doing?

### **Tanya Griffiths** 01:17

I'm doing quite well. Thank you. Yeah, I feel like the weather today, which is cloudy kind of reflects how I feel internally. So I'm feeling quite good and comforted.

### **Graeme Wyman** 01:29

Good. It's a good podcast recording day.

### **Tanya Griffiths** 01:32

Yeah. And how are you?

**Graeme Wyman** 01:34

I'm doing well, thank you for asking. So why don't we jump in to the interview? But to start us off, why don't you tell our listeners a little bit about Adler University, and how you got involved with the program?

**Tanya Griffiths** 01:49

Yeah. So Adler University is actually located in downtown Vancouver. And the main campus or the original campus is actually in Chicago. And essentially, it's based on Adlerian psychology, and the foundations of that lie in social interest, pluralism, alongside other values, such as equity and courage and excellence. And, yes, essentially, university where socially responsible practitioners are developed and encouraged. And so I was actually, in a completely different career, like work path before joining Adler. I was more so, in marketing, and in creative writing, because that's what my undergrad was in as well. And so I got involved in Adler, because I realized that I wanted to pursue psychology and I wanted to pursue being a counselor. And I really aligned with Adler's values, the way they approach learning. And that community feeling that was so important, and it's continuously upheld, in the way that classes are formed. So yeah, that's essentially how I got, sort of, brought into this into this field.

**Graeme Wyman** 03:30

Yeah, no, that's, it's certainly a shift for sure. From from your undergrad.

**Tanya Griffiths** 03:34

Mm hmm.

**Graeme Wyman** 03:36

So you are joining the Vancouver Adaptive Music Society for your practicum. What drew you to our program? And what do you hope to get out of your experience working with VAMS?

**Tanya Griffiths** 03:50

Yeah, um, I am a very creatively inclined person. As I mentioned, I did creative writing in my undergrad, it wasn't my major, my major was Hispanic studies. But I really enjoy creative pursuits. And it's really hard for me to pursue them when I'm in school, because I feel like my brain is very academically focused. And that's a that's a different part. And I just knew

that for my practicum, I wanted to engage myself in other activities that were also very meaningful. And I love storytelling. And essentially, you know, coming to talk to people coming from different streams. I just think that that's a way of storytelling and also a way of forming community and connection. So I was very intrigued by VAMS. I thought it was a great opportunity to also learn about podcasting. And just to meet many people who are doing amazing work within the disability community, which isn't actually like, in terms of like mental illnesses and mental health, I haven't really been involved in as much in Vancouver. I thought that it was a great opportunity to also widen my scope and learn more about the challenges that the disability community faces. Because it affects people differently. And in some ways, there's some of that overlap. So it also better my skills too as a counselor eventually, because then I also have some of that background as well.

**Graeme Wyman 05:43**

Okay. Um, so Tanya, in 2020, you began your business Being Baked Cookies, which combined your passion for being in the kitchen, but also mental health advocacy. And you briefly touched upon that when you were answering my last question. What prompted you to start up this business?

**Tanya Griffiths 06:02**

Yeah, it was actually, during the pandemic that I started this business. It was a very confusing and disorienting year - 2020. I just finished my undergrad. And my whole plan was to give myself the summer off to travel before looking for work. But the job market, and just the sense of grief, and confusion, I think, prompted me to really sit with what I wanted to do, because I could apply for all of these jobs into all these places that all these sectors are actually letting go of many employees. Seeing that I would have a very little chance of getting in. Or I could also experiment and make something of myself and for myself, and also for the communities that I wanted to serve. And so I came up with Being Baked Cookies, because I really enjoy baking. And I love the aspect of sharing food. Coming from the Philippines, sharing food and making food is one of our many love languages. And we also express a lot of gratitude when being fed, and also in the opportunity to also just nourish others. So I remember doing like a cookie experiment where I tried lots of different recipes and tried to figure out my favorite ones, because what else would you do during the pandemic? I know, so many people went into like sourdough making in 2020. And so I did that. And then I think it was one of my roommates, actually, that told me how it would be nice if I also included my creative writing skills into that experience of having a cookie and reading something, and it would be really nice and grounding. And I really loved that idea. I thought it was a great way for me to coalesce these two parts of me together, and also to

offer an experience an experience that is very different, and special. And so the way I see it is sort of like intentional fortune cookie experience, where people get to be grounded in the sense that they're eating something that brings them into the present moment, because I think it's actually difficult to think about issues and problems when you're eating something that tastes good. And it can bring oneself to the present moment. And then also read something that is comforting and is encouraging you to extend some grace to yourself or some compassion. So that's essentially how Being Baked started. It was just like all these ideas coming together, as well as being in that environment that really pushed me to pursue this. That's very remarkable that you took the time that I think everyone on the on the planet was having a tough time in but bringing something positive into the world with that. So big props for doing that. Yeah, I think a lot of small businesses definitely manifested in Vancouver. Specifically during that time because people were forced to be home and really sit with themselves and, you know, pursue their creative interests. So yeah, I thought it was a very nice time to also to see that small business community come together.

**Graeme Wyman** 10:13

Yeah, and I do really enjoy how, but like, again, bringing back into the moment, and I think I know for myself, whether that's music or even cooking, like I love to cook as well. And it's one of those things where you've just got to be super vigilant and focused on one thing, and again, anything that gets you being in the moment more, sign me up for that.

**Tanya Griffiths** 10:39

Yeah, I have a question for you.

**Graeme Wyman** 10:41

Of course.

**Tanya Griffiths** 10:42

What's your favorite meal to make?

**Graeme Wyman** 10:47

To make? Oh, okay. I'm gonna go for a twofer. You flipped the interview, I like it. I like it. So my mom had this bolognese recipe. And when I was a kid, I gave her a Mario Batali Italian Cookbook for Christmas. And she loves cookbooks, like I got my passion for cooking from her. And so she, there's this Bolognese recipe that was in there, and she would always

make it and knock it out of the park. And it wasn't until actually, like, two years ago that I actually decided, and I've cooked a bunch of different things beforehand, but doing that, it's like really like a three to four hour process. And, and that was, again, I had a lot more respect for my mom, like how long it took her but and everything. So it was partially connecting to her with that. But also just that I think the sauce whether it's on lasagna or anything, that's a really tasty meal. But the second one, and this also ties in my grandma, my mom's mom, she was an excellent cook as well. And even when I was an adult, and my parents would go away, and I wasn't even living at home, but my grandma would come and take care of the cats and dogs and stuff like that. So I there was an opportunity for me to just to hang out with her and learn some things from her. But we would one of the my favorite recipes that we would do together is a ham and split pea soup. So yeah, and that was you know, we go out with my grandma shopping for all the things and learning from her. So that that was also a really special meal that I still to this day, enjoy cooking.

**Tanya Griffiths** 12:40

I love that! Thank you so much for sharing, I have such a big smile on my face because I love hearing people's stories about why a certain dish means so much to them. And for you, it's like connecting with your mom and connecting with your grandmother and the memories attached to that. And I love that. And that's also how like, people are brought together over food. As I mentioned earlier, coming from the Philippines, food is so sacred to us. And many of our festivities are like food is always part of it. You know, it's always on the table. And we relentlessly offer them to our guests. Pass the brim of fullness.

**Graeme Wyman** 13:33

Yeah, that's awesome.

**Tanya Griffiths** 13:34

So I really appreciate that. And you're right, it offers that sense of comfort too which I think it's so nice to be reminded of of moments of togetherness, too, especially when we feel alone.

**Graeme Wyman** 13:49

Mm hmm. No, for sure. And the other thing too, that I again, I know we're going on a cooking tangent, which is fine, but I also really enjoy experimenting. Like sometimes I might try something a little different. And that's I think another thing that cooking again, it's being that like in the moment, and even having to make certain executive decisions in the

moment as well on top of that is is is a really fun way. It's almost like jamming, but in the kitchen you know, maybe that might be it might be a wrong note, but it actually fits in the whole larger scope of everything.

**Tanya Griffiths** 14:28

Yes! I love that.

**Graeme Wyman** 14:32

So no that I love that. I love that little tangent we just had. However I did go back to after you did Being Baked Cookies, you also developed a mindfulness app, which seemed like a natural extension from what you explained before but your original concept what what you thought being bake cookies can be. How did that come about - the you creating the app?

**Tanya Griffiths** 15:00

Yeah. I just realized that I start all my answers with Yeah.

**Graeme Wyman** 15:06

Haha! No worries.

**Tanya Griffiths** 15:09

I started the app because I always wanted to offer something to people that was free. And I know that cookies is something that people buy. We're usually situated in farmers markets, or we do orders online. But I wanted to offer something that could benefit my community. And that had like, no strings attached, it was just an offering. And so the mindfulness app came to me because I used to struggle so much with emotional regulation, and just sitting with my emotions and letting them be without attaching myself to these emotions. And so when I was thinking about this app that I wanted to create, I just want it to be simple and straightforward, and easily navigatable for the users, as well as globally accessible, of course. And I was thinking about this and brainstorming. And so what I thought I'd do is I would choose eight challenging, more difficult emotions, such as worried, overwhelmed, frustrated, and I would let people choose where they're at, and I'd give them the option of either getting an affirmation or a reflection depending on what they need. So what this prompts people to do is to label their emotion, there are many emotions, there's, there's like, over 30 emotions, which I think people don't realize that, but I didn't want to overwhelm them either. So I wanted these emotions, to not be so charged. So not emotionally, you know, heavy, very heavy. But I also wanted them to relate

to people. So the first stage of choosing an emotion gives people the opportunity to label their emotion, if they relate to the emotions, given since we only have eight emotion options, I guess. So that labels their emotion. And then the next stage is for them to sit with themselves and see what they need. So that's either receiving comfort in the form of affirmation, so saying I am statements, and hearing that comfort out loud, or reflections, so questioning their emotions further and allowing for exploration of that emotion of what is it telling them of, you know, if there had been any patterns in the past where these emotions come up. And then after that, we give them like a little break a little just to come into the present moment to ground themselves, because I think grounding is very important before starting this entire experience, actually, before offering that reflection, or that affirmation. And then people can stay there as long as they need before, it's basically the end of the user experience. And they can either start the experience again, if, for example, the affirmation or the reflection generated did not land with them, they can do it again. So in very simple terms, it's essentially a affirmation or reflection generator. And there are many different options for people to to explore. But yeah, I just wanted to give that to folks to use as a resource whenever they needed it. And that honestly makes me feel more aligned in terms of my values, because I don't think support should always be priced. I think that, you know, if we can make things more accessible to people who need it the most, then perhaps the world would be much better. So yeah, that's, that's essentially how it all started and how it came together.

**Graeme Wyman** 19:26

Okay, no, it sounds very interesting. And again, what a great initiative that you you've put together. Before I move on, for our listeners, can you tell them - well, I've been on the site - but do you mind just letting them know what the website is?

**Tanya Griffiths** 19:45

Yeah, of course. All you have to do is search [app.beingbakedcookies.ca](http://app.beingbakedcookies.ca) and that'll bring you straight to the app. No need to download anything. No data is taken from you. Um, it's accessible anywhere you are in the world, all you need is internet. You don't even need a phone. So yeah!

**Graeme Wyman** 20:07

Great. Well, no, thank you. I'm sure. Yeah, I mean, I'll definitely be checking it out again, for sure. And that goes into, I guess my next question, but since you started the website up, how much activity have you seen on there? And where do you hope it to grow to?

**Tanya Griffiths 20:26**

Mmhmm. So because of my schooling, I haven't been able to dedicate as much time to this, especially with something like an app, the more you drive it in social media, the more traction it gets, the more views it receives, the more uses it has. So currently, it's definitely been below 10 users, sometimes even like none in one day. But that's just like where I'm at. I've had no capacity to put into this lately. And also, knowing myself, I'm a very big, I want to give the most that I can to something that I start or to something that I'm dedicated to. So right now, I'm unable to work on it a lot. But in terms of the future, I want to push it out more in social media and sort of just, share more about it and how it can help folks. And obviously, just like any other mental health app, sometimes it just doesn't land with people. And that's okay. It's just a matter of putting this out there and seeing the people who do relate to it and who need that emotion regulation support. So yeah, I think it's kind of hard to say for sure. Because of school, but yeah, it's it's there. And, oh, it was also funded by a grant that I received, which was very helpful. But in order for me to also continue that development, I would need more grants. So it also depends on that aspect, too.

**Graeme Wyman 22:12**

Okay. Would you ever want to add more emotions at all?

**Tanya Griffiths 22:15**

Yeah, absolutely. When I released the app to beta testers, I had this one person comment that it would be nice to have a I-don't-know-how-I-feel option, because some people just don't know how they feel. The closest we have to that emotion is confused, which is on the app already. But it is true that some people just aren't aware, or they're still learning how to navigate their emotions. So yeah, being open to that as well. I think there's, in terms of app development, there's lots of ways to progress.

**Graeme Wyman 22:55**

Okay. Well, I have one more question for you today. And as a counseling psychology student, what would you like to do with your career once you're finished? Or even if you know, I know not to put you on the spot.

**Tanya Griffiths 23:10**



I think I'd like to go into private practice, maybe. But I'm also very open to working with communities. But one thing that I also want to be well versed in, is also how to create therapeutic settings that also stray away from a very western lens when it comes to counseling. Coming from the Philippines, and also seeing how the collective matters as well, and how personal ties, personal responsibilities in terms of like roles in the family, gender roles, they also play a part too. So the way I see the individual is also seeing the entanglements of their identities and their roles, whether that being familial roles, or even societal. And so, I think I want to make sure that I am equipped to help the communities that I wish to serve. And that also comes with training. And I want to make sure that I have that because my school, it prepares me to be a counselor, but also I want to make sure that I have enough experience and skills when it comes time to actually offering the support to somebody. So there's that aspect and then there's also just like being able to practice. Yeah, I think I would really love to just get out there and, and to and to be a counselor and yeah, I know that I'm relatively like still young. There's also that like age aspect where maybe harder to relate to younger counselors when you're somebody older. So yeah, just like writing, it's something that you get better in with time and practice.

**Graeme Wyman 25:16**

Well, lots of exciting things on the horizon.

**Tanya Griffiths 25:18**

Yeah, lots of possibilities! So I'm definitely staying open to it because I say this now, but maybe in two years, I am pulled in a different direction. And I'm open to that. Of course, of course,

**Graeme Wyman 25:30**

Of course, of course, yeah, there's never a handbook right for any of this.

**Tanya Griffiths 25:32**

Nope, there's no handbook for life.

**Graeme Wyman 25:35**

Yeah. Well, Tanya, thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me today. And to tell us a little bit about yourself. And, and yeah, I'm just looking forward to having you as part of the VAMS team for your practicum.

**Tanya Griffiths 25:52**

Yeah. Thank you so much, Graeme. It's also been so nice to have this sit down talk with you. And yeah, to be part of the VAMS team. It's definitely just so eye opening and so excited to continue. So thank you.

**Graeme Wyman 26:08**

Same here. Yeah, no, lots of good as I said, lots of good things coming ahead. All right! So that's another episode of Discover Stories on Re-Imagine Radio. Again, my name is Graeme Wyman and again, many thanks to Tanya Griffiths for joining us today. And please check back the Re-Imagine Radio YouTube channel for more upcoming podcasts and content.