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## The Utah Statesman, March 15, 2021

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Week of March 15, 2021



# MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

ARTICLES INSIDE



PHOTO BY Joseph Myers

# Suicide: How and why we should talk about it

By Jacee Caldwell  
NEWS STAFF WRITER

**S**uicide affects many individuals in various ways. It's a struggle, indirectly or directly, that people could be facing all around without anyone even realizing it.

According to America's Health Rankings, in 2020 Utah had 22.2 deaths per 100,000 population, a little over 665 deaths. This puts Utah at 5th in the United States for suicide.

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention also reports that suicide was the 7th leading cause of death in Utah in 2020 and, on average, one person died by suicide every 13 hours.

Although these statistics may just be numbers on a page to some, they represent a bigger picture that demonstrates a mental health crisis so many people face.

So then, why don't we talk about it more?

Of course there are appropriate and inappropriate times, just like anything, to talk about suicide. However, language matters. It's important for everyone to understand how to talk about suicide in the most proper and respectful way possible.

Maddie Shreve, a Freshman at USU said, "[Suicide] is a heavy heavy premise, and a mature topic, but I believe that it should be talked about because it can only be a benefit."

For starters, "suicide" is not a bad word. Kathryn Lee-hane, an author with her own personal experiences with

suicide, wrote an article for KQED where she said, "The more we understand and discuss it, the more we can help those affected by it-and potentially save lives."

She also wrote, "I'm haunted by the fear I could have done more to help my brother, maybe even prevented his death. But if no one wants to talk, if you can't share your experience with those closest to you, how can you heal?"

And while the word "suicide" does invite conversation, there are other terms that are strongly discouraged, such as the phrase, "committed suicide."

When a person attaches "committed" to it, it implies that the victim is to blame and the person who did the act was weak, this gives the whole idea of suicide a very negative connotation.

Unfortunately, this can contradict the entire point of normalizing talking about suicide in a positive and comforting manner.

Dan Reidenberg, executive director of Suicide Awareness Voices of Education, told The Huffington Post, "The best phrase to use is 'died by suicide,' since it sends the message that the death was caused by the mental health condition."

He further explained that we don't hear people saying that someone "committed a heart attack," so dying by suicide is the same concept. Using the word "committed" discriminates against those who lost their battle with a mental health disease.

Other generally discouraged suicide terminology includes, "gestures," which suggests the person is selfish, "just" which minimizes struggles, "successful or unsuccess-

ful suicide" which portrays death as a success and finally, "permanent solution to a temporary problem," which portrays that you don't take it seriously.

It's also important to acknowledge that anyone and everyone goes through difficult times in their lives.

Recently, with an interview with Oprah Winfrey, the former actress and current Duchess of Sussex, Meghan Markle, also opened up this idea of normalizing talking about suicide.

In the interview, Markle talked about previous suicidal thoughts that she has had and expressed how important it is to know that it's okay to talk about them.

"I share this because, there's so many people who are afraid to voice that they need help and I know how hard it is, personally, to not just voice it, but when you do, to be told 'no,'" she said.

If others can understand this concept and become aware that so many others are affected or are going through the same thing, then it may assist them in coping with it because they aren't alone.

Shreve shared her experience of her uncle dying by suicide and how, rather than blaming him or trying to find someone to blame, her family chooses to live everyday for him, in a way that he would be proud.

The months of January through March seem to be hard for everyone, but especially those struggling with a mental illness. This can be for various possible reasons including, the cold and gloomy weather, isolation because of COVID-19 and the start of a new school semester with no breaks in sight.

However, no matter what time of year it is or what the sky looks like outside, there is one thing to remember that will always be true; everyone has worth, value and purpose.

If you or anyone you know is going through these same struggles, there are resources listed below to ensure that everyone can have access to the help they need.

—jacee.caldwell@usu.edu

**Suicide is complex and usually caused by multiple factors. Those who experience suicidal thoughts and behaviors can feel hopeless and overwhelmed. The following resources can help:**

**CAPS provides crisis support, therapy, and other treatment options: [www.aggiewellness.usu.edu](http://www.aggiewellness.usu.edu)**

**The SafeUT app offers 24-7 phone or text support: <https://safeut.med.utah.edu/>**

**The employee assistance program offers counseling and other resources for USU employees: [https://hr.usu.edu/benefits/voluntary/Employee\\_Assistance\\_Program](https://hr.usu.edu/benefits/voluntary/Employee_Assistance_Program)**

**Seek the assistance and advice of professionals who are trained to support someone who has suicidal thoughts or behaviors by reporting a student of concern: [https://cm.maxient.com/reporting-form.php?UtahStateUniv&layout\\_id=4](https://cm.maxient.com/reporting-form.php?UtahStateUniv&layout_id=4)**

# Low-maintenance self care for those always on the go

By Emily White  
LIFESTYLES SENIOR REPORTER

Are you ever so anxious that you can't relax or be productive? Feeling just stuck in a weird nebulous of pointless headaches and procrastination?

Well, as it turns out, through an intensive process of trial and error, I've come up with some low maintenance ways to calm myself down. That's right, I'm talking about taking care of myself, something I haven't been too good at in the recent past.

The first (and most important) thing to do when you're feeling anxious is to identify what you want or what you need. Usually, in my moments of distress, those two things line up pretty well. Regardless, when you need a mental, emotional or spiritual reset, I recommend a self care break.

My self care breaks usually consist of writing, dancing, meditating or doing something to shake up my normal routine.

If you need positivity and mental support, I recommend doing the 10/10/10 worksheet. The worksheet consists of three separate lists: most exciting desires, gratitudes and things you love to do. Disclaimer: this takes practice. Don't beat yourself up if you can't think of things to fill the lists. Once filling in the 10/10/10 sheet gets boring, consider journaling. Whether you're writing in an old notebook or in a guided journal, writing will help rejuvenate your brain and promote deep self reflection, easing your mind into a more gentle and compassionate state.

Dancing has been a solid cure all to my anxious brain. I love learning TikTok dances (as juvenile as it sounds), working out with The Fitness Marshall or jumping around the kitchen to my favorite jams. I think my new obsession with dancing has something to do with the exercise endorphins, so if dancing isn't for you, any movement will probably help.

Still, there are times when dancing doesn't calm my overactive mind down.



GRAPHIC BY James Clayton

In these times, I turn to meditation. Yes, this can be useful for the ADHD, ADD and chronic overthinkers in our midst. Fifteen minutes is usually my limit for meditation. For it to be successful, I need to have a guided meditation (I've found good ones on Apple Podcasts or Spotify). If I need an extra boost of compassion for myself, I use a facemask during my meditation. Sometimes simply focusing on breathing is enough to get me through the day.

While our brains love a good routine, sometimes a good routine can turn into a nasty rut that threatens to burn you out and leave you bedridden for days on end. The solution? Stepping outside your norm. Maybe instead of going grocery shopping on Monday, you go on Wednesday. Maybe instead of only looking at the flowers at the store, you buy some.

Shaking things up isn't always that romantic. I don't know about you, but sometimes I just need to go through the thousands of screenshots on my phone and delete everything I thought I needed 10 months ago.

Whatever you choose to do, make sure to keep compassion at the center of your actions. Write about yourself, not because you're selfish, but because your voice matters. Dance, not for attention, but for your body to feel utilized and energized. Meditate and use your favorite face mask, not because you're high maintenance, but because you need some you time. Do something outside of your comfort zone, not because your routine is bad, but because life demands to be lived freely and, albeit, a little chaotically.

Emily White is a junior studying English and broadcast journalism. She is currently serving as the senior writer for the Lifestyles section of the Statesman.

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# Letting the sun set on stigma

For decades, one of the most common stock tropes for horror stories has been that of insanity. Villains hear sinister voices telling them to commit atrocities or have alternate personalities bent on murdering as many people as they can.

These kinds of portrayals are far from compassionate, and they're far from accurate.

Many people live with mental illnesses such as schizophrenia or dissociative identity disorder, and for them, constant portrayals of people like them as villains are just part of a larger, real-world stigma that negatively influences their lives.

It's important to treat all mentally ill people, including those with illnesses perceived as "scary," with kindness, compassion, and respect. We've made great strides in recent years when it comes to destigmatizing illnesses such as depression and anxiety, but many mentally ill people have been left behind.

One reason stigma against some mental illnesses is so prevalent is that many people have inaccurate ideas of what these illnesses actually look like and how common they are.

For example, Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID), previously known as Multiple Personality Disorder, occurs in between 0.5% and 2% of the population (if that seems like a small number to you, consider how many redheads you have met, and remember that they make up 1-2% of the population).

DID is a way that the brain sometimes deals with trauma. An Infinite Mind, a self-advocacy website for people with DID, writes, "To escape pain and trauma in childhood, the mind splits off feelings, personality traits, characteristics, and memories, into separate compartments which then develop into unique personality states." These different personality states, often called alters, help a person survive the trauma they are experiencing.

People with DID experience the lingering effects of their trauma along with gaps in memory when one alter or another takes over, but these gaps don't involve murder sprees. Many people with DID live successful lives, and through therapy are able to process their trauma and either integrate their alters into a single individual or find balance and happiness living with their headmates.

Still, the stigma attached to their illness can cause shame and distress.



PHOTO BY Mike Scheid on Unsplash

One survivor, Margaret G., wrote "I knew that was the only diagnosis that made any sense, BUT hated that diagnosis for a long time. That was for crazy people and they got put away." Another, whose story was published anonymously, wrote, "It's self-perpetuating - the stigma of DID pervasively exists, requiring that those of us with DID step forward to share our stories so that the world may know who we really are. However, those of us with DID fear stepping forward as the stigma of DID and all mental illness could seriously negatively impact our lives."

People shouldn't have to feel afraid and ashamed about parts of themselves they cannot control. Illness is not morality, but how we treat those around us, who are different from us, certainly is.

Being human is a deeply strange, complex experience, and brains react to it in all sorts of ways. Everyone deserves a chance to receive love and acceptance, and everyone deserves the chance to live safe, happy, and fulfilled lives.

Just like people with depression and anxiety, people with more stigmatized or "scary" mental disorders are wonderfully human, with their own unique perspectives and things to offer others. It's long past time we stopped treating them like monsters and started embracing them in our lives and communities.

*Katelyn Allred is an opinion writer in her junior year of college. She's studying English with an emphasis in creative writing and enjoys reading, listening to podcasts, and baking.*

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# The epidemic of misrepresented mental illness

By Will Bultez  
LIFESTYLES COPY EDITOR

Healthy discussions about mental illness are recent developments. Media portrayals, stereotypes and misinformation have contributed to widespread misrepresentation of individuals affected by more serious or uncommon mental disorders. Even more common disorders, such as Tourette syndrome, are often the target of antiquated and harmful depictions due to lack of access to education or unwillingness to learn.

These misrepresentations can range from more casual statements about “being so OCD,” to bullying to the belief that schizophrenia, or mental illnesses in general, are the root cause of violence.

“A very harmful stereotype is that schizophrenia is associated with violence or criminality and, as a whole, the data doesn’t support that,” said Carter Davis, a graduate student at Utah State University in the clinical and counseling Ph.D. program.

According to research published by Jonathan M. Metzler and Kenneth T. MacLeish, “little population-level evidence supports the notion that individuals diagnosed with men-

tal illness are more likely than anyone else to commit gun crimes.”

Dr. Ceslo Arango says the best predictors of violence are the same for schizophrenics and the general population: sociodemographic factors such as age, gender and economic status; drug abuse; antisocial personality, which can be characterized by no understanding of right and wrong; genetics; and previous acts of violence.

According to these researchers and Davis, violence is not a symptom of schizophrenia, but rather it can be a result of untreated symptoms, such as delusions and hallucinations. The majority of those affected by schizophrenia, however, will never be violent.

Davis said proper treatment and early intervention can have positive impacts on the course of the illness. He said this includes increasing social contacts, creating support groups and giving them jobs where they can interact with others.

Schizophrenia can cause a disability to form healthy social relationships, compounding feelings of loneliness and ostracization, which, according to Davis, makes healthy social relationships even more important.

“If you know someone who has either gotten this diagnosis or has any of these experiences, don’t let your mind go to the stereotypes you hear about,” Davis said. “Just take the time to listen to their individual stories.”

Along with schizophrenia, bipolar disorder is also commonly misinterpreted.

“Both bipolar and schizophrenia, they’re both described as what we call serious mental illness,” Davis said. “There’s an increased risk for both.”

This, however, often feeds assumptions that bipolar makes a normal life impossible.

“That doesn’t really acknowledge the science

and the research that says with appropriate management and social support, you can live a functional and full life,” Davis said.

In general, bipolar disorder is characterized by manic episodes, hectic, goal-directed activity lasting from a few days to multiple weeks. Many of those diagnosed with bipolar disorder often suffer from daily depressive episodes as well that can last for weeks.

Davis said medication for treatment is best paired with talk therapy. Again, education for that person’s whole network is also vital. One may never know if they associate with someone suffering from bipolar disorder or schizophrenia, so it is important to stay educated.

However, while it is important to understand that a normal life is still possible, it’s important not to demean bipolar disorder’s severity.

“Bipolar disorder is sometimes associated with artists and geniuses. There’s this idea of a sort of mad artist,” Davis said. “I think that can be a very harmful stereotype.”

He said that stereotype is too simplistic and “doesn’t speak to the severity of the condition.”

USU professor and obsessive compulsive spectrum disorder expert Michael Twohig said this is also a common issue when discussing OCD.

“There’s a little problem in our society of using OCD as a description for a sort of non-disordered behavior,” Twohig said. “I think we confuse being orderly and perfectionistic with being OCD and that takes away from the severity of what OCD is.”

In reality, when they are experiencing obsessions, it’s uncomfortable enough to cause them to “make great changes in their life.”

He said the obsession is a very disturbing thought, image or something happening in the body. The compulsive behavior is a reaction to the obsession. In Utah, a common example of OCD centers around obsession with morality. Twohig said this can result with parents harming their children over their obsession.

“People picture OCD being around cleanliness and orderliness, but the truth is OCD is about the thing you care about the most,” he said. “They’re really good at not showing that to the group. You don’t see peoples’ OCD.”

Compulsive rituals are often suppressed in public, but are still intense and aversive in private.

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# Aggie offense sputters in final, loses first of Craig Smith era



PHOTO COURTESY of Mountain West/NCAA Photos

Trey Pulliam #4 of the San Diego State Aztecs drives to the basket against the Utah State Aggies during the 2021 Mountain West Men's and Women's Basketball Championship held at the Thomas and Mack Center in Las Vegas, NV.

Defense may win championships, but it's not the only thing. If such were the case, Utah State might have hoisted the Mountain West Tournament trophy for a third consecutive time.

The Aggies spent most of the season getting away with its lackluster offense. Per Synergy Sports, they were almost exactly average in points scored per possession, sitting in the 52nd percentile. A top-shelf defense covered up any issues by lowering the bar the offense had to jump over to achieve victory. At least, it usually did. Saturday's 68-57 loss to San Diego State wasn't the only time a team burned USU on this weakness, but it's the one that will hurt the worst. It ended the bid for a three-peat and it may have ended the Aggies' run at the NCAA Tournament.

San Diego State's win could be ascribed to making nine of its last 11 field goal attempts, but those shots protected a lead already built by the Aztecs, despite making just

35.5 percent of their shots prior to that last flurry of makes. Holding a team to such a low shooting percentage almost always provides an easy route to victory, but lately, Utah State has often failed to take advantage of its elite defense.

In two of its previous three games, the Aggies put forth awful first-half offensive performances. Just 24 points against UNLV and an embarrassing 17 against Fresno State (the 24 against San Diego State fits right in with this group). Thankfully for USU, in both of the previous games, its defense kept them in it, allowing UNLV only 24 points and just 27 for FSU (and only 28 for SDSU) and the offense eventually caught up. Expecting that same strategy to work against a great team like San Diego State was folly.

Getting buckets when they aren't easy to come by has been Utah State's greatest weakness. Neemias Queta is credited as the lead player on offense, but his primary method for getting points — the post-up — is a highly inefficient play.

Queta's post-ups generate 0.899 points per possession this season per Synergy. For reference, Alphonso Anderson shot a relatively low 38.3 percent on spot-up shots this season and those possessions yielded a far better 0.985 points per possession.

Not having a go-to perimeter scorer — like, say, Sam Merrill — hurt the Aggies when they needed to make a play. Marco Anthony, Brock Miller and Justin Bean all have tremendous value on the court, but bucket-getting is not among their top skills. Rollie Worster has shown flashes of that capability, but he's just a true freshman with not enough time to develop into the kind of player to deliver in March.

Utah State's offense under Smith during his entire tenure has actually been deceptively underwhelming. His three iterations have scored more points per game than any Aggie team since the 1990s, but when looking at efficiency, questions can be raised. In the last 10 USU basketball seasons, Smith's three teams make up the bottom three in field goal percentage with 2020-21 being the worst. Three-point shooting is exactly the same story, even though Smith enjoyed two seasons of the best Aggie shooter not named Jaycee Carroll.

Pointing fingers at USU's offense under Smith isn't to say the team can't be successful with him at the head. The results clearly say otherwise. Two conference tournament wins, a third appearance, a regular season conference title, and a 12-2 record in March all clearly indicate that what Smith does works. But his weakness is teaching his players to become better shooters and scorers, and this year it came back to bite the Aggies right in the big blue A.

By Jacob Nielson  
SPORTS STAFF WRITER

*Jason Walker is a senior studying journalism at Utah State. You can also find his work on the SLC Dunk covering the Utah Jazz.*



# Selection Sunday: USU hopes for another shot at the big dance

With 2:41 left to play, Utah State trailed San Diego State by six, holding just a sliver of momentum and hope of victory.

Junior Justin Bean dribbled up the court and passed it in the direction of junior Marco Anthony, but it was turned over by Aztec senior Trey Pulliam. Desperate to avenge himself, Bean dove after the ball. It was all for naught. He finished the play defeated on the ground, while Pulliam finished it triumphantly in the air, getting the easy layup.

Claiming the Mountain West tournament championship over the Aggies 68 to 57, San Diego State finished the game standing high up on a ladder, cutting down the net.

Utah State — which turned the ball over 16 times on the afternoon — finished the game in the locker room, “Very disappointed and quiet,” according to head coach Craig Smith.

They battled hard all season long, just to fall one game short of the goal — their third straight Mountain West tournament title.

“It’s tough,” Smith said. “You put in this much time, this much investment, and everything that goes into it from all the way back to the summer to now then

you had the rigors of the protocols and all the testing.”

But depending on what happens on Selection Sunday, the Aggies still have a chance to turn around the end of their season, by earning an at-large bid to the NCAA tournament in Indiana.

“We had too many turnovers, so now we’re in the waiting game,” Smith said. “Everything’s out of our control, we did everything we possibly could, in one of the hardest seasons you could possibly imagine just for obvious reasons with COVID and everything.”

So here is what the selection committee will consider on Sunday:

The Aggies, who entered the SDSU game No. 37 in the NET rankings, finished the season 20-8, 17-5 against

conference foes. Overall, they are 8-0 in quad four games, 7-2 in quad three games, 2-1 in quad two games, and 2-4 in quad one games.

They have two bad losses — falling to quad three schools South Dakota State (No. 124), and UNLV (No. 183).

The Aggies also squandered three opportunities for quad-one wins to solidify their spot in the dance. In De-

ter the game, but wrote in a story earlier that morning, “The Aggies still have a chance to get selected with a loss.”

However, it’s not these talking heads that decide the 68-team field, it’s a ten-man committee consisting of athletic directors and conference commissioners. Lucky for USU, Mountain West commissioner Craig Thompson is on the committee, maybe he’ll put in the good word.

Smith expressed frustration postgame about the selection process and explained why it’s a struggle to be a mid-major and earn an at-large bid.

“We’ve been on the bubble for three straight years. That’s where we’re at. It’s hard for us to get certain games, it’s hard for us to get teams to come to play in Logan,” Smith said. “You do what you can, every game matters at our level. We’re obviously not a (Power 5) school where you can finish in the middle of the pack and still possibly NCAA birth.”

There will be great anticipation in Logan the next 24 hours, waiting for the Aggies’ fate to be decided. Will junior Neemias Queta — who will likely leave for the NBA draft following the end of this season — and a USU program that hasn’t won an NCAA tournament game since 2001 get another shot?

Smith thinks so.

“This team can compete with anybody,” he said. “We’re good enough to make it.”

**By Jacob Nielson**  
SPORTS STAFF WRITER

*Jacob Nielson is a junior journalism major at Utah State University who enjoys watching sports, running and his Aggies.*



ember, they were narrowly defeated at home to BYU. In February, the Aggies faltered down the stretch in back-to-back games against Boise State and came up empty.

Their best wins of the season are back-to-back quad-one wins at home over San Diego State (No. 21), and a pair of quad-two wins over Colorado State (No. 51). A win over Northern Iowa and a sweep of Nevada are also a good look on the resume.

ESPN bracketologist Joe Lunardi put USU in the last four in just after Saturday’s final, despite losing the championship game. Kerry Miller of Bleacher Report has the Aggies in his last four in as well, putting them up against Drake in a play-in game. Bracketologist Jerry Palm of CBS Sports didn’t update his mock bracket af-





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# USU women's hoops season ends with loss to Wyoming

By Jacob Nielson  
SPORTS STAFF WRITER

It was an abrupt end to the season for the Utah State women's basketball team as they fell to Wyoming 69 to 41 in the opening round of the Mountain West tournament Sunday afternoon in Las Vegas.

The Aggies struggled to make baskets all game long, shooting just 13 of 60 (21.7 percent) from the field and 2 of 16 (12.5 percent) from three. Freshman Kinley Falslev led the way, scoring 10 points on 3 of 10 shooting. Senior Emmie Harris had a team-high 7 rebounds and 4 points. Sophomore Faith Bradley had a team-high 2 assists to go with 5 points. Senior Jessica Chapman, the Aggies second-leading scorer (11.3 points per game), had just two points, shooting 1 of 8 from the field.

Wyoming opened the game with two quick buckets from junior Alba Sanchez Ramos to go up 5 to 0 and never relinquished the lead. The Aggies would score just six points in the opening quarter, and go on a scoring drought from the 4:06 mark of the first quarter to the 8:38 mark of the second quarter when junior Monique Pruitt spun and hit a jumper to make it 19 to 8.

Cowgirl sophomore McKinley Bradshaw proved troublesome for the Aggies, as she came off the bench and was able to get easy looks at the rim, finishing the half with 10 points. At halftime, the Aggies would trail 32 to 17.

In the third quarter, Wyoming turned the game into a full-on blowout, outscoring USU 28 to 15 to extend the lead 60 to 33. In the 4th quarter, the Cowgirls benched their starters, so the Aggies managed to hold them to just nine points. But the offense never got going.

USU scored just eight points in the final quarter.

Head Coach Kayle Ard's first year as Utah State's coach started promising - they won four of their first eight games - including two conference wins over Air Force. But then the Aggies went on a 16-game losing streak in conference play to finish the season with a 4-20 record.

Ard tweeted after the game, "Thank you for your unwavering support throughout our season. We will be better next year."

Harris and Chapman are the only seniors on the roster, both will have the option to come back next year due to the NCAA granting a free year of eligibility to winter sports athletes.



—sports@usstatesman.com


 @Jacobnielson12

PHOTO COURTESY of Mountain West/NCAA Photos  
Dagny Davidsdottir #33 of the Wyoming Cowgirls drives to the basket against the Utah State Aggies during the 2021 Mountain West Men's and Women's Basketball Championship held at the Thomas and Mack Center in Las Vegas, NV.

# Queta and co. lead USU men's hoops to its third straight final

By Jason Walker  
SENIOR SPORTS WRITER

March is the month for winners. And March is Utah State's month. The Aggies are now 12-1 in the month of March under the guidance of head coach Craig Smith — undefeated against Mountain West opponents. The team's latest feat during this hallowed month is downing Colorado State 62-50 in the Mountain West Tournament semifinal March 12 in Las Vegas.

"It's hard to win period, and it's times 10 when you get into March," Smith said. "At this time, everyone knows each other inside, out and backwards. Scoring is very difficult. But our guys stayed the course."

On a night when the Aggies made just 36 percent of its field goals, they needed every bit of grit to grind out the 12-point victory. Most of that grit came from its veterans — Neemias Queta, Justin Bean and Brock Miller — who have just about seen it all now that they are playing in their third Mountain West Tournament final. And it was those three who led the Aggies, especially on offense. Queta led all Aggie scorers with 18, Bean finished second with 13 points and Miller tallied 11.

"We've got a really deep group," Queta said. "We don't rely a lot on one person like the last few years. We had Sam Merrill, who was a great player for us, but this year we're the definition of a team even more I'd say. Everybody can step up every game. Everybody can score 20 points every game. We're a lot more balanced as a team."

Offensively the Aggies were balanced, but Queta was a one-man wrecking crew on defense. The junior center blocked nine, yes nine, shots on the night. Alongside his 18 points and 14 rebounds, he nearly recorded just the sixth triple-double in Mountain West history but did manage to record the second-most blocks in a Mountain West tournament game, behind only Justin Williams' 12.

Four of Queta's blocks came in the final 97 seconds of the game, a crucial stretch where Utah State had to hold onto a lead that had dwindled from as high as 16 all the way down to seven. The final nine minutes overall was a sinkhole for both offenses.

With 9:50 left in the game, Marco Anthony hit what would be Utah State's final field goal of the game. From



Isaiah Stevens #4 of the Colorado State Rams drives to the hoop against the Utah State Aggies during the 2021 Mountain West Men's and Women's Basketball Championship held at the Thomas and Mack Center in Las Vegas, NV.

PHOTO COURTESY of Mountain West/NCAA Photos

there, the Aggies missed seven straight shots. Colorado State cut down the 55-40 advantage from Anthony's shot down to 57-50 with 4:01 left on the clock. But from there, the Rams joined the Aggies in an inability to make any field goals. CSU missed 11 straight shots and didn't score another point the rest of the way.

"We really defended hard and well and made life difficult for them," Smith said. "They're a high-octane offense. They can really get it going. They have a lot of weapons. Of course, it really helps when you have a guy like (Queta) that's there that has tremendous feel for the game."

Though the defense in the last four minutes was admirable, Smith said watching his team struggle to make literally anything was "agonizing."

"We got out of sorts a little bit, maybe a little tentative," Smith said. "We missed some clean looks and some good looks. And I thought we missed some opportunities. We always say, 'look below you,' so if you're on the perimeter, you're looking inside for (Queta) or

looking for a cutter cutting to the rim. And I'm not sure we did a very good job. I thought we missed (Queta) three or four times where honestly we would have got fouled or a thunderous dunk."

Utah State will face San Diego State in the championship game at 4 p.m. Mountain Time on March 13. It's the third straight year these two sides have met in the Mountain West Tournament finale with the Aggies winning both of the previous matchups. The Aztecs come into the matchup ranked 19th in the AP Poll, though they were ranked sixth in the nation in last year's championship game that ended with Merrill's now-legendary shot.

In the two matchups this season, USU came away with wins, sweeping SDSU for the first time in program history.

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# It all comes full circle

By Jacob Nielson  
SPORTS STAFF WRITER

On March 7, 2020, Sam Merrill hit “the shot” over San Diego State to clinch Utah State’s second straight Mountain West tournament championship and its second straight NCAA tournament appearance.

But six days later, elation turned into heartbreak, as the COVID-19 pandemic forced the cancelation of March Madness and flipped the United States, and the world, on its head.

Fast forward 371 days, our country has changed in a remarkable way. The virus has kept people in their homes and away from large gatherings. Millions of Americans have lost jobs, and over half a million have lost their lives. Most states issued a mask mandate. A vaccine was developed in record time. And oh, there is a new president in office.

But despite all the change, one thing remains the same: Aggies, Aztecs and the Thomas and Mack Center on a Saturday afternoon with a tournament championship and an automatic bid to the Big Dance on the line.

In USU’s 62-50 victory over Colorado State early in the morning of March 13, it was apparent that the Aggies are once again a top-two team in the conference.

The defense asserted its will and the offense managed to get it done. The leader of that was junior Neemias Queta, who finished with an astonishing 18 points, 14 rebounds and nine blocks. With the win, the Aggies will likely earn an at-large bid to the NCAA tournament in Indiana, regardless of what happens in the final.

But in the eyes of the team, the goal is the same as last year. Win the Mountain West tournament.

“I don’t want to say accomplishment yet, we haven’t accom-

plished anything,” Queta said. “We have to go in there tomorrow and be ready to go and win. But it’s definitely good to be in the same spot last year.”

The Aggie’s journey to get back to the championship game hasn’t been easy. Merrill, one of the most prolific scorers in Utah State history, has graduated and is in the NBA. Two other starters, Abel Porter and Diogo Brito are graduated and have moved on as well.

After months of uncertainty, the team regrouped in Logan in the fall and did what they could to prepare for the upcoming season.

Repping a newly structured back court consisting of junior transfer Marco Anthony and freshman guards Rollie Worster, Steven Ashworth and Max Shulga, the Aggies traveled to South Dakota for a thanksgiving weekend tournament for their opening games.



PHOTO COURTESY of Mountain West/NCAA Photos

It didn't go well. They fell to VCU and South Dakota State, losing by 16 and 24 points respectively before picking off Northern Iowa in the final game.

Days later, head coach Craig Smith tested positive for COVID-19 and was absent for the Aggies narrow defeat against Brigham Young. Soon, there was an outbreak within the program, and two games had to be canceled.

At the end of December the group was finally back on the court and into conference play, and began to mold together as a unit. They strung together 11 straight victories — including back-to-back wins over SDSU — claiming the top spot in the conference and receiving votes in the AP top 25.

But then the struggles continued. They fell at home to Colorado State, giving up a then-season high 84 points. They followed that by traveling to Vegas and falling to UNLV 59 to 56, in a game where they shot just 32.8 percent from the field.

After winning the second UNLV game and then beating Fresno State, Utah State looked to get back on track. But COVID-19 reentered the picture, canceling its next three games.

USU returned to action on Feb. 17, their first game in 13 days, to take on Boise State. Worster was out with a leg injury, and the defense lacked the stamina and tenacity it generally carried. They dropped both games, to fall to 14-7 overall and slipped from No. 1 to No. 4 in the conference standings.

But as teams coached by Smith often do, the Aggies started to get back on track in the final weeks of February and into March.

They won four straight conference games to close out the season and once again earned the No. 2 seed in the conference tournament.

“We haven't exactly had the easiest of times here the last six, seven weeks with some things that are out of our control,” Smith said. “Our guys have not flinched, they have just stayed the course, kept coming together, I don't hear whining and complaining, (they) just deal with reality.”

The Aggies defense was effective all season, and multiple offensive threats have emerged. But in the past six games, they've taken their play to a new level, holding teams to 58.5 points, and have averaging 71.2 points per game.

“We just have a really deep group, we don't rely a lot on one person, like the last few years,” said Queta. “We had Sam Merrill, he was a great player for us, but this year is just a definition of a team, even more, I'd say.”

This installment of the Aggies will meet an Aztec team in the final that boasts a 13-game win streak, not having lost since their trip to Logan. They also have the conference player of the year, senior Matt Mitchell, and coach of the year, Brian Dutcher.

It's set up No. 1 vs. No. 2, just like last year. Despite the challenges, Utah State has the opportunity to regain its goal and beat the Aztecs in the final for the third straight year, becoming kings of the conference and solidifying their spot in the NCAA tournament field — and this time play in it.

It's all come full circle.

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PHOTO by Iain Laurence

# Aggie Network



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# A toolbox for managing our mental health

It's like drowning, except you can breath. It's like being run over by a semi without the broken bones and bruises to prove it. It's like looking through a one-way mirror that you're convinced no one else can see. It's something you can't find the words to explain to anyone, even though it's real.

On both my mother and my father's side, depression and anxiety runs in the family. I can see it, in my cousins, in my grandparents, in my siblings and in myself. And it seems to run in my chosen family as well.

In the past two months alone Utah State University has lost valuable, irreplaceable members of the Aggie family to the depths of hopelessness that have enveloped many people over the past year.

But long before COVID-19 was a concern in our mind, this was a problem. Over the past twenty years, suicide rates have steadily been rising in the US.

As a person who has both seen and experienced the struggles of mental health disorders, I can tell you that it's not easy and it's a little different for every person. Part of the problem is that people think that there is some magic spell, or formula, or Felix Felicis potion that would make it just go away but there isn't.

Honestly, in some ways, it never really goes away. But this doesn't mean that people who struggle with mental health are doomed to a miserable and broken life. Like people who are diagnosed with chronic physical conditions, the secret to living happily with mental health problems is good management. And to manage something correctly, you have to have the right tools.

Over the years, I've put a tool box together for handling my anxiety. I'm not an expert or a psychologist,

but I know what works for me, and in what situations.

For example, I personally find social situations extremely anxiety inducing. When I walk into a party (when we still did that) who am I supposed to talk to? Where am I supposed to sit? What should I eat and how much?

I always feel so out of place. I don't know how to effectively communicate with the other people around me, and I'm constantly worried about how other people perceive me. When I can feel my heart rate rising, my face flushing, and my palms beginning to sweat, I start to dig around in my tool box for the right technique to help me handle it.

My breathing is my level. Sometimes fast, and sometimes slow but often right in the middle, it stabilizes me. As I focus on it, everything else comes into balance.

My care for my physical health is my hammer. Without repeatedly pounding in the nails of self-care, everything else falls apart. Eating regularly, taking time to exercise for even just twenty minutes, rubbing lotion on my skin, and so many other simple health practices work miracles for the wars I fight in my head.

My acceptance of failure is my saw. My failure splits my hopes, cuts things down to size, and often leaves me wishing I had measured a second time. My acceptance of my failure gives me the opportunity to make something new out of those pieces. Everyone fails, and the more that I do it, the more I realize it isn't the end of the world.

And people are my vise-grip. They give me a reason to keep holding on. We live in a world where it's more possible than ever to be in contact with the people we

care about. I reach out, make plans, and enjoy all the time I can with the people that matter the most to me (and I meet new people when I can).

Hopefully, you found something in my toolbox worth tucking into your own, but at the end of the day that's not really the point.

The point is, there are tools, methods, techniques, and medication to combat mental health disorders. And if there are tools, there is hope.

At this point it is worth noting that if you're really struggling with a mental health issue, you should consider getting help from a specialist.

You wouldn't attempt to take out a tree with a hand-saw, and you shouldn't be tackling major mental health problems by yourself, either. There are lots of resources on campus to help students who are struggling with stress, depression, anxiety, and many other mental health problems. If you need immediate help, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is available to anyone 24/7 and it's free and confidential.

Again, mental health problems don't ever really go away. The only thing I don't like about my toolbox analogy is the idea that tools "fix" the problem. They don't fix it. But they do turn something that is impossible to handle into something that's manageable.

*Emeline Haroldsen is a dual Mathematics and Biochemistry major. She's originally from Maryland and she enjoys most forms of physical activity, playing the piano, and completing her homework on time.*

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GRAPHIC BY Keith Wilson

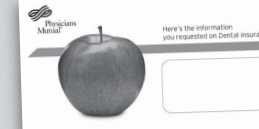
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8	2	4	3	6	1	5	7	9
7	3	6	8	5	9	1	2	4
9	1	5	2	7	4	6	3	8
6	4	7	9	1	3	2	8	5
2	8	1	6	4	5	3	9	7
3	5	9	7	8	2	4	1	6
1	6	3	4	9	7	8	5	2
5	7	8	1	2	6	9	4	3
4	9	2	5	3	8	7	6	1



*Keith Wilson*

CARTOON BY Keith Wilson

8				5				
	7		9				4	
		9		7	8	3	2	5
3		1		9			5	
		6					1	
	9			3		6		2
2	8	3	6	5		7		
	1				2		8	
			1					9

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# MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

MARCH 15 – 19, 2021

**MON**

## Meditation Yoga

TSC Ballroom | 5pm – 6pm

*30 min meditation, free hot cocoa and treats, CAPS info booth*

**TUES –  
THURS**

## Hope Wall

Tues & Thurs: TSC Patio, Wed: Front of Library  
10am – 2pm

*Free plants table, free hot cocoa + coffee, free treats, free mugs*

**FRI**

## Light the Night

Quad | 6pm – 8pm

*Sparklers, treats, guest speaker, and an activity*

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