

# Make Me Smart August 19, 2021 transcript

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**Molly Wood:** Great time.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Hey everybody, I'm Kai Ryssdal, welcome back to the Thursday edition of Make Me Smart, making today make sense.

**Molly Wood:** That's right. I'm Molly Wood. Thank you for joining us for our 500th episode.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Yeah, buddy. Hey, did you get the special thing that Bridget sent?

**Molly Wood:** Um, I did! Like nine pounds of ice cream. Thanks, Bridget.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Yes, I know! It was awesome.

**Molly Wood:** I love our team. It's even like the good local place. Yeah, multiple flavors. I mean, this team knows how to party from afar. It does.

**Kai Ryssdal:** It does. I think Bridget--I'm not telling you how to do your job, but it's not cool that just the hosts get the goodies, right? You gotta, now you got to do like stuff for everybody. I'm just saying.

**Molly Wood:** Oh, that's true. Yep. Uh huh. Right, just pull out the corporate credit card. Ice cream for all. Everybody got ice cream, I hope! It wouldn't just be us. That'd be silly. I'm just gonna let her not answer while she quickly shops for everyone else. Knowing Bridget, she shopped for everyone else.

**Kai Ryssdal:** You're new to being a host, right? Cuz, cuz, come on, hosts get special stuff all the time. And you have to make an effort.

**Molly Wood:** She wrote ice cream in our hearts.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Yes, well.

**Molly Wood:** I'm gonna send all of you ice cream.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Dark, cold, ball of coal heart. Bridget.

**Molly Wood:** Alright. Anyway, even though it's normally hollowed out Thursday, we have, yes, freezers full of ice cream, producers have ice cream in their hearts, and we're going to play it a little differently. Today we're going to do some news, which will be a little hollowed out I'm going to warn you in advance. And then we're going to bring it back with a special edition of half full half empty. Drew agreed to come to work today to host it for us. He comes to work every day, I'm just joking.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Eagerly and happily. Okay, you go first. Go.

**Molly Wood:** Oh, my biscuits. I mean, I don't even know where to start with today. I just don't even know where to start. Like, if you were going to design a hollowed out shell Thursday, then you would kind of totally have today. So I'm not gonna go too much into the bomb threat in front of the Library of Congress, except to say we're making, you know, we have had a subset of, of a certain type of terrorist in this country for a long time. And all we're doing is making more. Okay, in the headlines, and also on the news of three US senators testing positive for COVID-19--vaccinated senators.

**Kai Ryssdal:** All of whom were vaccinated.

**Molly Wood:** Right, exactly. All of whom are vaccinated. I want to point you to this story from sciencemag.org about Israel, which now apparently, despite having one of the highest levels of vaccination, 78% of those 12 and older are fully vaccinated, most of them with Pfizer, the country is now logging one of the world's highest infection rates with nearly 650 new cases. Now, more than half of those are in fully vaccinated people. So as we've been discussing, this thing is moving like wildfire. And it's part of the reason I assume that we're having this conversation about the third shots. The booster shots. Johnson and Johnson folks just out in the cold, kids under 12 apparently still out in the cold. Like it's all just, it's all just as March 2019 as it ever was.

**Kai Ryssdal:** It's, yeah, it's, it's getting messy again. You know, it's getting messy. Yeah.

**Molly Wood:** It's getting like, appalling in some states, truly horrific. And then across the country and as a matter of policy, yes. Like it's just messy. Clearly like, there's some flailing. And you sort of feel like the plans were made for the pandemic ending, not continuing.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Right. Just spot on.

**Molly Wood:** It's frustrating. Yeah, speaking of rinse and repeat, the US reissued the FTC--thank you-- reissued just as a little update, its lawsuit, its antitrust lawsuit against Facebook. And this was so interesting because, you know, the federal judge in June threw out this case that the FTC and 40 states had filed. And basically were like, you can't just say that Facebook is a monopoly, you actually have to prove it. And so there were a couple of options. One is to broaden the case. One is to drop it. And instead, it sounds like the FTC under, you know, the big famous Lena Khan new Commissioner, refiled the case with kind of like more

detail. Somebody, I think it was the New York Times, said it was like, there was a book report, and they said you need to show your work. And they went and showed their work, which I think is going to be really interesting to watch because it's very much the same case. It's calling for breakups. And the undoing of purchases that were made, you know, that the FTC rubber stamped, and it's going to be kind of a fascinating and long road.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Yeah, it's gonna be, it's gonna be a very long road. Right. That's where those of you expecting a quick resolution, don't.

**Molly Wood:** But it's, I do think that that is, I mean, again, this is, you know, she's a sharp lady. And I just think it's really interesting that, that she apparently felt and the lawyers of the FTC felt that no, this case really does stand on its merits, they just needed to do a little more work. The other thing I thought was so interesting is that the vote to revive this suit was three to two, with all the Democratic members of the FTC voting for it, and the republicans who have made no end of noise about reining in big tech because of concerns over censorship voted against the suit.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Yeah. Yep.

**Molly Wood:** So I don't know. And also just go read this Ringer story about this gross new host of Jeopardy. Because I'm sorry, this guy is gross.

**Kai Ryssdal:** He's gonna lose the gig. He's gonna lose the gig, cuz there's no way that they can roll him out in front of local stations to do promos and all this stuff. Let's back up. Why don't you tee up the Ringer story on Richards. Yeah.

**Molly Wood:** Yeah, totally. So yes. While Kai and I were on vacation, Mike Richards was named the new host of Jeopardy alongside Mayim Bialik, who was formerly on Blossom, who's gonna like, host the special programs or something. And then also, by the way, I found out today that she is sort of a proponent of like, really unproven, you know, brain improving stuff that was described by a writer as snake oil. And is this sort of a low key anti-vaxxer? Like, had to come out and say, no, no, I'm not an anti-vaxxer. I did at long last get the flu vaccine for my children for the first time this year, and also the COVID vaccine, but I still think that they're crap and there are too many of them and all this like, cast doubt on vaccines. So it's just like, it's messy on every level. But the reason it's messy with the guy who was the new host, and I know you already know this, but just in case, he was the executive producer, he was leading the search committee. There were lots and lots and lots of people who had been vetted and tried out for the show including LeVar Burton, as you know, a lot of people love that. Also Aaron Rodgers, Robin Roberts, Savannah Guthrie, all these like really successful accomplished TV people and this dude comes out of nowhere and hires himself and that was gross. But now it just goes on and on with what a gross like, me too guy he is, that there you know we have been questions about the mistreatment of female employees when he was the executive producer of The Price is Right. He was originally named as a defendant at one point in one of those complaints, there are like all these recordings of a podcast that he used to do which has now been deleted which,

adorable, the internet keeps everything. Where he just is disgusting, where the stuff that he just says about women as a matter of casual course is disgusting, and in 2021 should be unacceptable. Unacceptable. Gross, this guy is gross.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Totally agree. I'm just gonna let it sit there so now that we can get to my point which was there's no way that Sony Pictures Entertainment which owns Jeopardy can roll Mike Richards out to local stations for happy happy glad glad promos and not have somebody ask about this. And that's, I don't understand how you think that's gonna work. You know?

**Molly Wood:** I don't either. That's what I guess I find so amazing about this whole story, is, is like do you guys think nothing changed? Because I know not as much changed as we would like. I know that not a lot changed, but like some stuff did change. And this guy is a no go. We'll see.

**Kai Ryssdal:** I don't know what they're thinking. Yeah, we'll see.

**Molly Wood:** Yeah. Okay, I did like nine, sorry, your turn.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Oh, that's alright. That's good. Mine is reasonably quick. And it comes with a very large tip of the hat to Kimberly Adams who on Monday morning, as the whole event in, in Afghanistan was still unfolding, slacked me and said, what about all that military gear that we gave the Afghan army, that we took over there and left there? Who has that now? The Taliban has that now. And sure enough, the very first question to the Secretary of Defense on that Monday was, what about all the gear? And Secretary Austin basically said, Yeah, we're working on that. So from Reuters today, this note, talking about the Humvees and everything that's left over there, from small arms to helicopters. And Reuters reports this: "The officials said launching airstrikes against the larger equipment such as helicopters has not been ruled out to destroy it, obviously. But there is concern that would antagonize the Taliban at a time the United States' main goal is evacuating people." So all of these American weapons--well, you know, as it stands right now, as it stands right now, you know.

**Molly Wood:** Well, you try to take, you know, a big huge gun and tank away from the guy who's holding the big huge tank and gun. So yeah, they're gonna get to keep it.

**Kai Ryssdal:** I think it's so interesting that the attitude, the attitude that the American government seems to have about, you know, we're, we're requiring the Taliban to do this and we're demanding free passage, and we're this-ing and we're that-ing, and I'm like, they won. They've got the gun.

**Molly Wood:** Oh, yeah.

**Kai Ryssdal:** They've got the territory. They won. What are you, what, what kind of leverage do you possibly think you have? I just, I mean, they're posturing clearly, but come on, man. Yeah. You know?

**Molly Wood:** I know. Yep. This is it. This is, this is a weird one. In terms of, I mean, it's an absolutely, utterly horrific one. But it's also just like, what is happening?

**Kai Ryssdal:** Yeah. Alright, we're gonna do a very awkward change of gears here. Next sound that you're gonna hear you usually hear on a Friday. But we're going to hear it today because it is the 500th episode. So let's see. Boom. So 500 episodes, half full, half empty, very quick, and it's gonna be interesting to see how this goes with no tequila or wine or batanga or beer in the program. But we'll just see. Drew Jostad came into work today. Drew, what's up?

**Drew Jostad:** I can't believe I'm here on a Thursday.

**Kai Ryssdal:** I know.

**Molly Wood:** I know! We appreciate you. Ice cream for you!

**Drew Jostad:** Be as honest as you want with the first one here. Are you half full or half empty on doing this 500 more times?

**Kai Ryssdal:** Oh, man.

**Molly Wood:** Is this a trap?

**Kai Ryssdal:** Can I pass? Can I pass? Do any of the bosses listen to this? Let's just pass. Pass! I'm using, I'm gonna call a friend and say pass.

**Molly Wood:** For the sake of the audience, I'm gonna say half full. We love this show.

**Kai Ryssdal:** What Molly said. What Molly said. Oh, my goodness. Next.

**Drew Jostad:** Alright. Are you feeling optimistic or pessimistic on the topics you'll have to choose from for your news fix on the 1,000th episode?

**Kai Ryssdal:** Well, let's do some super quick math here, right, there are, give or take, 200 work days in a year. Right? So that's one year, two year, two-and-a-half years from now. Two and a half years from now is going to be 2020--what, what year is this? 2021, so we're gonna be in like, it's gonna be like election stuff and it's gonna be--I'm pessimistic.

**Molly Wood:** Oh, God. Oh, yeah. I am half empty.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Yeah, the economy will be doing well, but politics and society will be troubled. And I don't know about tech, you, you tell me about that there, boss man.

**Molly Wood:** Yeah, I don't know. I don't know. I'm not even sure the economy will be doing well.

**Kai Ryssdal:** I think it will be. I think it will be.

**Molly Wood:** Yeah, anyway. Yeah. No, I'm, I'm generally, generally pessimistic. Half, half empty on that one.

**Drew Jostad:** And how are you feeling about the odds of doing an in-person Make Me Smart taping in 2022?

**Molly Wood:** Great! All the way full.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Yeah, I'm, I'm all the way full. All the way full, and honestly, if we can't, that would just, that would be a real freakin tragedy. Let me just say. Cause we did that one--you remember that one event in San Francisco we did? How fun that was?

**Molly Wood:** That was so fun. It was super fun. Yeah, I'm sorry. If we can't do it, we're then, we're overthinking things. We're doing it.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Yes. Which is, which is entirely possible. But yeah, I'm way full. All the way full.

**Molly Wood:** Way full, that was so fun. Okay phew, an easy one.

**Drew Jostad:** What a note to go out on.

**Molly Wood:** Yay. Can't wait to hang out everybody. Thanks, Drew.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Alright. Excellent. Thank you, Drew. Do we know who wrote that sting? Did, did Daniel Ramirez and Ben Tolliday write that sting? Do we know?

**Molly Wood:** I, I don't know. But I bet the answer is coming to us inSlack right now, which is awesome.

**Kai Ryssdal:** It will be in Slack in a moment. Yes.

**Molly Wood:** That is it, as you can tell by the sting ending segment. That was super fun. And also thank you, audience, for letting us do this show 500 times. It's, it adds up fast when you go daily. This is what we realized. We appreciate the opportunity to hang out every day. Actually--oh, my god, Drew wrote it! Drew wrote the sting.

**Kai Ryssdal:** That's awesome. That's awesome sauce.

**Molly Wood:** Wow, that is amazing.

**Kai Ryssdal:** I didn't know he was musically inclined. That's cray cray.

**Molly Wood:** Incredible. Incredible.

**Kai Ryssdal:** We should start putting that in the Friday credits. We should start putting that in the Friday credits.

**Molly Wood:** Let's do it!

**Kai Ryssdal:** I mean, Ben and Daniel get it and they don't even work here anymore, for crying out loud. Could I just say.

**Molly Wood:** Seriously. Drew's out here working on a Thursday!

**Kai Ryssdal:** I know! Holy cow. Alright, we're gonna go, economics on tap tomorrow, the YouTube live stream, the whole deal, the discord, everything. 3:30 Pacific, 6:30 over on the east coast. Send us your questions, would you? We need to fill another 500 shows' worth of questions or comments or whatever. [Makemesmart@marketplace.org](mailto:Makemesmart@marketplace.org). Leave us a voicemail. Our number's 508-827-6278. 508-UB-SMART. Hook us up. Hook us up.

**Molly Wood:** Make Me Smart--oops, hold on, wait for it, no, there we go--Make Me Smart is produced by Marissa Cabrera, who definitely deserves ice cream. Today's episode was engineered by Lianna Squillace, same and super musically inclined. Tony Wagner writes our newsletter.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Senior Producer is Bridget Bodnar, who is now very, very furiously right now googling ice cream places near where everybody lives. Sitara Nieves is the executive director of on demand. And we're done. Look at that, we hit the music perfect.

**Molly Wood:** Ah-mazing.