

Make Me Smart July 30, 2021 transcript

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Molly Wood: No Audio. Only video.

Kai Ryssdal: I do pay attention in these meetings. Hey everybody, I'm Kai Ryssdal, welcome back to Make Me Smart, making today make sense every time we open our mouth.

Molly Wood: That's right, Although I think you might have just called our podcast a meeting, which is kind of sad for me. Okay, everybody, it's time for our meeting, fire up the zoom. It is, we did think it's a meeting because we did fire up the zoom, it's happy hour Friday, also known as economics on tap, which means there's video, the live stream is up and running. Thanks to everyone joining us whether you're finding us, you know, later, via download, or live on YouTube, or on discord where the chat is hoppin'. I was in the wrong channel, now I'm in the economics on tap channel. It's all happening.

Kai Ryssdal: Holy cow.

Molly Wood: I'm sorry, are there crocs?

Kai Ryssdal: There, I did an interview with the CEO of crocs yesterday in which I voiced my disdain for that particular brand of footwear. And the CEO of the company basically challenged me to wear a pair of crocs to the office and I said, I'm not gonna do that. I'm not gonna do that.

Molly Wood: See, again, again, the difference between you and I is on display because I did an interview with the CEO of crocs once when you were out of town, like several years ago, when crocs were just starting to come back. And I was like, crocs are kind of bad, aren't they? And he was like, yeah, totally. And then I bought them for me and my son. Cause I was like, I guess they're totally back!

Kai Ryssdal: Are they comfortable?

Molly Wood: They're pretty comfortable. They're pretty comfortable. I will, I won't say that I wear them around as much as I wear my like, slip on mule, slipper type things. But they are comfortable though. I don't like the, like me personally, I'm not a big fan of the little nubby bottom. That's always been my one complaint about crocs. Yeah. Have baby feet.

Kai Ryssdal: I wish I'd known yesterday. Alright, but we're not here to talk about feet or shoes. That's an entirely different podcast.

Molly Wood: It got weird!

Kai Ryssdal: We're here to do a little news, man, I'm gonna have to open the windows here in a minute because I am schlepping it. It's happy hour tap. So what are you drinking, and I will fess up, I'm teetotaling today, I'm having a good old fashioned Canada Dry because I got some stuff to do later on.

Molly Wood: Behind the scenes you should know I immediately asked him if he had a tummy ache and he said no. Because somebody's mom is in here. I'm having a little tequila while Kai opens the window, and by a little tequila I mean, I was just saying that I brought up the entire bottle through the garage just so I could sort of pour it before the show. Kirkland Costco size tequila.

Kai Ryssdal: We should just get you a straw.

Molly Wood: It's my jam. It's my jam for today. Like, like, like a two-foot straw. I know. It's, you know, it's, it's getting warm in the various home studios. Oh, thank you. Leslie Underwood totally agrees with me about the nubby bottom.

Kai Ryssdal: Oh, well, there you go. Aright. Okay, so, we'll do a little news, we'll do a little half empty, half full, or half full, half empty, however you want to sequence those. And then we'll move along.

Molly Wood: Yes, let's do the news.

Kai Ryssdal: I begin my news choices today, I begin them with tales of failure. One on behalf of the media of the United States. And I'm going to call out NBC news here, but lots and lots of others have been doing it. And here's the big blaring headline from NBC News earlier today: "Breakthrough COVID cases--at least 125,000 fully vaccinated Americans have tested positive." That's the headline, big fat, scary headline. And then, in much smaller type that nobody will see as they scroll through on their phones, "The 125,000 breakthrough cases in 38 states represent less than .08% of the 165 million plus people fully vaccinated since January." And that's just a fail. I get that we're worried about Delta, and I get that it's scary, and I get that it's, you know, more contagious, and there are breakthroughs, and all of these things, but media do better. Please.

Molly Wood: Yep.

Kai Ryssdal: And I will, I will lump us in there. We got to, it's just too important. And there's too much miss and disinformation for us to get stupid stuff like this wrong.

Molly Wood: It's absurd. It is absolutely absurd. It represents, in fact, .03% of the entire U.S. population. And then yes, .08% of—and, okay, well that's so funny because if you start clicking my links down here, what you'll see is it's the same thing, including, exactly, including an

emergency medicine doctor, tweeting about the headline in the Washington Post today. “CDC study shows ¾ of people infected in Massachusetts COVID-19 outbreak were vaccinated.” And this doctor says, “Please stop with these headlines because, more importantly, only four fully vaccinated people were hospitalized, none of them dies.” “This shows, he writes, “that vaccines protect against serious illness but don’t prevent transmission, so wear a mask.” The only thing that our profession--and I’m just gonna have to say our profession and own the fact that we’re part of it, even though it’s a tough time to be doing that because we keep falling into the exact same traps--we’re only covering, I mean, literally, I actually said to my brother today, I was like, I’m pretty sure that every single breakthrough case that exists has now been spoken to and reported on the media. I mean, granted, this is likely, so right, like so it seems like they’re super common, but actually, we’ve just heard about all of them. So we’re only reporting on breakthrough cases. And look, that is probably an undercount. And even if it is an undercount, it’s still remarkable protection by the vaccines. The, the, what these headlines are doing is giving more fodder to people are saying vaccines don’t work, or, why should I take it because it turns out, I’ll just get it and pass it on anyway. Even though that is still far, far, far, far less likely, I think Bob Walker was tweeting that it’s like, you’re maybe only, you’re an eighth as likely to get it at all, let alone pass it on. And it’s just leading to these like, these bizarrely polarized narratives. If you only cover things that 125,000 people are doing, It’s like, we only cover that, and then we only cover the people who refuse to take the vaccine. And then we make a big huge deal out of you know, things like Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, effectively getting a ton more attention for vowing to reject mask mandates for school aged students on Friday. This is also the guy who like, sued social media platforms for censorship and what is, and what is a full-on quixotic windmill situation. Like, don’t cover that. Don’t cover it!

Kai Ryssdal: It’s, I want to be, it’s the I want to be president situation, is what that was.

Molly Wood: Right. And I want to be president by, by increasingly marginalizing myself, because I know that it will totally work on the press and it will completely get people on my side.

Kai Ryssdal: You bet.

Molly Wood: Like I can’t believe how badly we’re still doing. I really cannot. This many years later. It is terrible. And our profession should be ashamed. It is terrible. Well, our Friday is like, I get one sip of tequila, and then rant.

Kai Ryssdal: I don’t know if, I had something in this ginger ale, I’d be going with you. I’d be going with you. Alright, so that’s my, my news item number one story of failure. My news item number two story of failure is a tweet from Sarah Ferris, she covers Congress for *Politico*, and she tweeted 20 minutes ago, she said, “House has adjourned and the lights have literally dimmed as August recess officially begins.” Now that’s important because one of the things that Congress did not do on the way out of town, and let me tell you now that the next scheduled vote in the House of Representatives is the middle of September, September, okay, one of the things they did not do is extend the eviction moratorium, which expires tomorrow. And there are 15 million people in this economy who are behind on their rents. And of that, some fraction,

disproportionately, by the way, people of color, are now staring down the barrel of eviction. And Congress has left. They've gone. They took off. So that's story number two of failure. Yeah. Yep. craziness. Craziness. And look, Congress of both parties, right, they have come together in the last year and done some remarkable things. The bipartisanship has obviously waned as the administration has changed hands. But, but look, this is a failure to recognize the ongoing crisis, because everybody's like, oh, yeah, the pandemics over and this and that. We talked about this the other day. Number one, the pandemic's not over. Number two, the economic effects are also not over. And they're lasting now, beyond the capacity of some of these programs. And that's where we are. Yeah, so a little failure in the news today.

Molly Wood: Lot of failure in the news today. I mean, when one of these institutions does not hold the other to account, you can see why, and vice versa, you can see why nothing gets done. Doesn't have to because you can just play to the press.

Kai Ryssdal: Right.

Molly Wood: This is a whole other podcast than you guys were expecting.

Kai Ryssdal: Alright. Okay.

Molly Wood: Yikes. Okay! You know what? It's Friday. We've got our drinks. Let's just, let's play a game.

Kai Ryssdal: Let's play.

Molly Wood: This is the game half full half empty, the game where we give you our predictions on various topics. Thanks to our host, Drew Jostad. What do we got? Take it away.

Drew Jostad: Alright, the irony's thick with the first one here. Are we half full or half empty on the alcohol shortage?

Molly Wood: Is that, is that happening?

Kai Ryssdal: It's actually a supply chain thing. It is a real thing. Yeah, we did this story the other day on the show. It's a real thing. It's a real thing. There are beer shortages and alcohol shortages. Obviously, I'm half empty, it needs to be full. Present day's beverage notwithstanding, we need to fix this. Times are getting hard again. Yeah, it's for real.

Molly Wood: We're going full homesteading!

Kai Ryssdal: That's, that's, that's, that's, that's worth its weight in, you know, gold.

Molly Wood: Oh, my goodness. Well, it's a good thing that I'm a bit of a hoarder. I did not know that. I will say I'm actually half full in the sense that there is no chance, and this is not

necessarily a good thing because Americans are drinking way too much, but I feel like there's no chance that America is gonna let an actual shortage occur. There's gonna be, I don't know, bootlegging, hooch. I'm gonna make some hooch in the backyard.

Kai Ryssdal: A little bathtub gin?

Molly Wood: Bathtub gin. I'm excited, I'm excited for the return of moonshine. I'm half full. Let's do it. Let's moonshine it up.

Kai Ryssdal: Your, your, your frontiers woman is coming out. Alright, Drew.

Drew Jostad: Are you full or half empty on any antitrust regulation coming from the FTC?

Kai Ryssdal: Oh, very interesting. I'm gonna let you go first.

Molly Wood: I'm half empty.

Kai Ryssdal: Really?

Molly Wood: Mhm.

Kai Ryssdal: You don't think it's gonna happen?

Molly Wood: I do not. I think that there, I think that agency is profoundly understaffed. I think there has been a lot of heat about everything that they're going to be able to do, but not a lot of light in terms of, I mean, they already got had a huge setback in the form of the federal judge dismissing the case against Facebook. And then the FTC said, woah, woah, okay, we're gonna need more time to refile that case, because we're so understaffed. Think they're gonna run headlong into judges, into delaying tactics like Facebook and Google saying, oh, you need to, or Amazon saying, you're gonna, Lina Khan's gonna have to recuse herself from these cases. And I think the bog is going to be too thick for them to make any progress.

Kai Ryssdal: Wow. Wow. But, but Lina Khan and all that stuff she wrote and all the high hopes and all the, everybody was, lookout Silicon Valley and Facebook. You're not, you're not, you're not having that?

Molly Wood: I'm just not having it. And you know what? This is another example of a thing that we keep on talking about because you know whose job it is to do this? Congress!

Kai Ryssdal: Congress.

Molly Wood: Like the fact that we keep leaving this to like, unelected agencies that are totally understaffed and don't have any teeth. One of the things the FTC said in a hearing before Congress just this week was, hey, you know, what we really need is for somebody to restore the

ability for us to collect monetary recompense, which was just stripped away from the FTC. They said, you need, you know, there's some other piece of authority that they need to go back and look at past deals. Right now, the FTC, the FTC doesn't even have the authority to do the things that it's saying it wants to do. It's almost like it's a weird celebrity appointment. And then meanwhile, by the way, the FCC, which is an agency that has a lot of teeth, doesn't even have a permanent chair yet. I'm not buying it. In fact, if anything, I feel like we're getting a little bit snookered in a PR way here. I don't know, I'm fired up today. I'm heated.

Kai Ryssdal: I was just gonna say, I was just gonna say, Drew next. next one. Phew! Okay. Drew, go.

Drew Jostad: Alright. I got more regulation, more regulation.

Kai Ryssdal: Oh, man.

Drew Jostad: The FAA regulating spaceflight.

Kai Ryssdal: Oh, see, I think that's bunchus. Truly I do. I don't understand where the FAA gets off doing the whole, oh, you're not officially an astronaut and we're not going to give you astronaut wings. Go to hell, honestly. Right? I mean, seriously, there's the line.

Molly Wood: Who did they say couldn't?

Kai Ryssdal: What?

Molly Wood: Did--they better not have said that that old aviator lady can't have astronaut wings. I'm not having that at all.

Kai Ryssdal: She was in Bezos' plane, yeah. They did say that. Yeah. Right.

Molly Wood: Unelected bureaucrats up in here.

Kai Ryssdal: Unelected bureaucrats. That's right. I think if you go above the Kármán line, you can call yourself an astronaut. I don't, I don't think those designator wing things and all that jazz, I don't think it applies to civilian. Alright, so here comes my, my background. I don't think it applies to civilians. I think if you're a designated aviator by a branch of the government that's qualified to designate aviators, which I understand includes the FAA, then, then you get wings, but if you're not, you don't. Yeah. Boo. Opposed.

Molly Wood: I'm with Kai, I'm half empty. I would also like to point out that the discord has, they literally have little graphics for full and empty. I mean, our discord is just next level, it's next level, it's wonderful. So when we, when they say, when we say something, when Drew offers the topic, then the little images come up, empty, empty, empty. So good!

Kai Ryssdal: Hang on a minute. Don't, don't, do not go anywhere. I'm not ready for the next one yet.

Molly Wood: Cause you're opening up discord?

Kai Ryssdal: Hang on.

Molly Wood: You got this.

Kai Ryssdal: No, I'm looking up bunchus. Somebody—oh, bunkum. I got it wrong. I got it wrong.

Molly Wood: Oh, it's bunkum. I was wondering about bunchus.

Kai Ryssdal: It's bunkum, not bunchus. Bunchus sounds better, But anyway. alright Drew, sorry to cut you off. Go ahead.

Drew Jostad: Okay.

Molly Wood: Yes, please.

Drew Jostad: Certain aforementioned footwear company is suing copycats, are we half full or half empty on crocs defending their intellectual property?

Kai Ryssdal: I think all companies should protect their intellectual property. I think they should definitely do that.

Molly Wood: Yeah, I think it's a system that gets a little out of hand. And we have extended a culture of ownership past the point where we necessarily need to, but at the same time, if you don't defend your intellect, I mean, you have to, legally you have to defend it, otherwise you lose the rights to your trade.

Kai Ryssdal: Or otherwise you lose it, right. Right.

Molly Wood: Yeah. You know who weirdly is like an incredibly, like a super aggressive protector of intellectual property is PopSockets. You know, the little stick on things on the phone?

Kai Ryssdal: Wow.

Molly Wood: We had make me smart ones.

Kai Ryssdal: Are they still a thing? I know.

Molly Wood: It's like a one man band. I did see someone in target the other day and I was like, are those still a thing? So, maybe?

Kai Ryssdal: I guess so.

Molly Wood: Anyway, I guess, you know, in a business kind of way, we're half full.

Kai Ryssdal: Yeah. Half full. That's it. That's it. I thought we had one more. I always think we have one more. Oh, well.

Molly Wood: I know, me too.

Kai Ryssdal: Sorry. So note to producers, let's make five please, shall we? Thank you.

Molly Wood: Oh, yeah. There's gotta be five.

Kai Ryssdal: That's it for us today.

Molly Wood: We're just punchy and pissed off.

Kai Ryssdal: Just a little bit. Just a little bit. It's, it's, vacation is so close. Speaking of which, Molly's gone the next two--so here's the way it goes. Molly is gone for the next two weeks. Now, are you gone-gone, or are you working on your tippy top secret project?

Molly Wood: Uh, a little bit of both.

Kai Ryssdal: Which I guess is not so tippy top secret anymore. Okay. Alright. Okay.

Molly Wood: A little bit of both.

Kai Ryssdal: So Molly's gone.

Molly Wood: I'm gone.

Kai Ryssdal: Molly's out for two weeks.

Molly Wood: I'm actually on vacation. Yeah.

Kai Ryssdal: Okay. Alright. Molly is out for the next two weeks. I am in Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday with Kimberly, then I'm out for the duration of Molly's absence and Kimberly's on with a rotating cast of Uhler and Meghan McCarty Carino, just so all y'all know what's going on.

Molly Wood: It's gonna be fun.

Kai Ryssdal: Just wanted, just wanted to say that. Alright, but we still do need your comments, your questions, your, your very carefully crafted critiques. Answers, of course, to the make me

smart questions. Send us an email or a voice memo, makemesmart@marketplace.org. Or you can just give us a phone call: 508-827-6278. 508-UB-SMART. There you go.

Molly Wood: It's so good. Just a reminder that we didn't even do that on purpose, the UB smart thing was a happy accident. That's how blessed our show is. Make Me Smart is produced by Marissa Cabrera. Today's episode was engineered by Drew Jostad, engineered by and starring Drew Jostad. Steven Byeon produces our favorite game, half full half empty, no pressure though, but we want five, and the YouTube live stream.

Kai Ryssdal: He's not even on the staff of the show, and we're like, give us more.

Molly Wood: Um, more, more, more.

Kai Ryssdal: Bridget Bodnar is the senior producer of this podcast. The executive director of on demand is Sitara Nieves. And this is where I click over to slack to see if I missed anything.

Molly Wood: Awww, friends, you're so nice. Everyone's, everyone's so sad about vacation, which I appreciate. However, you are in great hands.