

# Make Me Smart October 14, 2021 transcript

**Note:** *Marketplace podcasts are meant to be heard, with emphasis, tone and audio elements a transcript can't capture. Transcripts are generated using a combination of automated software and human transcribers, and may contain errors. Please check the corresponding audio before quoting it.*

**Molly Wood:** And then we were like, yeah, start early. Oh, dang it. I'm Molly Wood. Welcome back to Make Me Smart, the daily podcast where every day except for weekends we make today make sense. And on weekends we just spin around totally confused like a Roomba.

**Kai Ryssdal:** I was just gonna say, don't mention weekends because the bosses will be like, oh good, yes, we can do more content and downloads and calendar writing and oh my goodness, why can't we do that? Just saying. Hey, everybody, I'm Kai Ryssdal. It is hollowed out shell Thursday, news fix might be a little dark. I don't even know really if mine's all that dark. It's just kind of factual. But we'll do some make me smiles at the end. Although I don't really have one right now. Maybe one will come to me.

**Molly Wood:** Oh, well, I have two so you can borrow one if you want.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Oh, there we go. All right. Okay. Yeah. Oh, God. Yeah, that's a good one. I saw that 6310 thing. All right, anyway. Okay, you go with the news, go.

**Molly Wood:** Um, I have three stories like I do. One is sort of appropriate to hollowed out shell Thursday.

**Kai Ryssdal:** As one does on a show where the rules are we'll do one news item and one make me smile and then we'll go away. But no, that's fine.

**Molly Wood:** Three news items, two make me smiles, and whatever comes up in between. No, I just, I read this, I subscribed to this newsletter that I think is actually from like a PR firm called gray horse. And they had a write up in the beginning of this newsletter today that I just thought was really interesting. It starts with them talking about Facebook. And I have not actually heard this, this Frances Hogan quote, the whistleblower who used to work at Facebook, who said only about 10% of people who ever smoke get lung cancer. So the idea that 20% of your users could be facing serious mental health issues and that's not a problem is shocking, which was indeed a surprising stat. But then they talk about how, and then another writer compared Instagram to alcohol, saying, you know, it's like, can be delightful but also depressing. But what was so interesting is then they went on to say why do we have to put it like that at all? Why do we have to compare social media to alcohol or tobacco to try to convince people that mental health harms are in fact as serious as physical harms, right? Like we have this, we don't consider mental health on par with physical health even though this generation can experience, according to this newsletter, depression, anxiety and stress more acutely than any generation

that ever came before, thanks to likely this combination of like, constant social media stress. Plus, you know, all the terrible news that has occurred throughout their lifetime. A recent study found 75% of Gen Z participants had left a job at some point for mental health reasons. And the newsletter goes on to say, what they're telling us is that the way a construction worker can't do their job with a broken leg, an office worker can't zip through the day, Asana or TaskRabbit or whatever, with a, with an ailing mind. They're begging us to take emotions seriously, and we're refusing because they're not dying of lung disease.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Right, because they're not dying of it except for those who unfortunately died by their own hand, right? Because that's sometimes what happens, but also here's the other thing and this has been talked about with mental health forever. It's easy to not pay attention to it because you cannot see it, right? And I think one would hope we would be past that by now. We're clearly not, but that's what's going on, right? I mean, I know.

**Molly Wood:** It was, it's just such a good piece, but it also, like there have been tons of studies too, about how millennials have health risks related to mental health. Like Gen Z also, you know, it's high blood pressure and it's sleep problems and the mind is part of the body and we have to treat it like a public health issue. I just thought that was such an interesting, that was just very well put. You know I'm fascinated with the changing state of work and how people, all these different workers are like, we're not having it anymore in all these different ways and the latest one today is John Deere workers being on strike for the first time in 35 years. Just, just keep watching this, like people fed up with work is a thing.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Well, it's gonna go away on Monday, right, that's the other thing, the Hollywood, you know, the below the line workers that, you know, craft and makeup and sets and all that stuff. They're in editing rooms too. So yeah, so we shall see.

**Molly Wood:** There's a good Marketplace story to be done in editors, like if editors go and strike, let alone all of those other things, like craft services and makeup. Those are super important, but I don't think people have totally realized that editors are the key to everything you see. And then finally, dude, this Havana syndrome thing is totally heating up and you know I'm so obsessed with it and I can't get enough. CBS had a scoop today about how a bipartisan group of senators is urging Secretary of State Anthony Blinken to take immediate action in response to proliferating reports of Havana syndrome, saying that it is a significant unmitigated threat to our national security. What is this? Yeah, so hopefully we're--

**Kai Ryssdal:** I think it's a microwave sonic weapon thing.

**Molly Wood:** I mean it kind of, right, like it must be and what the heck? Yeah, I just don't, I just think this is such a low simmering big deal. And it seems to be getting bigger.

**Kai Ryssdal:** I totally agree. Totally agree.

**Molly Wood:** See, that wasn't so bad. Three stories, three minutes, boom.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Actually, and, and neither mine. Wait, hang on. There's a mosquito in here. And it's--got it. Sorry. Oh, okay.

**Molly Wood:** Shut it down.

**Kai Ryssdal:** I got two, one's a quickie. And one's a more substantive thing. Actually, they're both pretty substantive, but one's reasonably quick. There's a piece in Politico today that caught my eye, if only for the naivety, and the headline goes like this: White House banking on another McConnell retreat over the debt ceiling. And I think this is the democrats being naive, thinking about norms, and not understanding, as we've talked about many times on this podcast, that the norms do not apply when one party is trying to, and this is air quotes, govern in bad faith. And I think the idea that McConnell now after having gotten clobbered by members of his own caucus, after having backed down once on the debt ceiling is going to do it again, is folly and I mention that to put that in our bailiwick, because, oh, by the way, debt ceiling, mint the coin, default, economic catastrophe, look out below. That's what I'm saying. That's what I'm saying.

**Molly Wood:** I don't, I mean--

**Kai Ryssdal:** He will not now back down.

**Molly Wood:** I just like wish that it was only Politico playing this stupid game of like, oh, and then they're gonna do this, and then they're gonna do this, but it does not appear to be the case that anyone is that is doing all of the things that just need to be done to just move ahead. Yeah, I don't, I don't know.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Yeah. And my other one is sort of, it's another notch in the oh, things are getting serious in China. Microsoft announced today that it's going to shut down LinkedIn, by the way, who else had forgotten that Microsoft owned LinkedIn, me. Microsoft's gonna shut down LinkedIn in China because of the way the government there is trying to rein in and control technology companies. And it's just decided it's too damn hard. It's too damn risky. And we're not going to do it. The other really interesting thing about this, about which I hadn't been aware of, is that LinkedIn is presence in China was the, the company's presence there was technically owned by Chinese who had a contractual relationship with Microsoft back in the States. So it was all this weird, convoluted stuff so that Chinese nationals as, as they insist on doing, can own a good chunk of a multinational. But I think it's an indicator now of American companies saying, it might not be worth it to be in that market. And that is, that is a, you know, that's a seismic kind of change. Because for a long time, the attitude was you sell one of anything to 1.3 billion people and you're making a whole ton of money. And now it's, there's reputational damage, there's actual it's bad over there damage. And I just, it's worth keeping an eye on for people.

**Molly Wood:** It is, and it, it has been interesting for years that Microsoft, LinkedIn, Microsoft bought LinkedIn after it was already in China. But LinkedIn had entered China, you know, saying

basically, like, yes, you can do the local censorship thing. And Microsoft has sort of quietly been operating LinkedIn under those terms this whole time, which was something, you know, quite overlooked by the people who were mad at the tech industry. But now it does seem like it's gotten just untenable for all the reasons you said, and because, you know, in recent months, LinkedIn has had to, like block human rights activists, academics, journalists, like you can't do that for very long before the rest of the world gets pretty mad at you.

**Kai Ryssdal:** And LinkedIn and Microsoft have said we're not doing it. And you know, it's a decision. There you go.

**Molly Wood:** And no one's gonna be left from America. I mean, it's, you know, right. I just, I'm so fascinated by the like, parallel tech economy and the giants that have been incubated in China compared to the US tech giants, like nothing else is as big but then I think it's so interesting that China is also reducing the size and power of those companies, like I wonder if aside from China, does that just like clear the runway for all the US tech giants to just take over the world?

**Kai Ryssdal:** Well, yeah, but aside from China, you can't you can't do aside from China right? Because within 5, 10 years, right, it's gonna be the biggest economy in the world and all the cultural and economic hegemonic things that come with being the biggest economy in the world. It's still a manufacturing base, it's still all kinds of important in the global supply chain as we've seen, I don't think you can do without China. I don't think you can.

**Molly Wood:** Interesting. Yeah, that's true. I wonder if these companies are like, but we have India, maybe? But then if you can't do without, and you can't do business there, what happens?

**Kai Ryssdal:** I don't know. I don't know.

**Molly Wood:** Fascinating. We'll just wait and see and in the meantime, make us smile.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Alright, you got two, hit it. I like your second one because I was curious. I was so curious about the second one.

**Molly Wood:** I know. Well, let's start with that one because that one's so fun. As much as we have, you know, mocked Jeff Bezos's like, rocket shape and the, yeah, the need to just outdo Elon Musk and all of that stuff in these weird little trips to like sort of almost space that they keep doing. Yeah, I'm not even gonna lie, like it is friggin delightful that William Shatner at 90 years old was on that rocket today and that they brought him back safely. Thank goodness. And that also at 90 years old after like, you know, getting punched in the entire body, like it's really intense and people describe how intense it is, popped right out of that rocket and was just like, that was amazing. I loved it. And don't you dare friggin shoot me with champagne. I'm not even having that. He was so pissed about the champagne. It was beautiful. It was beautiful. I thought it was absolutely delightful.

**Kai Ryssdal:** That was the point. I was just really happy that nothing bad happened to him.

**Molly Wood:** Right? I was like, I'm not saying a word about this because I'm so afraid that something will happen and I don't want it to, so good job not blowing up. William Shatner. Great job. And finally, since we now, it just keeps getting increasingly obvious how much damage our phones are doing to us with social media and everything else, it's just time to go back to a brick phone. So excited. Nokia is releasing for its 20th anniversary a new version of its classic 6310 brick phone. The battery when it was first released--I had this phone, this is why I'm so excited about it because literally like my first phone, or one of my first ones and I loved it--the battery lasted weeks, weeks, you could do anything to this, you could drive a car over it, it was phenomenal. The new version is also going to have this like, crazy long battery life, be built like a tank, include the game snake. And will have, and I think we can appreciate this as radio professionals, have a built in FM radio. Boom.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Oh no. Could you be more retro? Oh, my god.

**Molly Wood:** It's the perfect phone, I want it so bad. I'm totally gonna get, I'm just like, I'm getting it. I can't, I can't. I can't not. Love it. I love it. I was overjoyed. And it's 60 pounds, so it's, you know, whatever, like 70 bucks or something.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Yep. You know what's funny? 70 bucks. We've all become so accustomed to like \$750 phones and you're like, oh, 70 bucks? Yeah, sure.

**Molly Wood:** They totally don't have to be. Oh, maybe I can get my kid on board with this. Ha-ha.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Also, Charlton Thorpe will want one of these.

**Molly Wood:** I bet he is like a flip phone guy, right?

**Kai Ryssdal:** Oh, he's a total flip phone guy. Total.

**Molly Wood:** I love though, that this is like, back.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Yeah, well, it's retro. There's that retro vibe. You just got to pick and choose your moments. You just got to pick and choose your retro moments.

**Molly Wood:** And this is the one. Yeah, I choose this retro moment. Did we really blow through all our stories that quickly?

**Kai Ryssdal:** We did. Amazing. But remember we started five minutes early, too. So we're on overtime.

**Molly Wood:** Oh, yeah. Good point. Alright, well, we didn't even bum you out. You're welcome. Send us your make me smiles. I know. You know, we're coming out of it. Whatever it is, maybe

we're coming out of being tired and sad by Thursday. Just plain old tired. You know what, let's just say yes. Let's just say yes. It's like, it's weird how little the media wants to acknowledge that things are getting better. Things are getting better with Delta. They totally are. And they're going to keep getting better I hope, although now my kid has like the old school flu, so, good times. Winter and school, that's gonna be fine, okay, I don't want to bring us down, send us your make me smile ideas. Thank you to everybody who sent us the story about the escaped zebra. Zebras, it got kind of sad so we didn't do it today, but keep them coming. Makemesmart@marketplace.org, or you can call us, 508-827-6278, 508-UB-SMART. Or you can write to us on our website, marketplace.org/makemesmart, and attach an audio file. So many ways.

**Kai Ryssdal:** So many ways. Tomorrow I get my weekly beer. I actually have more than one but, you know, nothing till Friday. Economics on tap, the YouTube livestream, the whole smash. 3:30 on the West Coast, 6:30 on the east coast. Consult your local listings and if you don't want to miss the show by the by, subscribe, would you? Get new episodes straight to your feed. We'll just hook you up. Just do it, be done with it.

**Molly Wood:** You can just sit there and wait. So great. In these troubled times, discipline is all we have.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Make Me Smart is produced by Marissa Cabrera. Today's episode was engineered by Brian Allison. I have no idea, by the way, what kind of phone he has.

**Molly Wood:** Bridget Bodnar is the senior producer. The Interim Executive Director of on demand, who is frankly deserving of such a wordy title, is Donna Tam.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Donna's gotten kicked upstairs. How about that?

**Molly Wood:** Yeah, she's management.

**Kai Ryssdal:** She's, she's in the leadership group.

**Molly Wood:** And it's well-earned and long overdue.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Yes.