

*First-Year Writing Seminar: The Podcast, Season 2*

Episode Transcript: Emily Kresin on “Cultivating Self-Awareness and Integrity”

[intro music]

(Host): Hello everyone and welcome back to season two of First-Year Writing Seminar: The Podcast. Today’s episode features guest Emily Kresin, a first-year student at Cotley College in Nevada, Missouri. During her first semester at Cotley, she enrolled in Freshman-Writing Seminar, a writing course with an emphasis on global awareness. She will discuss a document the course uses and explain the importance of the first dimension outlined in the First-Year Writing Seminar’s document titled “Character Traits Associated with the Four Dimensions of Global Awareness.” Just to let you know, for privacy reasons, some names in the story have been changed but the storyline is kept true. We’re glad to have you, Emily—take it away.

(Emily): Thank you Kylie, it’s great to be here. As you noted before, I believe that cultivating self-awareness is the most important dimension of global awareness because it can start a journey of improvement as an individual. It is only by learning our strengths and weaknesses that we are able to successfully be a part of a global community.

A prominent example of this concept can be seen last year during the Covid-19 global pandemic from one of the lowest parts of my life. Picture this: it’s the end of a long and exhausting day of school and work and I finally turn off my lamp and climb into my bed, covering myself with cozy blankets. My eyes flutter shut and I roll onto my left side, glad to finally be off my feet. A few moments later, I feel the *thu-thump, thu-thump* of my heart beating against my chest. *It won’t happen tonight*, I tell myself. *I’m exhausted. There’s nothing to worry about.* As I’m telling myself this, the steady beat of my heart increases and the thumping becomes louder, filling my chest and rising to my ears. My once calm thoughts began to turn increasingly worrisome; *what do I need to do tomorrow? Did I finish my calculus homework? What if I can’t sleep tonight? I’m supposed to work 8 hours tomorrow.* My heart continues pounding. *I can’t do this again, why can’t I sleep? What did I do wrong?* I turn over to look at the clock. It’s been an hour and I’m still not asleep. In an attempt to make myself tired, I walk over to my bookshelf and grab *The Catcher in the Rye*, the novel I call my “insomnia book.” I began reading this book as a way to ease away the insomnia and anxious thoughts. I’ve already read the novel once over the course of numerous nights like these. As I crack open the paperback, my mind racing, I lay on the floor and begin skimming the pages.

The following week, I joined a video call with my therapist, Lara, and explained to her my lackluster sleep schedule this week. *I feel angry at my body, like it’s punishing me for something*, I tell her. *I hate who I become when I’m anxious.* Lara is quick to stop me and redirect my thinking process. She gave me physical outlets, like yoga at night to calm my nerves and coloring books to distract myself. But she also left me with this new way of thinking. She said “your anxiety is a part of you, no matter what. Shaming yourself for being anxious is only going to make it worse. Instead of trying to hide it, use these tools to help you through it.”

Coping with my anxiety wasn't a quick or linear process; as the name implies, I had to learn to *cope* with my anxiety, not push it away. But through that process, I learned more about myself than I ever would have in a different mental state. I had to be open and honest with myself, which showcased the self-reflection and honesty character traits associated with cultivating self-awareness. I became familiar with my weaknesses because I lived through them each day. I became familiar with my strengths, too. I was strong, I realized, and determined. I didn't give up. I was more self-aware during that period of my life than I ever had been before and, because of it, I am now more knowledgeable about myself. During that time, I was retracted from society because I had to focus on learning about myself. However, I know I am now able to contribute to a larger community better because I know myself which shows how cultivating self-awareness is the crucial first step in achieving global awareness.

Stepping back a few years, one of the first instances of anxiety for me occurred when I was a lot younger, probably about age 10. I had just joined my local 4-H club, a youth organization that encourages kids to reach their greatest potential by completing different projects. I remember the leader of my club saying that each member is encouraged to give a presentation over their project in front of the whole club at some point in the year. As you can imagine, I felt incredibly nervous at the idea of speaking in front of complete strangers, especially at such a young age. A few months passed by and soon it was my time to give a project talk. I stood up from my chair, notecards and poster in hand, and slowly made my way to the front of the room. I set up my poster and began speaking, even though my heart felt like it was going to jump out of my chest. The more I talked, the more comfortable I felt, even if I messed up a few words. Once I was finished, everyone clapped for me and a smile beamed across my face. I felt incredibly proud of myself for completing my first speech and for overcoming something that was so uncomfortable. Through this, I showcased character traits like responsibility and dependability, even when I was frightened of the task ahead. I learned something important that day: sometimes you have to go through uncomfortable situations in life, but it will always end up okay. If I never experienced completing a challenge before, I would've thought that foreign tasks were impossible. By going through a challenging experience, I was able to learn that I am able to speak to a large group of people. While this skill may not directly impact my contribution to global awareness, being knowledgeable about my skills makes me more prepared for global conversations because I know what I bring to the table.

[Begin background music]

As you have seen from my examples, being aware of my strengths and weaknesses made me a more well-rounded individual. Since I knew my weaknesses, I was then able to work on and improve myself so I could contribute to larger groups. I truly believe that getting to know oneself through self-awareness is the most important aspect of global awareness because it allows the individual to contribute their best self.

Thanks for listening! We'll see you next week!

[outro music]

### **Attributions**

Music: "Tomorrow" by Anchor. "Night Light" by Anchor. "96 West" by Anchor.