Justice Curry: Greetings earthlings, and welcome back to another episode of Chat with WRAC The only podcast about Michigan State University's Department of Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures. I'm your guide Justice Curry, here to take you on another adventure within the WRAC department.

 I wanted to do something different with this episode and discuss ways that we can take care of ourselves during this insane time. And now more than ever is an important time to find resources and ways to cope with everything that's going on. And so for this episode, it's just going to be you and me just chatting it up, talking about my experiences with mental health and how I cope and hopefully these methods and my way of coping can help you out in some way, if you haven't found any yourself.

 Since the pandemic started, it's been really difficult for me to find a consistent support system outside of therapy. I say this to say that if you ever find yourself where you don't have any support from certain friends or family, that the faculty and staff in WRAC is always here for you and they will support you the best way that they can or help you find the best support that you can get. So don't forget to utilize that resource. It may be scary and anxiety inducing, but it's absolutely worth it and they do their best to make the students feel the most comfortable that they can. So please, don't be afraid to reach out.

 So just to give you some background, this entire pandemic I have spent by myself. Luckily right before the pandemic started, I got a cat and you hear him now, he's like, "Oh, me?" He's honestly, probably the best thing that's happened to me in 2020. Actually, he is the best thing that happened to me in 2020. But having another life to be responsible for can be a bit overwhelming when you're mentally ill. I struggle with anxiety. I struggle with depression, especially since the pandemic has been occurring. And so having him around, it's a liability, but that's a good thing and a bad thing. The bad thing is there are days where I feel like crap and I have to remember to clean his water bowl and get them fresh water, but he still encourages me to get up and to get moving.

 He wakes me up in the morning and this is good because when I'm depressed, when I don't want to do anything, or when I'm at a very low point, he's there to remind me, hey, you have me to take care of. I need attention. I need you to get your life together so that you can take care of me. And that gives me a sense of responsibility. And so having a pet has helped my mental health significantly. It has not fixed anything. I still had a pet while also seeing a therapist and seeing a psychiatrist. It's just one of the ways, one of the methods that added some responsibility to my day, added some motivation and also brought some comfort to me as a person living alone with no human contact most of the time.

 Now, I'm not telling you to go out buy cat, buy a dog, buy a hamster or whatever, because just know that they are a responsibility. You have to keep this pet healthy. You have to keep this alive. And you also have to be sure to the best of your ability that you're able to afford to take care of them. Especially cats. Cats are a lot more expensive than I expected them to be, but by the time I figured it out, I was already too attached to this kid to let him go. So I'm stuck with him fortunately/unfortunately. But just make sure that you are financially able to take care of an animal.

 If you're not and if you're a cat lover, just like me, Constellation Cat Cafe is located in Lansing or East Lansing, Michigan, and you're able to rent a cat room and you can just play with a bunch of cats for an hour or a couple hours if you need to. Buy a drink from the cafe side next door and just have fun with these cats, with yourself or with one or two people, hopefully no more than two because COVID, but that's another way to relieve some anxiety and to get some interaction with living things in a safe way, because you're isolated, it's just you and a bunch of cats in a room. So it's very helpful.

 Another thing that has been helping me significantly since this pandemic started, especially since winter started, it's a lot more difficult for me to maintain my mental health and to stay mentally healthy. So I go for walks almost every day or every other day, because it's not good to be cramped up inside. You need to go outside. You need to get fresh air. You need to feel the sun, even if it's a little bit gloomy. Going for a walk has helped in improve my anxiety significantly. Significantly. So I highly recommend just putting on a bunch of layers and walking somewhere.

 And for me, I don't have a car, so I walk everywhere anyway. So a lot of things, sometimes it's hard to find the motivation to just go for a walk just to go for a walk. And so I'll be like, Oh, I'm going to go to the store and pick up some things that I need. And that's going to be my exercise. I'm going for a walk. I'm carrying these things in a way back. That gets me out. I killed two birds with one stone. I get some exercise, I get some fresh air, and then I get things that I need for the house. So I definitely recommend that you try that. Definitely bundle up as well. I wear two pairs of pants, a shirt, two sweaters, a coat, a scarf. Yeah, no joke, stay warm.

 And I hope that you all found my experiences in my few little tips helpful. And I hope that you're able to implement this into your daily life and that it makes your life a little bit easier to deal with, especially living alone during a pandemic. I know a lot of people have roommates or they're living with families so you probably don't have to worry about the social aspect of dealing with this pandemic. Just remember to take care of yourself. And if you need to just make a list of everything that you enjoy doing to remind yourself of ways that you can make yourself happy with everything going on and always make time for yourself, always make time to treat yourself and to check in with yourself. Take a shot every time I say yourself, but thank you so much for listening to this episode of Chat with WRAC.

 Thank you so much for listening to Chat with the WRAC. Follow us on Instagram and Twitter @chatwithWRAC and tell us what topic you'd like to hear next. Don't be a stranger.