We all know how to maintain our physical health and how to practice dental hygiene, right? We've known it since we were five years old. But what do we know about maintaining our psychological health? Well, nothing. What do we teach our children about emotional hygiene? Nothing. How is it that we spend more time taking care of our teeth than we do our minds? Why is it that our physical health is so much more important to us than our psychological health?

We sustain psychological injuries even more often than we do physical ones, injuries like failure or rejection or loneliness. And they can also get worse if we ignore them, and they can impact our lives in dramatic ways.

It is time we closed the gap between our physical and our psychological health. It's time we made them more equal, more like twins.

Loneliness creates a deep psychological wound, one that distorts our perceptions and scrambles our thinking. Loneliness is defined purely subjectively. It depends solely on whether you feel emotionally or socially disconnected from those around you. Loneliness won't just make you miserable; it will kill you. I'm not kidding. Chronic loneliness increases your likelihood of an early death by 14 percent. Fourteen percent! It even suppress the functioning of your immune system, making you vulnerable to all kinds of illnesses and diseases. Now, cigarette packs come with warnings saying, "This could kill you." But loneliness doesn't. Loneliness isn't the only psychological wound that distorts our perceptions and misleads us.

Failure does that as well. Are you aware of how your mind reacts to failure? You need to be. Because if your mind tries to convince you you're incapable of something, and you believe it, you'll begin to feel helpless and you'll stop trying too soon, or you won't even try at all. And then you'll be even more convinced you can't succeed. You see, that's why so many people function below their actual potential. Because sometimes a single failure convinced them that they couldn't succeed, and they believed it. Once we become convinced of something, it's very difficult to change our mind.

Our minds and our feelings — they're not the trustworthy friends we thought they were. They're more like a really moody friend, who can be totally supportive one minute, and really unpleasant the next. Rejection is extremely painful. We all start thinking of all our faults and all our shortcomings, what we wish we were, what we wish we weren't. We call ourselves names. And it's interesting that we do, because our self-esteem is already hurting. Why would we want to go and damage it even further? We wouldn't make a physical injury worse on purpose. You wouldn't get a cut on your arm and decide, "Oh! I know — I'm going to take a knife and see how much deeper I can make it."

But we do that with psychological injuries all the time. Why? Because of poor emotional hygiene. When you're in emotional pain, treat yourself with the same compassion you would expect from a truly good friend.

We have to catch our unhealthy psychological habits and change them. And one of unhealthiest and most common is called rumination. To ruminate means to chew over. It's when your boss yells at you or your professor makes you feel stupid in class, or you have big fight with a friend and you just can't stop replaying the scene in your head for days, sometimes for weeks on end. Now, ruminating about upsetting events in this way can easily become a habit, and it's a very costly one, because by spending so much time focused on upsetting and negative thoughts, you are actually putting yourself at significant risk for developing depression.

The problem is, the urge to ruminate can feel really strong and really important, so it's a difficult habit to stop. But I knew what to do. Studies tell us that even a two-minute distraction is sufficient to break the urge to ruminate in that moment. And so each time I had a worrying, upsetting, negative thought, I forced myself to concentrate on something else until the urge passed. And within one week, my whole outlook changed and became more positive and more hopeful.

Can you imagine what the world would be like if everyone was psychologically healthier? If there were less loneliness and less depression? If people knew how to overcome failure? If they felt better about themselves and more empowered? If they were happier and more fulfilled? I can, because that's the world I want to live in. And that's the world my brother wants to live in as well. And if you just become informed and change a few simple habits, well — that's the world we can all live in.Thank you very much.