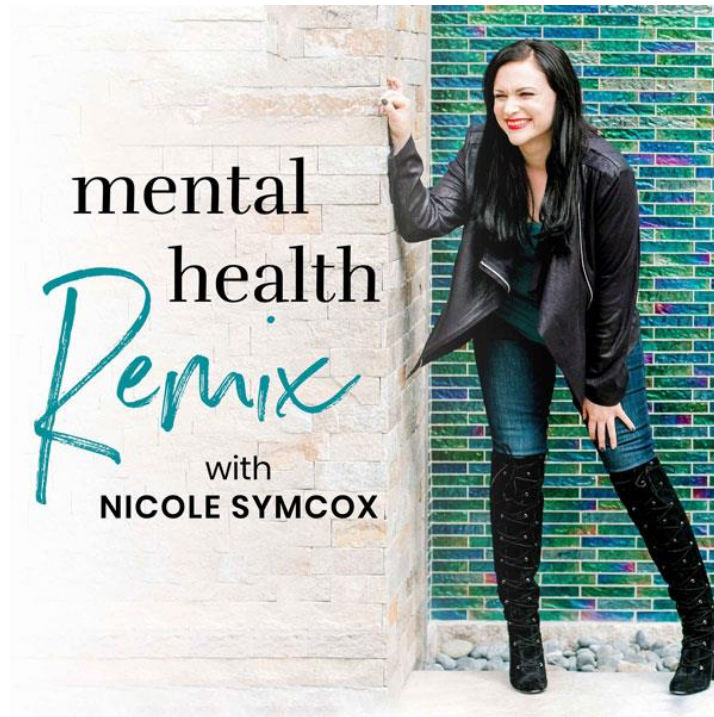


Ep #57: Changing Your Relationship with Anxiety



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Nicole Symcox

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I hear this all the time from teenagers. They're like, "Well, I'm just an anxious person, or this is just who I am, or this is just my design." No, no, no, no, no, no, my friend. No, no, no, no, no, no. We do not let the DSM define us, okay. We do not let mental health disorders define who we are uniquely and innately. Okay.

You are a unique person created by God. You are not defined by the DSM. You are not to find by mental health disorders, okay? Anxiety is a bunch of symptoms. It points us to where we need healing and where we need growth and where we need support, but it doesn't define our personality. It doesn't define what we have to offer this world. Okay.

Welcome to *Mental Health Remix*, a show for ambitious humans who are ready to feel, think, and be different. If you want to stop struggling with perfectionism, build better relationships, and connect with yourself and your potential, this is the place for you. Here's your host, educator, coach and licensed psychotherapist, Nicole Symcox.

Hey, hey, everyone. Welcome to Episode 57. So today is a special episode because I actually did a live podcast recording for this at Valley Christian High School, which is one of the largest private schools in California. Unfortunately, the audio from the live recording did not turn out. So I thought I would just go ahead and re-record what I said when I was live there at the high school. So if you're an adult, this episode absolutely applies to you as well.

So let's start here. You are not your anxiety. Anxiety is painful. It's full of symptoms, and it can get in the way of being the person we want to be. It makes everyday tasks really effortful, and it feels like everything is a battle. It almost can feel like it's you against your brain, which is a really uncomfortable place to live.

One of the things that you need to know about anxiety is it's a storyteller, okay? So it tells you stories to prepare or prevent what it perceives to be dangerous or a threat to your well-being. Okay. So the stories come

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through with thoughts and emotions that influence how you take action in your life. Its intention is to keep you safe. But the problem is, is that anxiety can snowball. It can get too big, and you can feel like you're living in a body with a faulty alarm that's going off all the time for no reason. Right.

That is when it gets really painful. When you feel like there's no reason for your anxiety to be alerting you or alarming you to potential danger, you feel like you're having an overreaction to something that doesn't need an anxiety reaction, right. It gets really frustrating to know how to help yourself in those moments. So we're going to talk about that more as we keep going.

So when this alarm is going off all the time, even when you're safe, it's incredibly frustrating. This is when we start crossing over into anxiety disorders, right? Your anxiety is starting to work over time. It's no longer helpful. It's becoming hurtful. So I think it's really important to note that there is a huge difference between normal worry and anxiety disorders.

There's a lot of different anxiety disorders, okay. We kind of use this term anxiety disorders as an umbrella term, right? But there's like Generalized Anxiety Disorder, there's panic disorder, there's OCD. There's just a lot of different types of other disorders that fall under the anxiety umbrella. So that's what I mean when I say disorders. Okay.

So with normal worry, normal anxiety, things are totally fine, right? Your anxiety stories are manageable. They come and go easily. They come and go appropriately, right. So, for example, being stressed out about a presentation. You may feel anxious and have a worried story of oh my gosh, what if I mess up right before the presentation? But then you get going, you do the presentation, and you feel relief because it's over. So you're like, cool. That's done. I was worried just because, you know, it's scary to talk in front of people, but I'm cool now. I'm good.

Now, on the flip side, when anxiety steps out of normal worry and it crosses over into a disorder, it's when you start becoming more anxious than not

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okay. More days you are anxious than not. More hours of the day you are anxious than not okay. Worry does not come and go easily. Many times you get stuck overthinking too much.

So just an FYI, that was an extremely brief description of when it crosses over to anxiety disorders, okay? We're not going to get into all the nitty gritty of it. It's far more complex than what is going to be interesting to you guys, okay, but that's just like a really broad definition.

So using the same example. If you have an anxiety disorder and you're about to do a presentation, you're likely to be super anxious days before the presentation. Ruminating, obsessing, overthinking, and probably almost to a panic state when it comes to give the presentation. Then probably days after you're stuck on whatever idea that you have that you made a mistake, or something went wrong, or you know you're just feeling bad about yourself, whatever. Then you'll spend days overthinking that.

So that's, again, just a very general example of how that might manifest if you're kind of crossing over into anxiety disorders, right? Like the worry isn't coming and going easily. You're getting stuck in certain—Your brain feels like it's getting stuck in certain areas.

So this is why you cannot be your anxiety. I hear this all the time from teenagers. They're like, “Well, I'm just an anxious person, or this is just who I am, or this is just my design.” No, no, no, no, no, no, my friend. No, no, no, no, no, no. We do not let the DSM define us, okay. We do not let mental health disorders define who we are uniquely and innately. Okay.

You are a unique person created by God. You are not defined by the DSM. You are not to find by mental health disorders, okay? Anxiety is a bunch of symptoms. It points us to where we need healing and where we need growth and where we need support, but it doesn't define our personality. It doesn't define what we have to offer this world. Okay. It's something that we are wrestling with. It's something that we're seeking healing over. It's starkly different than this is who you are.

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I get it because anxiety can feel so intrusive. It can feel like it is intruding on all of your thoughts and your feelings, and it can kind of feel like well, maybe this is just who I am. It's not who you are. Anxiety is not who you are.

So we want to separate the person from the symptom. They're not the same thing. You are, as a person, you are uniquely you. You have a unique personality. You have unique gifts. You are capable. You have lots of things to offer your friends in this world and yourself, and you may struggle with anxiety, but that is separate from you. That is something that you are struggling with and need support with. But anxiety can be managed. So symptoms can go down, right. Then that changes the way we feel and the way we think and the way we behave in the world. Okay. This is totally, totally possible.

So what I want you to hear for me today is that you get to define you. You are at the beginning of your life. You get to define who you are, okay? You can be who you want to be. You can live in wholeness and happiness. You don't have to settle for a life riddled with anxiety. There are so many ways to support yourself if you're struggling with anxiety.

Anxiety is a response to stressful situations that make us feel overwhelmed. When our daily life becomes flooded with stressful things, it's easy to feel anxious all the time, and you can have a bunch of symptoms. But, again, it can be managed, okay? Anxiety is part of your survival mechanisms as a human. It's original design is to keep you safe. A little anxiety can be good, but a lot of anxiety can interfere with your functioning, and that's why it's hard to deal with.

So you can feel panicked for no reason. You can feel wired and tired. You can feel like your brain never stops thinking about people or situations. You can feel easily overwhelmed. You can have muscle tension and stomach aches. Those are just a few examples of how anxiety can show up in your life.

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As we already talked about, normal worry kind of easily comes and goes. For anxiety disorders, it feels really difficult. It's so painful to deal with anxiety, but there's so many ways to heal. Okay. Therapy is absolutely one of the best ways. Taking a coping skills course or starting with a workbook, or even talking to your doctor about medication. Like there are so many options to dealing with anxiety.

Which is why I say you don't have to settle for a life riddled with anxiety when there's options and choices for treatment. Because all of these options are good ones, you just have to find the one that is right for you. That's part of the mental health journey.

What's right for your friend may not be right for you. Just because your friend loves their therapist doesn't mean that you will love that therapist. Like not all therapists are created equally. You have to find the one that you connect with and has the training to support you and your unique self and your unique issues because they're two different things. Okay.

Do you see why you're not your anxiety? These are a cluster of symptoms that feel awful. It's just not who you are as a person. It's anxiety. Okay? You are so much more than what people say you are. You are more than your successes. You are more than your failures. You are more than anything you can produce for this world.

What you give to the world is important, and it's valuable, but your innate value as a human is not based on how well or how poorly you do things. Those are gifts you offer the world. Your innate worth, as a valuable human worthy of love and respect, remains the same.

I know that that's a hard one. That's a lot of pretty words that I just said. If you're wrestling with mental health right now or you're wrestling with rejection or feeling sad over relationships, those pretty words probably feel meaningless right now. They still are true, but you may not be able to connect to them right now, and that's okay. That gives you information of

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where you are in your healing journey. Right? Like, maybe I need some more support in this area, and that's okay.

Your value is something you define for yourself. When anxiety gets loud, telling you stories. That you're unworthy, or you're not capable. We have to learn to manage it. We have to tell ourselves anxious stories as a human and flip the script on them. So when an anxious story is coming up, we need to know how to manage it. Flip the script and tell a new one. One that's more accurate. One that is reflective of truth, right.

Sometimes you can't do this on your own. Sometimes you need to do this with a therapist in the beginning because your anxiety is so loud, you feel almost helpless against it, and that's normal. That's normal part of the healing process. So you're not doing anything wrong. You're not weak. You're not any of those labels that anxiety is going to try to tell you. You just are where you are, and you need a therapist or a doctor or you need some coping skills to meet you where you are to get you to where you want to go.

So we have to learn through how to move through these hard experiences and not be defined by them. Because I think a lot of us put on brave faces, and we don't talk about what's really going on with us. So we have to learn to move through hard experiences, not be defined by them. Reframe the way we see ourselves and resource how we show up for ourselves. Changing the relationship with anxiety is where our power is at.

So, for example, starting to talk to yourself differently might be starting with the phrase, "I notice..." I notice I'm having an anxious moment. I notice I'm having an anxious thought. I notice I'm responding to the situation with anxiety. Okay. So the next question you want to ask yourself, "How can I support myself?"

So first of all, we're noticing, we're acknowledging what's happening. We're stopping, we're acknowledging what's happening inside of us. Then we're asking a question to ourselves. How can I support myself? Can I breathe?

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Can I call a friend? Can I do something different in this moment that will make me feel better? Can I move my body? Can I go on a walk? Can I do some art? What can I do right now that would disrupt anxiety's pattern?

So I want to end today with reminding you that you are more than your achievements. I know you guys have so much pressure on yourselves to be everything that your parents, your teachers, your mentors want you to be, but you are more than your achievements. Okay? I think this is the power in therapy because we really are what we think we are.

Learning how to hear our own voice and value yourself outside of other people's expectations is an incredibly powerful and something that is totally possible to achieve, even if it doesn't feel like it now. Anxiety is hard. Healing is hard, but it is worth it. Because you, as a human being, are worth it.

All right, my friends. I'm hoping that this episode was helpful for you. If you are struggling with anxiety and you just want a starting point. You're like, "I don't know if I want therapy. I don't know if I want to talk to a doctor." I have written a workbook. It's called The Anxiety Remix. You can find it on my website.

The link will be in the show notes for today, but it's just a great place to start. It has lots of coping skills and strategies that you can use in the moment of having anxiety. It kind of gets the wheels turning on how to talk to yourself differently with your mind, your emotions, and your relationships. So if you just want an easy, you know, DIY way to get going with supporting yourself with anxiety, I highly recommend my workbook. You can, again, find that on my website, and there'll be a link for it in the show notes.

All right, my friends. Always remember there's never shame and blame and getting mental health support. It's probably the best thing you can do for yourself. I'm rooting for you. See you next week.

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