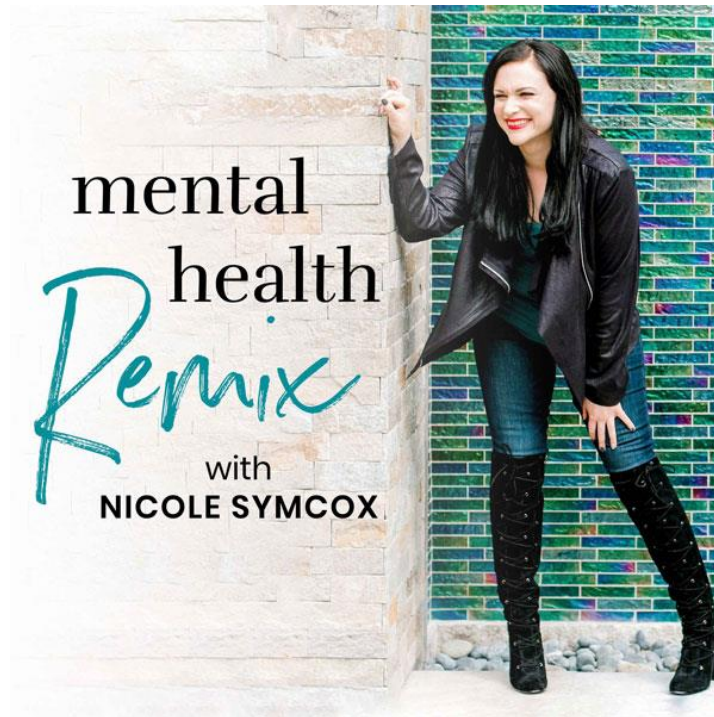


# Ep #61: Getting Things Done with an Anxious Brain



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Nicole Symcox**

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## Ep #61: Getting Things Done with an Anxious Brain

Now when you're in the middle of getting things done, if you get too focused on the goal, right, it can start to spiral really fast. So what was now a spark is now flame, forest fire, anxiety is getting bigger, louder. We can't take it anymore, and then we end up in collapse.

So probably many of you have not heard that term. But if you deal with anxiety, you know what I'm talking about. It's that point that you get where you just don't give a shit anymore. You're like, "Okay, I have been over the top stressed about this for like too long. I can't take it anymore. I'm done." Your brain and body are just like over it.

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 61. So today I want to talk about getting things done with an anxious brain. So it's something I get asked a lot, right, because a lot of people with anxiety are also high achievers. They're trying to meet their goals or trying to do their thing, but anxiety just continuously gets in the way. It's super, super frustrating, right? Like when you're trying to get something done or you're trying to stay focused but anxiety keeps creeping in, telling you scary stories, and then you're off track, right.

So let's stop that and try something different. So in this episode, I want to talk just a little bit about that. So to kick us off, anxiety can sometimes just feel like an alarm system, right? That it's just going off continuously. Sometimes it can feel like it's going off for no reason. Sometimes you know the reason, right? But either way, anxiety is an alarm system. It's alerting you letting you know something's up. Okay?

This can get really distracting when we're trying to be productive. We're trying to focus or trying to get stuff done to have anxiety go off and say,

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“Hey, hey, hey there's a problem. There's a problem.” You're like no shit, Sherlock. Of course, there's a problem. I'm trying to get like 100 things done. Like you don't need to remind me of that. Anxiety's like shh, shh, shh I don't care. I'm still going to talk to you.

It gets annoying, right? It gets loud. There's like all the distractions. So sometimes in these moments, we honestly, this is gonna sound so silly, right? To just like come on back to breathing, but sometimes we just need to breathe. We need to just start there. Because anxiety can make you feel like everything is important. That is what can make it so debilitating to prioritize and decide what is important in this moment. What is important to get things done, right? Because anxiety makes you feel like everything is urgent. Like everything's a 911.

The truth is, honestly friends, there's very few things in life that are truly, truly urgent. But anxiety feels like everything's urgent, right, because that's what it runs on. It runs on stress. It runs on feeling alert and wanting you to know that.

So what I want you to take away from today is I just don't want your anxiety to steal your humaneness. I don't want you to lose your humaneness in the middle of your anxiety. Because anxiety can really push you one of two ways when you're trying to get a lot done.

It can push you all the way into super high functioning to where you're almost robotic, and you're functioning like a machine, which then just leads to burnout, right. Or that just leads to not feeling good in the end. Or it can lead to collapse where we don't feel great about things, where we're not functional anymore, where we're not able to do anything.

Neither of those extremes are great. We want to stay in the human level. I know that sounds kind of weird, but bear with me. So when anxiety and pressure join forces, they start telling you stories and ideas like if this just doesn't get done or if it's not done perfectly or it has to be done this

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particular way then you failed or someone's going to criticize you or you're going to be disappointed in yourself or whatever the story might be.

We have to first stop and honor the stories that are coming up in our brain. Pushing them to the side and ignoring them tends to make them louder. When we tend to ignore anxiety's alarm, it tends to get louder. It's like, "Yo, obviously you're not listening to me. Let me crank it up a notch." You're like, "No, no, no, no, I heard you. I'm just really trying to block you out and not listen to you." Anxiety hates to be ignored. It really does. She's needy. She doesn't like to be ignored. So we have to acknowledge her. We have to acknowledge her.

Now when you're in the middle of getting things done, if you get too focused on the goal, right, it can start to spiral really fast. So what was now a spark is now flame, forest fire, anxiety is getting bigger, louder. We can't take it anymore, and then we end up in collapse.

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Your brain and body are just like over it. I'm not going to feel anything anymore. I'm just gonna be numb. Numb sucks. Numb is not a fun place to be. Like, we don't want to live there. We don't want to do life there. That's not a fun place to be. We're not really that productive there, right?

So anybody who's dealt with anxiety knows what I'm talking about. It can be this cycle. So we want to stop the cycle before it even begins. How we do that is we have to manage anxiety at the start before it gets too big and it takes over. We don't want these stories to get too big. We don't want these alarm systems to get too loud. We want to be aware.

So starting with acknowledgement, right. This is where you start to get your power back. You start at the beginning. I notice a story is coming up around my fear of failure, and I'm putting a lot of pressure on myself to get this

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right. Thank you for alerting me. That's what acknowledgment sounds like. It's not a long conversation with yourself. It's very, very simple. So we're just acknowledging that it's there.

Now we need to check things out. Do you need to reframe the story like we've talked about in episode 55? Like, does the story need to reframe? Does this story need processing and therapy? Like does this story need more time and attention than just acknowledgement? Sometimes it's just acknowledgement. Like sometimes anxiety will honestly be cool if you acknowledge it. Like if you acknowledge it it's like, "Cool. You see me, hear me, feel me. Cool. We're good now."

But then other times, we need to take it to a second step. Like do we need to reframe the story? Do we need to work the story out? Like, where's the story coming from? How did I get here? How do I create a new one? Those are all things that you can process in therapy and figure out.

But when you think about this, it's important to acknowledge and notice what you need to do. Because the more you ignore and blocking anxiety, it's very likely it's going to get louder. So from a strategic point of view, I want you to think about this in terms of being prepared. So let's say we've got a story we need to talk about in therapy. Cool, cool, cool, cool, we got that.

Now moving on to we need to just be realistic. Like, if you have an anxious brain, living in denial about that is not a good place to be because you're basically powerless to anxiety all the time. Like if you're just living in denial about your anxiety, you're not owning your power. Anxiety is great at telling you a story that you have no power or you're out of control of situations. So it's really important for us to acknowledge that we have anxiety.

So sometimes what I see in people is they're like, "Oh, my gosh, I have so much stuff to do." My follow up question I'm like, cool what's the plan when anxiety creeps in? They're like, "Oh, well, I'm sure it'll be fine. I've been feeling good lately. Like, I'm sure it'll be fine." Okay, right.

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So you need to consider that. When you have an anxious brain and you're prone to anxiety, it's just best to be prepared. It's just best to be prepared for it. Super, super awesome if your anxiety doesn't come up and fuck things up for you, but if it does, what's the plan? You know? You don't want to wait for those moments that feel important to you to figure that out. The plan, you want to have it figured out before that.

So we want to take back our power and try to get prepared. So you want to look at just from a strategic standpoint. So this is not an emotional standpoint. We already did the emotional thing. We acknowledged, reframe, we're good.

So looking at all the things from a strategic standpoint, like things you need to do, order them in importance. Because when anxiety kicks in, you're going to feel chaotic and you're not going to be able to do these simple things that we're talking about. Right?

So actual importance, by the way. Not what anxiety thinks is important. So considering what takes you the longest to do? What has the soonest due date? Which thing are you going to need help? Like making a plan around it, okay? Like we're safe planning around anxiety coming up. It doesn't have to be executed perfectly, but just the idea of having a plan of like this is the order of how I'm gonna do things. These are the resources that I have. If anxiety springs up, this is how I'm going to handle it. Cool, cool. Great.

Now, if that gets off track, that's okay. That's just part of it. But sometimes just having a plan can feel like gentle reassurance to yourself. Like we're not just out here flying blind and hoping for the best. Because that strategy doesn't usually work out too well with an anxious brain.

Second, you want to make sure you get the pressure you are putting on yourself in check. You need to reframe and notice like what is the story around this pressure that I'm putting on myself? Can I change this or can I offer a different story to myself right now that maybe feels more

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encouraging? Like, hey, you're under a ton of stress right now, and this is a lot to get done. I'm here for you. I'm supporting you.

Yes, you're talking to yourself this way. No, we haven't gotten to the crazy bin yet. Like it is okay to be your own cheerleader. It is okay to be your own encourager. It is okay to be your own reassurance. Like to offer yourself that. Like, hey, you know what? I'm proud of you. This sucks. This hard, and you're showing up. I'm proud of you. And owning that.

The world doesn't like you to own things like that, but it's important that you do. You need to be your own biggest cheerleader, right. And that sounds cheesy, corny, whatever, but it's true. We've got to have our own backs. We got to support ourselves internally, right, so we can show up externally feeling good.

Thirdly, pace yourself. Anxiety makes you think you can take on a lot more than you can. Because it's kicking up all that cortisol and all that stress, you're flying high on it, right? So you're thinking, you're like, "Oh, I can take that on. I can take that on. I can do that. I can do that." Right. Let's not do that. Let's pace ourselves. Schedule in breaks.

Treat yourself like a human being and not a robot. I meet so many people that lock themselves away for like three days because they have a project they're working on. They're not treating themselves well in that timeframe, right. Like you are a human being, you are not a robot. The more human you treat yourself, the better you actually perform in a lot of cases. I mean it's not a perfect science, but just think about that.

Like, the more you treat yourself like a human, the more you fuel your human needs, the better you show up in life. That's just how it works. Treating yourself like a robot is going to deplete you. It's going to deny you of the needs that you have to keep going. Like you don't treat a car like a human, right, and you don't treat a human like a car. Like we need to acknowledge that we're human. We get tired. We get hungry. We get

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emotional. Like we have things and we need to meet ourselves in our humaneness. And that's okay.

So sometimes scheduling breaks when you're trying to get a lot done can actually make a world of a difference for you. Anxiety and stress will tell you the story you don't have time for that. That's a waste of time. We can spend that time doing something else. So let's quantify what we mean by a break.

Like a break can be anything from like two minutes to 10 minutes. It doesn't mean a Netflix binger where you like just zone out and watch TV for hours on end. That's a different type of thing. So when we talk about breaks in the midst of productivity, giving yourself a 10 minute walk or two minutes of breathing, right, mindful breathing, which I teach you. Like those things make a tremendous amount of difference. Sometimes you perform better. Sometimes you produce more.

But when you treat yourself like a robot or you get to strung out on anxiety, right, it's difficult to produce your best work because you're distracted. You only have so much energy in your brain and embody to give. If you're having to use a lot of that energy, it's being depleted by other things because you're not meeting these needs then that works against you and we don't want that.

So sometimes the more you can be good to yourself in high stress moments, the better things turn out. That's not something that you'll hear. There's a lot of old school stuff out there around focusing and locking yourself away, and yada, yada, yada.

But at the end of the day, you're human. I don't want you to lose your humaneness because it's what makes you unique. It's what makes you beautiful. It's what makes you human. And that's okay. You can produce badass things for the world and be a human taking breaks, taking care of your emotional world, your internal world, because honestly that is what makes your external world so much better.

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If you're looking for a way to just get started with managing your anxious brain, I highly recommend getting my Anxiety Remix workbook. It is a great place to start with just some tools and strategies if you need some in the moment ideas on how to manage your mind and to manage your emotions around anxiety.

So there's lots of stuff in there just about like your mind, your emotions, relationships, but then it also has so, so, so many ideas and coping skills and tools and strategies that you can use in the moment that you're having anxiety. This is kind of like your go to resource in an anxious moment. So I highly recommend you pick up a copy of that if you're ready to get started with this in a really easy way. All right, my friends, I will see you next time.

Thanks for listening to this week's episode of *Mental Health Remix*. If you like what you've heard and want to learn more, go to [nicolesymcox.com](http://nicolesymcox.com).

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