

Ep 214. Anxiety



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With Your Host

Jody Moore

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Ep 214. Anxiety

I'm Jody Moore and this is *Better Than Happy*, episode 214, Anxiety

This podcast is for people who know that living an extraordinary life is not easy or comfortable. It's so much better than that. This is *Better Than Happy*, and I'm your host, Jody Moore.

Hey everyone, how's it going? Welcome to the podcast. I have had the most fun summer ever. I just have to, for just a minute, share with you that we are just coming off of three weeks of a lot of fun and travel. We went to California for our VIP event.

By the way, if you're a VIP in Be Bold, do not miss the VIP event. It was pretty awesome. We went to a hotel in Huntington Beach that is right on the beach looking out over the ocean called the Paséa; beautiful hotel. We hung out all day. We had my sister – Lindsay Buchan was one of the guest speakers. She taught us about self-coaching.

We had Mark Butler, my CFO and someone who is just so charismatic to listen to and good with money. He taught us about money. And then we had Alison Faulkner of the Alison Show, who we just called The Alison Show. If you guys don't listen to the Alison Show, what's the matter with you? Go listen to it. She's fantastic.

And anyway, we had such a fun day. And then we had a beautiful lunch out on the lawn overlooking the ocean. I kept joking all day that the lunch we were going to have was going to be nicer than my wedding, and it was. It was amazing. And then, in the afternoon, I coached and taught and we took pictures and loved on each other and it was amazing.

So, anyway, if you're in Be Bold, you've got to be in there for six months consecutively to be a VIP, but then you get to come to that event for free. You've just got to get yourself there. You've got to pay your travel, but the event itself is on us. And my husband and I love hosting that event and just making it really special, so come next year. We might do it twice next year. We're kind of debating that right now.

Ep 214. Anxiety

Anyway, we hung out in California with the family for a few days, came home, literally the next day after I got home, I packed up my stuff and went to Girl's Camp. And I was looking forward to hanging out with the girls, but I wasn't so sure about the camping for five days part. But surprisingly, I loved it.

It was so fun to be with those girls, to be with their energy and their enthusiasm and to have a total break from my normal routine and hanging out with the other leaders there and – it was awesome. I can't say enough about how much I loved Girl's Camp.

And then literally I drove home from Girl's Camp, took a shower, threw some stuff in the laundry, and then drove out to the lake cabin where I hung out with my family for seven days on Coeur D'Alene Lake in the cabin that we rent every year, which is just like heaven. Every one of us is, like, counting down the days wishing it would never end. Well, there's probably a couple of people that aren't sad to see it end, but for the most part, my family and I just love to be around each other.

I love having my sisters and mom there and we all just make dinner together and the kids play together and there's some craziness, of course, and some drama a little bit. But mostly, it's just the most relaxing, amazing, beautiful time.

So, anyway, that's where I'm at. And now I'm happy to be back, diving into my work, working with all of you, coaching in Be Bold, and recording some new podcasts for you today.

One thing I will mention is that during all of the craziness, we've been selling tickets to *Better Than Happy* live in Lehi, and that event sold out and we have such a huge demand for it that we decided to add a second day. So we did shut it down for a little while. Tickets were unavailable. We have opened it up again to a second day, which is still in September. I don't know the date off the top of my head. It's the 15th or 16th, whatever that Monday is. I think it's the 16th.

Ep 214. Anxiety

Anyway, if you go to jodymoore.com and click on live events, for sure date will be there of whatever's available. Of course, we're going to do two days now so that we can accommodate more people. So if you wanted to get a ticket and it was sold out, you might be in luck. Go grab one.

Okay, let's talk about anxiety. Alright, doesn't that sound like fun? I know anxiety isn't fun, but it's a topic that I'm excited to talk to you about because of how many people struggle with anxiety and how many times I get asked to speak to people about anxiety, both for the adults I work with and a lot of times I get asked this for teenagers.

Teenagers ask me about anxiety a lot. In fact, I recently was asked to teach a class at a Stake youth conference that we had and they asked the youth to choose to topics for the classes. And the one they asked me to teach was on dealing with anxiety.

And every time I go and speak to a group of youth, I take note cards and I have them write questions on note cards so that they can be completely anonymous and vulnerable. And it never fails, no matter what topic I'm speaking on, anxiety comes up. How do I cope with anxiety? How do I deal with anxiety?

So I know that many of you struggle with it. I know that your kids are struggling with it. I know that you're worried about how to help your kids and that's what I hope to provide for you here today on this episode.

Now, I want to preface it by saying that there are a lot of factors that affect our experience of an emotion like anxiety. There are many different things that can contribute to the feeling of anxiety. And so please don't think that I'm trying to oversimplify it in this episode. I recognize that there are many factors. There are biological factors, for example. There are chemicals and hormones that can create anxiety.

So if you've been listening to me for very long, you know that I teach that emotions are caused by thoughts. And anxiety is what I would classify as

Ep 214. Anxiety

an emotion. It's a feeling, it's a vibration in our body, and therefore it's created by a thought.

But I'm not discounting the fact that there can be, again, chemicals and hormones that are not functioning properly in the body that create anxiety without a thought connected to it. And why anxiety is on the rise today, I definitely don't have all the answers to.

I think it's a complicated question to answer, but I do think that there are probably a lot of biological factors that come as a result of a poor diet, maybe just things in our environment, maybe products that we use that have things in them that are not good for us that are maybe causing side effects like this. And then there are also many, many unknown causes that are just creating, again, chemical or hormonal imbalances.

So, I am a huge believer in utilizing all the resources we have at our disposal to solve for a problem like anxiety. And I want to mention that a clinical specialist can prescribe medication that can be useful if you think that you or your child may have a chemical or hormonal imbalance.

I don't want you to tell yourself things like, "Well, I don't want to go on medication because I don't want to be dependent on that for the rest of my life." I think that is a ridiculous way to think about medication, when it's appropriate and available and useful.

That is no different than someone who has poor vision saying, "I don't want to get glasses because I don't want to be dependent on glasses to see for the rest of my life." We would say to that person, "Why not?" Because glasses are a thing that exist and they can help you see better and they can help you have a better life, why wouldn't you want to take advantage of that, even though yes you may be dependent on those glasses to see for the rest of your life?

So I want you to think about medications, again, if a clinical specialist recommends that for you as possibly the right fit, don't hold onto shame or whatever else you're telling yourself that's preventing you from maximizing

Ep 214. Anxiety

and utilizing all the resources that we have available. If you suspect this could be useful for you, please, go see a doctor.

Now, what I'm going to speak to today is my area of expertise, which is the thought work behind it. Because I do think that we are quick to prescribe medication that, for many people, medication is actually not necessary, or medication in combination with thought work is really where they see the most progress.

I think that trying to regulate your diet is a good step because I think part of what contributes to anxiety is the blood sugar highs and lows that so many people experience because of an overabundance of carbohydrates and refined sugars and things like this. So I think cleaning up your diet can help. I think getting enough sleep helps, just taking care of yourself physically.

But I also think that taking care of yourself mentally and emotionally is huge. And I know this because I have many, many clients who have experienced anxiety, who have what they would describe as chronic anxiety throughout their lives who have found tremendous results through what I'm going to teach you today.

Today, we're going to focus on the part of anxiety that is created by the brain. So, the first thing I want to talk about is the word anxiety in and of itself. I think that part of the reason we see this huge rise in the number of people with anxiety is because anxiety has become a buzzword.

It is kind of a hot topic, right? It's a common part of the vocabulary that we use and even the vocabulary of our children from a pretty young age. I don't know about you, but when I was a child, I don't know if I heard that word, anxiety, very often.

So what we know is that the eye will see what the mind is looking for. So as soon as we start talking about anxiety a lot and talking about people that have anxiety or even if we propose our child, "Hey, maybe it seems like you have some anxiety," then they're going to start looking for whether or not that's true.

Ep 214. Anxiety

So, let me give you an example that's outside of anxiety to try to illustrate this for just a moment. So, bullying is another word that's kind of a hot topic, right? And I remember a few years ago, when my daughter was a little bit younger than she is now, in elementary school, they taught the kids all about bullying, what it is, what a bully is, what to do if you're being bullied, why it's important to not be a bully, right?

I'm all for this. Let's educate our kids about bullying and how to try and minimize it in schools; really important work, right? But what I noticed is that my daughter started coming home on the regular saying, "Mom, I got bullied at school today." And I would say, "Really? Tell me about it, what happened?"

And she would tell me about a conversation with another child where the child said something that wasn't very nice that she didn't really like. And what I'd tell her is, well, that was hurtful, right, and you had your feelings hurt because of your thoughts about what that child said and I'm sorry that that child said that thing that wasn't very nice. I don't know if I would classify that as bullying, or maybe that child is just operating in some kind of fear themselves, or maybe that's kind of just how kids are, unfortunately, and how people are and we have to learn to navigate that and we have to learn how to, yes, protect ourselves, but I don't know that I would classify that as bullying necessarily.

So, again, any time something went wrong and somebody was unkind to her or somebody excluded her from an activity, she would come home and tell me that she had been bullied. So I think, to a certain extent, we do this with the word anxiety. We start to label any kind of discomfort as anxiety. We do this for ourselves and we do this for our children, to a certain extent, or our children certainly just take it on and start to label it that.

So, for example, I was speaking recently at a Girl's Camp. And one of the questions that came in said, "I have social anxiety. Can you help me be more comfortable in social situations?"

Ep 214. Anxiety

And I was thinking about it. I was thinking about myself as a child. I was so shy as a child, I was so afraid to go outside to recess because I didn't know who I was going to talk to. I was afraid I wouldn't be able to find someone and I would be left out and it would feel bad that I would pretend to be sick. And I dare say I would literally feel sick after a while, sick to my stomach, so that I could go home and not have to go outside for recess.

Now, maybe, as a clinical specialist would say, that's social anxiety. I don't know, but nobody ever labeled it social anxiety for me. I just was a shy child. That's the way I view it now looking back. And sometimes, when we give something a label and a diagnosis like social anxiety, it makes it feel like something has gone wrong instead of, "Oh, this is normal. This is part of growing up."

And that's what I told that girl at Girl's Camp. I said, "I'm so sorry that you're feeling this way, but you know what I want you to know is that it's totally normal to feel uncomfortable in social situations, especially as a teenager, especially in junior high, especially at whatever age you're at, especially when you're meeting new people or especially with whatever's going on in your situation. It's pretty normal to feel uncomfortable, to feel like you don't know what to say, to worry about whether or not people are judging you."

So I just think we have a little bit of an opportunity to pull back on the labeling and the diagnosing of things in the name of helping people realize that the human experience includes a lot of discomfort and it's actually not a problem. It's just part of the deal. It's there for our own growth. It's there to provide us the opportunity to understand ourselves and to experience discomfort in order to then experience its opposite, which is joy.

Because here's what I've noticed is true in our society today – our tolerance for discomfort is very low. Let's think about physical discomfort first of all. Our tolerance for being physically uncomfortable is so low because we have so many amazing conveniences that mean that we don't have to be physically uncomfortable very often.

Ep 214. Anxiety

I always think about this when I'm in the car and we've got the air conditioning or can have just air without air conditioning, or we can have heat and we can turn the air up and down in little tiny increments to get the temperature just right.

I don't know about you, but sometimes I'm driving along and I'm like, "Ooh, it's a little cold," and I'll turn it up just a couple of degrees. And then, "Oh, it's a little hot," and I turn it down just a couple degrees. Our tolerance for comfort level when it comes to temperature is this tiny little two-degree window that we're trying to get to.

So again, I want you to imagine the days before we had central air and central heat and heated seats in our cars and all the things we have now. We just had to be okay with sometimes being cold and sometimes being hot. There wasn't a quick easy solution for it, and so our tolerance level for it was probably a lot higher than it is today.

We don't really have to tolerate being hungry because food is available in the grocery store or from a restaurant or someplace. At a moment's notice, we can stop and get food. But again, before all of that existed, we had to go hunt for food. We had to go gather food. We might have had to tolerate hunger a little bit more than we have to now.

We don't even really have to tolerate being tired very often thanks to caffeine and energy drinks and energy pills and energy gum et cetera. We can get a little lift in energy instead of just having to be tired. We don't have to give birth without an epidural. Imagine how much higher our tolerance for discomfort used to be before modern medicine.

Now, let me be clear that I am all for all of these conveniences. I am like, "Give me that epidural right away," as soon as the labor pains start. So I don't say this with any judgment. I'm all for us, like I said, utilizing all the resources we have to make our lives easier, but I just think it's important to notice that all of these conveniences have softened us a little bit physically and they've lowered our tolerance for physical discomfort.

Ep 214. Anxiety

And the same is true emotionally. Emotionally, our tolerance is pretty low because we live in a world where we can escape emotion in so many ways. We first of all have a lot of what we would all consider to be unhealthy ways to escape emotion, like drugs, pornography, et cetera, things like this that definitely provide a release from the emotion. At the very least, they neutralize emotion, and we would probably all agree, then cause a lot of negative consequences.

But even if we step away from those unhealthy things, we have many other ways with less severe consequences to escape emotion nowadays. For example, we can watch TV in order to escape whatever's going on in our real life. And we don't even have to wait for the show to come on thanks to Netflix and Hulu and all of the amazing TV technology we have, which I'm a huge fan of.

We can watch whatever we want to watch whenever we want to watch it and escape our lives in that way. We can get onto social media and scroll postings and stories instead of feeling lonely. So our tolerance for feeling lonely has gone down pretty significantly.

We can play a game on our phone instead of being bored. So many of us have a very low tolerance for boredom. Imagine if you went to the DMV and you had to wait in a long line, like we used to back in the day before the DMV took appointments, before they improved their processes, which they've done a lot, and before we all had a cell phone in our pocket, we just had to go to the DMV and we had to wait in that line and we had to just be bored.

We don't do that anymore. We get onto our phones. We play a game or we occupy ourselves in some other way. And so our tolerance for boredom is so low. Our tolerance for frustration is pretty low because we can just grab a handful of chocolate chips. They just take the edge off the frustration that we have with our children.

Instead of having to tolerate the discomfort of not knowing something that we want to know, we can just immediately text someone or Google it or

Ep 214. Anxiety

YouTube it and know right away. Now knowing is uncomfortable. Our tolerance for that is pretty low, right?

We have a very low amount of patience, a lot tolerance for having to practice patience because we don't have to be very patient. Anything that we want, we can find on Amazon and have it in our house within two days or, in some cases, two hours; instant gratification. So our tolerance for being patient is pretty low.

Now, again, I'm all for all of these things. All of these examples come from things that I know I do in my life. But I like to recognize that all of these things have softened me a bit emotionally, and then remind myself that being a human means pain sometimes. It means physical pain and it means emotional pain.

And of course, that emotional pain is really my area of expertise as a coach. I want to tell you today that emotions are nothing to fear. Emotional discomfort is really not a problem when you know three things; when you know that, number one, you are the creator of it with your thoughts. Number two, sometimes you might want to keep a thought that causes you pain.

So oftentimes, I'm coaching a client who will say, "Well I feel stressed because of this thought," or, "I feel frustrated because of this thought." And that's awesome. That's step one, to recognize that your thought is creating it.

But then step two is to ask yourself, but maybe, do I want to keep this thought? So for example, if I have a client who tells me that their husband is having an affair, then we will coach until they recognize that their hurt, their pain, whatever emotion they're feeling is not because of their husband's action. It's because of their thoughts that husbands shouldn't do that. It's because of their thought that this means something about them and their marriage.

Ep 214. Anxiety

But step two is maybe you want to keep those thoughts. Maybe you want to continue to believe that your husband shouldn't do that, that you don't want to be married to someone that does that, that that means something about your relationship, which means then that all we need to do is learn to embrace the emotional pain, to allow the pain, to embrace the pain, to know this is part of the human experience and that doesn't mean anything about whether or not you stay in this marriage.

But step one is to know that the way to cope with the pain is just to allow it and relax into it, and know that yes, you create it with your thoughts and they're thoughts that you choose to keep. So step number three is to get good at allowing and feeling your feelings. And the way to do that, my friends is just to practice them, to practice feeling them.

Instead of always hitting the escape button and going to Netflix, or hitting the escape button by eating chocolate chips, sometimes just allow yourself to practice the emotions. Now let's get back to anxiety for a minute. So, certainly anxiety is an emotion that you can practice feeling, that you can apply those steps to. You can know that you're the creator of it.

Sometimes maybe you want to keep the thought creating it and you just practice feeling it, but I also think that in many cases, it's not necessarily anxiety. It's just that our emotional vocabulary is so limited and anxiety is such a buzzword right now that we often just use that word to describe it. But I want you to consider when you're feeling negative emotion and you want to label it anxiety, I want you to stop and go into your body and ask yourself, what is it really?

Is it stress? Fear? Indecision? Restlessness? Shame? Impatience? Overwhelm? Confusion? Disappointment? Loneliness? Boredom? Frustration? Inadequacy? Uncertainty? Sadness? Heartbreak? Anger? Annoyance? Jealousy? Doubt? Envy? Embarrassment? Distrust? Hurt? Incompetence? Numb? Insecure? Or is it in fact anxiety?

Now, I gave you a lot of words but that's obviously a very, very short list of words that it could be. Anxiety may not always be the best descriptor of

[Better Than Happy](#) with Jody Moore

Ep 214. Anxiety

what you're actually feeling. The last thing I want to teach you about anxiety here is that anxiety is actually a secondary emotion.

So what I mean by that is that anxiety actually begins as something more subtle and then it escalates to anxiety as we resist that primary emotion. So many times, we label it anxiety because we're just not sure what it is, and by the way, if you're in the habit of resisting a primary emotion, then you may go to anxiety very, very quickly. It may be something your body has memorized.

You may even have resisted a lot of emotion in your past as a youth, or when you were younger, and so what your body memorized is anxiety and you experience that a lot, but it likely started at some point as something, what we would call a primary emotion.

It started as embarrassment. You didn't want to be embarrassed. You resisted it, you pushed it away, and in turn, you escalated it actually into anxiety. It started as fear. You were afraid of something and by resisting the fear, it turned into anxiety. It started as worry or it started as hurt. It started as probably something else that's easier to connect to the thought creating it, but because you didn't know how to allow those emotions, you resisted them.

And when we resist emotions, we double down on them and then we get anxiety. So think about it this way. If I'm worried and I'm worried about feeling worried, now I feel anxiety. If I'm afraid and I'm really fearful about being afraid, then now I'm feeling anxiety. If I'm really hurt and I'm feeling that it's not fair that I'm hurt, I shouldn't be hurt and I'm really hurt about being hurt, now I'm feeling anxiety.

So the solution is to allow the primary emotion, to know that this is the entire human experience and that we can practice feeling emotions and get good at them. So I want to offer that when the people that you love feel negative emotion, you also allow them to feel their emotions instead of teaching them to resist them.

Ep 214. Anxiety

So when my kids come to me and say mom, I feel really anxious today, I say I'm so sorry you feel that way, that's hard, but it's okay. I feel anxious sometimes too. It's just called being a human. When I feel fear, I say to myself this is painful but I can do this. Let's do some fear today. When I feel stressed, I remember this is created in my mind. This stress that I'm going to bring with me today, it's going to sit by me while I do whatever I'm doing today is created by sentences in my mind.

When someone I love is sad, I say I'm so sorry you're sad. I love you. And I'm sad that you're sad. Let's just be sad together. Now, I didn't use to say those things. I used to say oh, don't be sad. What's the matter? Don't be anxious. And I used to resist it myself until I learned what I'm trying to teach you here today.

I want to give one other amazing example of this. So about eight years ago I took one of my kids to the doctor and he was very young at the time and he was going to be getting some shots, but he was old enough to know what was going on. And so he was crying. He was crying hysterically.

And I was saying shh, it's okay honey, don't cry. I was trying to get my son not to cry, and I remember the pediatrician said to my son, are you scared? Then you should cry. Just go ahead and cry because if you're scared, crying is an appropriate response, so just go ahead and cry. And I was like, what is happening?

But it was so amazing. I was like oh, it kind of encouraged me to stop trying to talk him out of crying. When you just let him cry, you let him be scared, you don't try to talk him out of it, then what children do naturally is process emotion. We're the ones who teach them to resist it.

So even though our lives are not the same physically, even though we are physically weaker if you look at the way we live our lives, we've learned to compensate for that by going to the gym. We go to classes. We get on machines to work out bodies. We lift weights. We've learned that we need to gain strength intentionally because we used to gain strength by working the land and doing what was necessary to survive.

Ep 214. Anxiety

So now we do it by going into a room and getting on a machine. Nothing wrong with that, but we understand that physically. And I want you to understand that mentally and emotionally as well, that you have to compensate for the ease of escaping emotion, which is what of course we're doing in Be Bold, those of you in there know that's what we do.

We use challenges that sometimes life just gives us in order to become mentally and emotionally stronger, and then we also create opportunities to strengthen ourselves mentally and emotionally, and we purposely challenge ourselves because this is an option.

So I want you to remember that anxiety is not the demon that we've made it out to be. Anxiety is just an emotion. You can handle anxiety. This is what I teach the youth. When I went and taught at the Stake Youth Conference, I taught them how to feel anxiety. And I taught them that their brains create it, but I taught them that it's not a problem, that nothing's wrong with them, that human beings experience anxiety, and that the better they can get at experiencing it and not having to escape it or resist it, the more amazing their lives will be.

Our brains warn us when there's something uncertain or concerning in our future. That's what anxiety is. It can help us to plan. It can help us to course-correct. When we resist it and fear it and get anxious about it, then it feels like it's controlling us. But the other option is to just relax into it, even if it doesn't make logical sense. Even if you don't know what's creating it, just invite it along with you. Know that this is part of being a human, and let's all just get better at feeling anxiety.

Thanks for joining me today you guys. Don't forget to subscribe to the podcast and I will see you next week. Take care.

If you have a question about something you've heard me talk about on this podcast or anything else going on in your life, I want to invite you to a free public call, Ask Jody Anything. I will teach you the main coaching tool I use with all of my clients and the way to solve any problem in your life, and we will plug in real life examples.

Ep 214. Anxiety

Come to the call and ask me a question anonymously or just listen in. Go to jodymoore.com/askjody and register before you miss it. I'll see you there.