

Chatterbox #323 – Recognizing anxiety (Ad free)

Episode description

In this Chatterbox episode, Andrew and Anna talk about anxiety, explaining what it means and how it affects people. They share their personal stories about dealing with anxiety and discuss its different forms, from pre-presentation jitters to full-blown panic attacks. You'll also hear tips on coping with anxiety and learn about some techniques that have been helpful to Andrew and Anna.

Fun fact

As much as we like to avoid feeling anxious, a little anxiety isn't always bad! In small doses, anxiety can actually be helpful. It can make you more alert and even boost your performance in situations like exams or competitive sports.

Expressions included in the study guide

- Paint something with the same brush
- High-stakes
- Psych oneself out
- Pins and needles
- Spur something on
- There's no two ways about it



Transcript

Note: The words and expressions that appear in **bold text** within the transcript are discussed in more detail in the Detailed Explanations section that follows the transcript. The transcript has been edited for clarity.

Andrew: Chatterbox episode 323, "Recognizing anxiety" featuring Andrew and Anna. And now I'm joined by my co-host Anna who is going to talk to me today about anxiety and how to recognize anxiety and how to deal with anxiety, all of these things. And, yeah. Hello, Anna. How are you doing?

Anna: Hi, Andrew. Hi, guys.

Andrew: So, Anna, I'll start this episode by just asking you a general kind of personal question, but you don't have to go into too many details if you wouldn't like to. The question is, would you consider yourself to be an anxious person?

Anna: At the moment, no, but definitely I've gone through phases in my life where I've been more anxious, definitely, but not right now, fortunately, but absolutely there have been phases in my life, especially in my twenties where I was an anxious person. What about you, Andrew?

Andrew: I think I can be anxious at times. It depends on the environment that I'm in. So, like in my day-to-day routine, most of the time, no, I don't feel too much anxiety, but in certain situations, yes, I feel more increased anxiety. And I don't think that it has like a control over me or is like ruining my life or dominating my life or anything. But yeah, I would say that probably I feel like I'm a more anxious person than just a regular everyday average Joe. Of course, there's no way to measure that. I have no way to say if that's true or not, but I would say in general that, yeah, I probably feel more anxious than most people, but it's something that doesn't dominate my life. So, I think there are probably people who do have anxiety dominate their life. And yeah, I'm not like one of those people,

thankfully. Anna, maybe we should take a step back and talk about what anxiety is, in fact, in your own words, because we're not doctors and I'm sure there's like a medical definition for this, but just in your own words, what does anxiety mean to you and how would you define it?

Anna: And I just like to repeat that, OK, guys, I'm not a mental health professional or a doctor or anything like that. So just to repeat that, this is just my perspective on what I think that this is. For me, anxiety is kind of on a bit of a spectrum. So, for example, I can get really anxious before specific events like traveling. I get really anxious before I travel. The days before I travel, I get really anxious. I can't sleep. The typical thing of before you take a flight the day before, I never sleep the day before because I have that kind of underlying feeling of being anxious. And for me, that's kind of what anxiety is. And I think for me, there's a real big difference between being nervous about something like giving a presentation, for example, maybe at work, you feel really nervous in that moment. But then as soon as you finish the presentation, you're like, OK, I'm good. Whereas for me, anxiety is where you have that kind of constant underlying feeling of it's almost like a tension in your body or like a tightness and you just can't really relax. You know, maybe in the past it's affected my sleep. So, you just don't sleep very well. You find it hard to go to bed. For me, it's that mind worrying thing where your mind is just like nonstop. You're always thinking about something like the next day or maybe something's going to go wrong. So, it's like this like incessant, continuous thinking about everything and overthinking as well. So yeah, that kind of like tightness, just like not able to relax and the mind going constantly and just feeling on edge. I think that's how I've felt it. And it's kind of that constant feeling on edge rather than when you're just nervous about doing something specific. And then once you finished it, you feel fine. So, for me, that's how I've experienced it in my life. Would you say that's been similar for you, Andrew, or how have you experienced it?

Andrew: Yeah, I think you hit the nail on the head there by mentioning that it seems like there are several different kinds of anxiety. I wouldn't say that like nervousness when you

have to do a presentation or something. I wouldn't say that that's not anxiety. I would just say that's a different form. So that could be one form of anxiety. And another could be like when you can't turn your mind off and you're thinking about something again and again and again. I also get a little bit anxious before traveling, but I have a different kind of anxiety than you and I don't get anxious like the day the days before or anything. My anxiety happens when I'm in the airport that I'm going to lose my passport. I get so anxious about losing my passport for some reason. I always wear as much as I can, depending on the season, some kind of pants or jacket, which has like a really good pocket for putting my passport in. And I always like, it drives me crazy why I'm so anxious about it. But when I'm in the airport or traveling to the airport, I'm always like touching my pocket to make sure it's still there. And then two minutes later, it's still there. Like I don't know. So, I get that kind of travel anxiety.

Anna: Have you lost your passport before though?

Andrew: Never.

Anna: No. OK. Right. Interesting. OK.

Andrew: It's totally ridiculous. And I've traveled so much, and I've never even come close to losing it. It's always there, but it's just, yeah, it's just a weird anxiety. So yeah, I think there's different forms, right? I sometimes get, and we can get into this maybe a little bit more in the future, but I sometimes get anxious when I'm riding the subway, if it's really crowded and there are many people on the subway, I can feel anxious in that situation. And maybe that's just like a warning sign. Like my body is like, this is not a sustainable environment. Like you need to get out of this crowded environment. I don't know if that's just like a deeper biological signal telling me that there's danger or something. Maybe I feel anxious sometimes in those situations. There's like social anxiety, right? And sometimes I feel that I'm not really a super extroverted person. So, if I have to meet new people or

spend time with people that I have a difficult time getting along with, I mean, sometimes that can cause me some forms of anxiety as well. So, I think in general, if we had to just define it, it's like a feeling of discomfort, discomfort because of some stress or something that you're nervous about or some repeated thought that you can't escape. And I really do agree with you that there are many different forms that it can take. So, it's hard to just **paint all anxiety with the same brush.**

Anna: Sure. And I think you mentioned it earlier. There's a big wide spectrum of this to the point where there's some people that anxiety takes over their life and they literally can't really function. Maybe they have to stay at home because, and maybe guys, you know, somebody that's experienced something like this because they literally can't be outside because being outside, even doing that makes them so anxious or feel so scared that they can't even go outside or really do a lot of things with people or maybe even at work, for example. I'm just going to read off a couple of other sort of symptoms. It says here of anxiety, trouble concentrating, for example, or making decisions, feeling very tense or restless. This comes back to what I was saying before about, you know, it's like you're constantly going, your mind's worrying all the time. Maybe even, and this happens to some people I know, it can affect your stomach because they say that the stomach is your second brain, right? And your body kind of absorbs the anxiety. And sometimes that can really affect other parts of your body, like your stomach or your digestion, for example, sweating, shaking, trembling, as we've said before, trouble sleeping or insomnia. Insomnia is where you can't sleep. So those are some of the varying different ways that it can manifest essentially. But like you said, you know, it can vary very differently depending on the person to the point where I think being anxious about things is a normal human experience, but of course there's the other end of the spectrum where people do need help for to, to overcome it. If it's very intense or, or whatever, and I guess a doctor or a medical professional would be able to go into more depth about that and give you an accurate definition, et cetera. But those are some of the things that come up for that.

Andrew: You know, Anna, we are a podcast that is teaching people how to improve their English. And this is a huge form of anxiety for so many people is speaking in a second language for whatever reason. I think with like a lot of anxiety, probably when we think about it, we're like, it's so silly, like you're just a learner. You're just practicing your English speaking or for me practicing Korean, maybe Anna, you feel sometimes anxious when you have to speak in Spanish. I'm not sure, but like, it's so silly, right? Why do we feel so anxious and nervous about it? But it is true that speaking in a second language causes so much anxiety. So, I think that's one form of anxiety that probably everybody listening to this podcast right now can relate to.

Anna: Absolutely. You know, the feeling that maybe you've got an English presentation next week at work or at university and you've got that anxious feeling the days before, you know, God, I really hope I do well. I hope I can come across well. And I think for me, the main thing about that is you're right in, if we look at it completely coldly and objectively, it doesn't really make any sense. But when you layer on top of it, you know, this idea of fear of failure, looking like an idiot in front of other people because you say something wrong. It's really hard to put yourself out there and make a mistake in front of other people. We don't like doing that. People don't like doing that. We want to be right. We want to make sure that we do a good job on the most part, of course. So, putting yourself out there to look bad is hard. And actually, I read something the other day, which I think is really useful to share here, which said, when you're learning a new skill, embarrassment is the cost of entry. You have to be willing to be embarrassed when you're learning something and you're not an expert at something. That is the cost of entry, but it's really uncomfortable to feel embarrassed. We do everything we can actually most of the time to avoid it. And it makes us feel really anxious. The idea of, of, you know, being in front of other people and saying something wrong or nobody understanding us, like that, even thinking about that might make you anxious guys. If you're listening to that now, you might think, "Oh my goodness, it's just making me feel anxious." Just thinking about it, not even doing it. So yeah, speaking another language can, as you said, make people feel really, really anxious.

Andrew: Yeah. And I guess your example is more **high stakes**, right? Doing a business presentation in English is more **high stakes** than just making some small talk with the cashier at the grocery store, of course. But it all boils down to that same fact is that we don't want to look stupid in front of other people. And that's why we feel embarrassed about it or anxious about it.

Anna: In my opinion, it's not speaking the language that causes the anxiety. It's the fear of failure that causes the anxiety, which is speaking the language, right? But it's not actually speaking the language itself. It's the idea that you might make a mistake in front of other people and look stupid that makes you feel anxious.

Andrew: Anna, I don't know about you with your Spanish speaking and what level you're at, but I had an experience not too long ago and I can't even remember what it was. I think I was at the hospital. I went to the clinic, and I had to talk to the doctor. And, you know, that's always a situation where you have to use language that's not in your everyday repertoire when you're explaining about being sick and your symptoms and stuff. So, I had to Google some words beforehand to make sure that my vocabulary was OK so that I could, you know, explain myself clearly. And as I was walking to the clinic, I'm just repeating over and over in my mind what I'm going to say to the doctor so that I can do it correctly. And I've had this happen many times. You know, when I'm in a situation like this, maybe going to a government office and talking with somebody, when I have to do it in Korean, I always sort of prepare. I never like to go in and freestyle too much. I want to make sure that I'm prepared so that I don't waste their time because that's what I'm really, I think, most anxious about in my case is I don't want to waste somebody else's time by having to make them put in a lot of effort to figure out what I'm trying to communicate. Nowadays, I can communicate about most things in Korean. Maybe it's not like the perfect, most direct way to put it, but I can eventually explain like everything that I need to explain. But that can waste a lot of time and I don't want to do that. So, I was prepping and practicing and going over what I wanted to say again and again and again in my head as I

went to the clinic. And then when I got to the clinic and talked to the doctor and tried to repeat that sentence that sounded perfect in my head, it just all came out incorrectly. And so, I vowed to myself in that moment, "Don't do that!" Because I think I **psyched myself out**. When you "**psych yourself out**", it means that you cause yourself to make a mistake by practicing too much or getting too much in your head. I don't know. Have you ever had a similar situation or is this just me?

Anna: Oh, goodness. Yeah. When you were saying that, I was thinking, "Oh, that's exactly what has happened to me before," especially with the government office thing where you have to go navigate something. Maybe you have to send a form, or you have to sign up on some kind of register. And I always feel anxious before going. And I did the same thing as you. You prep, you try and practice. And then as soon as you get there, it all goes out the window anyway, because I don't know, it's very different doing it on your own when you're at home. And then in front of another person, you know, it just, it all goes out the window. It also depends if they're friendly or if they're a little bit rude. And if they're rude, that puts you off. And then you feel like, "Ohhh!" I always think you kind of, like, I see it as like jelly. You know, you kind of go wobbly and you're like, "Oh, I don't know what to say anymore." Yeah, I've had that happen to me many times. I'm sure guys know you might have had that happen to you as well in English, maybe when you try to navigate something or maybe ask for something and you kind of prep for, you're like, "I've got it done." And then in the moment, it's just, everything goes to pot basically.

Andrew: It's kind of like the cliché that you see sometimes in Hollywood movies or TV shows of like a middle school student that wants to ask the hot girl out and he's prepping like how to ask her out, like what he's going to say, what he's going to say. Then he finally works up the courage to go and talk to her. And then he just stumbles all over his words and embarrasses himself. Kind of that situation. So, Anna, there are many different forms of anxiety and we talked about some of the ones that we have. I'm curious, how does anxiety manifest for you? You talked about some of the different signs or some of the

different symptoms of anxiety, but what about for you specifically? What kind of reaction do you have to anxiety?

Anna: Definitely trouble sleeping. My sleep tends to be the first thing that's affected or one of the first things, definitely. Just an inability to fall asleep naturally or just quickly. And I would say just an overall tenseness and irritability, just not feeling relaxed or restlessness, which other people can notice. You know, when you're around somebody that's really tense, guys, maybe you have a boss or a colleague or maybe a family member, they're just, they're always really tense and it kind of makes you feel tense because they're tense. So, I feel like that's how it manifests for me is kind of this tenseness and just restlessness, which is not very nice to be around, I don't think, to be honest.

Andrew: Doesn't sound too pleasant.

Anna: Yeah, it doesn't sound great. It's just like you can't relax and then it makes other people not feel relaxed when they're with you. And I have had a couple of panic attacks, which are interesting to talk about because panic attacks can come on when you don't actually feel anxious at all. So, there's two types of attacks that are, you can have an anxiety attack or a panic attack and panic attacks are the ones where you might be, for example, in my case, I was completely relaxed. I was having dinner. This was when I first moved to Spain and actually panic attacks can come on without any notice and it can be when you've had a big change of environment or a big change that you haven't exactly processed yet. So, I just moved to Spain, it was a couple of months after and I was eating dinner and then all of a sudden, I got all these **pins and needles** down my face, all down my body. My hands clasped together like this. I couldn't move my hands. They like welded shut. It's very hard to describe. I thought I was having a heart attack and so did the other people around the table. It was really scary. And then they called the emergency line, and the doctor was like, "Oh yeah, it's just a panic attack. Put a bag over her face. Just have her breathe into the bag. And then in a couple of minutes she'll be fine." And she was right.

It was just a panic attack that came on out of nowhere. I was so relaxed and feeling fine. So sometimes there are other things that manifest like panic attacks. I don't know too much about it guys, so I'm not going to sort of define it or whatever, but that's another thing that's in this space of anxiety. And sometimes these things can happen as a result of maybe underlying stress or underlying anxiety and they kind of just pop up out of nowhere and they can be really scary. I've only had one or two in my life, but that's how it's manifested for me, I think. One of the more obvious ways anyway. What about you, Andrew?

Andrew: Yeah, I thankfully have never had anything like that. But you know, I mentioned riding the subway and sometimes feeling anxious on the subway and something a little bit similar happens to me when I do feel that anxiety on the subway. It usually starts with an increased heartbeat. So, my heart rate increases. And you know, from running, I'm pretty in tune with my heart rate, something that runners have to pay attention to a lot. So, I really know when it starts to increase, I'm like, "OK, something's happening here. Why am I feeling anxious?" Like I actually feel fine. Like there's nothing really that seemingly **spurs it on**, but I can notice my heart rate going a little bit faster. And then for me, I have a difficult time breathing and swallowing. I feel like I'm short of breath. And that swallowing also gets a little bit difficult, almost like somebody's like choking me a little bit, you know. And so that is how it manifests for me. And it's just a generally unpleasant situation where, yeah, you know, you get worried, like my heart is beating faster. I can't breathe clearly. I can't swallow. Like am I going to die? Am I dying right now? Am I having a heart attack? Even in that same situation, I've never had my hands clasp up like that. That seems really scary. Or the **pins and needles**. I think I would definitely go into a full-blown panic if that happens.

Anna: Yeah, it's actually a typical thing that happens. It's funny guys. It's called crab. I called it crab hands. I can't show you here, but it's like my thumb went across my palm and I couldn't open my hands properly. And yeah, the **pins and needles**, it was really intense.

Yeah, I thought I was having a heart attack. I thought I was going to die. But yeah, so those are called panic attacks. Luckily, I've only had a couple throughout my life, but could be another way that that type of anxiety manifests in people too. It's interesting you said about the busy metro, because sometimes when I'm in a big crowd, that can make me feel anxious as well. And I think the way that it shows up for me is like I start getting hyper alert. So, like, I'm like, it almost feels very primal, like you're an animal, because you're like, really in tune with what's going on, like any noise or any like sharp or sudden movement. You just suddenly feel really in tune with the environment in like a bad way, like hyper, hyper alert.

Andrew: One thing that I've noticed about reactionary signs or reactionary symptoms of anxiety is that one often **spurs on** more, and then that makes you feel more anxious. Right? Like, if I'm having a little moment on the subway, maybe I'll notice that my heart rate is beating faster. And then my breathing isn't as steady. And then I start feeling stressed about that. And then maybe it's hot. So, I'll start sweating a little bit. And I'll be like, "Oh, my God!" And then it's like, I don't know, one thing leads to the next to the next. And the more of these symptoms that come out, then the more anxious you feel. So sometimes anxiety can snowball, and it can be really hard to escape it. So that's another really annoying thing about anxiety is that one can lead into the next.

Anna: Maybe I'd like to ask you a question, then, Andrew, how do you find is the best way to deal with anxiety when you faced it in your life?

Andrew: Yeah, I mean, it really depends on the kind of anxiety. One thing that I like, this is kind of a mindset shift that I've had over the last not too long, maybe 5-10 years or something. But when I feel anxious, I don't look at it as like, "Oh, my God, why am I so nervous right now? Like, I should go home, I want to escape it." Instead, I try and look at it positively. I'm like, "The reason that I'm feeling anxious right now is because I care about this thing." If I'm anxious about making a presentation, it's because deep down, I know this

presentation matters and I want to do a good job. If I'm nervous about talking with someone, it's usually because I really respect that person and I don't want to, like you mentioned earlier, look like an idiot in front of that person. So, I actually really care about that interaction. And I think that subtle shift in the way that I view it has helped me to deal with it as well. It's like, you're just feeling anxious and nervous about this because you're passionate about it. And instead of worrying about that, I try and let that passion help me to overcome it. So, I think that little shift in my attitude and way of viewing it has really helped me to harness the power of anxiety into making me more successful in some of the things that I have to deal with that would have in the past really just made me want to run away from it and not do it.

Anna: Yeah, that's a really good shift, I guess. It's like viewing it from a different perspective. For me, it's exercise. **No two ways about it**, and actually exercise and also making me physically tired. The best thing for me is when I feel I finished the day and I feel tired, like physically, maybe because I did exercise in the morning. I've had a busy day, so I've been working my brain a lot or whatever, and I feel tired at the end of the day. So, for me, exercise and actually being physically tired helps me stop the worrying of all the things in my head, you know, the kind of the overactive, like constantly thinking about things all the time. So, for me, hands down, those are the most important things. But it's really interesting because if I'm anxious, I want to go for a run. But then I have a friend who's like, "Oh no, if I'm anxious, I want to go to bed." I'm like, I can't understand it. I'm like, "How on earth, if you have all that restless energy, could you possibly want to go to bed?" Like I just, so everybody has a different way of dealing with it. But for me, exercise is like the best antidote to stress and anxiety. Because if I feel tired at the end of the day, it's going to just naturally stop that overactive, constantly worrying about things or constantly thinking about what's going to happen next. It just quietens that down a little bit. So that's what's personally worked for me. I'm just much more at peace, maybe I would say, when I have like, I'm doing exercise, I'm having productive days, I'm squeezing in a lot of things so that at the end of the day, I'm tired.

Andrew: Yeah, I think that's also true for me. You know, exercise has been huge and just helping me with so many things in my life. And yeah, it's a great anxiety cure. Maybe not a cure, but a great way to deal with it. Absolutely. And I think I don't even sometimes notice how much of an impact it makes until I stop. If I stop for like a week or something, stop running, then I'm like, "Oh my God, I have all this extra energy and anxiety built up within me." And you don't realize how much of a release that it really can be until you stop doing it. So yeah, it's like the magic bullet for helping to reduce anxiety. Absolutely. So, Anna, we have three rapid fire questions that we're going to discuss in the "boco," the bonus content, for this episode for our Culips members. And we'll jump right in. And we talked about some little things that make us anxious. Anna, you get anxious a little bit before traveling. Me about losing my passport. There are any other little things, like kind of irrational things where you feel a large amount of anxiety over really a small, insignificant thing?

Anna: One thing that causes me a lot of anxiety is when people tell me, "I have 2000 unread emails." The thought of that just makes me feel like, "Oh my goodness." Like I like to have a clear inbox. Like even if I have 25 emails in my inbox, it stresses me out. I'm stressed. I'm like, "Inbox zero, it's like clean slate." I don't know what it is, but when people tell me, "Oh yeah, I've got like 5000 unread emails." I'm like, "Just the thought of that makes me feel really anxious." So, kind of irrational because it doesn't really matter how many emails you have in your inbox. But for me, even the idea, even like 10 emails, 15 emails, or on occasion I've had 50 emails in my inbox, it stresses me out. Really stresses me out. It makes me anxious. And you?

Andrew: Yeah, email's a good one. I used to be at inbox zero. Now I'm at like inbox 30, and that actually does stress me out. But I think that's a good anxiety. Yeah, because like I said, a lot of anxiety is like, it's because I want to respond to the people who have emailed me. It's like, of course I want to do that. So that's a good motivator in that regard. But here's an irrational one that I feel is when I have to ride the bus, if I have to pay for the bus

with change, like if I'm traveling in a different country and I don't have the transit card for that city, and so I have to use change to pay for the bus, that causes me so much anxiety. Like maybe I don't have the correct amount of change, or I'm worried that I'm going to forget a coin and that I'll hold up the bus, or that the bus driver will be angry or something like that. So, for whatever reason, I always sort of hate when I have to ride the bus in a foreign place, in a foreign country. I'm always worried that I'm going to screw the change up. And really that's so insignificant and just a stupid, like illogical kind of anxiety. But I do feel anxious in those moments. So yeah.

Anna: It's true, isn't it? It's always the most difficult to take the bus in another country. It's like, why? You know, because is it just that it's harder to know where you're going to get off at the stop? Like you said, the issue with the tickets or whatever, but it's true. Getting the bus is like the last thing you want to do in another country, for me anyway. I would avoid it at all costs.

Andrew: I think it's because the stops are often not clearly marked as well. Like you don't know when, when should I pull the bell? Like where's the stop coming up? I don't know. It's a stressful form of transportation for sure.

Anna: OK. I'll tell you something irrational that I have and anxiety that I have. OK. I get really anxious walking around the streets here because there's like a lot of birds in the trees and you can see on the ground that there's like bird poo everywhere. So, I get super anxious of like where I stand in the street. Cause I'm like, I do not want to have a bird poo on me. It's already happened. I know I've had a trauma. So, this is where it's come from. I've had a trauma. It happened last year. I've been traumatized by this now. So now I'm always like looking at the pavement just to see like where the evidence is, like where I should walk, where I shouldn't walk. So that's kind of irrational, stupid thing that makes me anxious. But well, what can I say?

Andrew: No, that's funny. That actually happened to me like about two years ago and I was wearing a hat and the bird pooped on the brim of my hat. So, I didn't even really notice because the way that I wear my hat is like kind of tilted with the brim up. So, it wasn't until like three or four hours later that my wife noticed and she's like, "A bird pooped on your hat!" And I was like, "Oh my God, I've been walking around with this bird poop all day. I didn't even notice." And so, after that, I've been much, much more aware of where you notice on the ground where they're doing their thing so you can avoid those spots. Yeah, that's a good one.

Anna: When I see people having a cigarette or something underneath one of those trees and I can see all the bird poop at the bottom, I'm like, be careful what you wish for. Be careful what you wish for.

Andrew: You're asking for it. Yeah.

Anna: Yeah, exactly. OK, Andrew, I'm going to ask you the next one then. Do you have a mantra or a phrase you repeat to calm yourself down or have you ever tried using one?

Andrew: The only time that I've tried using a mantra or phrase is when I'm running in a race. Like if I'm doing a marathon or something, I've found that I can control my heart rate a little bit better if I just get into the zone and just like repeat some kind of, usually it's like I don't have anything that I've prepared. It's just in the moment I'll find like some phrase or some word that matches the rhythm of my footsteps in that moment. So, like maybe it'll be a word like "rutabaga" or something, something with lots of syllables. And I'll just repeat it as I step on the ground when I'm running. So, I'll go like "rutabaga, rutabaga." And I don't know, it helps for some reason. It like helps to make my breathing even and helps to just get those thoughts of like, I want to stop running out of my head and helps to control my heartbeat. So, I think there's something to it. I've never tried it outside of running, but for running at least it's really been helpful. How about you?

Anna: No, I don't really have anything that I say to myself or really, to be honest, I'm not big on the kind of mantras or phrases, but there is one that I really like from a film recently, the Dune film that's come out recently, that was the books. And there's one phrase that the mother uses where she says, "Fear is the mind killer." So sometimes I've said that to myself when I've been really scared about doing something. I'm like, "Fear's the mind killer." For example, I started learning to drive, relearning to drive, I should say, I could already drive, and it was really scary, and I was so anxious. And so, I was just like, "OK, fear is the mind killer. Everything's going to be fine. You're not going to die." OK? That's also something I say to myself, "You're not going to die," which is also quite helpful in that moment as well. When you really do feel like you're going to die, I mean, you're not going to die. And also, another thing I say to myself as well, actually, that's true is when I was doing this driving lesson, for example, I said, look, the day before I was saying to myself, "If in the moment you don't want to do it, you can just leave. You can just decide that you don't want to do the lesson." There's always a way out, right? Or I could just walk away. So, I don't have to do it. I could just stop the lesson at any time and just get out of the car and say, "Nope, sorry, can't continue." And I can just walk away. Maybe you can't always do that work, for example, if you're given a presentation, but normally there's always a way out or say you're really anxious about something else. I'm like, well, if I really feel that anxious before I want to do it, I could always just not go or get off the metro or get off the bus. So sometimes I do say that to myself, like an escape route, essentially.

Andrew: I know that that's a similar strategy that a lot of addiction recovery programs use, right? If you're trying to stop drinking or something is like you don't think about forever, just think about for today, like I'm just not going to drink today, you know. If I don't like it, I don't have to do it today and just kind of put it in that smaller frame. And I think that makes it a lot easier to think of. Cool. Anna, have you ever tried one of these activities or games that are designed to help you relieve stress? I'm thinking there's coloring books for adults. There are these rooms that you can rent in some cities around the world where you go in and break stuff. Like, you know, have you seen these destroy rooms where you can

smash glass and hit things with baseball bats to get out your stress? Have you ever tried anything like that?

Anna: No. I can see if somebody was really stressed and angry, I could see how that would be really satisfying. But no, I mean the coloring books, I couldn't think of anything worse to be honest. I would be bored within about three seconds and no, so that wouldn't be a de-stressor for me. That would be a stressor because I'd be like, "What am I doing here?" So no, I haven't tried that, but I do find jigsaw puzzles quite an interesting way to like totally disconnect and just be really focused on something which like with exercise really helps you de-stress because you're not thinking about anything else. I'm just thinking, "OK, where can I find the puzzle piece for this little section?" So that's maybe one kind of activity or exercise that I don't do it that much to be honest, but whenever I do it, I'm like in a flow state. I'm like obsessed with this puzzle. It's like it takes over my life. Like all I want to do is complete the puzzle, you know? And you?

Andrew: Yeah, I haven't really tried any of them. No, no, I haven't. My brother, last time I visited my brother, he had one of those weighted blankets that are supposed to be really good for relieving anxiety. And it was just kind of like in the corner of his closet. And he's like, "Yeah, I don't really use that. I just bought it to see what it was like." And so, I was staying at his place. So, I was like, I'm going to try that. So, I tried the weighted blanket, and I did think that I think there's probably a lot of value in it for whatever reason. It does provide you with sort of sense of security when you're trying to go to sleep. So, I thought that was kind of cool. That's maybe the only thing that I could, yeah, could answer with. But I do like the idea of a puzzle. And my wife recently just brought home a couple of puzzles. So maybe I'll have to spread them all out on the floor and give it a try.

Anna: Careful, you're going to get addicted though. You're going to get addicted. It's going to take over your life, especially if it's a good puzzle. The key is getting the good

puzzle with a good picture, which has got lots of different elements in it. But poof, once you get started, that's it. You're in.

Andrew: Well, I'll give it a shot and let you know how it goes. Anyways, Anna, I think this is a good place to wrap things up. So, thanks for the conversation and to all the listeners out there. Thank you, guys, for tuning in and please share your thoughts and opinions and questions with us about this episode on our Discord server. We look forward to hearing from you. Take care and we'll talk to you next time. Bye bye.

Anna: Bye guys.

Andrew: That brings us to the end of this lesson. Talk to you next time. Bye!

Detailed Explanations

Paint something with the same brush

Idiom

In this episode, Andrew talks about how anxiety can show up in many different ways. He explains that anxiety often feels like discomfort caused by stress, nervousness, or repetitive thoughts. Andrew emphasizes that anxiety has many forms and adds that "it's hard to **paint all anxiety with the same brush**."

The expression **paint something with the same brush** means treating different things or people as if they are the same, without recognizing their differences. You can use this phrase when you want to say that it's unfair or incorrect to make generalizations about things or people.

This expression comes from the idea of painting: if you use the same brush and paint everything the same color, you don't see the differences between them. Similarly, if you treat all people or situations as the same, you ignore their unique qualities.

This phrase is often used to warn against making unfair judgments and to encourage seeing each person or situation as unique. For example, you might say, "Just because one person from that city was rude doesn't mean everyone from there is. Don't **paint everyone with the same brush**."

A variation of this expression is **tar with the same brush**. Similar to **paint with the same brush**, this phrase means to unfairly judge someone based on the actions of others, and is mainly used in relation to people, rather than things.

Here are a couple more examples with **paint something with the same brush**:

Sarah: Have you seen this new reality show on Netflix? I'm thinking of checking it out.

Paul: What? No! All reality TV shows are trashy.

Sarah: You **can't paint them all with the same brush**. Some of them are actually quite educational and inspiring.

Jess: I don't know if I want to go on a date with him. I mean, he plays video games! I've dated a gamer before, they're all lazy.

Mike: Come on, **don't paint all gamers with the same brush**. My brother plays video games and he's super active and productive!

High-stakes

Adjective

In the episode, Andrew and Anna discuss how speaking a second language can cause significant anxiety. Andrew mentions that giving a business presentation in English is a **high-stakes** situation compared to casual conversations, like making small talk with a cashier. He explains that **high-stakes** situations cause more anxiety because the fear of making mistakes or looking foolish in front of others is greater.

The expression **high stakes** refers to situations where a lot is at risk or where the outcome is very important. The term originates from gambling, where "stakes" refer to the money bet on a game. **High stakes** means that a large amount of money is at risk, making the game more intense and serious.

You can use **high stakes** to describe any scenario where the consequences are important, or the pressure is high. For example, final exams, job interviews, or major presentations can all be considered **high-stakes** situations.

This phrase is commonly used to highlight the importance or seriousness of a situation. For instance, you might say, "This project is **high-stakes** because it could determine if we get the new client," or "The championship game is **high-stakes** for the team."

A variation of this expression is **high-pressure**, which also describes situations that involve significant stress due to the importance of the outcome.

Here are a couple more examples with **high-stakes**:

Chris: I've been studying for this final exam for weeks. If I don't pass, I might not graduate on time.

Anna: I get it. Finals are really **high stakes**. Just stay focused and take it one question at a time. You've got this!

Tara: Are you all set for the opening night?

Liam: I'm excited but nervous. With critics in the audience, it's such a **high-stakes** performance.

Tara: Yeah, I can see that you're under a lot of pressure. But you're amazing! I know you'll do great.

Psych yourself out

Phrasal verb

In this episode, Andrew describes how over-preparing for a conversation in a foreign language can sometimes lead to failure. He shares his experience of needing to discuss medical symptoms in Korean and how he practiced what he wanted to say repeatedly. However, when he finally spoke to the doctor, all that practice made him so nervous that he ended up making mistakes. Andrew explains this by saying that he **psyched himself out**.

The expression **psych oneself out** means to become so nervous or anxious about something that it affects your ability to do it well. It's used to describe situations where overthinking and excessive worrying might lead to poor performance. When you focus too much on a task and worry excessively, your mind can cause you to make mistakes. This is similar to the idea of overthinking, where thinking too much about something leads to anxiety and confusion.

This expression is often used to describe scenarios where people perform poorly because they are too nervous. For example, you might say, "I **psyched myself out** before the exam by stressing over every detail, and I ended up forgetting everything."

A similar phrase is **to get in your own head**, which also means to become overly self-conscious and anxious about a task.

Here are a couple more examples with **psych oneself out**:

Stella: How was your interview?

Jake: I don't think it went very well. I kept going over possible questions in my head all night. I barely slept and felt really tired during the interview.

Stella: Sounds like you **psyched yourself out**. Next time, try to get some rest and go in with a clear mind.

Elsa: How was dinner with your girlfriend's parents?

Pete: It didn't go as well as I'd hoped. I **psyched myself out** by worrying so much about making a good impression that I ended up being really awkward and nervous.

Pins and needles

Idiom

In this episode, Anna talks about her experience with panic attacks and how they can occur unexpectedly, even when she doesn't feel anxious. She describes a particular incident when she had just moved to Spain and was having dinner. She says, "I got all these **pins and needles** down my face, all down my body."

The expression **pins and needles** is used to describe a tingling or prickling sensation, often caused by pressure on nerves or poor blood circulation. This feeling is similar to being poked by many small pins or needles. It often happens when a part of your body "falls asleep," like when you sit in one position for too long and then move, causing the blood to rush back to that part of your body. In Anna's story, the **pins and needles** sensation was a physical symptom of her panic attack.

While this phrase is commonly used to describe temporary physical sensations, it can also metaphorically describe a feeling of nervous anticipation. For example, waiting for important news can make you feel like you're **on pins and needles**. This means you are feeling both nervous and excited, usually because you are eager to find out the result but are also concerned about what it might be. In this case, the phrase **on pins and needles** refers to the stress and restlessness you feel while waiting for something important.

Here are a couple more examples with **pins and needles**:

Tony: Ugh, finally the meeting is over! My legs have **pins and needles** from sitting for so long.

Carol: Same! Let's go get a coffee and stretch our legs a bit.

Mark: Are you even listening? You've been checking your phone every two minutes!

Megan: I know, I'm sorry. I'm **on pins and needles** waiting for the call about the job interview. I just want to know if I got it or not. The suspense is killing me.

Mark: I get it, but constantly checking your phone isn't going to make them call any faster. Why don't we do something else to take your mind off it? How about a little walk?

Spur something on

Phrasal verb

In the episode, Andrew explains how his anxiety symptoms, such as an increased heart rate and difficulty breathing, can cause even more anxiety. For example, noticing his heart rate increasing can **spur on** more anxiety, leading to other symptoms like sweating and difficulty breathing.

Spur something on means to encourage or cause something to happen more quickly or intensely. It can be used to describe anything that triggers a reaction, either positive or negative.

For example, praise from a teacher can **spur a student on** to work harder, or a tight deadline can **spur on** a lot of stress for the project team. In the first example, **spur on** means to motivate or encourage the student to try harder. The teacher's praise makes the student want to do better and achieve more. In the second example, it means that the tight deadline puts pressure on the team, making them feel more stressed as they hurry to complete their work.

The word spur comes from the device used by horseback riders to urge their horses to move faster. A spur is a small, pointed tool attached to the rider's heel. When the rider presses it into the horse's side, it encourages the horse to speed up. Similarly, to **spur something on** means to push something to happen.

Some synonyms for **spur something on** include **encourage**, **stimulate**, **motivate**, and **provoke**.

Here are a couple more examples with **spur something on**:

Sales representative: Can I ask you something? What **spurred on** the sudden push with the sales team lately? Is everything okay?

Team manager: Not quite. I'm really stressed out, to be honest. The recent dip in our quarterly numbers made me realize we just can't afford another bad quarter.

Patient: Doctor, I've noticed the clinic is a lot busier than usual. Do you have any idea why?

Doctor: Yes, the recent flu outbreak has really **spurred on** a rush of health check-ups. People are being extra careful right now.

There's no two ways about it Phrase

In this episode, Anna talks about how exercise is crucial for managing her anxiety. She emphasizes that physical activity helps her feel tired at the end of the day, reducing her worries and overactive thoughts. Anna states, "For me, it's exercise. **No two ways about it.**" This means she believes that exercise is undeniably the best solution for her anxiety.

The expression "**There's no two ways about it**" means that something is definitely true or certain, with no doubt or other possibilities. You can use this phrase when you want to express that something is very clear and there is no other way to think about it. It shows that you are very sure about what you are saying.

For instance, if you want to emphasize the importance of good sleep, you might say, "Getting enough sleep is crucial for productivity. **There's no two ways about it.**" You can also use this expression when you want to agree with a statement. For example, if someone says, "Learning English takes a lot of practice," you might respond by saying, "**No two ways about it.** Practice is the only way to improve."

The origin of this expression comes from the idea that there is only one correct path or direction to take, with no other ways to consider. To help remember it, think of a straight road with no other directions, symbolizing that there is only one way to see the truth.

A similar expression is **no doubt about it**, which also emphasizes certainty.

Here are a couple more examples with **there's no two ways about it**:

Dean: I can't believe that woman just flirted with me! Should I tell Holly about this? What do you think?

Violet: I think honesty is always the best policy.

Dean: Maybe sometimes it's better not to be honest. I don't want her to be upset.

Violet: **No two ways about it.** Being truthful builds trust.

Chef: These tomatoes don't look very fresh. Fresh ingredients make the best dishes. **There're no two ways about it**, we can't compromise on quality, especially with the health inspection coming up.

Supplier: I understand your concern. I'll make sure to send a fresh batch first thing tomorrow morning.

Quiz

- 1. What can painting something with the same brush result in?**
 - a) It encourages artistic expression.
 - b) It can lead to unfair judgments.
 - c) It clarifies misunderstandings.
 - d) It ensures accuracy.

- 2. When someone says a situation involves high stakes, what are they referring to?**
 - a) A poker game.
 - b) A construction site.
 - c) A race with difficult obstacles.
 - d) A situation with potential significant consequences or risks.

- 3. If you "psych yourself out," what are you doing?**
 - a) Analyzing your own thoughts.
 - b) Encouraging yourself to succeed.
 - c) Overthinking and losing confidence.
 - d) Trying to understand someone else's perspective.

- 4. To "spur something on" means to:**
 - a) encourage progress or development.
 - b) hesitate in taking action.
 - c) criticize someone's efforts.
 - d) avoid discussing a topic.

- 5. What does it mean to say "there's no two ways about it" in a negotiation?**
 - a) That there are many ways to compromise.
 - b) That there is no room for discussion or disagreement.
 - c) That there are exactly two possible outcomes.
 - d) That there are several alternatives to consider.

Comprehension quiz

6. How does Anna describe the difference between being nervous and being anxious?
7. What specific event causes Andrew to feel travel anxiety?
8. How does Andrew describe his own physical reactions to anxiety on the subway?
9. What method does Anna find most effective in managing her anxiety?
10. How has Andrew's mindset shift changed his perspective on anxiety?

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Would you say you're an anxious person? What coping mechanisms do you use to manage your anxiety?
2. Can you describe a **high-stakes** situation you have experienced that caused you significant anxiety?
3. Have you ever **psyched yourself out** before an important task or event? What can you do in the future to prevent this from happening?
4. Describe a time when you felt **pins and needles** due to anxiety or nervous anticipation. What happened?
5. Think about a moment when your anxiety **spurred you on** to accomplish something significant. What was the task, and how did your anxiety motivate you?

Quiz Answers

1.b 2.d 3.c 4.a 5.b

6. Anna explains that being nervous is a temporary feeling, like before a presentation, whereas anxiety is a constant, underlying feeling of tension that doesn't go away easily.

7. Andrew feels travel anxiety at the airport because he worries about losing his passport.

8. Andrew describes having an increased heart rate, difficulty breathing and swallowing, and a general feeling of panic.

9. Anna finds that exercise and making herself physically tired are the best ways to manage her anxiety.

10. Andrew has made a shift in his perspective on anxiety by viewing it positively.

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