

# EXPLORE YOUR ENTHUSIASM

## EPISODE 123: REAL TALK ABOUT DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY

Today we're going to get into some heavy stuff that a LOT of you have talked to me about privately.

Over the last 6 months or so, I have been amazed at how many people have come up and talked to me about their mental health or that of a family member - anxiety, depression, and Alzheimers. Stories of their abuse, miscarriage, stillbirths, of their children with Autism and learning disabilities and physical disabilities. And this makes sense statistically, as 1 in 5 adults deal with mental health issues at least once in their life. At every event at least 2 people (if not more) have shared their story with me. At CGOA in July I started to think: I know it's common among thriving business owners, but you - my dear friends - may not. You're not hearing these stories.

And for good reason - it's personal and these makers aren't called to share it all online.

But I am. I'm here to help you know you're not alone in this. Whether it's feeling overwhelmed, being broke, or even having issues related to mental health, you are NOT alone in struggling with this. And as I share, I want you to remember - whatever you're struggling with, not only are you not alone, but you can also move forward WITH IT. Exactly as you are. People are doing it. You don't have to be different, better, or "more together" to make a business thrive.

I wish I could show you alllll the people who are exactly like you who are both struggling with these issues and creating businesses you respect. But their stories aren't mine to share; mine is.

Now, before we go on, I wanna give you a warning - I'm going to talk about suicide, depression and anxiety. When I've been at my most anxious, reading about other people's anxiety made my own symptoms worse, so please be kind to yourself. If you're feeling like you can't listen to this, that's OK! But please use this time to talk to someone - tell someone in your life, or talk to a professional. You can call a helpline with professionals of the National Institute of Mental Illness at 800-950-6264. To find affordable options for a mental health professional, visit [NAMI.org](http://NAMI.org). Don't just read stuff on the internet, tell a human being.

So go on and stop this and get help if you are feeling panicked or depressed (which doesn't always mean "sadness" - often it feels like a total disinterest in life).

*Still here?*

Earlier this year a friend of mine committed suicide. This was an internet friend - we never met in person - but one I spoke to regularly. We got personal and shared infertility information and church recommendations. My "testimonials" file has at least 3 from her, which she has sent me over the years. Her name is still at the top of my Google chat list. When I save a book on Goodreads, I often see her review of it.

Her death hit me hard. I felt grief about the loss of this life, but I also felt... fear. Her story brought home the reality I had long known: Depression Lies. (I like how Wil Wheaton talks about it.) Depression makes you feel like you're alone, like you're irrevocably screwed up, that there's nothing you could do to make it better. I know this, unfortunately, from my own experiences with it.

I now realize that a lot of what I've been experiencing since my friend's suicide, the way I lost interest in things I loved and found normal life stuff really hard... it's Anxiety. Of course, for a long time, I couldn't recognize the difference between anxiety and normal life (I've since talked to others and learned that this is really common. Since we don't know what it's like to be anyone else, we have no idea if this is a normal "I'm a stressed or tense" feeling or a case of persistent, life-inhibiting Anxiety.)

It's hard to explain how it feels; the best explanation I have come up with is that during a panic attack, it's like a hungry bear has just walked into the room. But everyone tells you not to worry - there's no bear. And your own brain tells you not to worry... but your body is reacting: HOLY COW THERE'S A BEAR! RUN! FIGHT OR FLIGHT, BABY!

Generalized Anxiety is like living with the bear in the room, but with a muzzle. You may mentally know the bear can't bite you, but your body is still SUPER freaked out (he has claws!). But since there IS no bear, you look at other parts of your life and think they are causing the reaction - you know something IS wrong (you physically FEEL something wrong) and you need to fix it. Because: why else am I freaking out? So you get in a loop of seeing scary bear-sized problems where there's not. Normal life stuff (going to the grocery store, having a hard conversation) becomes tinged with bear-levels of fear and just takes so much out of you.

And yet, I never really thought about it. Even panic attacks - after they were over I'd just start avoiding the thing that caused the attack. (Um, not a good coping mechanism!)

When family would ask or worry about my "stress" - I would say: I'm not stressed! I LOVE my life, my business, my students, my family. There is so much GOOD in my life, after years of working hard. What is there to be stressed about?

This summer, after a few conversations where I used the word "anxiety" to describe my feelings, I remembered a post by [Kyla Roma about her own diagnosis of anxiety](#) so I looked it up. And I was struck at how it perfectly described me.

Especially when she says this: **I just thought everyone was like this.**

And it dawned on me: *Wait...you mean that maybe everyone's brain doesn't do this? You mean maybe I don't have to just live with panic and avoidance?*

And she said, "I thought getting help would be scary" (Me too!!) "The thing was, I didn't realize I was in the absolute worst part already. Knowing what's wrong doesn't hurt you anymore. It opens you up to help, resources, services, knowledge, and community. Knowing what's going on opens a window that lets all kinds of good flood in."

That's when I made a doctor's appointment to deal with it.

Here's the thing I really need to say, the whole reason I'm sharing this: **Both Anxiety and Depression LIE.** They tell you that you're broken and that others won't love you, that you won't belong, if you admit it (even to yourself). And I realized this summer that (for my entire adult life) I had been *pretending* everything is OK, not just with those I love, but also with myself. For a really long time. I've spent my life being the girl who is OK! I'm here for you, I'm the safe place for friends and family to land when they're having a hard time. I'm the one is always fine, so that you can fall apart.

(There are really good reasons for this - it was a coping mechanism. But what matters less is where it comes from; I want to focus on what I'm going to DO about it.)

But you know, after years of having friends fall apart with me, I realize that I'm hobbling our relationship by not being equally vulnerable with them. By pretending I'm fine, I'm cutting myself off from the love and support I'd get if I opened up. I'm not letting them be a friend to me. I said this to a few friends/close family members and everyone said, "YES. I can tell when you're not

OK, but if you tell me you're fine, there's nothing I can do. I can't help or be here for you and I want to be."

In order to move forward and cease being frozen by panic, I had to decide: I deserve to take care of myself. My loved ones deserve the truth. I deserved their compassion and care. And good news: I have better, closer relationships because of it.

Part of my healing was starting to tell the truth, both to myself and my loved ones. Another important part was stepping back from my business. I turned a lot of stuff over to Jess while I went to the doctor, tried some solutions, and built a new way of working and being. I'm not even close to done yet; I still feel like I'm at the very beginning. But what's awesome is that my business kept going. It didn't die. I didn't kill it.

**Take note: Taking care of myself didn't kill my business.**

And I'm telling you all this, because, **YOU deserve it.** You deserve the truth from me. And you deserve compassion, both from yourself and from those you love. I've learned that I can't be compassionate with others struggling with this, if I don't tell myself the truth and offer myself compassion.

If you also always pretend you're fine. Or if you feel like a hot mess all the time. You deserve compassion.

I wish I could give you that compassion while sitting across from you, holding your hand. If I could, I would listen. I would help you build systems into your life, so that things keep running even when you fall apart. I would help you find a business model that you can manage, even in your hard times. I would help you create a sustainable life for yourself, no matter your situation. (For some of us, that means NOT having a business, but having a stable job with a stable paycheck!)

**I wanted to talk about this today for a few reasons:**

1. There's a stigma around mental health. The stigma keeps people from sharing their stories, which in turn reinforces the stigma. The more we share the story, the more you can see that you're not some kind of crazy pants. Or if you are, you're not alone in your crazy pants - I have a matching pair.
2. I want you to know: **YOU can do this.** You can work towards creating the life you want, exactly as you are. You don't have to wait until you get it together (I'm starting to think I'm never

going to get it together). You don't have to wait until you and all your loved ones are neurotypical.

**I'm NOT saying it's easy.** Heck, I'm not even saying you will always be able to get out of the bed. In fact, one of the main reasons I wanted to share this is that I read an article about a yarn company that exploded due in part to the owner's depression and inability to cope with production.

So yeah, we gotta find a way to do this, while not pretending you can do everything all at once. Because this depression-caused explosion isn't the rule. It isn't what HAS to happen to you. It's not even the norm, if my 5 years of talking to makers is any indication.

I'm just saying: *don't lose hope*. Don't for a moment think that the businesses you admire are run by always-healthy, always-happy people. Don't think that because I put out a weekly podcast that I can get it together to record a podcast every week. Don't think that because I have it together and am feeling amazing at a conference or during a webinar, that I'm like that all the time.

The main thing is: it's not either/or. It's both/and. I DO feel amazing at a conference. I am on a HIGH when teaching. I am feeling MOST myself when writing. I am sharing pretty pictures on Instagram because it makes me feel good. I'm not pretending that everything's ok, I'm sharing the parts of my life that I want to, that serve my Mission.

(Remember - this is the difference between using the internet for fun and for business. Since I use my online platforms to serve my Mission, I filter what I post through that Mission. I talk more about this in [episode 89](#).)

But we're talking about this today, because I want to be sure you know, that you really know, that you're not alone. After my friend's suicide, I came to realize that if I need to wear my cripypants out loud, in order to help just one of you feel less alone, it's worth it. I'd do it.

Wherever you are, whatever you're struggling with or whatever you've overcome - you've got this. You can do this. I love you and am so proud of you for just continuing to show up, even if showing up is just listening to podcasts while you lie in bed.

### **IF YOU NEED HELP, PLEASE GET IT.**

I found NAMI.org helpful. If you are thinking about suicide, if it seems like a reasonable solution, that's the Depression lying. Please don't believe it and call 800-950-6264 for immediate help.

I've linked to resources in the blog post for this podcast, which you'll find at [taraswiger.com/podcast123](https://taraswiger.com/podcast123).

In the Starship I'm always talking about a Clear Ask - that you can communicate what you do and don't want, so that we can be as helpful as possible.

So I want to be clear: I am happy to share what I've said in this episode, but at this point, I don't want to go into any more detail. I am not looking for suggestions or recommendations about anxiety and depression. I'm doing a lot of research and trying a lot of things! I promise to share any resources I find that work for me.

### What I would like:

I am happy to hear your own story (including what works for you!) and I'd love if you felt comfortable sharing it with the community. If you feel ready to talk about it, you can call my inbox at (567) 393-8272 and leave a message telling me how you're working on your business with depression and anxiety - you can share your name or remain anonymous. If I have more than 3 calls, I'll put it together into a podcast episode as proof that it's not just me and you.

Or you can share any part of your own story on Instagram with the hashtag [#exploreyoureenthusiasm](https://www.instagram.com/exploreyoureenthusiasm)

I posted about this in the Starship last week, before recording this podcast and the outpouring of support and "me toos" has given me the courage I need to share this with you. The Starship is full of people who are being brave and working on their business, despite anxiety, depression, and chronic disease. It opens tomorrow, so if you'd like to learn more, head to [TaraSwiger.com/starshipbiz](https://TaraSwiger.com/starshipbiz)

Thank you so much for sharing your stories with me and inspiring this episode and thank you for your kindness and encouragement as we move forward.

## RESOURCES FOR BLOG POST:

If you feel like you can't handle your anxiety or you feel deeply uninterested in life for more than 2 weeks and you don't think you have anyone in your life that will help you, call NAMI: 800-950-6264 or make a doctor's appointment.

<http://projecturok.org/wil-wheaton/>

<http://www.kylaroma.com/live-mostly-happily-depression-generalized-anxiety-disorder/>

The best explanation I found for how I feel: <https://www.anxietybc.com/adults/generalized-anxiety-disorder> (The bit about scenario building and "intolerance of uncertainty" was eye-opening.

If someone you love has committed (or attempted) suicide: [Survivors of Loved Ones to Suicide](#)