



Conscious Life presents

# ANXIETY SUPER CONFERENCE

## In Therapy

### Sanaya's last session

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#### **[00:00:00] Alex Howard**

Hi, I'm Alex Howard and welcome to this week's episode of *In Therapy* where we follow real life people on their therapeutic journeys.

And in this week's episode, we're reflecting on the power of the therapeutic process and the potential that we all have to create change in our lives. Change isn't always easy, but it is absolutely possible with the right tools and truly showing up and doing the work.

If you haven't already, please like, subscribe click the bell icon to be notified as new episodes are released. And do follow my Instagram [@alexhowardtherapy](https://www.instagram.com/alexhowardtherapy) for daily inspiration and support.

Sanaya came to *In Therapy* to work on her anxiety and has made significant improvements along the way. Last time she opened up about her bulimia. Together we explored how we can use unhealthy methods to attempt to achieve positive results and how we can find healthier parts to the same outcome.

Well, Sanaya, it's very nice to see you. How have you been doing?

#### **Sanaya**

I've been good. I've actually been really good since our last session and just been doing a mixture of actual work and like working on myself at the same time. And it's been really good, actually, the past month or so I keep thinking, oh, yeah, I'll bring it up in therapy and actually today I've just completely forgotten everything. And to be honest, I think it's just because I had a problem, I dealt with it and it's worked out for me. Like it's something in the past and I've clearly forgotten about it now. So, yeah, it's actually been a really good couple of months.

#### **Alex Howard**

I'm really pleased to hear it.

#### **Sanaya**

Yeah.

#### **Alex Howard**

Well, you can leave. Thank you.

**[00:02:16]**

What do you put the fact things have been really good down to? Like, I'm curious if there's anything, because last time I saw you, you had a bit of a bumpy time. Overall there were lots of positive things, like the anxiety was much calmer and so on, but the bulimia have been a bit more tricky. So it sounds like you've been quite a different track. And I'm interested of either how you've approached things differently or circumstances being different or thinking differently. Like what's behind it?

**Sanaya**

I think it's just been a mixture of different things. I think your exercises I did use at the beginning and they really helped and then it's just been fact that I've been busy. Oh, I got a job. Yeah, I know. So I got a job, an internship, which I started August.

**Alex Howard**

Tell me about it.

**Sanaya**

So it's basically a three month internship. It's at this production company and I do one month in books development and then one month in talent management and then another month in production.

**Alex Howard**

Wow. It's in factual?

**Sanaya**

It's in scripted.

**Alex Howard**

That's what you wanted to do.

**Sanaya**

Mainly dramas.

**Alex Howard**

That's what you said you wanted. And a production company that you are excited to go and do work with.

**Sanaya**

Yeah. It was just something that I had watched on BBC and I saw who the production company were and I just cold emailed them. So it was purely like, thank God I did that. But yeah, so that was really great. And I also didn't think that I would get it. I completely forgot that I'd even gone for that interview because I didn't think the interview had gone as well as certain other ones. I didn't get those other ones. I got this one. So anyway.

**[00:04:06] Alex Howard**

Well done. I'll say I feel proud of you. It's not mine to feel proud of, but I know how hard you've worked for this and how much you've wanted this, so I hope you feel the sense of pride and the sense of, yeah, I did it. You had a very specific, clear goal that you wanted and you've worked.

**Sanaya**

Which come to think of it now, is probably why I've been happier.

**Alex Howard**

It's given you a lift.

**Sanaya**

Yeah, it's a massive weight off my shoulders. I feel like even though it's not starting immediately and it's at the end of August, it's like I don't actually care what kind of work I do or anything like that. Even if I end up not finding any work till then, it's like I know that I've got that at the end of the day. So that's why I'm like, yeah, very content at the moment with where I am.

**Alex Howard**

When did you find out that you got the internship?

**Sanaya**

It must have been the week after I saw you, because I don't know why I wouldn't have told you, because it must have been.

**Alex Howard**

No, you definitely hadn't told us before.

**Sanaya**

I had been waiting for two jobs to get back to me that had said they would get back to me within a week and it had been five weeks. And I think that's when I last saw you, I was like getting anxious about this one job. And actually I found out I didn't get that job that morning, and then in the afternoon I found out I got this job. So it was like, oh, crying. And then it was like, oh my gosh.

**Alex Howard**

Life is so funny like that.

**Sanaya**

Yeah, exactly. It's just funny because I completely forgotten about it as well. But I feel like that's just how it goes, really.

**[00:05:54] Alex Howard**

It really is sometimes. And how's your anxiety been since I saw you?

**Sanaya**

Yeah, it's been a lot better, I think. I haven't really had any really anxious moments, and I've been still making myself, I think there's like a couple of days where I hadn't gone to the gym and I hadn't been working. It's like that in between of I had just finished work and I had been sleeping and hadn't just got back into a routine of doing stuff again. And I felt a little bit anxious, but it was like nothing really.

And I've had stages where I've forgotten to do my meditation or not forgotten, just been lazy about it and things like that. And I have felt like there is a difference. But I wouldn't say it's like anything like crippling anxiety or anything that I couldn't manage from the ways that we've discussed before. And in terms of feeling anxious and the way of coping is like making myself throw up, since we last spoke, that's not been a thing at all.

**Alex Howard**

Wow.

**Sanaya**

I think what it really was is actually just speaking about it.

**Alex Howard**

I thought it was a very brave thing to bring it up the way you did.

**Sanaya**

So I think that is what really helped was just speaking to you about it. And if I did feel the urge, it would be like you've given me tools to deal with this. There are other options that I can take. Whereas before, I wouldn't even think about it. It would just be an instant reaction.

**Alex Howard**

It's like an automated pattern.

**Sanaya**

Yeah. That hasn't happened since way before we spoke last. So that's really good.

**Alex Howard**

You must feel good about that as well.

**Sanaya**

Yeah, I'm really pleased. And in terms of my eating patterns and habits and exercise and things like that, I feel like I've gotten back into a really healthy routine and not just being unhealthy, basically. So, yeah, I do have days where if I'm really busy, I've forgotten to eat, and then I'll go and eat loads, and

then I'll get this urge. But it's very manageable. I say that very confidently because I know that it's definitely manageable.

**[00:08:36] Alex Howard**

I think that awareness is key, that when you get the urge that you recognize that you've got choices. And as you said before, I think the problem was you'd get the urge and then you'd make yourself sick, and then there would be a sort of ripples that would come from that of frustration, annoying yourself, but feeling stuck. Whereas now it's the recognition that you go down that path, you know how that's going to make you feel, but also you have other tools and other strategies.

**Sanaya**

Yeah, exactly. For the beginning of after I saw you, I was using the STOP Process a lot, and that was helping manage my anxiety and things like that. But also when I was getting anxious, I stopped for a moment like, oh, yeah, the way to deal with this isn't to make myself throw up. Let me really think about it.

**Alex Howard**

Yeah.

**Sanaya**

That's been really helpful in watching your videos back, because I'd watched them before as a way of dealing with anxiety and I think I just needed to refresh it. I think even though I knew what you were saying and I still remembered what you were saying, I just needed that. It was like a motivation for me to watch it.

**Alex Howard**

Well, I think also, and I said to someone studying other people's work many times over the years, sometimes you hear something you've heard before, but because you're in a different place, you hear it differently. And sometimes we hear something we've heard before the same way, but it reminds us of something that's not being fresh in our mind. And other times, I'm sure they didn't say that the first time.

And also we can only take in so much information at any one time. And so we hit our threshold and we often then stop absorbing information.

**Sanaya**

Yeah.

**Alex Howard**

So I think it's a really helpful thing to revisit and to reinforce effectively what it is that you're learning.

**Sanaya**

Yeah.

**[00:10:29] Alex Howard**

Where have been, if anywhere, have been the challenges since I last saw you? The places where it felt a bit more sticky. And it sounds like what you're saying earlier, there's been a few of those, but then you've been able to self correct and go, actually, what I need is.. Is there anything like that that will be helpful for us to talk about?

**Sanaya**

Yeah, I think it's just moments of because one of the videos I watched was the inner critic. I think there are still moments where I do feel like I criticize myself for no reason. And I feel like I've noticed that more since our last session, just because my focus hasn't solely been on my anxiety, it's been like on me in general.

When I watched the inner critic video and I was just like, yeah, there are moments where it can just be a random morning and I'm just super critical of myself. And even when I was at work and working, it would just be like I have a very quiet day. And even the people around me were like, oh, what's happened? Are you alright? I'm like, oh, no, I'm fine. I'm just getting on with the work I have to do.

**Alex Howard**

What's the general essence of those thoughts? Like when you're beating yourself up, I guess what I'm asking is, what's the content of the attacks of what you're saying to yourself? You think back one of those mornings where woke up and sort of given yourself a hard time, what were you actually saying to yourself?

**Sanaya**

I think it's like just forcing myself to be in a good mood and like, oh, you don't want people to think you're boring or you're super quiet or you're shy or anything like that. So it's like as soon as people have made comments like, oh, what's wrong? I'm like, oh, God, there's something wrong. And I'm like, okay, I have to overcompensate and be like, trying to make a joke or something.

So I think it's like my confidence of what people think of me and just my confidence in general about how I am. I don't want people to think that I'm a certain way.

**Alex Howard**

Feeling quiet and then someone makes a comment and then you beat yourself up for that, but it sounds like sometimes the feeling quiet is also because you're already giving yourself a hard time, and that is what makes you feel quiet. Is that right?

**Sanaya**

Yeah, I think so.

**Alex Howard**

In that instance, so let's say you wake up one morning and it's a morning where you're being quiet, what would you have been saying to yourself that made you feel quiet? It sounds like that quiet is

almost a little bit feeling, a bit shut down and a bit self defense like, defended to the world, in a sense. What would be some of the things that you would criticize yourself for?

**[00:13:27] Sanaya**

I don't know. It's hard to explain. But one of the main things about me is I hate people thinking that I'm like an emotional person.

**Alex Howard**

Almost like an idea of who you need to be, to be liked and whatever. So if you're feeling a bit low mood or a bit self reflective or a bit flat or a bit tired, that somehow that might not be okay.

**Sanaya**

Yeah. And it's like even when I see my friends, I'm like, I don't want to get upset in front of them or just not be fun. I think I have a real problem with not being okay all the time, not necessarily in front of my family, but definitely in front of my friends and people around me and people that I work with. I want to be chatty all the time.

**Alex Howard**

What do you fear would happen? With your friends and people that know you if you were particularly quiet or a bit low mood, how do you feel they might respond to that?

**Sanaya**

I think on the whole, it would be a lot of support and stuff, definitely.

**Alex Howard**

So I think that's what you ultimately know would probably happen, but I think there's a part of you that fear something else would happen, right?

**Sanaya**

Yeah.

**Alex Howard**

I think your good friends, if you were being quiet, they might be like are you okay, what's up? Maybe genuinely interested. And it sounds like you'd be more likely to make a joke than to actually say, I've just been feeling a bit sad this morning or I've just seen a bit flat. It sounds like there would be a need to sort of give the right answer.

**Sanaya**

Yeah. I think I'm definitely comfortable with a few of my friends if they came to me with whatever or if they seemed upset. I feel like I do that a lot of the time, but vice versa I don't really want them to have this impression of me.

**[00:15:29] Alex Howard**

What might happen if they have that impression?

**Sanaya**

Honestly, nothing bad, and I know that.

**Alex Howard**

But part of you thinks differently, right. Because that's why it is the way that it is.

**Sanaya**

Yeah, definitely.

**Alex Howard**

I think in your rational mind, you know that if you were genuinely sad, your friends would want to know and they would be supportive. But it sounds like there's another part of you which is a bit more like, well, but what if they're not? Or might they think that I'm just being needy? What's the fear of that part, do you think?

**Sanaya**

I don't know if, this might sound bad, but I don't know if it's like from a place of me judging other people in the past, where I've been like, if they've said something and I feel like, oh, they're crying over nothing or something like that. And even though I've comforted them and shown this support and stuff like that, I would never actually make it known. But I don't know if it's because I'm like, oh, I don't want to be like that. I don't want to be like them.

**Alex Howard**

So it's almost like that their kindness might not be sincere or they might secretly be thinking that you're being something else.

**Sanaya**

Yeah. I think it's more like if I've been in a situation in the past, maybe at school or even after that or at uni or something, and I feel like I've judged them or felt like that's annoying that they're crying all the time. I feel like maybe perhaps I've put that on me so I feel like I don't want to annoy them. And I don't want to be that person that's like the reliability and is upset about something and brings down the mood like they have done and that's how I felt.

**Alex Howard**

I suppose there is a difference between someone who is habitually low energy and emotionally draining and someone who's having a bad morning just say, I'm having a bad morning. Because to me, there's something about being honest about and naming how we feel without necessarily an expectation of anything from anyone else.



**[00:17:41]**

I'm not asking someone else to make it better or to fix it, but there's something about being emotionally honest about how we're feeling that in a sense means we feel more connected and more supported as opposed to just saying, yes, I'm laughing it away in a sense which what you're then doing is you're actually rejecting how you feel.

**Sanaya**

Yeah.

**Alex Howard**

It's like what you're really doing is you're rejecting yourself before you give anyone else the chance. Does that make sense? By saying how I feel is not important or I don't want to show them how I feel in case they reject me, but by doing that, you're actually rejecting how you feel.

**Sanaya**

Yeah, I think that makes sense a lot.

**Alex Howard**

It takes a level of emotional courage to be truthful about how we feel. And of course, there are certain things that are appropriate in certain contexts. If you're in a job interview and someone says, how do you feel? I'm having a really shit morning, it might not be the moment necessarily to do that.

And it's a bit like, I suppose, a continuum from situations where we actually do need to be quite guarded and we do need to be quite careful how we position ourselves. And that might be particularly work environments, people we completely don't know. And maybe there's an expectation of us that's genuine that we need to try and meet to the other extreme, being with your very closest family, where you just however you feel is able to be expressed.

And it's finding out where each situation is on that continuum. But what we don't want to be doing is spending too much of our time and our lives in that place that we're hiding how we feel because we pay a price for that.

**Sanaya**

Yeah. And also that whole guard up thing, I feel like I've been told that before how I just got my guard up and I don't really say how I feel, which I definitely don't.

**Alex Howard**

In a strange way, when people are honest about how they feel, often the people around them feel more comfortable, not less.

**Sanaya**

Yeah.

**[00:19:53] Alex Howard**

Now it's one thing if someone's having a difficult day and they're in a low mood and they're expecting other people to make them feel better, that's a burden that people can feel and that can cause distance.

**Sanaya**

Yeah.

**Alex Howard**

But if you're not expecting anyone else to fix it, you're just owning how you feel, there's actually something that's quite intimate and quite connecting about that.

**Sanaya**

Yeah. It's just taking the plunge and doing it.

**Alex Howard**

Yeah. And it does take some time to do that.

**Sanaya**

And I think if I hadn't had these sessions at all, I think I wouldn't know who I would be speaking to.

**Alex Howard**

Yeah.

**Sanaya**

I think I'm incredibly open during these sessions, but I feel like with my friends and things like that, I feel like I find it hard to be unless I've had a drink and we're on that subject of conversation. But those are like the cases where I feel like I can talk. But also it's with very few friends. Also, what happens is I usually regret it, not immediately, but I usually regret it the next day. I'm like, oh, I shouldn't have told them this thing about my life.

**Alex Howard**

Is that because your inner critic starts beating you up the next day? So it says, you shouldn't have said that they're going to judge you, they're going to be thinking this. So I think that there are times that we can over disclose. I'm not saying that you just tell everyone everything you think of it the whole time. Of course, there are appropriate places for having certain boundaries and certain ways where actually I'm not going to tell that person this thing because I actually don't trust them not to keep it a secret, for example.

I think boundaries are really important. And if we spend our whole life hiding how we feel and protecting how we feel, we spend our whole life hiding. And there's something which is very connecting about emotional honesty.

**[00:22:04] Sanaya**

Yeah.

**Alex Howard**

But really, I suppose my challenge to you and my invitation to you is that being braver about how you feel emotionally, in a sense, it's a self fulfilling prophecy because the more that you do it, the more people respond in a positive way, the more you actually feel closer to people and more supported by people, the easier it then becomes to do it.

**Sanaya**

Yeah. I feel like with my eating thing, one way of coping was, oh, I'll just exercise this feeling off. And I feel like that did work for a while. That was one of the ways that I was coping with anxiety, that was to exercise it off. But I think what obviously really helped, as I said, was me talking about it.

So I know that I do need to talk more. I can't just go to the gym and hope that I can burn it off, burn this feeling off. But I do know the benefits of just saying something. And then in a way, I know that it's like not just on my chest anymore, not just on me, like I've spoken to someone and I can hold myself a bit more accountable.

**Alex Howard**

Yeah. Well, it goes back to our last session where you were very brave in talking about the bulimia and look at how that changed how you felt about it afterwards. And yes, I was able to give you some practical suggestions of things, but as you yourself said, actually the talking about it was the thing that was the most helpful.

And I think the same is true in lots of micro ways in our lives that the more we are truthful about how we feel, the more we invite support from other people, actually the closer we feel to people and the more supportive we feel by them.

**Sanaya**

Yeah, exactly. It's just doing it.

**Alex Howard**

Yeah. What would stop you from doing that?

**Sanaya**

Yeah, I think it is like this way that I want to be perceived, and I guess that could come from the way that I perceive others sometimes.

**Alex Howard**

It's what I call the idealized self, like the ideal version of who we think we need to be, to be liked, to be happy, to be popular, whatever it may be. So who is the idealized Sanaya? If you were really being that person, who would you be?

**[00:24:36] Sanaya**

Just like someone who's really fun and funny all the time and people want to be around and stuff like that.

**Alex Howard**

So it's always in an upbeat, positive mood.

**Sanaya**

Yeah.

**Alex Howard**

Is it possible, though, that if that idealized Sanaya is always positive, always happy, always in the right mood, then in a sense, other people may feel less able to open up to her because they won't want to feel like you feel, which is that they're the one that's being the drain or the one that's being needy because this person always is positive and happy. Or if that idealized Sanaya was actually more realistic and actually asked for help sometimes, talk about how she felt, would that not make others feel safer and feel more comfortable?

**Sanaya**

Yeah, definitely feel safer and want to be more open with me and things like that, for sure.

**Alex Howard**

Because in a sense, it strikes me that your idealized self actually isn't very ideal.

**Sanaya**

Yeah, probably.

**Alex Howard**

Because I feel like what it does is it makes other people feel... Almost puts a spotlight more on them because they're always the one that's a bit low mood or a bit sad or a bit fed up or whatever. But this idealized Sanaya is always positive, always happy, whereas actually she's a bit more authentic. Everyone else then gets permission to be more authentic.

**Sanaya**

Yeah, I do see what you're saying.

**Alex Howard**

Really the secret to working with it is working with your inner critic. Because what feeds this idea of the idealized self is this constant we all can have criticism of you're not good enough, people don't like you're, not this, you're not that. So then the effort to deal with that inner critic, the effort goes in to trying to be this idealized self. But actually what's better is to put the effort into stopping the inner critic. So then you haven't got the pressure and the drive to have to be it.

**[00:26:41] Sanaya**

Yeah, it's just a lot. I knew that I had a lot to do on my inner critic, a lot to work on. But yeah, it's just hard.

**Alex Howard**

It is. And a big part of it is having the awareness, just the very fact that we're talking about it the way that we are is helpful. But there's the awareness of when it happens, the moment more in hindsight, you can see different examples of when the inner critic has played out. The real trick is to be able to catch it as it's happening, because then you can actually do something about it in that moment.

**Sanaya**

Yeah. It's just one of those things which is easier said than done. But it's definitely something that if I find myself having a bad day, like, I will reach out.

**Alex Howard**

In a sense, what you need to do is to go and build more positive memories of being emotionally honest.

**Sanaya**

Yeah.

**Alex Howard**

Like the more times you do it, like you described, the easier it then becomes next time. But it's almost like the more we don't share how we feel, the more that we shut it down, the bigger the monster of the fear becomes, the more difficult it feels. But each time you talk about how you feel and remember, we're not talking about becoming this person, it's like a massive energy drain on everyone else. We're actually talking about just being honest about how you feel in that moment, which then actually, if you do need some support from someone, it actually makes that more possible. Like it's inviting people to be emotionally closer to you.

**Sanaya**

Yeah. I think I do have a few experiences of when I have opened up, and this is like in the past, throughout uni or even sixth form, because I don't think I was not open, I think I was very open, and not necessarily being shut down, but just being told that maybe my problems weren't as big as their problems or so and so problems. And I know that that's a good way of coping sometimes because I'm like, I just need to put it in perspective, but obviously that's just like belittling how I feel.

**Alex Howard**

Yeah. It's not about having bigger or smaller problems or someone else's being more important. It's about being emotionally honest about how you feel. Not with everyone and not in every moment more of the time.

**[00:29:09] Sanaya**

Yeah. And I do know that with the friends, the ones that I would go and talk to, I would never get any reaction like I have had before and they would never shut it down or anything like that. So I do know that. But I guess it could be just because I haven't had the best experiences in the past. And then I have thought, oh, God, they must think I'm so annoying.

**Alex Howard**

But again, I think that's your inner critic. You're inner critic story about what people thought in the past, people might think now, what they're going to think in the future. But if you do open up to someone and they reject you in that or each time you share how you feel, they're sort of disinterested, I would say it's probably quite important information about that person, about that friendship.

**Sanaya**

Yeah, true.

**Alex Howard**

Like at the end of the day, having friends is about having people that you can be yourself with. And if being yourself causes a divide, then that's important to know. There's a lot of work trying to be someone else.

**Sanaya**

Yeah.

**Alex Howard**

So I would really encourage you in the coming few weeks to go and reality test this, because you've had some negative experiences in the past to go and collect 2 3 4 5 initially experiences, and it doesn't have to be a massive deal, it can simply be, how are you feeling? I just feel a bit deflated and fed up the last couple of days. Or it could be, oh, yeah, I've just been a bit more worried about what's coming up. It doesn't have to be big, necessarily. It's just being true and being honest.

**Sanaya**

And that I feel like would help me because I won't feel so deflated after seeing like them and forcing myself to be...

**Alex Howard**

Well, that's the thing, it takes a lot of effort to try to be someone else. But also if how you're feeling is, let's say, I'm a bit sad about something, and then you spend two or 3 hours hanging out with a friend and you don't tell them how you feel, if it doesn't change how you feel, sometimes it might just be in a residue of the whole feeling and it pops you out of it, but if you're still feeling that way at the end, it's actually really lonely. Like to feel a certain way and not talk about it and feel like we're going to be rejected if we do. And then you spend time with a friend, but you're not really there because you're having to spend the effort hiding or trying to put on a performance.

**[00:31:36] Sanaya**

Yeah. And I think it does boil down to this fear of being rejected or something, but I know that won't happen, but it is still there.

**Alex Howard**

You know it won't happen in your mind.

**Sanaya**

Yeah.

**Alex Howard**

We need you to know that in your heart. So your heart then has the courage to then express yourself.

**Sanaya**

Yeah.

**Alex Howard**

We've got another 10 minutes or so. It feels to me like a lot of the threats of what we've been working on, so the anxiety, some of the self esteem bits, the focus around the internship, the bulimia, a lot of these things feel like they've got some quite natural ends or at least have made progress to the point where it feels like you've got to a lot of the places you wanted to get to since coming in.

And I'm just mindful how you feel in terms of next steps. And does this feel like a point where we're getting close to the end of the work together? My question to you really is what do you feel you need going forwards from me and from the work that we're doing together?

**Sanaya**

So I think where I am is further than I thought I would get. So I feel very content. And if I hadn't seen you for a whole year, I do have faith in myself that I would have ways of managing different situations that crop up and things like that. So I do feel like I'm in a much better place than I have been for the past year. And I think I have found your videos and tools and things like that helpful. So, yeah, I feel like happy and content with where I am right now.

**Alex Howard**

How could things go wrong? So what could happen that could knock you off track or could happen that you could lose momentum with the tools that you're working with? Just put a bit of thought into how we keep things on track?

**Sanaya**

Yeah, I think it is just accountability, and I think a lot of things can sway that accountability. I feel like if it's just the fact that I'm being lazy and I've missed a few days or like a few weeks or something, and I

can feel myself getting anxious or I feel like I could throw up or something like that, I feel like I can recognize that.

**[00:34:32]**

The only thing that would worry me is with accountability is if I let it go because of, not necessarily laziness or something that I'm aware of, I think I'm worried that it would be like my brain is elsewhere, focused on something else, and I'm just not aware that I've lost it.

**Alex Howard**

The anxiety, in a sense, is for you, I think, particularly a symptom of things being out of balance. So if things go out of balance, at a certain point the anxiety starts to rise. And if it's responded to in the right way, you have the tools, you know what to do to bring it back into balance. The challenge might be that as that's happening, you're so distracted in something else that you're doing that it's slipping to a point that then it actually feels more difficult to then get it back in balance again.

**Sanaya**

Yeah.

**Alex Howard**

And my sense is when that happens, it's almost like the further out of balance it goes, the longer it might take to get it back into balance. It doesn't mean that you can't, it just means that it might be more than a day or two, might be a week or two to really bring back the equilibrium and the balance again.

**Sanaya**

Yeah.

**Alex Howard**

So at the same time, the goal is not that you feel like you have to spend the rest of your life constantly, like am I doing the right thing? That in of itself, of course, is anxiety inducing.

**Sanaya**

Yeah.

**Alex Howard**

So I think what you particularly found is meditation and exercise have been two things that have really helped you in terms of managing your state and just keeping things overall common grounded. And then if things get a bit more out of balance, you know things like the STOP Process and working with your inner critic and being a bit more direct with yourself about what you need helps.

So I think you've got some stages of intervention that I think can be helpful as well. In terms of your work with me, it feels like that this feels like a bit of natural completion, pause point. And that's not me



saying to you, all right, we're done. See you later. But in a sense, part of the integration of the work that we're doing is also knowing, I got this, I can do this.

**[00:36:58]**

The goal of therapy is not to spend your life in therapy. The goal of therapy is to give you the tools and the strategies that then you can support yourself. And we all go through chapters in life that can be a bit too overwhelming and knowing that there's trusted support, that's there is also, I think, a helpful part of that. I don't know how that sounds to you or if that feels different to you or if you've got questions?

**Sanaya**

No, I feel like I'm very content with that. And I do feel like you've given me all the tools. I know that I can manage certain things. And it's also comforting to know that if I did have a massive blip and I was just like, I need to vomit on you.

**Alex Howard**

You mean metaphorically I think. That's not in my job description literally.

**Sanaya**

It's really comforting to know that it's not like I'm completely out.

**Alex Howard**

No. And I always say to people, because sometimes I think people can think, particularly if a lot of time passes, it's like a few years down the line and someone finds yourself for whatever reason, of course life events happen and sometimes a difficult place, someone's inner critic can make it feel like they failed, or it's like somehow shameful that I've got to go back and ask for help, that I've done it wrong. And I always say to people, that is just not the case.

We can do everything right. And sometimes just life has become a bit too overwhelming. Or a bit like you found relistening to the video, something with a bit of course correction, a little bit to get back on track.

So anyway, I want to stay in touch because I want to know, I want to hear how it goes in August, end of August when you do the internship. But I want you to know that if at any point you feel you need a little bit of support, it doesn't have to be an on camera film session, sometimes it could be like a five minute phone call to just go, you said this thing to me a year ago, and I'm stuck with it.

So I'm really flexible to what you feel is going to be helpful to support you. But I just want to say what a pleasure it's been and it's working with someone like you, which is why I do this job, because you've done the work and look at the progress that you've made. And I feel good about the part I've played in that. But you've done work.

**Sanaya**

Yeah.

**[00:39:28] Alex Howard**

So well done.

**Sanaya**

Thank you so much. It's actually been so helpful. I genuinely didn't think that I would get to this. It's happy tears. I'm really content with where I am now. Thinking back to our first session I'm like, oh my God, yeah, it's crazy how much it has helped me.

**Alex Howard**

Well, I also think particularly back to, I think it was our second session, where we really got into talking about the anxiety. And I know that was really difficult because in a sense it made it real, the fact that we talked about it.

**Sanaya**

Yeah, I know. I watch that the other day and I was like, God, I feel like I'm in such a different place. I feel like who I was then and the stuff that I was talking about, it wouldn't even affect me now the way that it really did. So, yeah, it's really wow to see.

**Alex Howard**

And I want you to remember that there must have been a moment in that session where you had a choice because you could have just not really gone there and talked about and just sort of said enough words to sort of get through the session and then just drop out of the process. But the fact was you had the courage to go, it's scary, it feels uncomfortable, a lot of me feels like I just want to get away from this, but you have the courage to do the thing that felt hard and look at what's changed as a result of that.

So I want you to remember that in your life. I want to remember to be brave and to do the things that feel difficult but do them because that's how you grow and that's how the things in your life that matter to you become possible.

**Sanaya**

Yeah. So thank you very much. It's been very eye opening.

**Alex Howard**

Good.

**Sanaya**

I need a tissue now.

I feel like the person I was is completely different to who I am now. I basically just overcome the impossible, essentially. It just proves to me that what I can do with the right tools and with therapy and with a little bit of guidance and help.

**[00:41:44]**

I'm really grateful to Alex and his team for that and what *In Therapy* has given me from here onwards. It's just super helpful having those tools in place because I know that if another anxious moment comes, I know exactly how to deal with it. My future is looking happy, I'm feeling a lot more positive about things. And it's just been such a positive process for me. It's got me to a place that I never thought even just a year ago I would ever be here. So, yeah, it's been such a positive process.

### **Alex Howard**

This week's episode, for me, really is the perfect example of why I feel so privileged to do the job that I do. Really part of our mission with this series is to demonstrate that change is possible but change isn't always easy. If you think about Sanaya when she came into *In Therapy*, if you remember, particularly her second session, I really felt that she was on the fence at that point of whether she was going to be able to take the leap to really trust me and to trust herself and ultimately to trust the process.

She was brave enough to do that, and she did the work. She's been meditating very regularly, almost daily since the point she started. She's been working with the STOP Process, she's been listening more to her emotions and as we talked about in today's session, she's also still working on the importance of being emotionally honest and really being herself with other people in her life, which for me is part of the antidote to avoiding anxiety starting to creep in again.

It's so important for all of us to be able to be emotionally honest and truthful with ourselves but ultimately also with the people in our lives. And it's not that from this point that I expect Sanaya to have a perfect happy ending. Of course there's ongoing work that needs to happen, but the difference is that she has some awareness and she has some tools that means that she can meet those bumps and challenges of life in a different way.

So there's going to be a pause of a few weeks. We're just about to shoot in a couple of weeks time, David's final episode and then after we've released that there's going to be a pause until September. We are actively beginning the filming of the next evolution of *In Therapy*. We have three participants which are actually going through their psychological assessments the last couple of days. We have an independent psychologist that makes sure that it's the right fit for people, they understand exactly what they're coming into, they're comfortable with it and it's the right timing for them as well.

So we'll start that filming in the next few weeks and then we'll be looking to start releasing those episodes around September time. We as a team are super excited about where we're going with *In Therapy*. We've got all kinds of ideas buzzing around to really see how we can evolve this project to the next level.

But this is a great opportunity in the meantime to review the dozens of episodes that we filmed previously. You can go back, of course, and watch Sanaya's story from the beginning, but also some of the previous stories that we've covered as part of *In Therapy*.

Thank you for watching. I look forward to talking with you again soon.