



Conscious Life presents

ANXIETY SUPER CONFERENCE

The power of embracing uncertainty

Guest: **Marisa Peer**

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[00:00:10] Alex Howard

Welcome, everyone, to this interview where I'm super excited to be talking with Marisa Peer.

Firstly, Marisa, welcome and thank you so much for joining me.

Marisa Peer

Thank you for inviting me. I'm thrilled to be here.

Alex Howard

Just to give people a quick background on Marisa, Marisa Peer is a world renowned therapist who developed a therapeutic method called Rapid Transformational Therapy that can help support people's mental wellbeing more quickly than some traditional approaches.

In 2015, she established the RTT School and has helped train thousands of therapists globally. She's also the author of six bestselling books, including her latest, *Tell Yourself A Better Lie*, that was a great title by the way, in which she shares her insight into how unmet needs in childhood can define who we are in adulthood because of the skewed belief systems, habits and stories we tell ourselves.

Marisa, I think an interesting place to start the conversation was, I know that you've seen a significant increase in people with anxiety as a result of the pandemic, and I'm curious as to why you think that might be the case and some of what you've observed from that?

Marisa Peer

That's actually very easy to answer. Human beings need certainty. Certainty is a need of all. We need to be certain I'm loved, certain I'm connected. A little kid wakes up and Mummy and Daddy aren't there, or you come home from school and they're not there, you have uncertainty.

We saw in 911 what happens when you take someone's certainty away. We want to know, I've got a job and I'm going to have enough money and I've got a partner and they're not going to die and my kids are going to be okay and not turn out to be a raving drug addict.

So we're always looking for certainty. And what COVID did is it took that away on a massive scale. Everything we knew didn't exist. We couldn't go out. We didn't know when it was going to end. We thought we might die, might get sick. And it's almost hard to believe how that came upon us so fast. And everyone was told to stay home and life as we knew it just ended.

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But you see that sometimes when an election is coming, I certainly saw that in America in the last election, and we saw it when there's rioting. I saw it because in the 80s with AIDS, it was like, oh my God, nothing's going to ever be the same again.

But what's so interesting is that's not true. Life always goes back. You have an epidemic, you have a crisis, you have 911, a terrible crisis, but we do go back. But unless our mind knows that everything's going to be okay, uncertainty will really rock people. It's why prisoners on remand do worse than those who've been sentenced because they don't know what's going to happen.

When you know you can cope with it much better. The unknown and the uncertainty makes people really uneasy because we survive by always looking for certainty.

Alex Howard

And in a sense, sometimes the ways that we try to find certainty actually create more problems.

Marisa Peer

Yes because we try to get it from someone else. Are you going to stay with me? Are you going to make me well? I'm sick, can you fix me? We kind of give our agency for ourselves to other people.

And only when you think, okay, in an uncertain world, I'm the same. I'm the same mom, the same dad, the same partner, the same person. When you can give yourself certainty back, it's a massive game changer.

Alex Howard

Walk us through a little bit your methodology and your approach. How do you... Well, let's talk about the approach more broadly, and then we can talk about the approach for specifically working with anxiety.

Marisa Peer

So I've been a therapist my entire adult life, and I love what I do so much, I don't have a plan to retire, but I was always a little surprised that the model of therapy, which is basically, bring me your pain for a long time and we'll talk about it.

And I tried to imagine if you went to a dentist or an emergency room, a chiropractor, and said, hey, I'm in a lot of pain. Can I just come here every week and discuss it? They go, no, you've got an infection in your gum. You've got a broken bone, you've got to fix one of your vertebrae. We've got to fix it now.

And I always thought therapy should be the same as every other healing modality. Turn up with your pain and I will do the best I can to get you out of pain today, this minute, right now. You might have to come back, but I'm going to get you out of pain.

So I really just created a model that took people out of pain the day they turn up, no difference of turning up with a broken arm. You expect someone to set it and send you home feeling better. And a lot of people don't understand that the words 'rapid' and 'therapy' can go together, but they really can.

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And I think also we live in such a fast world, people haven't got time to be in pain. But it isn't just physical pain, it's the pain of no one loves me, the pain of I keep sabotaging, the pain of I seem to have a destructive streak going through me. So I created Rapid Transformational Therapy, and it's been so successful.

The thing I hear more than anything is, wow I've been in therapy for 10 years, I didn't know that. How did you get that in an hour? Gosh, I'm a therapist and I've been looking for this kind of result my whole life, so I'm really proud of it.

And my new book, *Tell Yourself a Better Lie*, is showing you clients cases, how they had OCD, alcoholism, one had a terrible fear of needles, one was bulimic, and yet they fixed that in one session. That almost sounds hard to believe. In fact, I was having lunch with an eminent therapist who said, since COVID, I'm seeing people, who said, you know what? In 40 weeks I can get a breakthrough. I'm like 40 weeks? He said, yeah, it's amazing.

And I didn't say I've just done that in 90 minutes. It's one of the cases in my book, because that would be really rude and braggy. When you have OCD, 40 weeks is too long to get over something that's ruining your life.

So I created something. I've always thought outside the box. My father wanted to reinvent how you educate kids and I wanted to reinvent how you give people therapy. And it's been very successful. We've trained 13,000 people all over the world, and they are getting really good results at last, but they're getting them much quicker.

Alex Howard

So now you've moved Marissa to escape the skip at the front of the house, walk us through, taking that example of OCD, that someone is finding that their life is being dictated by and controlled by a behavior that they recognize is ultimately not useful and helpful. How would you approach that therapeutically?

Marisa Peer

What RTT does so brilliantly is that you really put on three hats. The first thing you do is you become an investigator. You become what I call a good detective. A good detective is always looking for clues. A good detective looks at a crime scene and they look at stuff to work out what's happened here?

When a client comes in with OCD, we do the same, because no baby is born going, I must line up all my toys, I can't get into my cot unless the sheets are just so, if I stand on those cracks, something bad will happen. So you must always start with therapy with the premise that nobody is born like this. Nobody is born saying, I can't eat cake. Nobody is born saying, oh, don't look at me, I blush. I'm no good with confrontation.

We acquire, all of our issues are acquired. And the good thing is if you acquire them, you can get over them. So the first thing you do is investigate. You go back and have a look at, when did this happen? Why did it happen? What was going on when it happened?

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When you got that information, which you can get it very quickly. We normally get that within 10 minutes of a session. The next thing is you stop being an investigator and you become an interpreter and you begin to interpret, how did this lead to that?

And once you've got that information, you become an interrupter. You must interrupt the client's beliefs.

And finally, (background sirens) sorry, I don't know what's going on in Notting Hill.

Alex Howard

You're in London, it's fine.

Marisa Peer

I live in such a peaceful place.

Alex Howard

It's all good. We keep going.

Marisa Peer

And then the final is you become an installer. You code in something better.

So many therapies come along and try to code in something better, like CBT. I know you're scared of spiders, so let's draw a picture of a spider and hold a toy spider. They're trying to code in a new behavior.

Another therapist may try and have a look at the old behavior. But when you do the three together, let's look at where this came from, let's massively interrupt it, and then we will put in something else.

I was giving a talk yesterday, and I was saying, look, if cake could make you better, don't you think it would've made you better by now? After 40 years of eating cake when you have a bad day, if it could make you better, it would have already done it. I never thought about that. If it could have made me feel better, wouldn't it have done it by now? And why do I need more cake?

And so when you challenge the belief system, the most common one, the most heartbreaking one is, I'm not good enough. I can't find love. I was given up for adoption. My dad left when I was a baby. My mum always wanted a son. They preferred my sister. There are many reasons we come up with why we're not enough.

And when you investigate they go, that's not true. The fact that your mother couldn't, wouldn't, or didn't love you has got nothing to do with how loveable you are.

So you investigate it, and then you have to interrupt it. Some of the most amazing people in the world were abandoned, neglected. I have a great friend called Sammy Shoebox, a famous DJ that was left on a tip in a shoebox, that's why he's called Sammy Shoebox. And he's the most amazing, incredible, gorgeous, lovable guy. The fact that he was put in a shoebox isn't him.

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But we tend to have a story. I find that with all my clients, our greatest pain comes from the lies we tell ourselves. I was abandoned. I'm not loved. I'm not smart. I'm not enough.

Our second greatest pain comes from making someone else's story. My mum wanted me to be an architect, and I'm not smart. My dad wanted me to be an athlete, and I couldn't do it. My parents wanted a girl, or they wanted a boy or they didn't want me, I was a mistake. So we make someone else's story our story, and we cause ourselves so much pain by telling ourselves lies. I don't matter. I'm not lovable. I'm not smart. I wasn't wanted.

Because the truth is, you're here. In fact, I was working with a client recently who said, when I was a little girl, my mother tried to suffocate me with a pillow. And that was her story. She told everyone. I said, but you're missing a point. She didn't actually go through with it. I know what she did was awful, but maybe look at another story, my mother couldn't go through with it. Some force intervened and said, this kid is going to live and she stopped.

And she's told you this story all your life and you keep telling the story, your mum tried to kill you. She actually didn't. She stopped herself. And if you can just reframe that. It's still horrible. We think, yeah, I was meant to be here. So just reframing our story even a little bit. I wasn't wanted.

Because I work with many men who've left their kids and say the same thing, they're better off without me. I'm such a useless person. My wife's got someone else. He's better than me. And they don't understand that when you don't meet a child's need for love and acceptance, they don't stop loving you, they immediately stop loving themselves, often for their entire life.

We can look at Marilyn Monroe, Princess Diana and see that. Oh, a parent left and they are abandoned. And they haven't said, my parent was an idiot. They now believe that they're not worthy of the love that parent didn't give them. And that's what you do. Look at that, yes, your dad didn't see you. Your dad was just an immature kid. He's an alcoholic. I'm really sorry, but that doesn't have anything to do with how lovable you are.

So investigate, interrupt, and then install a new belief. You know what? You're deeply loved. The fact that your father didn't know how amazing you are is his loss. I always tell my clients, your life like a clock. Your childhood is the first 10 minutes. It could be the most awful 10 minutes but it's not the whole clock, it's just the first 10 minutes. And some of the most amazing people in the world have had horrendous childhoods.

I loved Wayne Dyer, who was raised in a children's home. Tony Robbins told me he had four different dads before he was a teenager. And yet some of us come from really dysfunctional families and go, well, you know what? I'm just going to make it better now.

Nigel Lawson said once, and I loved it, "I feel sorry for people who've had a great childhood because mine was so bad that nothing can ever be as bad again". You can be ruined by a perfect childhood that doesn't actually exist, but a horrible childhood, well, you think, well, it's never going to be as bad again. I'm free now. I can plan what to eat, what to do, where to go.

And I think this belief we have that if we're not loved as children, I mean, that definitely affects you, but, our life is ruined, simply isn't true. You've got all your life to get over that and to have an amazing childhood even if the first bit was awful.

[00:14:01] Alex Howard

To go back to what you were saying at the beginning, part of why the pandemic has caused so much anxiety is the loss of certainty. That it strikes me that often that we hold onto these stories or these beliefs around childhood because they give us a certainty. They allow us to have a sense of who we are and how to operate in the world.

Marisa Peer

Yeah and they allow us to fail, of course I couldn't do that. I didn't have a mom so of course I'm a terrible mum. Of course I can't be successful. I didn't go to University. No one in my house had money and you've got to come from money to make money. So we do keep the story going. And it's a great shame that we don't realize that we can change our life the minute we change our story. And that actually isn't even difficult.

Alex Howard

Walk us through some of the ways that we can learn to change that story. Because let's just also, I want to back it up into context of anxiety as well. But what we're saying is a lot of the anxiety we experience in life is a direct result of these stories that we're holding on to.

Marisa Peer

Yes, your story could be, my mom didn't want me, or I should have been a boy. I worked with someone who told me this story. It was quite amazing. She was in Ireland with her mother. She was a little girl. And a man came to her mother and said, it's a disgrace that you haven't given your husband a son. He'll never be a man, you know. And this was her husband's friend.

And he said, you've got five daughters, that's a disgrace. And then walked away. And she was the 5th daughter. And she thought, oh my goodness, my dad isn't a man. I should have been a boy. My dad will never be a man. And from that moment, she became very masculine. She never wore dresses.

In fact, when I met her, she was a chief fire officer. And she said, my husband, I won't let him put up a shelf. I do everything. I won't wear makeup, I won't wear dresses. And I never realized it all tracked back to hearing that man say, your husband is a disgrace.

And I said, but you know what? You know that the man decides the sex of a child. Women produce X and the men produce X or Y. So your mother didn't do anything. And it was your father's friend who was a disgrace. And by the way, your father loves you very much.

And she had a wonderful relationship with him. Yes, he might have liked a son, but you don't get what you want, but you have to love what you've got. And she said, I never realized my whole life has been run on that belief, I should have been a boy. It's my fault my father isn't a man. But if I act like a boy and do very masculine things, my father might feel a bit more like a man.

And she realized it wasn't her job to make her father... And her father was a man, he was a very happy man. And everything changed in that instance because she stopped running the belief, I should have been a boy. I need to be something to make my father be a man.

And it's so amazing that we don't even remember these events to happen, but they have such a profound impact on us because as a child, we haven't been on the planet long enough to say, well,

what kind of idiot comes up to your mother and says that in the street. Maybe he was drunk, maybe he was having a bad day. As a child you're like, if he said it, it must be true. Because children are taught to idolize adults, and they do.

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And so it's the ability to look at a scene and think, yeah, that was real, but why am I getting the power to affect my entire life? It was real. It was painful. But you see, the event doesn't affect you as much as the meaning you attach to the event. And when you change the meaning of an event, you change your entire life.

I talked in my book a lot about somebody called Brian, who was a chronic alcoholic, but had other issues too, he abused food, he went into very abusive relationships. It will went back to his father finding out he was gay and saying, I'm disowning you and don't you even come to my funeral.

And he felt so hated by his own father, but when we did the session, he said, I realized that my father, my mum was pregnant when she had me, they had to get married, he always resented me and her. But I didn't make my mum pregnant. He was careless. It wasn't my fault. And actually, my dad got over saying that. And by the time he died, we'd made our peace. But even if we hadn't, I wasn't put on the planet to make my dad happy. I was put on the planet to make me happy. I like being gay.

And he's never drunk since, he's lost a lot of weight but he's also come out of abusive relationships that will hurt him. Because the most frustrating thing about the mind, I find as the therapist, is that we are almost coded to recreate what we know, but change it. My dad was horrible. Why don't I find a horrible guy to be with? But I'm going to make him a lovely guy. I'm going to find someone mean and critical, make them so nice and warm. And then I put a happy ending on the lesson.

And we're all so busy trying to recreate what we know and change the ending, when actually it's like, well, why not change the beginning? Instead of finding a cold person and making them nice, why not just find a nice person? Instead of finding someone who's, like your dad, critical withholding and mean, why not find someone who's nice and kind and giving? It's so much easier.

But that's the vexing thing, the mind wants to go back to what it knows, recreate it, but change the ending. And as therapists our job is, hey, let's change the beginning. It's so much easier.

Alex Howard

So walk us through some of the tools that you use to do that. So when you recognize that someone has got this story, and in a sense, it's giving them a sense of identity, a sense of certainty, meeting the world from that place. You've identified that, how do you then work with it?

Marisa Peer

Well, I've always been a fan of little simple things that have the most profound results. One of the things that I do in therapy is I take someone back and they show me, oh, well, when I was a kid, we didn't have food. I was made to eat everything on my plate. I wasn't allowed to leave anything. They'd always say, do you know how much that cost? And think of those starving children in Africa. And now I can't leave food.

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Okay, that makes perfect sense. Any kid made to sit at the table, made to eat that congealed lunch the next day, would learn to eat anything. But that isn't you. You're not 7. Your dad, if he came to you now and said, do that, you'd laugh.

In fact, one of my clients I was with, I said, imagine you've gone home with your own daughter and your dad said, eat that fish. It's on your plate. She goes, I would just get up and leave. I said, that's good, isn't it? Because if you did that to your daughter, don't you dare. It's the skin of a bit of salmon. She doesn't like the skin. On your plate, eat it, was what her Dad would say, on your plate, eat it.

And then she realized that although she could never defend herself, she would certainly defend her own children. I said, I want you to imagine you've gone to Gordon Ramsay's restaurant and he's come up and said, you can't leave if you don't finish that, what would you do? And they go, I'd eat it. I go, no you wouldn't, you'd open the door, I'm calling the police. I'm full. It was lovely, but I actually don't like it.

So it's making them so they have a voice. And what I do a lot is I make them say, that's not me, and they have to tell me why it isn't them. And then you have to say again, that will never be me ever again because the little kid that went to school wearing second hand clothes and didn't even have enough food in their lunch box, that's not you. That's nothing like you.

So they have to literally justify, it's not me, it's not me, because it can't be me, because it will never be me, because. And when they say that, they're actually interrupting the belief.

So what I do after I've found the seams, is have them look at them, look at those seams. What I call left hand, right hand. Look at those seams and understand how you got to be the way you are. Oh, yes, I understand that now. And then understand why you're keeping it going. And then they realize there's no reason to keep it going except habits. And we make our habits. Then our habits turn around and make us.

And then they get to say, it's not me. I'm just currently doing a big weight loss membership for Dietless Life, and it's so interesting that when you're a child, if you live in a home with sexual abuse, physical abuse, just people shouting all the time, a child can't say, I think I'm going to go and book myself a massage now, I'm going to go away for the weekend, I think I'm going to go on Amazon and have a little spend here to go over it. All they can do is open the pantry and eat. Food is the only thing they have that will change their state.

And many people as adults still do that without realizing I can run a bubble bath, I can ring a friend, I can go out for a walk, I can download something on Netflix. I don't have to keep eating cakes. That was the only option I had when I was a child.

So it's the realization that children have so few options to change their state apart from food. And so as adults, they still act as if it's the only option they have and they still eat when they're stressed, eat when they're unhappy, eat when they're lonely.

Because they don't even consider hang on, there's at least 20 other things I could do right now. I could say, no, I'm going to eat, but I'm going to eat something yummy and healthy. I don't need to eat tons of cheesy Wotsits. How is that really going to help? I'm going to get this orange stuff all over my hands and it's not even changing my state because now I don't like my body and I feel worse.

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So it's making them see that they have a lot of options, but often they really have no idea. I can't leave my husband, who's going to love me? I've got to stay in this abusive place. No, you don't. So what? You could live on your own and be blissfully happy. Get some cats, get some friends. You'll be ecstatically happy. You don't need to stay with someone that's hurting you because you believe there's nowhere else to go.

But often we stay because it's better to stay here where I am because I know, what if I found someone nicer and they left me? What if I left this home and I never got... What if I left this job and didn't get another one?

So some of our greatest damage is choosing to stay in a relationship that hurts us or a job or a situation that hurts us just because of the certainty we get from it. We call it better the devil you know. And that's saying, I know what I'm dealing with here so I just stay.

Alex Howard

In a sense, part of what you're saying is that to become free from these historical beliefs and narratives and stories, we also have to learn to become comfortable with the level of uncertainty or we have to be willing to try on new perspectives or new frames of how we meet the world.

Marisa Peer

Yes. And for many people, that's very scary because it's uncertain. What I should leave this job? I could really have my own business. I should leave this relationship, I should do something else. It does become very scary because our mind loves what is familiar so much that it wants to go back to it.

I know you have three children, I don't know how old they are, but you'll see with a 2 year old, they say, I don't want that. I only like pink yogurt. I only want Rice Krispies, and I want it in that bowl and I want that cup. And what happens when you're 2 is exactly the age where you could wander up to Prairie and pick your own berries and dig up your own food. They will only eat what they already know because that's how they stay safe from being poisoned.

And so our mind is super coded and hardwired to run back to what it knows, but also run away from what it doesn't know. And that happens a lot.

70% of lottery winners are bankrupt in 3 years, which is really high. 70% who win millions of pounds lose it. Why? Well, if you've never had money and you get it, what's familiar is just you spend your paycheck until it's gone. And people who have never had money, they're not familiar with investing or taking, and they're just familiar with buying stuff.

And it's the same thing with love. If your mother had lots of partners, if your father wasn't there, if your first person cheated on you, that's so familiar that you actually go back to that. Oh, yeah, I met someone else. They were too good for me. What they're actually saying is their behavior was so unfamiliar. This nice kind, I didn't recognize that so I left and went back to what I know.

And although it's vexing that the mind likes what is familiar, it's also very good because you can make anything familiar. Believing in yourself, having high self-esteem. You ought to choose, let me make

good stuff familiar. And bad stuff, let me make taking the sugar out of my tea familiar. If you do it for a couple of weeks you think, I can't believe I drank it like that, it's disgusting.

[00:27:09]

So you can make anything, you can make good stuff familiar and bad stuff, I'm doing that, on its own will change your life.

Alex Howard

That also though sometimes initially, to make it familiar in the first place takes those leaps of courage. It takes that willingness to step into a place that initially is unfamiliar. What helps people do that?

Marisa Peer

I mean, you have to sit with it. You have to say, I did that.

My father was a head teacher. He was a lovely man, but like many head teachers, he was interested in other people's kids. He had patience for them, time for them, but at home, I think he found us exasperating because we weren't obedient like the kids in his school. We didn't sit down and put our hands up, excuse me, sir. So he was very interested in other people's children.

And I realized as I grew up, that I always attracted men that were more interested in things outside of their life, obsessed with their career. One day I had to take a big dig, if I'm making this familiar, then I can make it unfamiliar. So that was the decision.

And then I had to keep saying, I'm going to make this unfamiliar. I'm going to make being with someone that puts me first familiar and being someone that doesn't put me first unfamiliar. And within weeks, I met my husband. We were married in 10 months, and he always puts me in front of everything and everyone. But now, of course, I can almost not even imagine being with someone who didn't do that because it was a choice. But I had to keep saying, I'm making it familiar.

I remember being at a show one day, I was on television, and I went into the green room where you go afterwards and they give you drinks. And there was this, what I call a very compelling guy came up to speak, and I thought, oh no, he's just like my dad. And I just picked up my coat and went home. Yeah, because I'm making this unfamiliar, that compelling person who's really got everything going on will never put you first.

It's a choice. You have to think, well, I'm going to choose not to do this. A lot of things we do, lending our friends money, putting up with bad behavior, letting people take advantage of you, no, I'm not going to let that be familiar anymore. So the first thing is the decision. And you've just got to say the magic words, I'm making this familiar.

So I used to love drinking Diet Coke, and I loved eating chocolate and cakes. And I said, you know what? I'm just going to make this unfamiliar. I stopped drinking it and I missed it. It's very addictive. But after a while, I got used to it. And then one day I tasted it and I was like, oh my God, this is like drinking batter. It's so disgusting. Because once you make something unfamiliar, you don't want to go back.

But it's not even work, it's the realization. If you said, okay, I'm going to do 100 sit ups every day. You don't like that, but after a while, you think, you know what? Now these are familiar, I kind of like it now. I'm enjoying it.

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I remember the first time I paddle boarded, I was too scared to even stand up on it. I thought, I'm going to fall in the water. And I was really freaking out. I was holding onto a bridge saying, I can't do it. My husband is going, go on. I said, no, I can't let go. And then I realized I could paddleboard on my knees and then one day I just stood up and now I leap on that paddle board and never fall off.

But it's like riding a bike, isn't it? It takes a little bit of bravery to make it familiar, but when you make it familiar, you forget that it wasn't familiar.

Alex Howard

Well, I think that's often the thing, isn't it? That initial step is the hard bit, because that's the point that you're stepping into a place that's unknown. But once you've taken that step, in most situations it gets much easier. Particularly if it's a physical thing, that once you've done it, you've done it. And then you're building a new comfort.

Marisa Peer

And you're so right. You're making what is unknown known and what is known unknown. So if you feel unlovable and unworthy and certainly not enough, make knowing you're enough known and make feeling you're not enough unknown.

It sounds so easy because it is, but it absolutely will change your life so dramatically. I know that because we have a program called the 5-Day Challenge that we've got in 600 schools in the UK, and way more than that in America. And all these kids have to focus on the fact that they're enough and say they're enough and make artwork for their desk, a little placard saying, 'I'm enough'. And all the schools say, this is amazing.

In fact, tonight I might be getting an award, keeping everything crossed. I'm in the running to get an award for one of the best things that's happened to education. And all the schools say, this enoughness for the children, its stopped bullying, they get on better, they're actually academically doing better. But what is that? We're just making them repeat something. They all stand up and go, "I'm enough". They say it in assembly. And its had the most profound impact on them.

A school in Spain said to me, bullying has just stopped in our entire school ever since we introduced this I'm Enough Program. And I love that. You might notice I wear little bracelets that say, 'I'm enough'. I have it all over my house. I don't really think about it anymore.

But if you have dry skin and you put lotion on your skin, your skin would absorb that lotion. It wouldn't say, is this organic or is this really expensive? It would just let it soothe something that was dry. But I think words are like balm too. And you have to keep repeating them and they sink in like butter on toast and make a massive difference.

Alex Howard

Going back just for a moment, this idea of taking these leaps, it also strikes me that one of the impacts of anxiety is often we will shut down. And in that state of numb and shutdown, we often then won't take that step forward. In a sense, it paralyzes us where we are.

[00:33:05]

And I imagine a lot of the people that you've worked with over the years, part of the problem is that they're shut down, they're numb where they are. What do you find helps move people out of that paralysis?

Marisa Peer

You're describing fight, flee, freeze. And that's innate enough to fight or flee or freeze. And I remember many years ago, I lived in a basement flat, and I was walking home, and I was very aware that somebody was walking home behind me. And I thought, this person is following me. And I knew that I had very little time to get down those steps, get my key in the door, and shut it behind me.

But I had just enough time. I got down the steps, put my key in the door, and I couldn't remember how to open the door. I was like, oh my God, out of all the times. But I was so nervous. I was so anxious. And when you're anxious, your body pours all the blood from your brain to your vital organs to make you run. And you can't think. It's like, oh my God, I'm so panicky. I can't remember the code for the alarm. I'm so stressed. I can't get my buttons. I'm dropping stuff.

So when we're anxious, our mind empties, all the blood goes to our heart and organs to make us run, and we can't think. And so in that instance, I knew something that I could do. It's just to fill up your mouth with saliva and swirl it around, because it immediately brings you back to your senses.

And I just had seconds to get in that house. Actually, I didn't even go in the house. I realized I didn't have enough time. There was a little cupboard outside my house, and I actually went in there where all the boilers were until this person had left.

But I always remember that. When I was anxious, my brain emptied. And you'll see that on a game show, they go, what's the capital of France? They go, I know it, I know it, but when we're nervous, we can't think. We can only feel.

And nature did that to make us run. There's a tiger. I'm going to freeze or run. But the freezing is really bad news, but it's an evolutionary hack that actually kept you alive because animals go after prey. So sometimes freezing was actually a better thing. Just standing.

I was on a beach with my daughter in Greece, and there was this really agitated dog. And I said, darling, you've got to stand really still and turn your back. I know that sounds very wrong, but don't look at it, because that's a challenge. And don't move, just stand still. And in standing still, the dog went past. I said, you've always got to do that. Not with crazy people, with crazy dogs. We have to do different things.

But anxiety makes our mind... I can't pass my driving test. I go to pieces. I'm terrible at exams, even though I know what to do. And so if you're anxious, there's a few things you can do.

One of them is to touch your face. You're told all your life, don't touch your face, but you actually have stress receptors here. And if you're feeling really anxious and you just do that, you'll often see that when people are deep in thought, they do that and they're touching their face.

So this action, it's why chewing gum is so relaxing, releases stress receptors. So when you're feeling anxious, especially if your brain empties, your mind empties, fill up your mouth with saliva. Because when you're very, when you fall asleep, you wake up with a bit of drool coming out of your mouth

because when you're relaxed, you have a very wet mouth. That's why kissing is so relaxing. And when you're very nervous, you have a dry mouth. You see people in court licking their lips and drinking water.

[00:36:34]

So if you can just make your mouth as wet as you can, it tells your mind, oh, you're super chilled, because wet mouth, super chilled, dry mouth, super tension. But you can fool the mind. And then do this and this, push your shoulders down. It really helps. Oddly enough, that really helps as well.

There's so many little things that we do that actually send messages of relaxation back. It's like a biofeedback. You're sending different messages to your body, but you're also interrupting ones coming back. So when you do that, you're sending a message back that says, I'm really happy here.

I notice I do that on stage all the time. And I never realized why until I noticed that it's a thing that makes you feel relaxed.

Alex Howard

Super interesting.

For somebody that's watching this, that's recognizing that they've got some of these beliefs, they're starting to see the beliefs, they are recognizing that they need to take the leap of courage and they're doing that, but they still need to complete this final step you talked about earlier in terms of really installing that new belief. What helps support that final piece?

Marisa Peer

So the way you feel about everything, and I do mean everything, is really only down to two things, the pictures you make in your head and the words you say to yourself.

Let's imagine you have a terrible fear of flying or a fear of bridges or a fear of water or even a fear of bees. You can only have that fear if the pictures you're making, the words you're using support that fear.

You never see a baby on a plane with a fear of flying because they don't really know. I remember my daughter once said, Mummy, look at this. You slide out of the plane into the water. She thought she was going to some theme park, and it looked amazing to her. She could hardly wait to put on a life jacket.

Alex Howard

Very disappointed when the plane landed.

Marisa Peer

Very disappointed. But she didn't know what fear was because she didn't understand that.

If you think that you spend the first 9 months in the womb and then you spend the next year in a high chair, strapped into a seat, strapped into a buggy, no baby says, I've got claustrophobia because I

can't leave. Babies are trapped in their cot, in their crib, in their high chair, in their stroller and yet they're blissfully happy because they don't know how to interpret that.

[00:39:04]

So if you have anxiety about any issue, just take a minute and just think, what are the pictures I'm making? What are the words? I say, I'm trapped, I'm stuck, I'm nervous, I'm anxious. If you went to a fun fair and saw people whizzing around on a ride screaming, you go, are they excited or scared? I actually don't know. Neither do you, because the reaction is the same. We scream when we're excited on a rollercoaster and we scream when we're scared.

So think about the pictures and words and then change them. I'm happy. I'm great. I've got this. You think that's not true? It doesn't matter. The mind doesn't know, and it doesn't care if what you tell it is true or false or good or bad. You can say, I'm nervous, but I'm excited. And whatever you tell your mind, it will start to make it real.

And when you can understand that every day our mind is working to make our thoughts real, you think, oh, if that's true, then that must mean if I think better thoughts, my mind makes them real.

So if you think about eating, your stomach will rumble. If you think about something really embarrassing, you might go bright red. Think of something really sad, your eyes will fill up with tears. And if you think about something sexual, you'll probably start to feel very aroused because your mind is making your thoughts real.

And if only we knew that we could think better thoughts, "I might fail" becomes, "I could succeed". I've got a terrible memory. Have an amazing memory. This could go wrong. It could go right. I'm going on a date, I could be rejected. I could meet the love of my life. And nobody can reject you anyway unless you give them your permission.

So if we could just understand that our mind works constantly to make our thoughts real, and every thought we think is a blueprint. I had a mother who said, I'm going to get sick. I always get my sinus headaches in the winter. Yes, when children come round, they always make me ill. Going out to dinner with my mother was an experience because she's like, I'm allergic to that. I can't do that. My gut doesn't like that. She could eat almost nothing.

And I said, mom, you are perpetuating this. You're keeping it going. You're describing every day what you can't eat. Why don't you describe what you can eat? Well, nothing. But that's not true. But my mother, of course, being someone who was evacuated in the war and didn't like it, got very ill and got to go home. She was sent home to her mother in Newcastle because she was ill, and she learned something very early, if you're ill, you get special treatment. And she never wanted to give that up.

And so it's a question of really looking at what words are you using? People say, oh, I just had the most hellish time. I couldn't find anywhere to park my car. Is that really hell? You have a car. Other people are on the train. They're on a bus. It's hell in Tesco. There is no hell in Tesco. Hell is having no money to go to Tesco. There is no hell on the M21 or the M25. But we use these words. This commute is killing me. My kid is driving me crazy. My baby is making me insane.

I live in America, and I hear this word all the time, I'm losing my shit. And I was saying, if that was really true, you wouldn't be in my house. I mean, you certainly wouldn't be in this restaurant. You would've gone home in embarrassment. But, I lose my shit. I lost my shit.

[00:42:34]

And one of my clients said, since I started using that, I've got chronic diarrhea. I'm like, well, that's not a coincidence, is it? Because if your mind is going to make that thought real, stop thinking that thought. But our gut is very linked to our mind. So people who are very tense tend to be constipated. People are very anxious, tend to often have chronic upset stomachs.

But if you could only get it that our words and thoughts are a blueprint and we can't stop there, but we can stop the words and thoughts. I never say things like, I've got a chronic headache. I'm chronically tired. I'm losing my mind. I'm stressed. I'm at my maximum. I say things like, well, this is a challenge, and I'm a little bit stressed. I'm a little bit overworked today. You just have to learn to tone it down. Since your words shape your reality all the time, you can change your reality all the time by just changing your words.

Take off chronic and absolutely maxed out stressed out of my mind, this is killing me and just say, the challenge, the situation, this will pass, this week has a lot on, but next week I'm going to lay on the sofa and read the Sunday papers all week. You've just got to keep, as Walt Disney said, maximize the positive and minimize the negative and then your life will be so much better.

And never more so than with anxiety because I've got my anxiety. And here's the thing, do not prefix anything you don't want to have with 'my'. It's not yours. I've got my migraines, I've got my anxiety, I've got my nervous stomach. When you call something mine, you own it.

But if you call it the, my husband wouldn't go, here's the wife. He says, this is my wife because he likes me being his wife. I say, this is my daughter. This is my house. This is my business. I don't call it, 'the'. This is the kid. Because that's one step back from owning it. So if you don't want to own an illness, never, ever prefix it with 'my'. Prefix it with 'the'. Here's the anxiety but it's going to go in a minute.

Alex Howard

And of course, one of the things that anxiety does is it speeds up all of our thoughts. And often when we find ourselves using language and talking about things in ways which, as you say, are perpetuating those cycles.

Marisa Peer

And you see, people are so busy trying to change the behavior, using, again, stuff like CBT, but this is how it works. First you have a thought, thought always comes first. The thought comes, I can't be scared of a bee or a dog unless I think I'm scared of a bee or a dog. So you have a thought. And a belief is really nothing more than a thought you think a lot.

And then following the thought, you have a feeling, and then following the feeling, you have an action. If I think I'm an anxious person, I've got social anxiety, someone said. I said, you haven't got that. You're anti-social. You haven't got social anxiety at all. Don't do that because you're an anti-social person out of choice, but that is not social anxiety.

But imagine you thought that thought, I have social anxiety. If you think that thought, how are you going to feel? You know that every feeling is going to be negative. I'm worried. I'm anxious. I'm nervous. I'm a little angry, actually because I don't want to go out because I've got social anxiety. I'm annoyed that you're making me do this stuff.

[00:46:04]

So you think of thought and you feel a feeling, and then you have actions and behaviors that go directly back to the feeling you felt from the thought you have. But if you were to change that thought, I'm a really social person. I love people, and they actually love me, too. And I get on with everyone, any level, all walks of life. If you thought that a lot, you'd feel very optimistic and happy and confident.

My actions and behaviors, I can accept social invitations, I can go out, I can be spontaneous, but it all tracks back to the thought. Thought comes first. Your thoughts dictate your feelings, your actions and your behavior. So stop trying to change the actions and maybe even the feeling, change the thinking because it just works so much more quickly and the effects are permanent.

Alex Howard

So Marisa, for people that want to find out more about you and your work, where's the best place to go online and what's some of what they can find?

Marisa Peer

If you go to marisapeer.com we have tons of free audios for love blocks and health blocks and money blocks. They're all free, we don't ask you for your cards.

So go to marisapeer.com if you want to get some free stuff.

If you want to know how to train in RTT, go to rtt.com.

And if you want to join my new membership to reach your ideal weight without dieting, go to dietlesslife.com. I've got a Facebook group called [Dietless Life](https://www.facebook.com/DietlessLife) so just go to Dietless Life and we'll give you again lots and lots of free stuff.

So you can see all my audios, sorry you can see my videos all over [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com) and [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com). I used to hate being called Marisa, it was such a weird name but now I love it because there's only one of me.

Google Marisa Peer. I'm on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com), on [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com) on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com) I'm there.

Go to marisapeer.com and take lots of free products, go to dietlesslife.com if you want to live a dietless life and be your ideal weight, and if you want to train in RTT, go to rtt.com, we'd love to see you there.

Alex Howard

Wonderful. Marisa, thank you so much for your time today. I really appreciate it.

Marisa Peer

Thank you so much too. It's been amazing. Thanks for having me on.