



Conscious Life presents

ANXIETY SUPER CONFERENCE

Naming and taming worry & anxiety

Guest: Rebekah Ballagh

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[00:00:10] Meagen Gibson

Hello and welcome to this interview. I'm Meagen Gibson, co-host of the Anxiety Super Conference.

Today I'm speaking with Rebekah Ballagh, a counselor, four time bestselling author and illustrator, self-development coach, and mindfulness teacher.

Rebekah, thank you so much for being with us today.

Rebekah Ballagh

Thank you for having me. I'm really excited to be here.

Meagen Gibson

Well, I know, other people might not know, but I know I found you originally years ago on Instagram and found your content and illustrations really comforting to my own anxiety.

And so I wanted to hear a little bit about how that started. And also, it doesn't matter how many interviews I do about anxiety, everybody has a unique response. So I'd love it if you could tell me how you define and understand anxiety.

Rebekah Ballagh

So how the Instagram and my business, Journey to Wellness came to be initially was, I was working as a counselor in a college. So I think that would probably translate to high school for you guys. And what I was finding was you would have these therapeutic conversations, you would teach a tool of some description to somebody and they come back the next week, and the nature of teenagers, but also just the nature of humans, you might say, how did you get on with the thing that you were going to try out from the week?

And they would say, I forgot what we talked about. I forgot what my homework was. And you felt like, okay, yes. And I thought, actually, I'm a really visual person. And if I could create an illustration that summed up some of these concepts, these complex therapeutic concepts into one drawing, and also provided a tool in one space.

So I do that, post it on Instagram, my clients, the students could follow along, and that's all I ever intended it to be. And then fast forward 4 years and it ended up being that it's a community of over 350,000 people, it's mostly adults. And now I'm creating courses and resources and doing training.

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So it evolved to a place that I never imagined it to be, but it feels now that I'm doing more meaningful work because it's at such a bigger scale, which I absolutely love.

And so anxiety has been at the core of everything that I do. And I always keep coming back to it. And I think partly that's because I've had my own journey with it.

So in terms of how I would describe what anxiety is, I actually think that's a really fundamental and key part of learning and managing, grappling with your own anxiety is to first understand it. Because I think quite often people actually don't do this piece, the psychoeducation piece around it. We just get straight into the work around it and unpack things.

For me, when you understand anxiety, it actually really normalizes it and also really validates your experience. All of a sudden, the overwhelming physical things you experience have an explanation, and I think that can take so much fear out of it.

So shall I explain my little anxiety skills?

Meagen Gibson

Absolutely. I would love that, especially. And I love that you already named the physical process of it. So, say more.

Rebekah Ballagh

I have stages of how in-depth I go. And the first stage really is just to explain, we have a little structure in the brain called an amygdala, and it's this little almond shaped dude that lives in our limbic system, our emotional center of the brain. And one of its main roles in life is just to be constantly scanning and on the lookout for anything that it might perceive to be dangerous or threatening to us in any way.

And as soon as it picks something up, it sends a very instant signal from the amygdala down the brainstem and back into our adrenals, which sit in the back here, on top of our kidneys. And they have this squeezey bottle hormone release response where they release adrenaline and more adrenaline and cortisol and all of these stress hormones into our system.

And this is that threat response. And often people know it is fight, flight, or freeze. So this is where we're either fighting, ready to attack the thing that's threatening us, and we get irritable and angry. Or maybe we're freezing and just shutting down and going very quiet and hoping that the threat doesn't see us. Or maybe we are running away or avoiding the situation entirely.

But with this flood of stress hormones that we experience, there's all kinds of symptoms that happen as a result of that. So our chest goes tight and we breathe faster and high up into the chest, and we get maybe dizzy and lightheaded, and we feel nauseous, our mouth goes dry, we sweat.

And it also explains all of those IBS symptoms that are very uncomfortable that we experience with anxiety, because the body is saying, do I need to be digesting my muffin that I had for breakfast this morning? No, I don't need my blood in that nonessential function right now. And it redirects the blood flow out of the stomach, out of our digestion, and into our limbs ready to fight or run.

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But that causes that icky butterfly wash of nerves that we get in the gut, and it causes us to race to the bathroom eight times before we've got to do a public speaking event, maybe.

So all of these things, whilst they feel abnormal or overwhelming to experience when maybe you technically are safe, it is actually just our body performing its function, exactly what it's meant to do to keep us safe.

And it's totally evolutionary. So when we have a caveman, if we heard a rustle in the bushes, it could be that it was a rival tribe or a saber-toothed tiger. And so the amygdala ends up functioning like a smoke alarm. It pretty much goes off because we've burned the toast. Most of the time it's a false alarm. It's not a real fire, but it would much rather go off over you burning toast, over a rustle in the bushes that turns out to be a bird, than for the one time something to be there and happen.

But unfortunately for us now, as humans, everything's changed. There's no saber-toothed tiger, we don't need the amygdala function in quite the way it does, but it still does. And now our saber-toothed tigers are things like receiving a blunt looking text from your partner when you thought, oh goodness, what have I done wrong? Or it's even just thinking about a worry. Are my kids okay? I wonder if this is happening.

Our imagination goes wild and our amygdala doesn't know the difference between imagination and what's really happening. And it's just picking up on things and calling them threats when we're actually safe.

So it's still something necessary. We need it to survive. If a car came racing towards you as you're crossing the street and you didn't get out of the way because you had a woosh of fear, you'd get hit by a lot more cars. But it also can hijack us and get in the way a little bit. So it's something that we have to become aware of.

And I also often talk about the nervous system and the fast and slow track when it comes to anxiety, but that's probably a spiel that you don't want to hear.

Meagen Gibson

But let's put a pin in it for just a second, because I just want to circle, I hate the term circle back, but that is what I want to do, because you said so many great things.

And I also want to really validate people's experience because what you said about the hijacking, I very recently, 6 or 7 days ago, I had an experience and I literally talk about trauma and anxiety for a living. I interview extremely smart people. I have a wealth of resources at my disposal and practices and all of the resources are available to me.

And I had an experience 8 days ago where I encountered somebody that I then had to call the police about. It was peaceful, no one got hurt, but it was something that I had to do. I didn't think anything of it. The next morning, my amygdala was in high alert anxiety response mode. And I was so confused because I know all the things. I don't know all the things, but I feel like I do.

Rebekah Ballagh

Yeah.

[00:08:48] Meagen Gibson

It's like the equivalent of somebody who plays a doctor on TV and they're like, why didn't I know I was sick? That's the level of my expertise, but you get what I'm saying.

And I was so confused. I was like, I know all of the coping skills. I have all of the practices, I have all of the knowledge and yet I am sitting in a chair in my front yard and I am completely, it's a void of information. I have access to nothing.

And so I just really want to validate people's experience because that is really what happened. And it faded and it went away. And I had access to tools and people to talk to and things to get through that moment.

But in the moment, I didn't know how long it was going to last and I didn't know how extensive it was going to be. I won't say it was terrifying. I was safe, but I had to continuously tell myself I am safe. There is no threat to myself or my safety or anyone I love right now.

It's just so incredibly interesting how that happens and how that's a neurobiological process that you have no actual control over.

Rebekah Ballagh

That's exactly it. You do get hijacked by it. If this catches you off guard or you get in a spiral with it or something actually happens that feels physically threatening, even if it comes up the next day, when we're hijacked by it, it's a survival thing.

So our body is not really interested in us trying to think our way out of it. It's saying, hang on a minute no, I'm going to shut all of that functioning down. We shut out of our prefrontal cortex where all that ration and logic and decision making happens, and we just go into a complete threat response in survival mode.

And I so understand your experience because the first time I had a panic attack was in a public speaking setting to do with my career, speaking about anxiety. I had a panic attack while speaking about the biology of anxiety.

And it happened because it was a new situation for me. I was early on in my career, I was speaking in a setting where I thought, goodness me, do I have the expertise enough on this? Am I going to be judged here? How is this going to go? How are they receiving me? And there were some stresses going on in my life as well.

So we have to take into account if we're in a bit of a stress response anyway, so there's other things going on in the background, we're going to be higher off our baseline in terms of nervous system activation, having already a bit of cortisol in the system. And that was enough to tip me.

And I remember starting to have this panic attack whilst speaking about anxiety, and in my head going, oh my gosh, okay, I know what's happening. I know I'm having a panic attack, but I can't stop it. And my whole system was saying, run, get out of there. My heart was beating through my chest. I could barely think. I couldn't breathe.

And this spiraled off on setting quite a number of panic attacks to come through this. And logically, I'm thinking, I know this. Why is this happening to me? And so it's a little bit more than just logic as

well when we're working with these primitive systems. It's also understanding fear. I totally hear your experience with it, and it is baffling but real.

[00:12:15] Meagen Gibson

If you could say just a little bit about what you just shared, which is that you would have more panic attacks to come. Because several contributors have said that once you have a panic attack, and I just want to remind people, by the way, that if this conversation, because we've both shared a personal experience and I'm about to talk about panic attacks, if it's activating for you, pause, take a break, take care of yourself. You don't have to watch this. You don't have to subject yourself to it in order to make yourself better. You can come back to it when you're ready.

But panic attacks, and often having one can create this vicious cycle where then we're anticipating and fearing the next one, which brings on a stress which brings on more repeated panic attacks. And so I'd love it if you could share a little bit about that process and how you dealt with it yourself.

Rebekah Ballagh

Yes, absolutely. And it's so unfortunate, and I'm really pleased that you said that piece about people being gentle with themselves, because even thinking about panic attacks, if you're someone who experiences them, can be enough to set you off into feeling really anxious.

I also always encourage people to lean in a little bit and to do this work, because having gone through a number of years of them, I do understand how terrifying they are, but I also know there is so much hope and you can get out of this place. And it feels like you can't at the time. And as you spoke to, a lot of that is this fear of the fear that we develop.

Because there's anxiety and then there's panic. It's a heightened level again. And this is the true hijacking of the system. It feels truly like you've lost control and your body is just operating without your permission. And it is. It's going right, we're in ultimate survival mode. I'll do what I can to keep you safe. And it's trying to do all of these things to say, I'll help you to run. I'll help you to get out of this setting.

But usually that setting is not something we actually need to run from. Just like me, when I am walking up to a stage to give a presentation, dry retching the whole way up, having a panic attack in front of everyone. But what it becomes is, as you say, it can often happen after you've had one and you've had many, is because our brain and our amygdala so strongly encodes those emotional fear memories.

Because if this was, say, you were attacked by a saber-toothed tiger, if you didn't then have a really horrifically strong emotional response and a fear memory the next time you saw a saber-toothed tiger, that's a bit of a problem survival wise. If you just say, oh, I'll just assess the situation again and see how we go.

So the brain's not interested. As soon as something looks like the threat again, it just is so much faster to send you back into that because it had that response initially. It so strongly encodes those fear memories to keep us safe. Thank you, brain, for trying to do your job, but unfortunately, it's not helpful.

And my initial response was, probably what a lot of people do, the unhelpful thing of avoidance. Initially when people would ask me, can you come up and do this presentation? Can we speak at this

assembly coming up in school? I would say, oh, and I'd have a whoosh. You could imagine the whoosh of fear. So that's our fast track amygdala brainstem whoosh.

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And I would think, oh, just a bit busy at the moment, and I've got something on that day, and my caseload is quite high, and I probably won't. And what you initially feel through avoidance is such relief. And so the anxiety and the panic went away because they said, okay, that's disappointing that you can't do it, but sure.

So avoidance was my initial strategy even though I knew, being a counselor and being an expert on anxiety, I knew that was not what I should be doing.

But what happened was, just as we always know is going to happen when we start avoiding things, I became quite sensitized to feelings of fear coming up. So initially, it was this big public speaking judgment event that set them off, but then, because I became so hyper aroused, hypervigilant to my own somatic experience, I was always checking in. Am I feeling anxious again today? Okay. Keeping on top of that.

I went to put an offer in on a house one day, my first house that my husband and I were buying, it was just me to make this offer. I sat down with the real estate agent, and I had a full on panic attack. And that was when I realized that avoidance was not serving me, because what went from this was now my world was shrinking around me. Anything that felt threatening, even if it just resembled something where I might be judged or I was being looked at by others, it was starting to impact me.

And I realized that I can't do this anymore. I can't avoid it. I have to step into what I know to be true as a counselor, and that is sitting with that fear and discomfort and actually leaning in, stepping into the situations that I was afraid of.

And I do that in a graded exposure way, so I didn't want to flood myself. I didn't put my hand up for the very next assembly to speak in front of a thousand people, but I started speaking up a lot. In meetings I put my hand up and then I put my hand up to speak in the staff room. And eventually I was speaking in bigger events.

And whilst doing it, I was still feeling anxious and panicky and dry retching and sometimes having full on panic attacks during it, but you do that in a different way when you decide to work on panic. You do it in a way of, okay, bring it on. I welcome these feelings because I know they cannot hurt me. I know they are extremely uncomfortable, but I know that I will get through it and they will pass and I want what's on the other side of them. And that success in my career and being able to speak in my career.

And so it's about leaning in and pushing through, but doing it armed with tools. So armed with all of your coping strategies and the knowledge of what anxiety and panic really is, armed with your breathing techniques and your body calming strategies. So do it with it. You don't have to go into it fully panicking with no idea. You want to do it like that.

But actually, and this is what really helped me, when you are working on panic or you're trying to face a big fear, a key to overcoming it is actually being back in the fear, which sounds crazy. Because it sounds like if I go and do this thing that makes me panic and I'm feeling really panicky and stressed out, that's not working.

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But actually you've got to be back in that memory, that strongly encoded memory. We've got to access that pathway again. So feeling that fear and having some small experiences of success, I didn't vomit all over the stage and pass out. I did get through it. And actually people can't tell that you are feeling the way that you feel to the extent that you think they can, as well.

So having those experiences of success and slowly it starts to rewrite the memory. And to the point where, fast forward to now, I was on live TV twice in the last year, no panics. And I do these speaking things all the time because this is what I want and I've pushed through and lent in.

So that's just my experience. And I don't want to make it sound like it was simple or easy because I know it's really overwhelming and it did take time, but it's very possible. And you can do that with support and find ways to widen your world again.

Meagen Gibson

And I also want to say that, I think often people think of panic and anxiety in those types of situations, especially when we contextualize it as, this is a sophisticated system that was developed to keep you alive and keep you safe. And yet you're like, but my life is not being threatened while I'm on stage giving a presentation or a speech.

But in reality, when you think about what our lives are like now, that is the most threatening thing that you do. Because our lives revolve around our work and our careers, and if our stories are that if something were to happen when we were up there, then that would all be removed from us. And that is our semblance of safety, obviously not regarding our families and people that we love and things like that, that make up our lives.

But if our work, our livelihood, our careers, the things that make meaning for us individually in a capitalistic society, if those are threatened, that is one of those saber-tooth tiger situations, isn't it?

Rebekah Ballagh

100%. And often there's something, in the things that we fear the most or resist the most, there's sometimes a lot of growth and learning there. And for me, there were core beliefs tied into what was happening there.

And that's often the way for people. There's some underlying limiting belief or fear, and mine was around rejection. People are going to reject me, was a core belief that I carried from way back and not realizing that was being activated in all of these moments as well. These people are going to judge or reject.

Even though it may not be technically life threatening, as you say, it is our modern day saber-tooth tiger, and it is threatening to us today.

Meagen Gibson

So if the core of anxiety is really future oriented fear and worry, how are some ways that you recommend that people manage their worry?

[00:22:15] Rebekah Ballagh

Worry is this really pesky business because it's a more cognitive element of anxiety. Because anxiety encapsulates everything really, and all of those physical things too, but worry is so in our head.

And it's really normal for one thing, so again, evolutionary stuff, it's us going, let me think about all the possible things that could go wrong and threaten me and all of the detailed ways in which that could happen in order for me to make sure it doesn't and keep myself safe.

So there's a reason we're doing it, but we actually can get really lost in it and it becomes really unproductive where our brain is trying to attempt to control a situation or find some certainty, find some comfort. I always say that the three C's that anxiety wants is, comfort, certainty and control.

But worry is usually combined with really unhelpful thinking styles. We get into catastrophizing, it's always future predicting. So it's mind reading stuff. We don't know what other people are thinking. We don't know what's going to happen in the future, but we ask ourselves, what if?

And I have a couple of different approaches to how to manage worry. One that I am leaning towards even more so now is the idea of externalizing your worry. So naming it. This is your worry part and giving it a name. Mine is called Patricia but you can come up with anything that you want.

I often say to people, think of someone in your life right now who, when they speak, you roll your eyes. You don't want to take their advice. It might be your boss, your great uncle who's always awkward. It doesn't matter who it is. Think of someone who you really just don't take seriously and name your worry part after them.

And think of it that every time you engage with your worry part, you play this game of tug of war with it. So you pick up the end of the rope. As soon as worry pops up, Patricia's here and she's saying, if a social event is coming up, but what if this happens? And what if you don't know anyone who's there?

And then when you go, oh gosh, yes, what if I don't know anyone who's there? I've got to go on Facebook and check all the events and see who's going. This is us picking up the rope of trying to placate worry and do everything that it wants us to do to find some comfort and certainty, but we just engage in this big tug of war and it doesn't make worry go away.

Eventually we might shut it up for that evening, maybe we don't, but then it comes right back again the next morning with something else that it's concerned about.

And I also sometimes think of it as feeding the little worry monster palette. So every time we're engaging with it, we're just feeding it a little palette. There you go. And it has an insatiable appetite, and you'll never, ever satisfy it.

And so one strategy with worry is to drop the rope, stop feeding its palette. So we notice it when it comes up, there's Patricia, there's my worry part, I'm actually not going to engage with that because I know what it's going to do and it's actually not serving me. I'm not really going to get anywhere with this. We're just going to go back and forth, back and forth, and then it's going to come up tomorrow with a different issue.

So that is one thing that I love to do with worry, is to externalize it and do that. But if you need to engage with it or you need to do something around your worry, a few other tools that might be really

useful for you is to do a brain dump. Something like where you just write a worry list, jot out everything in your mind that you're worrying about.

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And you can either go through and identify what's in my control and what's outside of my control within this list, and then make a plan around the stuff that's in your control. Because worry just has us going around in circles. We don't actually make a plan, so make a solid plan. When am I going to do it? With who? By what time? And how is it going to happen?

And then all the stuff that's outside of your control, you find little ways to release and let go. And even just saying, this is not in my control. This is a waste of energy. Sometimes I put all those worries into a jar and shut the lid on them. Or I put them on paper and burn them, or I'll write that, and then I'll physically brush myself off and have a shower and visualize those worries going down a drain or something like that.

And if you are someone who worries all the time, you've probably heard of worry time, and that can be a really useful tool to use as well. Where you set aside 10 minutes at 7:00 in the evening, you've finished tea, not too close to bed. And during the day, when your worries come up, we just press pause on them. So we're not doing the big resistance, like, go away, because that makes them come in harder. We just say, okay, I see you there, Patricia. That's fine. You can come back during your appointment worry time tonight, 7:00.

And then we keep pressing pause and grounding ourselves in the moment throughout the day. And then come worry time, you can furiously worry for 10 minutes. At the end close it off with, and what am I going to do about it? Do some planning, have a shower, and then we put it aside for a new worry time.

So there are lots of different ways to manage worry. I think probably the key thing is to remember that it can become a bit of a black hole that we fall into. And so reminding ourselves of that, that this isn't actually serving me, can be a really useful thing.

Meagen Gibson

I love everything that you just said, and that's immediately applicable. Externalizing it, giving it a name. I'm also hearing an opportunity for a lot of gratitude. Like, oh, hi, Patricia. Thank you. I know what you're trying to do. This will not help me control or fix anything but here's what is in my control. The evaluation of it, the appointment setting, like, here's the time I've set aside for that. I love all of those things. I can do all that starting today.

Rebekah Ballagh

It's quite fun. But I think the key with it, everything I try to teach is, come back to compassion. So we don't want worry to come up for us to go, oh, my gosh, what is wrong with me? Why am I doing this again? Because that's not helpful. And we're going to get into a spiral now with our inner critic and beating ourselves up. So it's always compassion.

And I really encourage the use of humor with this stuff, because it's heavy and anxiety feels draining and heavy and worry feels heavy. And so being able to go, Patricia, here we go again. It's just fun. And then we just say, alright, here she goes.

[00:29:18]

In my self development courses, we all do this. And it's so funny. The women, when they come to it, they're like, Lindsay! you're back. And we all just have quite a bit of fun with it, but it helps us to lighten up on ourselves and you're much more likely to get traction.

Meagen Gibson

I love that.

And you named not having your worry appointment time too close to bed. And I know for some people, anxious thoughts before bed can be quite disruptive to sleep. You've already named several ways that you can deal with that.

Because I think part of it is that if you're not dealing with it during the day, then it's going to flood you once you stop avoiding and lay down in the quiet. But a lot of people also wake up with anxiety, anxious thoughts. So how do you recommend that people cope if there's that flood of panic in the morning?

Rebekah Ballagh

I had so many people come to me and say that. I've woken up really anxious or even, I've woken up in a panic and I don't understand because I haven't even got started for the day yet. And it's definitely something that I've experienced as well.

And morning anxiety is a really common experience. It can be that we've gone to bed worrying and so we wake up with a worry hangover and an anxiety hangover in the morning. But it's also a time of day where our cortisol is very high. So somewhere between 6am and 8am or 6am and 9am we have one of our highest levels of cortisol. So that's that stress hormone.

So it probably sends us into a little bit of a sympathetic nervous system, which is the threat response place in our nervous system. And so we're really quite likely to feel anxiety because of that.

And also because of our blood sugar. We've got this real drop in blood sugar. We haven't eaten breakfast yet. So all of these physiological things combine and end up combining with us being hypervigilant. And so we wake up and we do this instant scan for anxiety.

And it happens so quickly. Sometimes you don't even realize that you've done it, but you've woken up and gone, am I feeling anything? And then because you've done that, you get a little butterfly rush or something happens. And then the amygdala wakes up and goes, oh, are we? What are we looking for? And then we feel it. We feel the anxiety.

But there's other things that can contribute to that too, like rolling over and we often roll over and go straight on our phones and we check our emails. And hands up, I've definitely been guilty. We check emails, we pop straight on social media or we can check the news. And all of these things, even though we might not have the link in our mind with that being really activating, they absolutely turn on our threat response. Instantly we're on edge.

It's also a brainwave thing if you do that with your phone. You go from your sleepy brainwaves to your awake brain waves all in one go really quickly, as opposed to nicely coming out of your sleep. There's so many things combined.

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And then behaviorally, because we've felt a bit rushy and a bit anxious, we then act in ways that further cement it. So we bolt out of bed and start rushing through our morning doing 100 tasks at once and we have three coffees to get going. And we do all of these things that only further feed our Patricia's into this place of real anxiety.

For those people who wake up in a panic attack, it's a little bit different. And sometimes what this comes down to is, I call them a glitch. You know how computers have a glitch and it just does this weird thing sometimes and there's no real reason why. It's a little bit like that. And naming them a glitch for me helped to go, okay, I glitched out, all good. Not needing to read into that or fix that. I'm just going to roll with that and take care of myself.

Because sometimes these glitches happen when you've got that fluctuation in temperature as you wake up and maybe your heart does a little pump and then you breathe differently because you're starting to wake up. And that fear cycle might go, oh, temperature change, oh, heartbeat, that must be a panic, and send us into one. So sometimes it's just that.

And so I guess the overarching goal for morning anxiety is just to become really aware of it, to be mindful of not scanning for it. We don't need to look for it. But then creating this routine in the morning that activates the parasympathetic nervous system, that rest, digest, restore and peace.

And for me, that meant cutting coffee over 2 years ago. My body can't handle caffeine, it's just too hyper sensitive to it. So it might be no caffeine.

It might be just a mindful acceptance approach. I'm noticing these feelings and that's okay, I can sit with them, let them pass. It might be that you do a mindful cup of tea drinking exercise or a mini meditation or a breathing thing. You intentionally move very slowly, doing one thing at a time, go for a walk, whatever it is, just to really ease yourself into the morning without judgment and also without feeding that morning anxiety.

Meagen Gibson

All of that is so great. And I think so many of my friends (it's me), if you're a highly productive person, you can see that morning anxiety as productivity juice. Yes. I wake up and I panic and then I get a lot of things done. I've since changed my ways, I promise, but I used to do that a lot. And so I'm glad that you really named that.

And also named the physical processes that are going on. The cortisol drop, in part, the stress hormone is literally to wake you up and get you moving. That's part of what your brain and body is releasing in order to wake you up and get you ready for your day. So there's nothing wrong with your cortisol being high. It's meant to do that.

What's wrong with it is if you're already predisposed to anxiety or if it's pumped in there and then, it's like a starting gun. It's not going to go off and make a loud noise and startle everyone for the race unless you get up and get on your phone right away and read the news, then you're going to get startled.

And blood sugar as well. Not having the first thing that you drink be motor oil dark coffee straight into your empty stomach.

[00:36:22] Rebekah Ballagh

If you are a morning anxiety person, you've got to try to cut the caffeine just to see what happens.

Meagen Gibson

And I know for me, it's so much about ritual more than it is the caffeine itself. And so I try to find replacement rituals that are soothing.

Rebekah Ballagh

The stories we tell ourselves as well is like, as you said, in the mornings, I'm panicky so I'm going. Straight away I've got to be productive, I've got to be efficient and I have to do this. We send a little Instagram post, five cups of coffee already this morning, it's going to be a big day. We hold on to the stories we tell about ourselves as efficient working people and busy people.

And some of it is actually just about dropping that narrative. How much is it serving you that you need to race first thing in the morning and have eight cups of coffee? It's not serving you because you're going, here's the rule for my day. I'm setting the precedent that for the rest of the day I'm going to have zoomies and not in a good way.

Meagen Gibson

Burnout at 2:30pm after lunch when all the cortisol drops. I've got a belly full of lunch, my coffee is worn off, and I'm just going to crash. And we don't want that. Nice, easy energy all day long.

Rebekah, this has been fantastic. And I love that you're a visual thinker, and you've translated all of this into easily digestible illustrations as well that people have access to.

And you've also written a book as well, or illustrated a book, correct me.

Rebekah Ballagh

Written and illustrated.

Meagen Gibson

Great.

Rebekah Ballagh

So I've got four out now and more to come. So, I've got three of my own that were fully illustrated and written, and then one was a collaborative project on a kids book.

Meagen Gibson

Fantastic. And where can people find more about you, your books, your courses, all of that stuff?

[00:38:17] Rebekah Ballagh

So you can find me over on Instagram and that's where you'll find some daily posts and stories and things like that. So that's [@journey_to_wellness](#). All of the underscores.

Or my website is [journeytowellness.online](#) and that's where my facilitated trainings, my self development coaching, online self-paced courses. And you get the link there to the resources that you can get and all my books are there as well.

Meagen Gibson

Fantastic. Rebekah, thank you so much for being with us today.

Rebekah Ballagh

Thank you for having me. I had such a good time talking to you.