



Conscious Life presents

ANXIETY SUPER CONFERENCE

Working with anxiety in relationships

Guest: Terry Real

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[00:00:09] Alex Howard

Welcome everyone to this interview where I'm super excited to be talking with Terry Real. Firstly, Terry, welcome and thank you for joining me.

Terry Real

Thank you. It's a pleasure, Alex.

Alex Howard

I'm particularly excited for this interview because we're going to be getting into really the part of our lives that can be the greatest source of our joy and our pleasure in life, but it can also be one of our greatest sources of anxiety and one of our greatest sources of struggle. We're going to talk about the area of relationships.

Just to give people a bit of Terry's background. Terrence Real is an internationally recognized family therapist, speaker and author. He founded the Relational Life Institute, offering workshops for couples, individuals and parents, along with a professional training program for clinicians to learn relational life therapy methodology.

He's the bestselling author of *I Don't Want To Talk About It, How Can I Get Through To You?* and *The New Rules of Marriage*. And also, Terry, your new book just out, remind me of the title of that?

Terry Real

The title is *Us: Getting Past You and Me to Build a More Loving Relationship*.

Alex Howard

Beautiful. So that's just come out recently. So also to give people a strong recommendation towards that.

So, Terry, I want to just start off a little bit by opening up the idea of anxiety. Different people talk about anxiety from different frameworks, different perspectives. I know that in your thinking about it, really anxiety is a state.

[00:01:48] Terry Real

Yes.

Alex Howard

How do you see that? What do you mean by that?

Terry Real

Well, when I work with people, I make a distinction between states and feelings. And what I say is that, generally speaking, states are made up of feelings. But states are disembodied. They just come and go. They're like the weather. Thursday, I woke up, I was depressed. By the weekend, my depression dissipated. It was like I had clouds on Tuesday and then they drifted off by Friday. They're not connected to anything. They just visit you and there you are. You're a sort of passive participant in it.

And feelings are connected. You feel something about something. So when I'm working with, for example, a person who is depressed, I say, well, not always, but generally depression consists of sadness and perhaps anger, a hopelessness. What are the feelings that you're feeling in the depression?

And of course, anxiety is fear. But you say, oh, I woke up, I was anxious. That's okay, but if you say, I'm afraid, then as someone working with you or you working with yourself, you get to ask, okay, what am I afraid of today? And what I'm afraid of is often relational. I'm afraid that this is going to happen to me at my job, or I'm afraid that my partner is going to be mad at me or whatever.

And if it is, sometimes it's not, it could be in relation to your body. I'm afraid I have cancer. But oftentimes when you connect it to what it's related to, instead of keeping it as a disembodied cloud cover, then there are avenues of action. If you're afraid that you're ill, talk to your doctor. If you're afraid that your sister's mad at you, ask her.

So feelings can be calls to action. States tend to paralyze us. And it may be useful, not always, but it may be useful to drill into the state and ask yourself, what am I feeling? And then ask yourself, what am I feeling about? What am I afraid of? And that can lead you into connection out of disconnection.

Alex Howard

It's a really interesting point, because if I say I'm anxious, actually what I'm saying is, I'm experiencing a state that I don't like, but I'm disempowered and I can't do anything about it. And what you're saying is, by getting more specificity, by in a sense, looking at what are the pieces or the ingredients that are making up that state, that actually gives me a pathway to action. It allows me to do something about it.

Terry Real

Possibly but it certainly is more connecting than just, I'm having a panic attack. Well, okay. What are you panicked about? What's going on in your mind? This isn't just Zeus hurling a lightning bolt of anxiety in your direction.

[00:05:16]

And yes, disconnected states tend to paralyze us, whereas connected feelings tend to give us avenues of action.

Alex Howard

One of the ways that I often look at anxiety as well is it's a place of disconnect from our feelings and emotions. That 's like, it's a place that our system has sped up in a, in almost as a trauma response to escape feelings that either don't feel comfortable or don't feel safe or don't feel acceptable. Is that a way that you would also see it as well?

Terry Real

Yeah, it is like a trauma response in that it tends to be overwhelming and impersonal. And I think we're saying exactly the same thing. Whereas you may need company for this, this may be hard to do on your own. But with a friend or a partner or a therapist or a coach, you face that disembodied state and drill into it. Ask yourself, what the hell is going on?

Alex Howard

And we mentioned trauma. What's the relationship that you see between trauma and fear, and then how that can move into anxiety? Because I know that a lot of your work in relationships is also understanding the impacts of trauma.

Terry Real

Yes, absolutely. Trauma is really sticky. First of all, the autonomic nervous system, our autonomic nervous system scans our bodies, each of us, four times a second. Am I safe? Am I safe? Am I safe? Am I safe? And if the answer is yes, I feel safe, we stay seated in, what I call, the wise adult part of us, the prefrontal cortex, the most mature part of our brain that can think and be deliberate and make conscious decisions.

If the answer is no, I'm not safe, then we tend to move into that part of the brain, shuts down the more automatic parts of the brain, subcortical limbic system flare up and we move into automatic responses. Fight flight, and I've added a third one, fix, for us. Greater codependence.

Alex Howard

I don't know what makes you say us, Terry.

Terry Real

Intuition.

You know, oh my God, you're upset. I've got to take your upset away or I'm upset. It is about anxiety. It's not a thoughtful, mature working on the relationship. It's, I can't stand anybody upset about anything and so, therefore, I have an anxious compulsion to take that away. Fight or flight or fix.

I'm a fighter. Both my wife and I grew up in violent homes. And it's, screw me, screw you. You can flee and be sitting six inches away from somebody, that's called stonewalling. And fix, of course, is that

caretaking, "codependent", let me. Anything that's smelly in the room, let me throw open the windows and get the smell as quickly as possible so that I can start breathing again.

[00:08:43]

And these automatic responses screw up our relationships. I talk about the adaptive child part of us, the part of you that adapted. I remember you call it the maladaptive stress response. But the adaptive child part of us, once we're anxious and triggered, tends to do the same damn thing over and over and over again.

I heard the great Gabor Mate call it, your stupid friend. The one that follows you around and does the same thing over and over again.

So my knee jerk is to fight. Yours maybe to fix.

Alex Howard

Yeah.

Terry Real

And many of our listeners will be to flee, particularly if they're anxiety ridden.

And the point is that walking through that automatic door will get you the same result over and over and over again.

So, in my marriage, if my wife Belinda is coming at me with anger, my visceral response is to fight, but on a good day, I'll stop. And I'll breathe. We do a lot of breathing and relational work. I'll breathe myself down from that ridge or you'll breathe calm yourself from that anxiety or that need to flee.

And once I get centered, neurobiologically once I bring the prefrontal cortex back online, and you'll feel it as a more centered, I'm less triggered, my heart is slowing down, I'm not sweating, then I can deal with the relationship in a much more mature way.

And the news of my new book is that, I call this relational mindfulness, this the cultivation of shifting in the heated moment out of these automatic parts of us to more mature, thoughtful parts of us.

This can be cultivated. This can be strengthened and grown. And the shifting out of those automatic responses into something more thoughtful, deliberate, mature, that is the way out of the mess of many of our vicious circles in the relationships we're in.

Alex Howard

It's really interesting this point that how we often try to manage our internal anxiety, by how we manage those around us. Like your point around, do I fight? Do I literally flee? Or do I just stonewall and be there in body but not there at heart? Or do I try and fix it? But in a sense, a lot of what these are is attempts to manage our own internal state of anxiety by trying to manipulate or control or change what's happening with the other that we're in relationship with.

[00:12:04] Terry Real

Absolutely. We try and manage the stimulation rather than manage the response.

And I would like to sell t-shirts and have the wording on them be, 'I would be happy if only you would..' I think a lot of people would buy that t-shirt. And that's the way we run our relationships, 'I would be happy if only you would..'

And the reason why you won't, God damn it, has nothing to do with me, by the way. It has to do with you. It has to do with what a bum you are. And then we move into escalations and blame and we further our either fighting them, fleeing from them, or trying to control and fix them. None of that will work.

Alex Howard

And what you're speaking to, of course, is the same point of people, a lot of your work is doing couples work, people go to couples work because their partner needs to change.

Terry Real

Absolutely.

Alex Howard

I'll come because I need to be supportive of the fact that you're the one that..

Terry Real

I'll come to support you in you not being such a problem.

Alex Howard

Or I'll come so Terry can help you understand why you're the one that's broken and you're the one that has the issue.

Terry Real

You've been tuning into my sessions, and maybe my marriage.

Listen, what I say is that everyone who comes to see me, by and large, is an essentialist. But their partner is essentially this, that or the other thing.

And in the book I tell a story, it's a true story about, we'll call them Bob. So Bob comes to see me. He's a blue collar guy. We're very, it's right on the sleeve. And I say to him, as I say to all my clients in the opening line, "What would you like from this therapy? What's your wish?". And he says, "Well, between the two of us, this therapy would be a success if I got laid."

Alex Howard

At least he's honest.

[00:14:16] Terry Real

Here's a goal. I say, okay. So I brilliantly deduce his sex life isn't what he wanted. And I say, "Tell me". "My wife is just cold. She's just a cold fish. She comes from a cold Yankee family. Her whole family is cold and she's just a frigid person".

Okay, Bob. I bring in the wife, and this is the beauty of doing family therapy instead of individual therapy, you save yourself years of listening to the same old narrative. I bring in the wife. "Your husband isn't happy with your sex life". "Yes, I know". "What do you think's going on?". "Well, he's a terrible lover. He's had premature ejaculation for 20 years. Every time I try to talk to him about it, he just blows up in my face. He doesn't give a damn about my sexual needs". Okay.

I bring Bob back in and here's what I said. I say, "Bob, I've got fantastic news for you. The fantastic news is that you and your wife are connected". This is the wisdom that all couples therapists bring into the mix. "You are not dealing with a frigid woman. You are dealing with a pattern between the two of you that isn't working. Guess what? If you change what you do on your side of the seesaw, things might change". Let's see what that would look like.

And this is what I call systemic or ecological wisdom. In our individualistic culture, and the book really is a critique of the culture of individualism, we simply don't think relationally, we don't think systemically, we don't put ourselves in the mix. I am managing my discomfort by getting you to change and what you need to change is who you fundamentally are. You change and then I can be happy. Good luck with that.

Alex Howard

It's really interesting, it's so often as well that the more inner work that people do, one of the things that I notice is sometimes they actually find a relationship more difficult because they get more in touch with their own feelings, their own emotions, their own needs, that failure to meet their needs, perhaps when when they were children, or some of the childhood traumas.

And so they're increasingly in touch with what they want or what they need. And then the frustration becomes that the relationship is not bending to that and not meeting that. That it's almost like, because it struck me that the term you use, relational mindfulness. What often I think can happen is that the more that one is working just on the relationship with themselves and working on perhaps being more mindful, more present, it doesn't necessarily result in happier, better relationships. I'm curious as to how this concept of relational mindfulness is helping with that?

Terry Real

Well, that doesn't help with that but I'll give you another concept that will.

Alex Howard

We'll come back to relational mindfulness in a minute.

Terry Real

Well, it goes back to this individualism which I think toxifies a relationship. Because what happens is, somebody goes into therapy, they get more intense with what they need, they find their voice, they get empowered and it's, oh my God, Katy, barred the door.

[00:17:50]

A lot of therapists, sponsors, men's groups, women's groups move into, what I call, individual empowerment. Individual empowerment I sum up as I was weak, now I'm strong, go screw yourself.

Alex Howard

Yeah.

Terry Real

I am woman hear me roar.

And there's a next step that I go into a lot in the book, which is relational empowerment. I was weak, now I'm strong. I'm going to bring my full voice into this relationship. I'm going to assert what I want and need. Honey, what do you need from me to help you come through for you? Now, who asked that?

The relational golden rule is this, what can I give you to help empower you to give me what I'm asking for? What can I do to help you come through for me? Because I want you to. I call this helping them win. You want them to win.

But we don't think like that because we're so busy asserting our own wants and needs that we forget that we're a team. The essence of this new work is thinking ecologically, thinking like a team. And once you remember that it's the two of you, all the language changes.

It's a difference between saying, I want more sex. I need more sex in this relationship. And saying, Honey, we both deserve to have a good sex life. What do we need to do to kick start this all? Very different way of saying the same thing. One is about individual empowerment, me, me, me. The other is about us and how we can mutually empower one another to make this work for both of us.

Alex Howard

Of course, when we consistently engage from those default patterns, like, I'm not happy, I want this, often part of the glue that I think holds that together is the anxiety of doing something different.

For example, what you expressed, like the vulnerability of, or just a vulnerability of I miss you and I want more closeness. As opposed to a demand that I want more sex, which is probably the least attractive thing that someone can do.

Terry Real

Exactly.

Alex Howard

But what do you find helps people go to those more vulnerable places and helps them manage sometimes the anxiety that comes up about going to those more vulnerable places?

[00:20:26] Terry Real

That is a very, very wise insight. One of the things I say is that moving into maturity often means moving into more fear and loneliness. Because, for example, the way we try to get more in our relationship, in our culture we're largely passive about relationships. You get what you get and then you complain about it. That's got to be the worst behavioral modification program I've ever heard of.

But literally, the way most people deal with what's dissatisfying in their relationship is to criticize their partner for doing it wrong. Why? Well, there's no vulnerability and complaint. Request is vulnerable. You might get turned down.

And universally, we shy away from the vulnerability of saying, look, I would prefer it if you did it this way, because of the anxiety of doing it.

And so what I talk to people about is what I call sustainable hurt. Sustainable hurt is part of the package. Being vulnerable means that you might get hurt. If you knew in advance you were going to get your way, there'd be no vulnerability. It would be a done deal.

So how do we move into vulnerability with each other? And by the way, vulnerability for some, like a one up guy, can be moving into open heartedness and gee, I'm afraid of... Vulnerability for others, for example, a one down woman, might be moving into assertion and saying, look, I don't like how you do that. They're both vulnerable. They're different kinds of vulnerability but they kick out the same kind of anxiety, which is, there will be hell to pay in my relationship if I dare do this.

And based on our early childhood traumas, the less well met you were, the more anxious you're going to be about implicitly asking for more for yourself in your relationships.

I think that's the next step in the inner work. You spoke about the inner work and what I took from your initial description was this inner work of being in touch with yourself and asserting yourself. But how about the inner work of soothing yourself? The inner work of calming yourself, the inner work of taking a breath and giving yourself the courage to lean into that anxiety and try something new.

And one of the ways, and this is a longer... But one of the ways that I found useful in doing that is understanding that by and large, what most frightens us is young, what most frightens us is our early trauma. We're afraid that what's going to happen to us in this relationship is some version of what happened to us as kids.

And I do work with my clients and I encourage people, readers who work, for example, to do work themselves on identifying these younger parts of us and working with them.

I had a guy would not stand up to his wife for hell or high water. And it puzzled him. He was very assertive at work, but his wife scared him. And we went back to his childhood and he remembered very vividly in the session, I have this on tape, very vividly, his parents screaming at each other night after night after night after night. And he was a little boy who would hide literally underneath his bed and play with his toy soldiers and try to block it out.

And he kept saying to himself as that little boy, never again, never again, never again. And I said, of course. And so now when you step close to the cliff of daring to contract your wife, that little boy wants to hide under his bed and go, never again, never again, never again. Never again my parents, but never again me. I'm never to be in a position where I'm yelling and screaming or being yelled at.

[00:25:19]

And I said to him this one sentence that I believe changed his life. I said to him, this isn't your fear. It's his. It's that little boy's. And I set up a conversation between him and that younger part of him. He put that little boy on his lap. He put his arms around him, he soothed him, he said, your parents may not be here for you, but I will be here. You don't have to be alone anymore. I will take care of you.

And that then gave him the courage from that point forward to put that little boy behind him and face his wife, which is synonymous with facing his fears, which really means, face that little boy's fears.

So when you can, in the words of my pal Dick Schwartz, the founder of Internal Family Systems, when you can unblend from some of these trauma states where I am the adult me and my fear and anxiety is little Terry, I can soothe a little Terry and not have him run the show.

One of the things I say is, when an inner child kicks up, and I believe most anxiety states are young, when an inner child kicks up, you want to put them on your lap, put your arms around them, hear them out, and take their sticky hands off the steering wheel. Then you're not running the show, I am.

And if I may, literally, and I say this to people all day long in my office, when Belinda and I have a fight, which we do from time to time, I will take my little Terry, I have a composite about him, I know him well, and I'll literally visualize him behind me. You can stay behind. He holds on to my shirt. Between the anger coming our way and you, is me, my big body, my adult self. I will take the hit. You are protected. But here is your part of the deal. Don't you deal with Belinda. You let me deal with Belinda. I won't make a mess of it. You will.

And so one of the things I say is that maturity comes when we deal with our inner children and don't foist them off on our partners to deal with. And when somebody is dealing with anxiety, I'll bet the ranch that they're dealing with early childhood extreme states, fearful states. Separate from those early experiences. Be in the adult here and now. Prefrontal cortex. Turn to those inner children and enter into a relationship with them so that you can soothe them and they don't envy you.

Alex Howard

Part of what's so interesting in what you're saying, is that the way you're relating to that inner child in of itself is critical. Because often what happens is the little boy inside of us is terrified and then we're terrified because he's terrified, which then just escalates the whole pattern.

But then what can also happen is I think people can swing to either extreme that's unhelpful. They can either become too harsh and too boundaried and lock the little boy up, and that causes more anxiety. Or be so unboundaried and loving and attentive and whatever he needs, actually, then it causes more anxiety because there's no container and there's no holding.

So it's the way that we relate to that place inside of us, actually, I think in what you're describing, takes quite a bit of skill, quite a bit of practice to really learn how to do that in the most helpful way.

Terry Real

Yes, although let's not get too fussy with it. It's basically good parenting. You are parenting that young part of you the way you weren't parented when you were that age. And a good many of us know a thing or two about how to parent.

[00:29:37]

There's three aspects of good parenting. There's nurture: let me hear what you're saying, I'm sorry you feel bad. There is guidance: let me teach you how to do this differently. And there's limits: you in the backseat, I don't want you paralyzing me or I don't want your anxiety to drive us, as we're relating to my partner.

So it's a combination of listening and being empathic, but also you're wiser than that young part of you and you don't want that part of you running this show. It's listening, loving and devoting.

Alex Howard

Beautiful. What do you see as being helpful in terms of practices?

I'm mindful that a lot of what we're talking about in terms of having different perspectives and learning different ways of being in relationship, particularly thinking about those moments when we are deliberately doing something different. And in that moment anxiety is likely to arise.

What do you find very specifically helps cultivate these qualities that we're talking about? Any particular homework or assignments or tools or practices that you encourage people to do?

Terry Real

Well, the first one is breathing. And my friend, the German mystic, Thomas Hübl, has a wonderful saying, "Generally speaking, urgency is the enemy and breath is our friend".

Alex Howard

That's great.

Terry Real

And I do a lot of breathing and my clients do a lot of breathing and breathe down into your heart. Breathe into that little boy or little girl. Separate their anxiety from yours. It's their anxiety, it's not yours. And breathe into them and give them some of that peace.

Get re-centered in that calmer part of you that's still there, but not as a way of either controlling or running from the fear. Be with the fear in the sense that you would be with a child. Don't be overtaken by it. But don't try to control it or deny it or lock it away. Just be with it. Be intimate with it.

And I do find a lot of process with understanding that if you are subject to an extreme emotion, the odds are you're dealing with trauma. Our own adult prefrontal cortex, wise adult emotions tend to be moderate. So if something is plaguing you that is extreme, I usually go to two things. One, is trauma. You're being flooded, it's young, turn and deal with that young part of you.

And two, it tends to be multigenerational. So if you really want to do some deep diving, this may not be your fear. It may be your mother's fear or your father's fear or their parent's fear that you have taken on.

When a parent is not handling an emotion by either walling it in or acting it out, my belief is they radiate that emotion. And little children who have no boundaries, they're supposed to be wide open

systems, walk into that radiated emotion and walk off with their emotion, plus yours. And that plus can haunt them for the rest of their lives until they do some healing work to divest of it.

[00:33:49]

Can I give you an example?

Alex Howard

Yeah, please do.

Terry Real

So I work a lot with grandiosity in relational life work. For 50 years, we, as psychotherapists, have been obsessed with helping people come up from the one down of shame, which is brilliant and good work. But as a relational therapist, I'm also about helping people come down from the one up of superiority and entitlement.

So, and when you are in a grandiose state, we call it being shameless. You're not feeling sufficient guilt and shame. That's what stops you from being offensive.

So as my kids will never let me forget, when they were little, I was always late being the very important person that I am, whereas all of the other parents were parked, parking was hard to come by in that moment where all the kids are being dropped off, and they'd often parked a couple of blocks away from the school and happily usually walk up. I was too late in order to do that, so I would park in the visitor's parking section, which was right next to the school.

There were no visitors at 8:00 when the school was first opening, what the hell, but it was not what you were supposed to do. I was in a grandiose, entitled place in myself, and I felt no shame or compunction about doing that. After all, I was so late. My kids in the backseat were mortified. Mortified. They were embarrassed. They were embarrassed that other kids would see me do this. They were embarrassed that I should behave like this. They were ashamed of their father.

But more important, they took on that experience of shame. And that's what we call carried energy. And I think a lot of anxiety these days are actually multigenerational. They're carried fear from a fearful parent who is either acting out their fear and was unboundaried with it, or walled off their fear and radiated it in some sideways way.

So again, this is flunking. I would go into the childhood experience of someone in the same way I say to the adult, 'it's not your fear, it's little kids'. I might say, Alex, this isn't your fear at all. It's your mother's fear that that little boy picked up. Can we divest of that fear? It's not yours.

Alex Howard

And in that instance, when there's the recognition that actually it's not our fear, but we're still feeling it, what helps? Does it need to be worked with differently to if it was actually our fear? Or is that recognition alone enough to it to detach from it?

[00:36:56] Terry Real

Well, I do deep work that I learned from one of my mentors, Pia Melody. I would have the person, often in a workshop or group setting where they have several days, close their eyes, get back into the traumatic experience, which is when that fear is being transmitted, bring the parent into an empty chair in front of them, in their mind's eye. And literally confront the parent.

This is not my fear. This is yours. You gave me this fear in the moment when you said... There's a great moment in the film, *A Mighty Wind*, a comedy. The protagonist says, "Yeah, I think my mother was always overprotective". It's a visual. And it flashes to a picture of him at a chess tournament wearing a helmet.

Alex Howard

That's great.

Terry Real

So I would bring the mother in to say, when you made me aware of that helmet, you were transmitting your fear to me. And I felt it. And I've carried that fear all my life. And your fear has cost me in these ways. I am tired of carrying your fear for you. Take it back.

And I can have the person, in their mind's eye, literally scoop up all of the fear that was beyond them. Some of this fear is mine, but a lot of it's yours. Let me give back the fear to you. And they hand it back to the person who handed it to them. And it is like magic. People do feel lighter and calmer after they divest in these ways, but you need a therapist to be able to do that.

Alex Howard

That's beautiful. I'm curious as to how you see defensiveness in relationship? The reason why I ask, because I think one of the ways that anxiety often shows up is, I'm going to protect my anxious place from being defensive.

And I guess in some ways it feeds into what you said earlier about the flight response, where we don't necessarily leave, but we're there, but we're either defended or we're kind of vacating. What do you find helps soften that defensiveness in relationship?

Terry Real

I talk to people a lot about letting go of their ego, letting go of their pride. What are you defending? Who cares?

And the language that I have for that is, you stop and ask yourself, what is this going to cost me?

So, for example, if you want your kid in a military school and your partner wants your kid in Spring Hill, super progressive, jump on chairs school, if you give in to your partner, that will cost you. But if your partner is saying, I didn't like the way you talked to me last night. And for the life of you, you didn't think it was that terrible. What would it cost you to say? I'm sorry you felt that. What does it cost you?

And so I ask people to start to be aware of what the hell are you defending anyway? And maybe you can let go of that grip.

[00:40:28]

Now, these are where gender roles come in, by the way, because men constantly live in a state of anxiety, I believe, because we're living up to standards that are not human. What it means to be a man is to be invulnerable. And of course, we're all vulnerable as human beings.

One of the things I say to the guys I work with is, trying to escape your vulnerability is like trying to run away from your rectum.

Alex Howard

Quite difficult and often not successful.

Terry Real

But we like to deny our vulnerability, which is nonsense. And whenever our human imperfection or vulnerability shows up, we feel like we have to stamp it down and preserve our whatever, our manliness, our ego. Men in particular, have this issue.

So it's really about moving into vulnerability and moving into our own imperfection. When a man is confronted with his imperfection, he gets anxious because men are supposed to be perfect. And rather than sit with that anxiety, I'm going to alleviate my anxiety by alleviating my imperfection, which means alleviating you. So shut up or I'm not going to listen to you. And then we don't deal, no repair in the relationship because there's no accountability.

So I teach men in particular to let go of some of those stereotypes of what strength looks like and replace them with more relational ideals. For example, I talk to men about trading in strength for elegance. Wow, that could have been a five hour fight and I just sidestepped it, gave a little flip, and they went on their way. How cool is that?

So stop defending yourself and start behaving with more savvy and elegance in your relationship.

Alex Howard

We're almost out of time. But I also wanted to ask about courage in relationship, because often I think people think that courage is the absence of fear. That I won't be anxious and then I'll be able to take the risk of being more vulnerable.

And certainly my experience, and there's also many, many quotes that speak to this, is that often the reason why you need courage is because you have some fear or you have some anxiety. And there's something about that in those moments of fear, taking those brave steps.

I wonder how you see that. And in the huge amount of clinical work you've done, there'll be so many moments you've seen people take those steps, what do you notice happens just before or what supports people taking those leaps?

Terry Real

What's the phrase? Feel the fear and do it anyway?

[00:43:37] Alex Howard

Yeah.

Terry Real

I saw an old World War II movie where John Wayne is talking to a young soldier who's about to go into battle, and the guy goes, "I'm so ashamed to tell you that I'm just afraid". And the Duke puts his hand on the guy's shoulder and says, "Heroes aren't people who fear no fear. Heroes are people who fear the fear and do it anyway". Hey, if the Duke can say that, then I can say that.

It does take courage. And you can draw in inner resources, you can draw spirituality, you can draw on allies, people who've loved you, courageous figures inside of you.

I had a 12 step guy who had a beautiful image. He was in a state of extreme fear and he had a vision of him holding his inner little boy and his higher power holding both of them. That was very powerful.

So we have allies inside of us, grandmothers, grandfathers, uncles, heroes, spirit. And we don't have to be alone, both inside of ourselves.

And also tell a friend about it. Get some external support for your work. Most of the external support we get from our peers is, "Yeah, I wouldn't put up with that", that individual empowerment. But get some support for your relational growth and for your courage.

My wife confronted me today and I was ready to just urgh, and I took a breath and I said, "You're right, Honey. I'm sorry. You shouldn't feel bad". And I moved into repair with her. It was really scary. I wanted to share that with you. Good work, Terry. That's a pal. Have some pals.

Alex Howard

That's great. Terry, for people that want to find out more about you and your work, what's the best place to do that? And also some of what they can find, and particularly speak to your new book, *Us*, that's coming out as well.

Terry Real

Yes, *Us* just came out June 7th. You can buy it everywhere. There are links on my website. Please come to my website just my name, terryreal.com.

We have an incredible inventory that you can take to learn just where you are, just how screwed up you are, and important, and how your screw up in there is coalesced to form your particular pattern.

I am launching, this very summer, our first online 'Us' workshops for individuals and couples. So please join us for that if you want to hear more.

And if you are a professional, mental health professional or coach, then come and do some training. Go to terryreal.com. We have a very rich training program and we'd love to have you be a part of it.

[00:46:51] Alex Howard

Fantastic. Terry, it's always a pleasure. I really appreciate your time and I think it's great to have opened up such an important piece of the jigsaw of anxiety. So thank you.

Terry Real

Remember, anxiety is not an individual issue, it is relational. You're anxious about something. It's embedded in a relationship. Don't keep it disconnected, connected to the people around you.

Alex Howard

It's a great place to end. Thank you so much.

Terry Real

Thank you, Alex.