**LWQA episode 142**

This episode is brought to you by what's next my new group coaching program designed to help you find some clarity around your next steps in work and life times of transition can be challenging and frustrating as we wait for the pathway in front of us to unfold in this program. We focus on what you're learning during this in between time.

What obstacles are keeping you from moving forward and where you can trust yourself more to move forward with confidence. Over four weeks will reflect together and hold space for one another session start Sunday, July 7th. And if you join in before July first, you'll receive a complimentary private coaching session with me on a topic of your choice.

Learn more and register at Katie Linder dot work backslash next you're listening to lifework QA episode 142. Welcome to life work QA where I answer a listener question each week and provide resources and guidance to help you take your life and work to the next level. I'm your host. Dr. Katie Linder.

On this episode. I want to talk about the topic of living with anxiety. And this is something that I can speak to from experience. It's not something that I have really shared openly or publicly before but there have been several things that have come up for me lately that make me feel like this might be a good time to talk about this topic now, I want to offer a couple of disclaimers before I get into today's episode one is a little bit of a trigger warning.

I'm going to be talking about some symptoms of anxiety. And if you have anxiety, it may be a little bit triggering for you. And so I want to give you permission now to either engage with the transcript of the episode if you feel like that would be easier for you or to just skip the episode all together.

That is completely fine. The second thing I want to offer a disclaimer on is I'm going to offer some descriptions of anxiety that are very personal to me and that may not show up for you in the same way. And also it may look very different in your life. So you may have anxiety or you may have people that you know who have anxiety that looks very different than what I'm going to describe.

The other thing I want to mention, of course, which you all know is I am not a medical professional nor am I mental health professional? So today is really going to be focused on my experiences. And again, it's very personalized. So if you have questions about your own experiences based on what I'm talking about here today, I would absolutely recommend talking to a medical professional or a mental health professional and really diving deep into your own personal experiences.

So part of the reason that. It may be kind of not apparent that I struggle with anxiety is that I have what some people call high-functioning anxiety and that is basically meaning that I have anxiety and I have a lot of internal anxiety that I deal with and I'll talk a little bit more about that, but that from the outside I am incredibly high functioning.

And I look very organized. I get a lot of things done and actually the anxiety can be a bit of a driver for that for people who have a type A personality and this concept of high-functioning anxiety. I'll link to a couple resources in the show notes is something that for some people is pretty contested.

It is not a formal diagnosis and it's something that I stumbled across relatively recently and thought Oh, like this really does fit my experience of anxiety. I think a lot of people are diagnosed with anxiety and I was diagnosed about 10 years ago with something called generalized anxiety disorder when they hit a bit of a rock bottom and for me this happened when I was in grad school toward the end of my grad school.

And I was to a point where I was having a lot of panic attacks and I didn't really know what they were at the time and I ended up going into therapy to try to kind of figure out what was going on and was basically kind of told about anxiety and realized that I'd actually had anxiety since I was a young child and I remember as early as the second grade.

Experiencing panic attacks and needing to go home from school and kind of recover from those experiences. So I was able to look back on my life and actually learn a lot more about myself through the lens of understanding what anxiety was but when I was in grad school, I would have days where I would have.

Basically rolling panic attacks that would go on for hours. It was very disruptive. Now people around me probably couldn't see it. That's kind of part of that high functioning piece again. I was controlling it as best I could but I was feeling terrible pretty much all the time. And this went on for quite some time before I sought out a therapist and was like what is going on?

I don't know what this is and it was very disruptive in particular to my teaching. For some people generalized anxiety disorder, which is basically a feeling of generalized worry lots of you know, thoughts ruminations that you can't control sometimes. It's tied to panic attacks. Sometimes it's not for me it was at least initially and it's not something that you can control and that's one of the the signs is that you're kind of in your own head a lot and you're really struggling and it may or may not impact your.

Life and your ability to kind of go throughout your day now, I think this is one of the challenges for people who are dealing with high-functioning anxiety is that you often just muscle through it and you don't necessarily feel a need to get help or to seek assistance. And to be honest. One of the reasons I did was because I had this.

This panic attack issue and I could not control it and it was just becoming unmanageable for me. If I didn't have that. I don't know that I would have sought help because for me and because I had been dealing with anxiety since I was a young child, it felt very normal to have those feelings. And if I didn't have the physical disruptions, that would have been I think something that I would have just tried to manage on my own.

So one thing I want to throw out there and this is part of the reason I've decided to talk about this in a more public way is almost 20% of the population deals with some kind of anxiety and less than 40 percent of that group is seeking any kind of treatment. And I think that in part this is because people are high functioning and I would imagine in higher ed and in Academia.

We see this even more there is quite a stigma against having any kind of mental health issue and this is in part why I haven't talked about it. It's definitely something that I have concerns that people will look at me differently that people will think I am, you know, not as capable and so it's absolutely an ongoing.

Challenge of how do we talk about these things in a way that makes them a big part of who we are in our identity and something we can openly share now. I should also say, you know, Thinking about my radical self-trust taxonomy has really helped me to think about what anxiety looks like in my life what it means for me my exploration and kind of Journey with anxiety has been very tied to seeking self-knowledge and having a good sense of how to manage it in my own life.

So let me kind of rewind back to that time in grad school where I was really actively trying to figure out how to manage this anxiety and I would imagine it was probably triggered by the stress that I was under at the time. I was actively dissertate incur. I was teaching I was probably defending, you know, like my prospectus and things like that.

And so anyway, I went and saw a wonderful therapist who was provided by the institution. And we did all kinds of things to try to figure out how to manage this a lot of breathing techniques meditation and one of the best things I learned at that time was the idea that as you're having a panic attack often times because it's a fight or flight response your kind of initial thought is just a fight it and fight it and it's so uncomfortable and for me panic attacks show up as a lot of nausea and just feeling kind of lightheaded and.

I have a lot of adrenaline and so I want to get up and move around and kind of pace around and at the time this was something that just because I was experiencing it so much was really affecting my quality of life. And so by working with this therapists. We were kind of trying to figure out how to manage it and.

For me and again, this is where it gets, you know, very personalized. I just wasn't able to manage it with kind of the the breathing techniques and things like that it would help but it wasn't stopping the panic attacks all together and one day in my therapist office. I had a panic attack in front of him, and he said I think we need to start exploring medication.

So about 10 years ago. I went on my first medication for anxiety, which was helpful had some side effects and So eventually a couple of years in switch to a second medication, which I've been on ever since I take it every day twice a day and it is something that has helped me to control particularly the panic attack side of my anxiety for the last 10 years.

I've Maybe. To panic attacks in the last 10 years and coming off of days where I was having multiple a day. That's a huge huge relief for me. Now the whole concept of whether or not to take medication for things like this is very controversial. And so I want to be very clear that this is a personal choice that I made that has been incredibly helpful for me.

I have absolutely no judgement toward other people who decide not to take medication or who try to manage anxiety in a range of ways. And there are also a ton of other things I do in my life and in my lifestyle to manage anxiety and many of those things are things. I have talked previously about on the podcast just not in the context of how I'm using them to manage anxiety.

So for example, sleep is a really important component of me not feeling anxious getting a full night's sleep. It is also really important for me to not have caffeine or any kind of kind of stimulant so I don't drink any kind of caffeine. I've also cut way back on sugar for the same reason that it can cause me to feel more anxious if I'm having that kind of food and just other kinds of things like being in solitude and really paying attention to my introversion has been helpful for me as well.

Oftentimes I think in relationship to the high-functioning anxiety. What will happen is all kind of muscle through a situation that gives me anxiety and that is very difficult for me to be in and then I need recovery time from that. So people often say, you know, how do you do public speaking? How do you you know, do these kinds of things that you know would cause nervousness and other people and I can honestly say a big reason is probably because I'm medicated it's because I'm getting help with the kinds of things that my brain wants to do and I'm saying kind of gently no that's not the right response here.

That fight or flight response is not appropriate in this situation. Now this may raise a ton of questions for you, and I'm certainly not touching on everything that I could talk about because this has been a pretty much a life long journey for me to be thinking about in dealing with and living with anxiety.

But I do think that part of a conversation about you know, thriving in work and life has to do with these kinds of things too. And it is so important to take care not just of our physical selves but our emotional and our mental solves also and for me in my life that shows up as really taking an active role in responding to this anxiety now a few more things that I want to just mention about it that.

Helpful for me as I've kind of tried to figure this out is first of all, I have an incredibly supportive partner. Who when we first met I was not diagnosed with having this anxiety disorder and several years in was when we kind of figured it out. And so he has been on this journey with me the entire time kind of trying to figure out what's going on.

And has been really incredibly supportive has sat with me through many a panic attack and also, you know as as anxiety has kind of shifted as I've gotten older it has changed over time. Sometimes it does show up as things like agoraphobia, which is basically like not wanting to leave the house.

Sometimes it's helpful to be with a person that feels very safe or comfortable to you. And so he's often played that role for me. So there's lots of different ways that this kind of stuff can show up in your life and you just kind of figure it out and you try different things and see what works for you and really trust your instincts about what you you need at any given time.

Now I think maybe the last thing I want to say is how having this experience has helped me to figure out my radical self trust framework because one of the really interesting things about anxiety is you learn pretty early on especially with the physical symptoms. That you can't really trust them in some ways because you feel kind of intense feelings physical feelings, but they're triggered by things that don't either don't exist really like either some kind of response.

Your body is having to what it perceives as a threat when no threat is really there. And so this is something that has been kind of an interesting thing for me to experience especially since I know I started experiencing it as a very young child that I feel very ill when I have a panic attack, but I'm not really ill.

It's just my body's response and a lot of stress that's happening in that moment and it's interesting because I went from a place of thinking why can't trust that like that's not a real feeling. To really embracing it and saying but it is a real feeling. I am feeling that right now and just because it's being triggered by something that maybe isn't there or is something that I can't you know pinpoint why exactly I'm feeling this way.

It doesn't mean that my body is still not something that I need to listen to and that I need to be attentive to how to take care of myself in those moments. And for me and I'm sure for many others, but maybe not for everyone panic attacks can be a sign of just stress and strain and needing to slow down.

There are also of course a ton of other physical symptoms of anxiety that don't come with panic attacks that also are always assigned to me that I need to calm down and just like take some time. To be either by myself or take some time off. My creative Retreats are definitely a really important part of handling my anxiety and giving myself time away from the rest of the world to really focus and think about the things I want to the things that I'm passionate about.

My morning walks have been also a really important component of this as well. So. I hope this has been interesting helpful. One of the things that I've always wanted when I knew I would eventually talk about this kind of Journey is to present it in a way that would be helpful to other people. And the reason I'm bringing it up now is because I know that there are probably other people who are listening to this.

It's you know, 20% on most of the population that has this that is kind of dealing with it and whether or not that the people who are listening have been diagnosed. This is something that you can ask for help with and I have never regretted asking for help when I was in grad school to going to therapy to continually checking in with therapists over the past 10 years to kind of see how things are going and making sure I'm still on the right track.

I'm to talking with my family about it to talking with my partner about it to sharing it with some close friends and now to share it with all of you because this is something that we can talk about and that we can share resources on and I want to make sure that I'm not part of keeping that stigma of having to hide things like this.

So I welcome your questions as always. I'm happy to also talk privately with people over email. If you want to chat with me about this. It is not surprising to me that I do have people who come to me in a coaching situation who are struggling with us coaching is often. I think of first place that people will go if they don't realize that anxiety is something that they're dealing with and there's a lot of referral that happens in my coaching practice, too.

Mental health professionals if I see signs of somebody dealing with anxiety and I know in higher ed. This is a common thing. It's a common everywhere. And so of course it would be common in higher education as well. So you can always email me at contact a KD Leonard artwork. You can tweet to me at Katie double underscore lender.

You can connect with me on Instagram @ KD underscore lender, or you can write me a letter at Katie Linder PO Box 1621 in Albany, Oregon 97321. I always love to hear from you and thanks so much for listening lifework. QA is part of the radical self dress podcast Channel a collection of content dedicated to helping you seek self-knowledge nurture your superpowers playfully experiment live your core values with intention practice loving kindness towards yourself and others and settle into your life's purpose.

Learn more about the rst channel and access show notes and transcripts for each episode at Katie Linder dot work / podcasts. If you found this episode helpful, please also consider rating and or reviewing the show in iTunes.