



EPISODE 74: THE REASSURANCE TRAP WITH SALLY WINSTON

THE MARRIAGE LIFE COACH PODCAST | SEE SHOWNOTES AT: [MAGGIEREYES.COM/PODCAST/74](https://maggiereyes.com/podcast/74)

Maggie

Hello everyone and welcome to the Marriage Life Coach Podcast. I am so deeply honored and delighted to have a very special guest with us today. She is the co-author of one of the most powerful books that I have used with so much success with so many of my clients. And I want the whole world to know about it.

Our guest today is Sally Winston. She is the founder and co-director of The Anxiety and Stress Disorders Institute of Maryland. She has served as the first chair of the ADAA's Clinical Advisory Board. She's received their prestigious Jerilyn Ross Clinician Advocate Award.

She's a Master Clinician who's given sought after workshops for therapists for decades. And among the many fabulous books that she has written, worked on, and co-authored are What Every Therapist Needs to Know about Anxiety Disorders, Overcoming Unwanted Intrusive Thoughts, and my personal favorite Needing to Know for Sure, which is a CBT based guide to overcoming compulsive checking and reassurance seeking, which is such a simple and deep and infinitely useful book.

For everyone listening, this is an episode you're going to want to listen to once and then come back and take notes on. I am so excited to be in the presence of a legend today. Welcome, Sally.

Sally Winston

Hardly a legend. But hello, it's nice to meet you and spend some time with you.

Maggie





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So first, we sort of introduced your official introduction, but tell everyone a little bit about what you do and just the work that you do in the world.

Sally Winston

I'm a Clinical Psychologist. Mostly what I do is treat patients. My specialty is anxiety disorders and obsessive compulsive disorders, and all the things in between. I started a very long time ago. I hate to tell you how long time ago.

And during the course of my work, I founded the institute that I now run and I've trained an awful lot of therapists and my co-author Dr. Martin Seif and I have written a lot of books. And also we have an ongoing blog at Psychology Today Online, and we're just trying to get the word out.

Maggie

Love it. So, so powerful. So here's a kind of a fun story about how I discovered this book. I was working with a Coaching client just helping her get her marriage stronger, and do things like have less arguments and have the arguments be less intense and things like that.

And she had what sounded like these intrusive thoughts. It was when we were talking about it was almost like the thoughts were assaulting her. So instead of us thinking thoughts, it felt like the thoughts were thinking her and I sort of was like, "What can help her the most? What would be amazing?"

And I was scrolling on Instagram, as one does. And someone just randomly or in the Divine order of the universe, whichever we want to call it, recommended this book and I just by the title thought, "Well, this is interesting. Let me check it out on behalf of my client."





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And I read it and I sent it to her and I'm like, "You must read this immediately. This will help you." And of course I thought it would help her. But of course, like anything that we think is gonna help another human, it helped me to understand so many small details that are hugely impactful in the book.

And today we're going to talk just about two or three of the main themes. There's something called the Reassurance Trap that we're going to discuss in a moment. And *The Natural Voices of the Mind*, which to me, when I heard the *Natural Voices of the Mind* concept, it just blew my mind. Like yes, this is such a great framework to think about the relationship we have with these different voices in our heads.

I'm so excited to dig in. So let's start with the Reassurance Trap. If you were going to describe that, and of course I want everyone who listens to this to go and get the book, but if you're going to describe it briefly, what would you say?

Sally Winston

Well, let me just back up a little bit so that I can describe it because it's the second in a series of three books. And the first book is about *Intrusive Thoughts*. And it is about thoughts that come unwanted that, just as you describe -- thoughts that seem to be thinking you that you don't even agree with, but they keep assaulting you.

The second book, which is *Needing to Know for Sure*, which is *The Assurance Trap* book is the second part of that. The first book, the first two obsessions, and the second book refers to compulsion. So they are two parts of obsessive compulsive disorder. We don't have either of





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those words obsessive compulsive disorder in the titles, because somebody who knows they have OCD will go and look up OCD and they'll find lots of books on OCD.

But somebody who doesn't know that that's what they're doing doesn't look it up. So that is why we didn't put those words in the title. We put words that are ordinary words that everyone can identify with. Needing to know for sure is just that. It is the compulsive need to make the anxiety that comes from doubts, go away.

And people seek trying to make those doubts go away in many different ways. And so this is what that book is about. The most common is some kind of reassurance, which is either your reassurance that you seek from someone else, or reassurance that you try to give yourself. And the kind that you get from other people is fairly easy to identify because people get kind of tired of it.

Even if you rephrase the question in all different kinds of ways, they tend to get tired of reassuring you and you're aware that you're annoying people. But when you are doing self talk, when you're trying to reassure yourself internally, that is the most common kind of Reassurance Trap.

And it feels like you're trying to make yourself feel better, or you're trying to come up with a solution, or you're analyzing something, or you're working on a way of making yourself feel more certain so that you can feel better. So you say things to yourself like, "Well, what's the probability that that would happen?" Or, "I would never actually do that."

Or maybe you'll say to yourself something like, "Well, that's a normal thought." But the problem





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is that if you have a very sticky mind (which is what people with OCD and Generalized Anxiety have) your sticky mind leads you to want to solve this kind of a problem with reassurance. Then what happens is, the reassurance reinforces the worries.

It's not obvious at all. It doesn't actually work. It works for about five seconds. But anyone who has this problem will tell you it only lasts five seconds. And then you come up with a "yes, but what if something," and you start round again. That's called Negative Reinforcement.

It's not the same as punishment. It is a way of solving the anxiety that comes with the worry. But it doesn't actually work. And so you end up in these loops, where the more you reassure yourself, the more you feel the need to reassure yourself.

Maggie

Yes, yes, this is so powerful in so many ways. So in Coaching, one of the things we talk about endlessly is: are we solving the right problem?

Sally Winston

Oh, that's a wonderful thing.

Maggie

Yeah, the first thing is like, wait, which problem are we trying to solve? And is this the best way to solve that one?

And this is such a great example of wait, we're trying to solve this doubt, this anxious feeling, all the things that come up when we have these thoughts, sort of that feeling like almost like this





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assault, with reassurance, but that is not what actually helps you solve the problems. Like we're using the wrong tool to solve the wrong thing. Reassurance has a place in the context where it's totally appropriate and is the right thing to do.

And that's something where we also talk a lot about that in Coaching that this coping mechanism over here is great for over here. But in this other place this thing -- that is there's something wrong with using it, doing it, having it -- but over here, it actually is more detrimental than beneficial.

Sally Winston

Well, there's two kinds of reinsurances, as you said. There's productive reinsurance. Where you want to know the answer to the question. You look it up, you answer the question. You're done.

And it leads to some sort of an action plan which could be, "Okay, I've got the answer. I don't need to do anything." But that's productive. But unproductive reassurance is what this book is about, which is about over and over looping round and round, trying not to actually solve the problem, but solve the doubt.

Maggie

Yes.

Sally Winston

So we're operating down at the level of the content of what the doubt was. We're operating at the level of the process that keeps the doubt going. And the process involves sticky mind getting entangled with the content of the thought, paradoxical effort, which is the struggle to





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make it go away, which of course, makes a comeback.

Right? And this avoidance of the anxiety or the feelings that you get when the thoughts or the doubts come up. So if you want to solve this problem, you have to solve the problem of what's feeding the problem. Not answer the question, "Is it true or false?" So you're exactly right. It's about addressing the process that keeps your misery going, not the particular thing that you're having a doubt about.

Maggie

Yeah, so it's like the root cause versus the symptom. Like, one of the ways I talk about it, which is kind of gruesome, but it's very vivid -- if you had a bullet wound, there's a moment where you do need a bandaid, because you need to put on a bandaid to stop the bleeding, so you can do whatever's next. But at some point, you have to remove the bullet. You can't just keep on putting a bandaid over and over and over on it, which is what the reassurance...

Sally Winston

Right. And the problem with what many people believe from years ago kind of psychotherapy is that the root cause is something in your childhood. That's not what we're talking about. We're talking about a process by which you are accidentally feeding the very words that you're trying to get away from. It's accidental. You're trying really hard.

In fact, you could be trying all day long. But it's working backwards. And that is because the rules for the inside of our minds are different from the rules for the real world. In the real world, if I want to move this table, I'll put an effort. I'll push on the table, the table will move. But in the inside mind, effort works backwards.





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Maggie

Oh, say more.

Sally Winston

And the more you try to get rid of a thought or not have a feeling or make an effort to think the proper way, the more you apply a technique, the less that you are embodied in the attitude that's going to solve the problem. So effort is paradoxical in the inside world. And so people with every good intention are applying one technique after another to try to feel better, and they only work briefly.

Maggie

Yeah. Okay, I have to bring this back to some of the Marriage Coaching and teaching that I do on the podcast because it fits so well with so many things that I talk about every single week. One is we talk a lot about acceptance -- acceptance of ourselves, acceptance of our partner.

And this example that you're giving of this paradoxical, almost over working towards some goal, that then leads diminishing returns. The harder you work, it's like the less actually effective it becomes is very similar when I see -- For example, many of the wonderful listeners that listen to the podcast are highly verbal -- love to talk, talking as a way to resolve a lot of things.

And I'm the Coach who comes in and says, "Let's maybe stop talking." Let's not apply any more talking to this issue. Let's go do some internal work. Let's listen to the natural voices of our mind, which we'll talk about next.





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Let's do some work over here. And what happens over and over and over again, is when practicing acceptance, we're doing our work, we're checking with our different minds that we have, the need for the conversation dissipates or completely disappears.

Sally Winston

Yes, and that is a wonderful insight in that a lot of internal thinking is a form of rumination. It's going round and round and round. And it's actually not getting anywhere. And it is compulsive self reassurance, or self checking in one kind of way. Or even with another person, you can have an endless conversation that gets you absolutely nowhere. So that's a great insight you're having about that.

Maggie

Yeah, yeah, absolutely. Yeah, absolutely. So let's talk a little bit about: you mentioned Productive Reassurance and Unproductive Reassurance. And one of the things that I just wanted to make sure we discussed explicitly was Productive Assurance will always help you move forward.

You mentioned earlier, it's like you get a fact, and then you have that fact and then you keep going. And to give an example, I have a client right now where she wanted to make a big investment. And she had to check her bank account. And she had been ruminating a bit about what to do and will the investment work out for her and like all of these other things.

But the actual thing that needed to be done was she needed to check -- she needed to get a factual piece of information to determine, am I gonna do this now? Am I gonna do it later? When am I gonna do it? And it just so happens that I talked to her after that. And she said, "Well, guess what? It turns out, I have more than enough money to do this thing, plus other things I





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also wanted to do.”

Sally Winston

Right. Sometimes in real fact actually helps. But you can tell when things are unproductive when it doesn't help. So you get one good reassurance from a credible source once. And if you're circling back, you have a high suspicion that you're in a Reassurance Trap.

Maggie

I love this. Okay, everyone, if you're circling back -- 99% of everyone listening circles back, including me from time to time. So if you're circling back, you're probably in a Reassurance Trap, and we want to help you get out of it. So Productive Reassurance, you get the fact you move on. Unproductive Reassurance temporarily creates the illusion of certainty.

Sally Winston

Or at least it just reduces your anxiety immediately. When you're having this sense of urgency, "I must solve this right now." That it's got to be done right now. I can't stand it if I don't know.

That's very likely -- you know, the only real emergencies are when you're on fire, or you're having a heart attack. You know, most problems are not emergencies. But they feel like it because your nervous system is clanging this emergency false alarm.

And you can easily mistake distress for danger, because the alarm sounds the same. So if you're thinking it's danger, if you're making that mistake, then it feels like it's an emergency. But if you can see that the alarm is ringing, I can feel it, I sense it in my stomach -- it feels urgent, but it's actually distress. It's not danger.





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Maggie

Yes, it must be addressed in some way. But there's no immediate danger to your person unless it's a fire or a heart attack. First of all, I love that example. Before I became a Coach, I worked in human resources, and I used to hire the doctors who work on cruise ships. That's what I used to do.

And when we would pre-screen them, one of the principles that we used was they must know how to manage a heart attack, because a heart attack must be managed within 15 minutes, or literally the person would die. So we would give them these clinical scenarios where they had to know what drugs they would use and what the protocol would be for this case.

Everything else that happened, as long as they had a general sense that they could look it up, ask a colleague, figure it out, think it over -- distress versus danger. Everything else, we still have to address it. If you broke your leg, we need to figure that out. But you won't die from that.

Sally Winston

Exactly. Very good.

Maggie

I love that. I love that so much. Okay, and another thing that you said that I think is so important, and I've heard it said many different ways, but for some reason, the way that you phrased it in the book. It's like I felt like my mind was just blown wide open was: we think more certainty will solve the problem and that we think that that is it.





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That's the solution. It's more certainty. But the truth, like the truth with a capital T, is increasing our ability to manage uncertainty is the thing. It is nothing else like it. That's the one. Can you just share a little bit more about that?

Sally Winston

Yeah, yeah, that's a very important thing. First, let's just look at what certainty is right? Because we think of certainty as being somehow factual. Certainty isn't actually anything to do with facts.

It's actually, technically, it's a metacognition accompanied by a feeling. So metacognition means a belief about a thought, accompanied by a feeling. So uncertainty is mainly you experience it as a feeling, not a fact. Getting rid of uncertainty is literally impossible. So seeking certainty is a hopeless task.

Let me just give an example. And this might be -- your listeners can do the same thing. Think of somebody that you really care about. And ask yourself the question right now, this is an important question, it's not trivial. Are they alive right now? Think about that.

Now, not too many people I know grab for their cell phones to check on their friend, or their lover, or their child. But why not? And most of the time when I ask someone that, it's, "Well I'm not asking a trivial question." They say, "Well, I feel certain that they're okay. I talked to them this morning."

And I'll say, "Yes, but they could have died between now and this morning. Why aren't you more upset?" And they'll say, "Well, I feel pretty sure they're fine." And then what they're saying is





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embedded right in it -- "I feel pretty sure."

Once we understand that certainty is not a fact, it's a feeling, then we realize that we're tolerating uncertainty about a million things all the time. When you walk into the room, and you sit down on a chair, you don't know for sure that all four legs are going to hold, you know, and if I say to you, "I'll meet you at the corner for a cup of coffee," I don't say provided I don't have a heart attack and die by 10:00.

We all know how to handle things we don't know for sure. And in fact, if you really look very carefully, we don't know anything for sure except that someday we'll die. We don't know for sure that the person who loved us yesterday, loves us today. We don't know for sure anything. But we tolerate that all the time.

So the idea of becoming more comfortable or more willing to be uncertain, has to do with understanding that it's the feeling of uncertainty we need to be able to deal with, not some fact that in our imagination, what if? Right?

So you don't have to tolerate, you know, whether or not it's possible that, you know, that my next door neighbor is a pedophile. We're not saying, "Oh, if the person's a pedophile, it's perfectly fine as long as you're not sure about it."

We're saying, if you have a thought about which you are uncomfortably uncertain, and you struggle yourself into a Reassurance Trap, the way out is being willing to have doubts. In reality, there's no way out of having doubts. Once a doubt occurs to you, you can't pack it back up and send it away. It's gonna be there.





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So it's not about getting rid of it and it's not even about sort of white knuckling your way through not knowing. It's about understanding that it's a feeling you're trying not to have. And there's plenty of uncertainty that's actually -- I mean, what do you think a spoiler alert is? A spoiler alert is something that says: "We don't want you to know the end of the story yet, because the uncertainty is fun."

"We don't want you to know who won the football game." And if you do know who -- if you know, for sure won, then you don't even feel like watching. So this is, you know, uncertainty is not a bad thing. It's the unwanted uncertainty that you're unwilling to have, that can lead you astray if you get hooked into trying to make it go away. Does that make sense?

Maggie

It 100% makes sense. And there's so much I love about that. One thing is, I talk a lot about feelings on this podcast. And the feeling is a vibration in your body is how I describe it. And we can have vibrations like this is a thing that humans can do. We are capable.

And one of my favorite ways to describe or think about feelings, especially when we have feelings that we struggle with, is to think about them like colors. There's black, there's purple, there's blue, there's green. We would never say, "Oh, green is so awful. I never want to see green again. Let's just re-color all the grass."

We have this allowance in our brain that sometimes there will be green. It's not my favorite color. I'm not gonna paint my house green. But there might be some green somewhere and I'll just walk on by when I see it.





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What if we had that same relationship with feelings? Like this one is not my favorite, but it comes out every now and then it's perfectly alright, if it comes and it goes. And I find that, that loosens the grip a little.

Sally Winston

Yes, that's a lovely way of putting it. I like that. I may steal it.

Maggie

Go right ahead.

Sally Winston

You know, if you think about -- here's a little story. You're walking down the street and there's this guy coming towards you. He looks really sketchy. He's like wearing an old dirty raincoat. And he just looks weird. And he's a little bit scary, but you keep walking. And as he crosses your path, he says something to you that's disgusting, or horrible, or scary. What's the best thing to do?

Maggie

Keep walking.

Sally Winston

Exactly. Keep walking. Now, if you turn around to him and you say, "What did you just say?" You know, you're going to get involved in something that you would very much rather not get involved in. Feelings like thoughts pass. A stuck thought is called an obsession. And a stuck feeling becomes a mood.





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Maggie

Yes, Sally, yes.

Sally Winston

So if you have a feeling and you just let yourself have it, it will fade in intensity. But if you struggle with it, they get stuck.

Maggie

Okay, here's something I tell my students and my clients all the time and I'm gonna tell you, too, and I want to hear what you think. I think of another way that I think about feelings is, besides the colors to loosen the grip, is that a feeling is like water.

So if we think about water, when water is flowing, it's healthy, it gives life to everything. We love water flowing. When water is stuck, it becomes dangerous. And it becomes, instead of life giving, life taking, right? It brings disease and brings bad things, all the things.

So if we can think about feelings as water, where we just let them flow. They come and they go. They keep on going. Different ones come all the time. Like waves in the ocean, you always want to be with the waves in the ocean just flowing with those waves.

When we see the stuckness, right, is when -- now it becomes dangerous. So feeling in and of itself -- like water in and of itself -- it can be great. When it's the stuckness it becomes dangerous and then we need to do something about it.





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Sally Winston

And feeling uncertain is not dangerous. And a lot of people feel like it is.

Maggie

That's why we're talking. Yes, yes, exactly. So let's talk about the Natural Voices of the Mind. This is a concept that's introduced, and I'm assuming in the first book you talked about as well. And I, you know, read a lot of different books about a lot of different things.

And when I read this, I thought it was explained so simply, so easily. Anyone could understand it. Anyone could apply it. And that, to me, was part of the genius of the way that you presented it. So the natural voices of the mind are three voices -- worried voice, false comfort voice, and wise mind. Can you walk us through this concept?

Sally Winston

Originally when we came up with it, worried voice was Oscar for O, obsession. And false comfort was Cassandra for compulsion. And the third was David for wise David. And our editor said, "No, you better lay it out, because people are not going to remember that."

So just lay it out: worried voice, false comfort, and wise mind are talking inside our heads all the time. We're not talking about actually hearing, but we know that there are channels in our minds. And these are one -- these are three of the channels that are operating in worry.

Now one of the things that we know about worry is that worry feels like it's all one thing. But actually, it's got two parts. There's the "what if" part, which makes your anxiety go up. And then there's the second part of worry, which is your attempt to make the anxiety go away. Right?





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So that is something like -- so you might go, "What if the bus doesn't come?" And that makes you feel scared. And then you go, "Yes, but it'll be here in five minutes." Even though you don't know. That'll make you feel a little less scared. But then it's "Yes, but how do you know that it's coming in five minutes?" Followed by, "Well, um, it will be okay if it doesn't come, I can always call them if I'm late."

And then, "Yes, but what if you're late? Then they're gonna think you're an irresponsible blah, blah, blah." So worry actually isn't one thing. It's anxiety going up, anxiety going down, anxiety going up, anxiety going down. And that is the interplay between the "what if" and the solution, the "what if" and the solution.

And that's the interplay between worried voice -- where your anxiety goes up, and then anything that false comfort does to try to make worried voice not being anxious is false comfort. A lot of times that's one form or another of checking or reassurance. But it's also the voice of avoidance, which is the third book.

And the voice of, "Don't, don't do it, don't say it, don't go there, just avoid it, don't feel it, just avoid it." So those -- the interplay between those is what the Reassurance Trap is. If you get stuck in this round and round and round. Wise mind is borrowed from Buddhist meditation, and it is basically the ability to stand back and take a look at the process that's going on. And, and step out of it. Take a look at it. And step out of it.

Stand back. Don't be so entangled. Be willing to surrender. So you let yourself have the feelings -- even the anxious feelings -- so they can pass. Because if you don't allow them, they won't





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pass. So wise mind is your -- what you would call a mindful presence.

The other piece of being able to observe is being willing to not judge, criticize, suppress, being mean to yourself on the inside. Of course, this is the healing part of the mind. And so a lot of the work is about learning how to access your wise mind, not as a technique, right? Because we don't talk about techniques in any of our books. It's about an attitude shift.

Maggie

Yes, yes.

Sally Winston

We are changing -- we are not saying what's in your mind is wrong or bad, and now we have to change it. Like, here's, that's a negative thought, let's put a positive thought in there. We're not doing that because it doesn't work. What we're doing is saying we want you to change your relationship with the contents of your mind.

Maggie

Yes. Okay. We're gonna slow that down for a second, because that is literally what this whole entire podcast is about, but with relation to people's marriages, right? We're saying people are imperfect, we are humans, we process the world differently. What if we just accept that and then we see what's the love that we can cultivate within that, right?

And then everything -- all the tools and the different things that I teach and that we talk about every week -- is to help you do that, is to help you access that compassion, access that acceptance and access also the idea that you can experience something differently.





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Like for example, today, if you've ever had that feeling that you were assaulted by a thought, guess what? Millions of people have had that feeling too. A) you're not alone. B) there's a different way forward. C) Go get the book. Right?

And even if all you do is just notice, "Oh, that's my worried voice. Oh, that's my false comfort voice. Oh, that's my wise mind" -- it's just to start bringing awareness to what's happening. I always say awareness is halfway there. Like once we have awareness, we're halfway to wherever we want to go.

Sally Winston

Well, I would add awareness and a shift in attitude.

Maggie

Yes, yes. Yes. That's exactly. Beautiful. Now, another thing that you mentioned that I just really loved -- well, two things -- the more we feed the need to know for sure, the hungrier it gets -- sort of touched upon that a little bit in different pieces of things we've talked about. But I think it's important to just say that. It's this voracious vortex that is never fed, always wants more.

In relationships, this often happens with partners where, you know, "Do you love me? Do I love you? Is this working out? How do you feel?" All of these, like it feels like an urgent need. There's a sense of urgency attached to that question. And the way forward is not to continue to feed the vortex. The way forward is to develop this relationship with varied voice, false tempered voice, and wise mind.





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Sally Winston

So I like to say: you don't solve a problem of too much thinking with more thinking.

Maggie

Yes, one of the things that we do is talk about -- because we want to know how we're thinking, we want to know how the thinking affects us. But like, who are we being? Who do we want to be in the world? I want to be more loving. What does that look like? That's almost like that attitude shift.

And one of the things that I teach is Power Questions. So it's a question that helps you return to your own power as opposed to a question that disempowers you even more. It's like, what would love do? What would a powerful woman do in this situation? If I had power over this, if I had authority over that, how would I approach it? It's like that attitude shift of who am I being?

Sally Winston

Right. And that's, that is in enact terms. And there's a form of therapy called enact. It functions where you take a look at what are your values? What's really important to you? It's possible to be uncertain and still behave according to your values.

Maggie

Yes. Okay. So literally, this is one of the things -- I teach a group program called the Marriage MBA, where we learn to just handle anything that happens in our marriages, to develop resilience around it. And one of the exercises we do is exactly around values for that reason. Is, my value can lead me. I can be led by this thing that is really important to me.





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And I can turn to that over and over again, no matter what is happening around me. What is happening around me does not determine how I show up. My values, my decisions, my vision for what I want to create -- that determines how I show up.

Sally Winston

Right. And if you're, if you have an unwanted feeling -- like uncertainty, or disgust, or anger, or jealousy, or any feeling that you don't want to have -- the attempt to suppress it, or make it go away, it's gonna make it bigger, because that's what we talked about.

But it is not true that you have to get it to go away in order to be able to behave according to your values. There's a place for all of that stuff that can be present. This is not about a technique for getting rid of or managing. So if not, you shift your attitude, not to make yourself less anxious. It's while you are anxious, or angry or upset, while that feeling is happening, you also can proceed.

Maggie

Yes. I love that so much. The example that I give is one time, I was very angry with my husband and I was crying about whatever it was that was going on. And even as I was angry and upset and crying, I was like, "I know you're a good person. I'm just really upset right now."

And I was literally in the midst of a very visceral, emotional cry. But I still was present to like -- both of those things were held together. They're not opposites. They're all part of the whole of who we are.

Sally Winston





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Almost nothing is all or nothing.

Maggie

Yeah, yes, agree. 100%. And this is like the exact next thing I was gonna say, you already said it, which is: thoughts get stuck by the means of the energy you put into trying to resist them. So the more you try to resist them, avoid them, suppress them, or have that tumultuous relationship with them, as opposed to accepting them.

This works with partners too. The more we push against the partner, the more whatever behavior we want less of, exacerbates. Very often -- so often now that it becomes predictable -- the more we accept a partner, the more that behavior either -- we come to a place where it matters less to us, so it can continue, but it's just not an issue. Or it also dissipates. It's a really -- it's feelings and people work very similarly.

Sally Winston

Right. And you also tend to urgently demand help with the insides of you, from your partner. You don't need that help. There's a great deal that your partner really can't do for you. But you can be asking and asking and asking, "Please make me feel better." When really, it's up to you to be willing to feel how you feel so it passes.

Maggie

Yeah. So be willing to feel how you feel so it passes. I think everybody needs to write that down. I am willing to feel how I feel so it passes. It is the healthiest ways to be willing. And what I do is I work with women individually, so I don't work with couples.





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And the reason that I do that is precisely what you just said. It's like there's so much that's just ours, that we own, that has nothing even to do with what we think some of the issues are. And when we get clear, many of those things dissipate.

And the ones that don't, we deal with them from a much more compassionate and much more powerful and much more loving place. Is there anything else that you want to share before we start wrapping up for today?

Sally Winston

I can't think of anything, do you have any other questions?

Maggie

I just want to say thank you so much for all of your work in the world. I happen to come across this book, as I mentioned, a beautifully serendipitous way. It has been life changing for me. It has been life changing for every client that I have shared it with. I have shared it with my Coach friends, my Coach friends now...

Sally Winston

Well, the first book is translated into 11 languages. Somebody just found it in China. It's not up to us -- we don't even find out about it except accidentally. And the second book now has had three or four translations.

They're both available in audio book. And the third book in the series, which will end the series, is on anticipatory anxiety and chronic indecisiveness. And so that book is finished, which is, it's in the process of being copy edited. So it'll be another few months before it's out.





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Maggie

Oh, that's wonderful. Well, I'm so excited for it to come out. And I know it will be a blessing to so many people. And I just want to say, it takes a lifetime of experience and of self experimentation and of study to make these concepts so simple.

So that you could just hear it once and apply it today. And I just want to express my gratitude, not just for the book, but the lifetime of work that it took to create something as simple as that.

Sally Winston

Thank you. Marty and I are both getting old. So we decided that we wanted to get our words out before we couldn't do it anymore.

Maggie

Yeah, that's beautiful.

Sally Winston

Yeah, I only started writing a few years ago. So, there it is.

Maggie

So one of the things I like to do at the end of interview episodes is -- I wrote a book, which is 400 questions. So basically, I wrote 400 questions, which is not exactly the same as writing a book.

And the idea is to help couples get closer and to help them talk about a variety of different





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things. And I'd love to just pick a random question and ask it. So this one called to me when I was thinking of you, which is: what are your favorite words of wisdom to give?

Sally Winston

So I treat people with anxiety. So they have symptoms of anxiety in their minds, in their feelings, in their bodies. And the words of Claire Weeks, who was the person who sort of taught me this approach, her definition of recovery has always stuck with me.

And what she says is: recovery is not when the symptoms no longer occur, it's when the symptoms no longer matter. And I think that's incredibly important, because people want to clear away the anxiety and make it stop.

But it's also a much more reasonable and attainable goal, to be willing to have moments of discomfort. And when you do when they don't matter. They don't make you do anything. They don't make you feel bad about yourself. They don't make you avoid anything. They don't matter. Then you've got it.

Maggie

Yes. Oh, what a beautiful way to end our episode. Thank you so so much. How can people follow you and read your articles? Should they go to Psychology Today? Is that the best place for them to go?

Sally Winston

There is a blog on psychologytoday.com that Dr. Seif and I wrote together. We never know who's the first author. But you could just put my name into Amazon or any bookseller, and up will pop





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all my books. So that's the way to do it. And we have a website, which is at, you know, at my Institute, which is anxietyandstress.com.

Maggie

Okay, so we will link to that website in our show notes. So for everyone listening now, if you want to go to her website, check out what she's writing about there. We will also link to the Psychology Today sort of author page. So that'll all be in the show notes at [MaggieReyes.com](https://maggiereyes.com) for this podcast episode.

Sally Winston

And there's there's two organizations where people can find therapists who have special expertise in OCD and anxiety. One is the Anxiety and Depression Association of America which is adaa.org. There, there are many, many, many webinars and things available to the public free of charge, and they're excellent quality -- adaa.org.

And the other is IOCDF, which is the International OCD Foundation, iocdf.org. Same thing, lots of very good information. Both of them also have registries for therapists that you can find that are local to you.

Maggie

That is wonderful. Thank you. Thank you so, so much. Best wishes for the next book when it comes out. And thank you so much for sharing your wisdom with all of us.

Sally Winston

Thank you so much for having me. I enjoyed it.

