



EPISODE 1015

Use These Science-Backed Strategies to Instantly Reduce Anxiety, Boost Confidence, & Feel Your Best

With Dr. Amy Morin

You are now listening to [The Model Health Show with Shawn Stevenson](https://www.themodelhealthshow.com). For more, visit [themodelhealthshow.com](https://www.themodelhealthshow.com).

SHAWN STEVENSON: Are you stressed out about stress? Stress is everywhere, and I'm sick of it. But at its foundation, stress is a part of life. We need stress, as a matter of fact. Hormetic stressors help us to be better. We need stress in order for us to grow, to thrive, and to improve in all areas of our lives. But of course, that stress can become chronic, and it can really beat us down.

And so how do we cope with stress when stress is stressing us? And I'm telling you right now, today's episode is absolutely transformative. I've taken some of these tools that I've learned from our special guest, and I'm utilizing them in my own life to incredible results, and I'm so grateful, because this isn't something that we can escape.

Our world is very different, and it's rapidly changing, and it's more important than ever for us to learn to adapt and to thrive and to have those simple human practices that can really keep us feeling empowered. And the reality is we can get all the stress balls, we can get all of the massages and the anti-stress teas.

We could do all that stuff, and those could do little bits for us. Those are all great. Those are fine and dandy. But the most important thing when it comes to adapting and even growing from stress is our perception of that stress and how we are managing our own minds in the context of the inevitable stressful stuff that are happening in our world.

With that being said, on today's episode, you're going to discover how humming or even gargling can help you to alleviate anxiety, and this is tapping into one of the most powerful systems in our bodies to help to reduce stress. She's gonna break all that down for you. You're also gonna learn how to literally change the channel in your brain and instantly change your mindset. You'll learn how to solve your minor and even major problems that show up in your life by creating psychological distance and questioning your questions.

You're gonna discover some powerful insights to take care of things that you might even dread doing. How do we take the dread out of it? And you're also gonna learn how to utilize one of my favorite things, a victory vault, to restore your confidence when you might need it most. All of this and more with our special guest, Amy Morin.

Amy Morin is a psychotherapist, mental strength trainer, international bestselling author, and the award-winning podcast host of the Mentally Stronger with therapist Amy Morin. Her books on mental strength have sold more than one million copies and have been translated into more than 50 languages. She's practiced therapy for over 20 years, and she's a sought-after speaker whose TEDx Talk, The Secret of Becoming Mentally Strong, is one of the most viewed TED Talks of all time, with more than 25 million views.

Today, she's going to give you the mental health playbook to help you to beat stress, thrive under pressure, and live your best life. Let's dive into this conversation with the incredible Amy Morin. I'm so excited. Amy, thank you so much for joining us today.

DR. AMY MORIN: Thank you so much for having me. I'm excited to talk to you, Shawn.

SHAWN STEVENSON: We need this playbook right now, and I think that a lot of people are gonna walk away with some really valuable things that they can implement starting now. And if you could, let's start off by talking about the biggest misconception about mental strength

DR. AMY MORIN: I think one of the things is that people equate acting tough with being strong.

And it's really pervasive in our culture, right? Like you hear people say things like, "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger." People are like, "The more you suffer, clearly the stronger you are," or the difficulties in life, you emerge from it stronger. And it gives us this sense that you have to push yourself almost to the breaking point, and if you don't break, then somehow that means that you're a strong person.

And one of the things I was seeing as a therapist then is people were believing I have to shove

down all my emotions, and if I feel something, it's bad. Or if I ask for help, it's a sign of weakness. Or if I were to acknowledge that I'm not perfect, then there's something wrong with me, then other people are gonna see me as not being tough enough.

And even the saying that we have when people say "Check on your strong friends," or somebody might say, "I'm tired of being strong." When I'll tell them like, your strong friends are the ones that are probably asking for help. They're the ones you don't need to check on because they're gonna call you when they need you, 'cause you're not afraid to say, 'Hey, I'm struggling.'

It's your friends that are acting tough that you might wanna check on." Or when people say, "I'm tired of being strong," like that doesn't make sense. That would be like if somebody said "I'm really tired of being physically strong today." That makes no sense. Maybe you're tired 'cause you're doing exercises that don't work for you, but having muscle doesn't make you more tired.

It's the opposite. Life gets easier when you become stronger. So It's that belief, I think, that if I don't cry at a funeral that I'm a strong person, and if I get through life and I can come out kind of unscathed, then that must mean I've bounced back. And I see people put pressure on themselves. They go through something tragic and the next day they're all, "Here I am.

I'm doing well." 'Cause they think that's what they need to do. And that's one of the reasons why I try to talk so much about mental strength, is to teach people like, "No, it's okay to say I'm struggling. It's okay to ask for help." And hopefully, there are always exercises and strategies we can use to grow stronger when we face challenges.

You don't just have to pretend like everything is easy all the time.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. Oh my goodness. We're already cracking open this awareness of our perception of strength and what that looks like. And something specific that you just said I heard not too long ago. I heard my wife say it. And her father had passed recently.

A lot of life changes. My oldest son moved out. And just one thing after the other. And her sister said to her her name is Anne, but her Kenyan name is Jerry. She was like, "Jerry, you're so strong. You're gonna be okay. You're so strong." And she said to me, "I don't wanna be strong anymore."

Yeah. "I don't wanna be the strong one." Right? And for me that didn't make sense. And you just great, gave a great analogy. It let me take this muscle off today and put this down. It's just who you are, but I understand. I absolutely understand what you mean. And so having access and insights like you're providing us can help us to utilize our strength in a way that is serving us.

And I'm curious, what made you decide to write The Mental Strength Playbook?

DR. AMY MORIN: I've written six books so far about what not to do. There-- I wrote 13 Things Mentally Strong People Don't Do, and that turned into a whole series of books about what not to do. And the reason I wrote that one was really a personal one.

I had written a letter to myself on one of my worst days about what mentally strong people don't do, because on my worst day, I didn't want a whole bunch of stuff that I was supposed to add to my to-do list. But I was finding that over the years, a lot of people were saying, "Okay, I'm trying to make these lifestyle changes, but what do I do when I am in the middle of the day and I have a presentation in 10 minutes, my anxiety's skyrocketing?

How do I get through that moment?" And so much of what we talk about seems to be about preventative care, and I thought, "Ah, we need a book that's more like urgent care." Like, when I'm in pain right now, I don't want you to tell me, "Make sure you get some sleep," or, "You should eat a better diet." I want you to tell me "How do I get the pain relief that I need?"

And that's what my hope was with this book. But the reason I made it a playbook was it's all about the strategy. What works for me in the moment might not work for you when you have anxiety. Or when I need a little boost in confidence, a strategy that works when I have to make a sales call might not carry over to when I'm going to play golf with my friends and I have self-doubt

So it's about knowing yourself a little bit to feel like, okay, in-- if I run a play and it doesn't work, there's always something else I can try. I don't have to conclude that's not for me." And when we have a playbook, I think that gives us permission to say, "I can try lots of things." So I tell people, "Just pause.

When you have a challenge, you pause, you pick, and you play." So we just pick, all right, what's the play I can run? And then you run the play and see if it works. If it doesn't, you try another one, just like a coach in a game

SHAWN STEVENSON: I love this. I love this framing so much, and it really just brings about a tactical perspective, tangibility, and also giving permission to try something else as well if a play doesn't work.

But I think a lot of these plays are gonna work if we consciously employ them. And you have sections in the book with incredible mental strength plays to help us with everything from confidence to unlocking more productivity. And I wanna dive into some of these powerful plays so that people can start utilizing them today.

First let's go with a couple of plays for fortifying our emotional strength, which we can all use more of today. Specifically, you call these anxiety alleviators. So let's start with play number 29, change the channel in your brain.

DR. AMY MORIN: Oh, so this one is all about when we're ruminating on something and it's not helpful.

And there's a big difference between solving a problem and just dwelling on the problem. You have a bad day at work, maybe something happens, you have a conversation at lunch with your coworker and it doesn't go well. And you come home from work and you keep replaying it over and over "Oh, all the things I wished I would have said," or, "Why did they say that?"

And suddenly your whole evening becomes consumed with thinking about it. We know from the research if you tell yourself just don't think about that," it's actually the more you think

about it, the more it keeps popping up into your head. But the longer you think about it, the worse you feel.

The worse you feel, the more likely you are to think about it, and it gets us stuck in that cycle. So we need to break this cycle. And when we change the channel, it just basically means we're gonna distract ourselves, which a lot of people are like, "Oh, distraction's not healthy." No, sometimes it really is.

It's really important. So your brain isn't good at multitasking, so if you can come up with a task that takes just enough brain power that you have to think about it, maybe something that physically moves your body, maybe you move to a different environment. But give yourself a break from that rumination loop.

So I might go to the other room and I might say, "You know what? I'm gonna see if I can clean the kitchen in five minutes." You set a timer for five minutes, and you're really trying to work on the kitchen. Suddenly, that conversation you had at noon might go out the window. Or maybe you do a crossword puzzle 'cause it takes enough brain power that you have to really think about it, or you call a friend and you talk about a completely different subject other than what's stressing you out, 'cause our tendency is often to do the opposite, but the more you talk about it, the worse you feel sometimes.

So it's all about giving your brain that break, and then sure, maybe my brain's gonna go back to that thing later, but when I do, I sometimes feel better and I have a different perspective, and then I stop exaggerating how bad it was and I can think, "All right. It wasn't as big of a deal as I was making it."

But we can change the channel any time we catch ourselves just caught in that rumination loop of thinking over and over about the same thing.

SHAWN STEVENSON: That's so valuable. I know a lot of people listening go into that rumination, and we have this recency bias, too, in our brain. If something just happens and we tend to really mull over that thing again and again.

And once we can create some space, create some distance, we can come with a fresher perspective oftentimes. But what we tend to do is latch onto the thing and start thinking again and again. And so just literally changing the station. This doesn't mean that the improvement or the problem or whatever the thing...

And you talk about this, too. This is what I love about the book as well. You tell us the plays, you tell us why they work, you tell us how to do them. You also give common mistakes that people make and things to be aware of, how to not execute on the play. And we are not, as you mentioned, ignoring that the thing is there.

It's still gonna be there potentially when we come back. But this is giving us an opportunity to change the station, which we all have access to. We have infinite stations in our minds that we could tune into, and chances are we're going to come back to that thing, if we come back to that thing, with a new self in a way.

We're always new and refreshing ourselves. So I really love this one. Thank you.

DR. AMY MORIN: Yeah, because there's problems we can solve and there's problems we can't, right? If I'm worried about a financial problem maybe I need to take action. But if I'm worried about my loved one's health issue, thinking about it longer and harder doesn't get me to a better solution.

But our brain really wants to go there. It wants to say "If I just think about it longer, then somehow I'll come up with a solution or I'll feel better," but the opposite's true

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yep, you share in the book these pitfalls to avoid within that play, right? And so one of them is ignoring real problems. So again, distractions are great and super helpful, but we don't wanna leave certain issues unresolved, of course.

We're just accessing this ability to change the station, to take away some of the inflammation of the rumination. We this sounds like a children's book. And coming back again with a new self, a new perspective, and just remembering, because rumination, I think, is so seductive.

And you mention even changing the environment. Literally just going to a different room, especially getting outside of that, the four walls that you might be inhabiting right now. Maybe it's your office, maybe it's your, the your bedroom. Whatever it is, go outside. Right. Just even stepping outside, going out on your balcony or if you have access to that.

Just changing the environment and taking in new data is super helpful.

DR. AMY MORIN: It is, 'cause, my brain can get stuck on this cringe moment. Maybe I said something and I think, "Oh, I embarrassed myself." Replaying that over and over isn't good for me. Keeps me stuck, holds me back. But yet my brain thinks if I go over it enough, I'll prevent myself from ever making another mistake, or if I just replay it long enough, maybe it will fix it.

Obviously, you can't change the past, so it doesn't do us any good to stay stuck there. But I'll see a lot of people in my therapy office who will say just that. "Oh, I was really thinking about this," and then "What did you do next?" Then I kept thinking about it." And the more that we do that, if you just sit on the couch and rehash something over and over again that's when we give ourselves this extra dose of pain.

Reliving... painful moments in our lives don't tend to fix it. It just keeps us stuck there.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. Thank you for saying that. Th- you're saying the thing that we, that i- we realize but we never consciously think about. Because we think in some weird way we're like Michael J. Fox and we can go back and cha- like, "I should have said this"- Right

or said, and change the, the picture, whatever. But in reality, the past is the past. And what we can do, of course, we can find new ways to approach things. We can learn from the thing. But most of us are not ruminating for the purpose of learning. We're ruminating because we want to change the past.

And so thank you. That's another incredible insight for us.

DR. AMY MORIN: Absolutely. And it's linked to more mental health problems, right? Depression, anxiety, all sorts of struggles that we have in life are often linked. and then when

you start to develop, say, something like depression, or you have anxiety, the more likely you are to ruminate, which again reinforces a lot of those mental health symptoms.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Another one in the same section with anxiety alleviators was something really interesting that I can attest to. And you offer this incredible play, which is to hum, sing, chant, or gargle. Talk about that one. Why is that one effective?

DR. AMY MORIN: Oh, I love this one because you don't need anything to do it. You don't need an app on your phone, or you don't need to be in a specific place.

You can just do it to yourself. And we know that our vagus nerve is the biggest nerve in the body. It is kind of the CEO of your parasympathetic nervous system. And if you hum, sing, chant, or gargle, you're essentially activating that nerve, calms you down. And you think, "Wow, the sound of my own voice could calm me down?"

The research is pretty clear that it can. So you might be, like, stressed out. You're in a traffic jam. You turn the music up and just start singing along with the music and watch what happens. As you start singing, you start to calm down a bit. Or you're walking into something and it's a big meeting, or you're maybe walking into a date and you're really nervous.

Just hum a little to yourself while you're walking, and it can really calm your body down. And when your body becomes calm, your mind starts to think, "Oh we're okay here. I can do this." Maybe you're at work, and if you have a quick break you can take where you go to the restroom and you gargle for 60 seconds, it does the same thing.

Sometimes people chant. They find a little thing to say. Just om. You can do that just to activate it. But it's one of those things we have that with us everywhere we go. You don't need any tools. You don't need to spend any money. You don't need to do anything fancy. But it works right in the moment too.

We're not talking about meditating for 20 minutes, or you don't have to find a quiet space. You can usually hum to yourself if you're in the grocery store or whatever it is that you're

doing to calm yourself down. And I love it when we have this ability to sometimes you use your brain to calm your body, but sometimes you use your body to calm your brain too.

Because when your body starts to calm down, your brain thinks, "Okay, we're doing okay here. This isn't so bad."

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. It goes both ways. Yeah. And our ancestors generations and generations prior figured this stuff out. This is why every culture around the world has singing embedded into the culture. It's just like, why?

Why would people do that? There's something really special about it and that capacity to do it. It does a lot of really beneficial things for us, and the same thing goes with humming. There was this humming meditation that I did for years, that my mother-in-law taught me, and these were some of the most incredible years of my life.

I stopped doing it as frequently once my youngest son was born to not wake him up, 'cause it's some pretty vigorous humming. And so now I'll do it occasionally when he, after he gets up in the morning. And what we found, there's now some really interesting data on it increasing nitric oxide, for example.

So there's these really interesting things that our bodies have access to within us. You said it to start. This is something that we have with us all the time. We don't need any kind of special this or that to be able to access these things. So it's pretty cool.

DR. AMY MORIN: And as you say, this isn't, obviously isn't new. There's so much of our culture, our history. You think about a lot of events that we do, what do we do at them, and there's always music, singing and so many things. But now we're just doing more research on it, right? So we know from the research okay, it can decrease your heart rate. It decreases your blood pressure. It raises your H- HRV. Those are all wonderful things.

But then you think Yeah, I know this. I don't have to read a study on it. Let me just try it- Yeah ... in the moment and see what happens, and you feel the difference right away.

SHAWN STEVENSON: All right, I'm about to give you the tea on longevity. There's one beverage that has been found and scientifically proven to contribute to longevity far better than anything else.

A phenomenal peer-reviewed study published in The Lancet just last year found that people who regularly drink tea age slower than everyone else. Using clinical biomarkers to determine biological age and following thousands of participants for up to four and a half years, the researchers found that, number one, transitioning from not drinking tea to tea drinking was associated with a decrease in biological aging versus people who remained non-tea drinkers.

That's the tea. Number two, even stronger associations were found in consistent tea drinkers. And number three, the research suggests that drinking around three cups of tea per day had the most anti-aging benefits. Now, there are so many varieties of teas to choose from, and they're teeming with different benefits, from green tea to herbal teas like rooibos tea.

But there's one tea, if we're speaking about anti-aging, that you need to know about. It's been found to have anti-aging and anti-obesity effects. This is according to a study published in the journal Clinical Interventions in Aging that found that the renowned science-backed tea called pu'erh makes a notable difference in weight loss.

In this double-blind randomized placebo-controlled trial, the researchers stated, quote, "Consumption of pu'erh was associated with statistically significant weight loss when compared to a placebo. Fat loss was seen for the arms, legs, and the hip and belly regions." Unquote. The participants who utilized pu'erh lost more overall body fat, and what was especially remarkable was they maintained their muscle mass during their weight loss.

This is that major component of longevity. There's only one pu'erh that I drink, and this is my favorite tea. I've been drinking pu'erh for years, and it's from the incredible team at Pique Life. Go to piquelife.com/model right now, and you're gonna receive up to 20% off, plus some limited time free bonuses, like an electric frother to mix your favorite beverages.

Their pu'erh is made from a patented cold extraction technology. It's triple toxin screened for purity, and It's wild harvested, so it's even richer in these incredible polyphenols that lead to those amazing benefits that we talked about. And right now, you get to try Pique Tea's risk-free with their 30-day money back guarantee.

You either love it or you'll receive a full refund. So you have nothing to lose and better health to gain. Head over to check them out. It's piquelife.com/model. That's P-I-Q-U-E-L-I-F-E.com/model. Take advantage. And that is the tea.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Now back to the show.

You just said it, like, why, doing the humming meditation, I just feel so present and so calm and so capable, and I didn't think about the science behind it at the time. So this is really interesting. But the gargle one was surprising- Yeah ... for me. What's up with that?

DR. AMY MORIN: Yeah, let's ... Right. So again, it's all about just stimulating that, that nerve in your throat. Gargling does it. A lot of us don't really think, "Oh, I'm gonna go gargle right now."

But for some people I've worked with during their lunch break, they'll say, "You know what? Get done eating. I'm gonna go to the restroom. I'm gonna do that just to calm myself down." So you could just take some warm water, toss it in the back of your throat, gargle. When you spit out your water, suddenly you find, "Oh, I feel a little calmer than I did when I, before I started."

And it's just a really simple yet easy way to do it. So somebody who might say, "I'm not gonna walk around the house singing," or, "I'm not comfortable at my office humming loudly," this can be the alternative, is to say I can just go gargle for a minute, and maybe I feel more comfortable there."

SHAWN STEVENSON: Amazing. Amazing. Again, you've broken these down into these different categories. So these are anxiety alleviators. You've got some other ones in here. Flip

the script, create a reverse worry list, and more. But I wanna shift gears and go to another category. I wanna go to insight igniters. Insight igniters.

First of all, can you talk about what those are? And I wanna ask you about get psychological distance. What does that mean?

DR. AMY MORIN: So insight igniters are the strategies that help us develop better ideas. Sometimes we're trying to solve a problem, and we just can't come up with a solution, and the more we think about it, the more difficult it becomes.

Yeah. Or we're trying to make a decision. We're deciding between do I wanna take this job or do I wanna take that job? And you're struggling. You can't-- You feel stuck. And so all of the strategies in this section are just about where do I get the insight that I need, whether it's to solve a problem in my business or to deal with a issue I'm having with a loved one, and where do my ideas come from?

We know that people who enjoy better mental health tend to have better problem-solving skills, yet most of us weren't taught how do you solve a problem? What do you do when you're stuck? And we also know that when our emotions are running high, our logic tends to run pretty low, and we make the best decisions when those two things are in somewhat of a balance.

And our emotions can cloud our decision-making. When people will say something like this emotion is a positive emotion, like excitement." Yes, it feels good to be excited when you're about to go on vacation, but what if I came to you with a get rich quick scheme and you get so excited that you forget it's a terrible idea?

It's not always helpful. And any emotion can cloud our judgment. We know that, say, sadness, like you should never negotiate when you're sad because we tend to take a really poor deal in comparison to if we negotiated when we were happy.

And so when our emotions are high, one strategy is to get that psychological distance which just says, "I'm gonna step back from the problem so I can see it a little bit more clearly."

Because when we're so close to it, our emotions are high and you just really can't see what to do next. So it might even be a simple decision. But when you're really emotional, you think, "Oh, I don't know what to do," or it's really hard to make this simple decision. So there's a few different things you can do to get psychological distance.

One is to just say, "What advice would I give to my friend right now?" That's like the simplest and easiest one. If I were trying to decide should I take this job for more money even though it's a longer commute or do I take this other job even though it's less money but closer to home? If I'm really struggling with that, I'm gonna be like what would I tell my friend?"

What advice would I give that person? Often it just becomes a little bit clearer. Another way to do this is to time travel. This problem in front of me right now often seems huge. In five years from now, what would I had hoped that I had done? So sometimes it's just asking ourselves that question reminds us like, "Okay, this is gonna be uncomfortable, but maybe in five years I'll be really proud of myself, or I'll be really glad that I did it," often makes the whole choice just clearer and easier to make.

Another one is to just call yourself by name. So if I'm thinking, "Ah, I really have to do this," or some people think in terms of you "Ugh, you should really not do that." But we know that if you just call yourself by name, it often feels more like you're talking to a friend. So if I say to myself "Okay, Amy, you need to decide what's good for Amy today."

We saw this with LeBron James. He was in this press conference when he was trying to decide between continuing for the Miami Heat or going back to Cleveland, and he's "LeBron needs to do what's best for LeBron." And people are thinking like, "What's wrong with him?" "Why is he talking about himself in the third person?"

But it's really actually a good psychological strategy. When you call yourself by your own name in your head and you're thinking, "What does Amy need to do?" Suddenly I can say, "All right," the decision becomes a little bit more clearly. And finally, another one is when you just ask yourself like, "What would a hotshot do right now?"

So maybe I'm like, "Ugh, I don't know. I just got this opportunity, but I'm not sure I can do it." What would a really confident person do? They'd say yes, right? Yeah. So just asking yourself that question about what somebody who is really talented or what somebody who is really skilled would do usually makes a decision pretty clear or gives us an idea of what step we might wanna take.

And then when we have that distance, usually you see the problem from a different perspective and we're like, "Yep, that's what I need to do," and it becomes easier to take the action.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Amazing. You are giving us permission to access our internal wisdom. Wisdom is really ... and one way to look at it is seeing things from multiple perspectives.

And I love the practicality, because a lot of people feel like they give great advice, and maybe they do. They are great at giving advice to other people, but we never stop to ask when we're dealing with something and trying to figure something out, what advice would I give a friend, right? Yeah. And flipping the script on ourselves and, again, this is something we have access to instantaneously, but you're giving us the playbook so we could

Let's turn to the play. Okay, this is what I'm gonna do. Execute on it, and you're probably gonna find that you're going to have better results. And if you could, so that's getting psychological distance. One more in this category I wanna ask you about. Question your question. Question your question. Talk about that one.

DR. AMY MORIN: When we're trying to solve a problem, we often come up with what the question is. So if we're talking about business, somebody might be like, "Okay, how do I attract new customers?" If I ask myself that question, I'm gonna be thinking about all the outreach I need to do or how to reach new people. But what if I change the question?

What if the question became more "How do I get my existing customers to tell their friends?" So suddenly by asking a different question, I start coming up with different strategies. Or somebody might be saying like, "How do I get rid of my anxiety so that I can pursue this

goal?" That's one question you could answer, but what if you said to yourself, "How could I pursue my goal even though I have anxiety?"

If you answer that question, you take a different approach. But so often we just go with whatever the question is, whatever first question that popped into our head, and then we get stuck right there because our entire existence becomes about solving that one problem. So I love to encourage people, no matter what problem you face or no matter what challenge you're dealing with, what if you just step back and you said to yourself "What's another question I could ask myself?"

And you don't necessarily have to go down that road, but it's just a way to say, "Maybe if I asked a different question, I'd come up with a different solution, and maybe I'd still get to where it is I wanna be in the end, but I'd take a different approach to get there

SHAWN STEVENSON: This is one of my favorite ones because I believe that questions are the answer.

DR. AMY MORIN: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And the power of the questions that you ask are s- this is something that we cannot discount. And there's a function in the human brain, it's called instinctive elaboration, and it's always seeking to answer the question that you're posing.

DR. AMY MORIN: Right.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And a lot of times our questions are automated, right?

And so we might even have a dominant question that we're asking ourselves all the time that's creating the results we see around us. Why me? Why does bad things keep happening to me? Why won't anybody help me? I know... These were questions that I was asking on an automatic, and when I shifted the question just to like, "How can I feel better?"

It just changed literally stuff that was there the whole time I started to be able to see. And it just kind of... it's like a, the reticular activating system in the brain, just it's like a GPS in a way. Right. And it's determined by your questions.

DR. AMY MORIN: Oh, I love that too, and just like flipping that question "How can I feel better?

What could I do today?" Sometimes that's all it takes, and when we say that it inspires us to take some action or take a different approach. Because you're right, our pa- our brains take the path of least resistance, so the question I asked myself yesterday is probably gonna be the question I ask myself today, unless I am proactive about it and say, what's another question I could ask?"

Or, "What's a different way I could look at this situation?" And it works literally with everything, whether it's, "Oh, I'm gonna be a guest on this podcast, so what am I gonna ask myself before I get on there?" Which strategy do I wanna use? Or what if I signed in and said, "How am I gonna do my best?"

Versus, versus if I logged in and said something like, "How do I not embarrass myself?" Those two questions are probably gonna lead to a completely different outcome, but it's all about the way that I frame it

SHAWN STEVENSON: So in the book, you break down how to run the play, get clear on your original question choose a strategy to dev- to develop a new question.

So you're actually giving us strategies to develop a new question because we might be like I can't ask a new question," so s- in this you say challenge your assumptions, turn it upside down, zoom out, zoom in. Can you talk a little bit about any of these tactics for us to develop a new question?

DR. AMY MORIN: Yeah, because again, so often our brain is like, "Nope, that's the thing I need to do. I need to figure out how do I make my life better by doing X, Y, or Z?" So I'm a big fan of saying let's write something down. When we see it on paper. it gets it out of your head and

becomes a lot clearer. So write your question down, like what's the problem I'm trying to solve?

And sometimes we don't even know what the problem is that we're trying to solve. We're just like, "Try to make my life better." So what's the question behind all of that? What am I doing today? How am I gonna spend my time? What is it I want my life to look like? If you just started asking more specific questions or slightly different ones, it will then lead to different opportunities, different answers.

So I would say write it down when you can, and that can help you to zoom out a bit. And then you might even think what would ask? What would Shawn ask if he were in this situation?" Sometimes that gets us into somebody else's head again to say maybe," or you look around at what other people are doing and you're like, "Like how, I wonder what problem they were solving," or, "How did they get there?"

And just doing that too can help us to really get the creative ideas flowing so that we don't feel like there's only one solution. Because any challenge we face, I guarantee there's tons of different ways to solve it. We're often looking for that one solution, and then we feel stuck. But if you said, "No, what's a different way that I might be able to solve this problem?"

Or, "How else could I get to my end goal without doing X, Y, or Z?" You'll come up with different ideas if you start working on it. But I think writing it down, putting things on paper, the more y- you start to write, often the more the ideas start to flow, and that can give you a different list of questions or maybe just that one question that says, "If I took it from this approach, how would I do things differently?"

SHAWN STEVENSON: This is so good. One of the most popular supplements that's just on the tip of a lot of people's tongues when it comes to beauty and skin health and the health of people's nails and hair quality and all that stuff is collagen. Collagen is having a huge moment right now, and this is actually turning out to be for good reason.

We now have several studies indicating the benefits of collagen supporting metabolic health and skin health to help prevent fine lines and wrinkles. But unlike most collagen products, the

collagen that I use utilizes multiple forms of collagen derived from the very best and most bioavailable sources.

There isn't any collagen in the world that's better than this, and I'm talking about the collagen from Organifi. Head over to organifi.com/model right now, and you're going to get 20% off their phenomenal collagen blend, and you're gonna get 20% off store wide. They've got all these incredible food-based formulas with no binders, no fillers, no sketchy stuff, and also sourced from the very best sources in the world.

They make it a mandate to make that so for us. So again, head over to organifi.com/model. That's O-R-G-A-N-I-F-I.com/model for 20% off. Now, back to the show.

I think this is why we love stories so much and examples to see how other people approach things, to see, their solutions, the questions they might have been asking because then we take pieces of that ourselves.

And you have so many incredible stories in the book from, the people that you've worked with over the years and just your own life experience, which has been bonkers, to say the least. And I think this is a good spot, if you could to talk about what got you into this field at this level and this perspective, and the passion in which you're doing this work with because you've done all these extraordinary things that you might not have done if you didn't have the conditions that you had to deal with early on in your career.

So can you talk a little bit about that?

DR. AMY MORIN: Yeah. I was a therapist by trade. Went to college, thought, "Woo-hoo, I'm gonna teach people all this stuff I learned in my textbooks." And about a year into my work, my mom passed away suddenly. She had a brain aneurysm that ruptured, and I was really close to my mom.

And the thought of not having her there, I was 23 at the time, but the thought of not having her for so many of the events in my life, like all the things I had imagined and to see my dad and what that was like for him. They had been married since they were 18 and 19, so to see

my dad be widowed, and it was just one of those moments and I thought, so many of the skills I'm teaching people really don't feel like they're helpful in this moment.

And I was kind of horrified 'cause I thought, "Yeah, but the textbook said this helps," or, "It says that this will get you through the tough times," and I didn't feel like it did. And so that was the moment that studying mental strength just became much more personal, and I knew that grief is the process by which we heal.

Our tendency is to try to go around the pain, but you can't avoid it. You gotta go through it. And this whole idea that if you just wait, like time will heal, it doesn't. It's what you do with your time. Yet a lot of the things I thought this, what do you do with your time? How do you get through it?" So started studying it, and one of the things I had really learned, 'cause again, I was a therapist, so it's like I had this revolving door of case studies, people coming in, and I was really studying "How did some of these people get through their tough times, and what kept other people stuck?"

One of the things that really stuck out to me was it was often about what people didn't do. People who didn't feel sorry for themselves were able to say, "Okay, I'm gonna go through the pain rather than stay stuck here or go around it." And I'm so glad that I started studying that from a personal standpoint because on the three-year anniversary of the day that my mom died, my husband died of a heart attack.

And to lose the two people that I was closest to in such sudden and unexpected ways, I mean, my husband and I were talking about what a difficult day it was 'cause it's the three anniversary of the day my mom died, like how are we gonna spend the day? And after seeing my dad lose my mom, like I just remember looking at him and thinking, "My gosh, to lose a spouse, like how horrible would that be?"

And it just felt like a nightmare. And to even describe like what that period of my life was like, I couldn't even come up with the words. And I'm like, "I'm a therapist. I'm supposed to know." And all I could say was like, "It hurts to breathe And there was this period of my life where everything was flipped upside down.

I didn't know which way was up and which way was down. And I just kept reminding myself "Okay," how do mentally strong people get, get through things?" And it wasn't just about pretending I was okay or powering through it, but there was also a piece of me that I had to do that to an extent.

I had to go back to work fairly soon after I was widowed because I'm now down to one salary, and I didn't wanna lose my house. So I thought, "Okay, you're gonna go back to work, and you're gonna try to figure out how to teach other people how to deal with their problems while secretly your own life is in complete shambles."

And then on the other hand, I also then had to take plenty of time for myself to say outside of the office when I'm not just white-knuckling it, how do you get through it? How do you manage the pain? And it took years really to feel like I was gonna work through it and decide which way was up and which way was down.

And was fortunate, I found love again. People would be like, "You'll get remarried someday." I'm like, "Yeah, right." I thought, no, I found love. I was happy. Kinda thought it was impossible, but I did, and I thought, "How fortunate am I not to just find love once, but to do it twice?" But almost as soon as I got remarried, my father-in-law gets diagnosed with terminal cancer, and I had lost my mom and my husband so suddenly, and this time it was like I knew what was coming.

And I was like, I've spent all of these years grieving, and the thought of losing one more person, it didn't feel fair. And in my head, I'm, like, imagining, like, all of these other people who haven't lost somebody, why do I have to lose three people? And on one of my worst days, as we were facing my father-in-law's terminal diagnosis, the doctors had told us he had maybe a couple of months left at the very most.

But I sat down, and I wrote a list of what mentally strong people don't do, and I had just meant it for myself really. But I decided to put it on the internet 'cause I found it helpful. I was reading it every day when I woke up, and I thought, "Eh, if it helps me, maybe it will help

somebody else." So I expected five people to read it, but 50 million people read it, and I got a book deal from it, and that's why I still get to speak about mental strength now.

So that was 13 years ago that the article came out, and since then I've written seven books, and as long as people keep asking me questions about mental strength, I'm happy to keep talking about it. But I'm thrilled that it resonated with so many people, and I think it speaks volumes about the fact that people do want mental strength, and we all wanna become mentally stronger.

But for so long, we just weren't taught how to do it, and we didn't know what made us stronger, and we were doing some of those things that we talked about earlier when it comes to acting tough, and then it just felt like it wasn't working, and people didn't know what to do. And that's how I ended up being where I am today, so I can keep talking about mental strength.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yep. Wow. To say that so many people go through loss and grief, and to have somebody who truly understands, like at a level that is beyond imagination is so valuable because you help people to feel like they're not alone. Yeah. You really do understand. That's one of the things that's that we have as a need, as a psychological need, to feel that connection.

And so thank you for continuing to move forward because again, I can't imagine just, again, just not feeling like it's hard to breathe was the best- Yeah ... description of that time, and still continuing to try to take a breath. Thank you for that. And what you've been able to provide the world is remarkable at this point.

And you j- you just got me thinking about this h- whole human story. This stuff is crazy. It's messy and beautiful and joyful and heartbreaking, and it's all of it. But we're sold this Disney idea, but Disney is killing they're killing off people immediately. Kill the dad.

Kill them. They're doing this stuff- ... but then it's just this happy ending. And- Right ... in reality, again, life is just constantly changing and evolving and becoming, more, different

expressions of what's possible. And so having more awareness around these things, and most importantly, as I've learned from you and reiterated, our ultimate agency is within us.

Stuff is gonna happen. What we have control over is us. And so you're giving, literally giving us the playbook on how to do this stuff, so thank you for that. And, just to, this reminds me of something too, just the fact that, that, that blog post went crazy viral, and then the books that have come.

One of the things that you stepped into that you did not expect to be part of your career was speaking, and you've got one of the biggest TED Talks ever. But you shared in the book, and this is a great opportunity to talk about another category in the playbook, confidence catalysts. In the book, you talk about you getting invited to speak for the first time and how terrifying that was, and it was so funny.

I think I laughed out loud when you- ... when I read that you were going to say that you were sick or not feeling well or something after seeing the other speakers, and it was, like, some big-time people. And one of the c- confidence catalysts is to act as if. So this is a great opportunity to talk about that one.

DR. AMY MORIN: For most of my life, I was incredibly shy. The thought of talking in front of five people was terrifying, and every year on my report card, the teachers would always write "Amy is painfully shy. We've never heard Amy's voice." So public speaking was never on my radar, not something I was interested in doing, not something I ever imagined I would do, and certainly not something I thought I could do.

And I was a social worker in rural Maine. Probably the most people I'd ever spoken to were a handful of people in a room at the same time. And I did. When my article went viral, I got invited to speak on a big stage, and I accepted it without really thinking 'cause I was excited. So I thought, "Yes, this will be cool."

Yeah, and I get there, there's Gary Vaynerchuk and all of these other household names on the stage, and I thought, "Oh yeah, I can't do this." But I'm like, "Okay, maybe you can." And how do

you do it? One of my favorite strategies is act as if. Act as if you feel confident. And a lot of people think it's about f- fake it till you make it, but those aren't the same thing.

I wasn't gonna get up there and be fake, but I was gonna say, "If I got out there and I was the most confident version of myself, what would that look like?" And for me it was like, "Okay, you're gonna walk across the stage like you own it. You're gonna look people in the eye while you deliver this speech.

And sure, maybe you feel incredibly nervous on the inside, but let's just see if you can act as confident as possible on the outside." And this is so important, and this is something I had taught therapy clients for years, but of course, it's easier to tell other people to do it than it is to apply to our own lives.

But we know from the research our brain really wants to make sense of what we're doing. So when you change your behavior first, often the feelings follow and the thoughts start to shift. So if I act like I'm confident, I walk into a room like I own it, my brain's I'm not really feeling it," so it tries to make up that difference.

And one of the ways it will do that is it starts to shift how you see yourself. So if you act confident, after a while your brain's "Okay, we've got this," and it can shift it so that you feel better. And this can be for lots of things. When somebody's about to make a phone call, or you're nervous about going back to college after years of not being in school, or you're gonna walk into a job interview, you just ask yourself like, "What would I look like if I walked in the room feeling completely confident?

Would I be standing up straighter? Would I make more eye contact?" And then you just do those things. But it's all about taking that moment when you're nervous and ta- filled with self-doubt, and just right before you do it, you just ask yourself, "What would that look like?" Try to name a couple of things, and then you go in there and you act as if you feel that way.

SHAWN STEVENSON: This sounds like you're kind of changing the volume on your identity. Like we all, we're not gonna do anything outside of who we believe ourselves to be.

DR. AMY MORIN: Right.

SHAWN STEVENSON: But we do have a confident version of our most confident version of ourselves, and just being able to tune in, turn up the volume on that, and act as if, like you are that version of yourself.

I love that so much. Versus you're stepping on stage. You kinda gave that example, too. Maybe this is a, you f- finessed your way into a conference on building a successful business, but you don't even have a business, or your business is trying to build a successful business and teaching h- people how to build a successful business even though you don't have one.

And f- the fake it till you make it paradigm, where this is really, again, acting as if we are that version of ourselves. And this is tuning into the power of our identity, and being able to... And this is another thing throughout the book, really, is being able to be aware of these character traits and these perceptions and our tendencies.

Because a lot of our lives are just happening, and we're not really paying attention to the power that we have to instantly change how we're doing things, how we're seeing things, and our results. And so that's really powerful. And another one of these confidence catalysts, and this is another one of my favorites, is to visit your victory vault.

Talk about that.

DR. AMY MORIN: So we know that when I get rejected for something or when I'm embarrassed or I make this huge mistake, suddenly I feel bad, right? And in that part of my brain where I feel bad is a whole file folder of all the other times I felt that emotion, whether we're talking about feeling rejected and it stings, or I feel like I'm not good enough 'cause maybe I got turned down for something.

So suddenly you start then remembering all these other things ugh, I got cut from the team in the eighth grade, or when I went to that job interview and I didn't land it six weeks ago. Suddenly you just remember all the times when things didn't work out, and the more you start thinking about that, the easier it is to then start to believe "Ugh, I'm a loser"

I can't ever do anything right. Not the kind of person who succeeds." That's why it's important to visit your victory vault. This is gonna be a list of the things that you've done in life that are your victories, and I don't necessarily even mean these huge achievements. It might be something like, "I took my mom to a doctor's appointment and advocated for her, got her on the medication she needs."

And what's the lesson you learned from that? Maybe you learned, "I could speak up when I need to," or "I'm a-- the kind of person who can really go out on a limb for a loved one." And we all have those things in life, but we brush them aside, or we forget about them after a while. So that's why I encourage people to, to create one, and it might be a list on your phone.

Maybe take out a piece of paper and create a list, but to have something physical that you can read. And you maybe have 10 things on there, maybe you have 50, but just kinda look back over your life. What are some of my biggest victories? Maybe they're professional, maybe they're personal. But then the trick is to just add the lesson that you learned about yourself along the way.

Maybe you learned, "I'm stronger than I thought I was," or, "I learned not to take other people's opinions to heart." And then when you have one of those days when you feel like, "Ugh, I'm not good enough," you take out that list, and you read it. And when you see that list, and it's written in your own words of your own personal victories, it reminds you "No, actually, I've done some pretty incredible things before."

And then when we start activating that part of our brain, we're remembering the positive stuff reminds us of other cool stuff. You know what? That one time the odds were against me, and I rose to the occasion, or that comeback I had that one time, like that was pretty cool. And then it empowers you to then feel like, "Okay, even though I'm having a bad day and maybe these things didn't work out not all hope is lost."

I still have done some pretty incredible things in my life."

SHAWN STEVENSON: It's so good. I love this. I think a lot of our struggles is due to forgetting.

DR. AMY MORIN: Yep.

SHAWN STEVENSON: We forget how capable we are. We forget how mentally strong we actually are. And the greats are really good at remembering, is one of my beliefs.

And so giving ourselves the opportunity, creating this victory vault, as you mentioned, and there's so many ways you could do this. This could be, as you mentioned, like a written list. This could be a journal. This could be a shoebox of things, there's whatever that is for you. But this one really spoke to me because something in a kind of parallel happened just yesterday with my youngest son, who's 14.

So he, the day before yesterday, I got up in the morning and I was doing my stuff, and then I left. I think I went for a walk, and I came back and he was watching old AAU basketball highlights of one of his favorite players. And he's been in the NBA now for I think maybe three years, and he's on the Chicago Bulls, this particular player.

He just got traded to them last season. And so he's watching his old AAU clips from when he was in high school because he really likes his style of play and just analyzing certain things. The next day, he had an appointment to get his hair cut. That appointment was late, all right? So the barber didn't start on him till late, and he's probably hungry and he's bothered or whatever.

But that 20 minutes or 30 minutes allowed him to go to the store with his mom and to bump into this player he was just studying the day before, all right?

DR. AMY MORIN: Oh.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And I got back and I saw, and he showed me a picture. They took a picture together, and he shared with him that he was just watching his AAU, and he said the specific team, and the guy was blown away like, "No way.

That's crazy." And I encouraged him to write this moment down. Write this down- Yeah ... in a journal. These magical moments, these synchronicities that happen in our lives all the time

that prove and remind you that the things you focus on tend to show up in your life some way or another. Sometimes it's extreme magical moments like that.

Sometimes it's little subtle things, so maybe a friend texts you a video of his like j- "Yo, I was just watching him," right? And so it's just to remind you to live in that because that's always an option as well. We could turn into that channel as well or we can turn into the channel of, none of this works.

It's so difficult. And so I love this one so much. I have a journal, and I don't use it enough. I've probably got, I don't know, maybe 15 entries into it of these little magical moments, right? And so when I go back and start reading it, it's just what the ... That is incredible. How could I forget how powerful this universe is and how powerful I am in conjunction with it all?

So I love this one so much. Thank you for sharing it.

DR. AMY MORIN: Absolutely. I like this one too, and I think to look at it as not just a document that you do once. Keep adding to it, and other things will pop into your head or somebody's gonna remind you, "Hey, remember that time?" P- keep adding to it, and you can never have too many things, I think, on your victory vault list to just remind you on the days that are difficult, and they're gonna be there.

You're gonna have difficult days. But when you read that list, you think, "Gosh, yeah, some pretty cool things have happened," and look at the lessons I've learned along the way, and there's no way you can do that and not feel empowered when you're done reading that list.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yep There's so many incredible plays in this playbook.

Ah. But I wanna ask you about one more before I let you go. Okay. I wanna ask you about this category of dread diffusers. All right? Dread diffusers. And one of them, one of the plays is to go on a curiosity quest, and this was another one of my favorites. Let's talk about that one.

DR. AMY MORIN: So dread is one of those emotions that you can waste so much time dreading something.

If you have a meeting coming up or you're going to a party, and frankly you don't like a couple of the people that are gonna be there, suddenly you start thinking, "Oh, this is gonna be horrible. It's gonna be awful." And you're living it out in your mind as if it's gonna be intolerable, which makes right now a lot worse than it needs to be.

So suddenly a 60-minute meeting, maybe you spend six hours dreading it, and you've just then given that person or that thing that much more of your time and your energy. And so it's so important when we have dread to get a hold of it and think about how it is affecting my decision-making?" We know that to get rid of dread, we'll often make some poor decisions.

They'll ask people, "Would you rather submit yourself to a minor electric shock tomorrow or a major one today?" People are like, "I'll take the major one today. I'd rather have more pain today than dread having a little bit of pain tomorrow." So then you think, how does that affect our decision-making?

For a lot of people, the avoidance of dread or the escape of it leads to really poor decisions. So it's important to have some plays up your sleeve when you're dreading something. And the curiosity quest is a fun one because dread and curiosity can't coexist. It's impossible for the two to go hand in hand.

So instead of thinking, "Gosh I really am dreading this," or, "This is gonna be horrible and awful," you just ask yourself "What could I learn from it?" And the example as a therapist, if we're being honest, a lot of us will have a client or two that we kind of dread seeing, and it's often nothing to do with them.

It might be more about me. I'm thinking, "Gosh, this person isn't getting better. Maybe I'm not giving them what they need." And I see that they're on my schedule for 4:00 PM, and I'm already like, "Oh, gosh, they're gonna come in and tell me that thing I taught them last week didn't work, and then what?"

And before I know it, I might be dreading the appointment. A better thing to do is to think "What could I learn from seeing this person today? What could I learn from myself and how do I cope with this feeling while I'm waiting for it? What could I learn from my actual meeting with the person?"

And when we start to think about it that way, like suddenly I kind of look forward to stuff 'cause I wanna grow as a human being. So I know, all right, it's an uncomfortable feeling, but the discomfort is an opportunity. What could I learn about myself when I'm bored? How can I learn about myself when I'm anxious?

W- what is it I do to manage my emotions? It's just a wonderful opportunity, and if you get really curious about the dread that you feel, you can increase your self-awareness so much and so fast just by getting curious about yourself

SHAWN STEVENSON: This is I can't believe there's so much knowledge and so much potential awesomeness that we have access to with this.

We all have situations that we dread in our lives that feel heavier than usual, and simply utilizing this internal wisdom, we can immediately change things. You got me thinking about, again, we got a situation that maybe we're dreading or maybe a work task, a project, and asking yourself, o- okay, how can I make this fun, right?

How can I make this awesome? Or I love the question, and this is from my friend Pat Flynn, who's created all this incredible stuff but he asks with difficult things, and all... He just does this all the time anyways. It's one of his dominant questions. If this were easy, what would it look like?

DR. AMY MORIN: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Right? And it's just ch- you change, go on a curiosity quest, right? Just make these simple changes in your perspective and investigate through that lens instead of the lens of dread, which you get both. You can pick if you want the dread. Right. If you wanna do the Judge dread thing. go ahead. all right?

But chances are you're gonna wanna utilize some of these powerful plays. The Mental Strength Playbook is available everywhere books are sold. Can you let everybody know the best place to get a copy, if you have a preferred place, and also just how can people connect with you overall?

DR. AMY MORIN: Sure. So obviously, the book is pretty much anywhere books are sold, but Amazon's the one a lot of people like to go to.

But my website is amymorinlcsw.com, as in licensed clinical social worker, .com, and on there, I have information about all of my books, a link to my TEDx talk, and information about my podcast, which is called Mentally Stronger with Therapist Amy Morin

SHAWN STEVENSON: Awesome. We'll have everything linked up in the show notes, of course, for everyone.

And this is a book that I, and I don't say this very often, this is a book that I know is going to be on my list of recommendations for friends and family and colleagues. And it's just so valuable, literally, to be able to look at what I'm dealing with, to turn to a play, and just do the play. So thank you for this genius idea of putting it together, and even through the lens of this kind of sport framework that's so pervasive in our culture as well as super sticky and relatable.

And I just appreciate you so much. Thank you for putting this together for all of us.

DR. AMY MORIN: Thank you so much for having me. It's been a pleasure to talk to you.

The pleasure is all mine. Everybody, the one and only Amy Morin. Thank you so much for tuning into this episode today. I truly hope that you got a lot of value out of this.

If you did, you know what to do. Share it with somebody that you care about. Sharing is caring. Keep this conversation going. You could send this directly from the podcast app that you're listening on right now directly to somebody's phone. You know that they got it on

them. Or of course, you could share this out with your community on social media if you're in the X universe, Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, wherever you like to hang out.

You could take a screenshot of this episode or share a little tidbit, a little clip from the episode if you like, and get this empowerment into more people's hands and hearts. Let's change this thing. We've got some epic masterclasses and world-class guests coming your way very soon, so make sure to stay tuned.

Take care, have an amazing day, and I'll talk with you soon