

# **THE MODEL HEALTH SHOW**

**EPISODE 509**

## **The Surprising Science Of Anxiety & Making Good Anxiety Work For You**

**With Guest Dr. Wendy Suzuki**

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**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Welcome to The Model Health Show, this is fitness and nutrition expert Shawn Stevenson, and I'm so grateful for you tuning in with me today. We've all experienced the symptoms of anxiety, but have you ever thought about what anxiety actually is? How does it manifest? What is controlling that experience, those sensations that we feel when anxiety takes hold? What's really at its root and what are some of the real clinically proven solutions? So today, I have for you one of my favorite people on the planet, renowned neuroscientist, Dr. Wendy Suzuki. And she's here to really provide us with a Masterclass on anxiety.

Now, the reason that I wanted to do this Masterclass is because right now, unbeknownst to most people, nearly one-third of the US population has been diagnosed with an anxiety disorder. So when we talk about these hidden epidemics and these things that are really integrated into our society, into our communities, into our families, this simply isn't getting a lot of attention. And what are some of the downstream effects? Well, we know that anxiety can cripple our immune system. Recently, we talked about here in The Model Health Show, the CDC's latest report in looking at, "What are the leading causes of death resulting from COVID-19?" And we knew that, yes, obesity is the number one risk factor for death, but again, overlooked by many and most folks have no idea about this research looking at over 500,000 COVID patients, the second leading cause of death is fear and anxiety-related disorders, second leading risk factor. And again, we wonder why, it's because of the damage that this can do to our immune system, the psychoneuroimmunology aspect of this and how our mind and our perception of the world can change our biochemistry dramatically, so we know that aspect. Also, what is it going to do as far as our heart health, our blood sugar, our cognitive performance and so much more, everything is going to be affected dramatically by our incidents of anxiety.

But as I've mentioned, we have solutions. Not only that, you're going to find that there is actually some promising reward within our anxiety, but that is such a much bigger story and I've brought on the very best person in the world to talk about this so, really excited to get to that.

And now, being that she's a neuroscientist, in our past conversations even here on The Model Health Show, we talked about the dramatic impact that things like exercise have on the brain, have on cognitive performance, have on managing and modulating things like stress and anxiety, so we've covered that a little bit. But also, where we really connected was on how food and our nutrition has a dramatic impact on our brain health and our cognitive performance, which, this should be obvious because your brain is made from the food that you eat, from the nutrients that you provide it, but the brain also is very picky. You know we have the blood-

brain barrier, this very protective system ensuring that only the right stuff, the right stuff... Shout out to New Kids on The Block, get into your brain, alright?

Now, one of the most important things for the brain, but also funny enough, is one of the most popular things talked about in regard to our immune system is vitamin C. A study published in *Frontiers in Aging Neuroscience* found that adequate plasma levels of vitamin C significantly improved performance on tasks involving attention, focus, memory, decision speed, recall and recognition versus test subjects who were deficient in vitamin C. How important is this? These are basic things. We're looking for this new Holy Grail thing that's going to improve our cognitive ability, but we really need to get the foundational things handled first, are we getting adequate vitamin C in our diet? Because this is the thing, botanical sources of Vitamin C far outperform synthetic forms of vitamin C over and over again on clinical trials. And my personal...

The thing that I take on a regular basis to make sure that I'm getting adequate amounts of vitamin C, I get the most dense vitamin C dense superfoods ever discovered, one of my favorites is amla berry. And this is highlighted in the *Journal of Food Science and Technology*, states that a single amla berry can contain up to 600% of the RDA for vitamin C. In one berry, alright? That is a superfood in every sense of the word, to be so dense in one of these essential... Vitamin C is an essential nutrient that we must get from our diet. But it's not just the fact that, "Okay, this is a great source of vitamin C." How does it show up in the data in our bodies?

Well, a study published in the *Journal of the Science of Food and Agriculture* demonstrated that antioxidants in amla berry were found to have significant free radical scavenging activity and protect against cellular reactive oxygen species, essentially helping to defend against cellular damage and accelerated aging. Yes, please. Yes, please. Alright, so that's amla berry. And you combine that with...

And amla berry isn't even the top botanical when it comes to vitamin C, that is actually awarded to camu camu berry, C-A-M-U C-A-M-U. And combine those together with acerola cherry, the third of my favorite vitamin C dense superfoods, that combination is found in one place and one place only, and that is the vitamin C complex from Paleo Valley. No binders, no fillers, organic, real superfood concentrates. This is the best vitamin C bar none and one of the most important things for our immune system and our overall health that we need today. Head over there right now, to [paleovalley.com/model](http://paleovalley.com/model), that's P-A-L-E-O-V-A-L-L-E-Y.com/model, and you're going to get 15% off their Essential C Complex. I'm telling you; you need to have this in your super food cabinet. And also their turmeric complex is amazing as well. They got great snacks, organic snacks, for your friends, family, for your kids, so many good things at Paleo Valley. Head

there check 'em out, [paleovalley.com/model](http://paleovalley.com/model). Now, let's get to the Apple Podcast view of the week.

**ITUNES REVIEW:** Another five-star review titled “inspirational” by MVP 2200. “I love this podcast. I started out reading the book, which changed my mindset about health and what it really means, not weight or looks, but health. This podcast helps motivate and inspires me daily.”

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Awesome, thank you so very much for leaving that review over on Apple Podcast, I appreciate you immensely and listen if you're yet to do so please pop over to Apple Podcasts and leave a review for The Model Health Show, it means so much. And on that note, let's get to our special guest and topic of the day. Our guest today is Dr. Wendy Suzuki, and she's a professor of neuroscience and psychology in the Center for Neuroscience at New York University, shout out to NYU, and a celebrated international authority on neuroplasticity. She was recently named one of the 10 women changing the way we see the world by Good Housekeeping, and regularly serves as a sought-after expert for publications including The Wall Street Journal, Shape and Health. And her TED talk has more than 31 million views and was the second most viewed TED Talk of 2018. She's also the author of the best-selling book, Healthy Brain, Happy Life, as well as her brand-new book, Good Anxiety. So, let's jump into this conversation with the amazing Dr. Wendy Suzuki. Well, Wendy, thank you so much for coming to hang out with us in LA, last time I saw you, we were in your city.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** In my city, yeah, in a cool little studio in Midtown so great to see you in beautiful LA.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yes. Thank you for coming out. And also, we did talk since then with your students. That was so fun.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** That's right, you came to be a guest lecture in my NYU undergraduate class, and I got so much good feedback for the practical information that you gave on sleep. Why is it good? How do you improve sleep? I told them about the neurobiology of sleep, "But yeah, big deal, I still can't sleep. So, give me some help here," and so you came. So, thank you so much. It was such a shot in the arm for the students.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** That's so awesome. It was fun. It was really fun. Well, you're here and you told me a little bit about this when I saw you last that you were working on this project, and even then, I was so intrigued because this topic of anxiety, this experience of anxiety is really at epidemic proportions.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yeah. It really is.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** It's something that a lot of people are experiencing and struggling with and kind of suffering in silence in a sense, and you've really helped to turn this thing on its head and the fact for me that I love so much about you is that you're a neuroscientist, so you can actually look at this from that lens and also the practical lens. The first thing I want to ask you actually is a little bit different, I want to ask you what is anxiety and where does it stem from in the brain?

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yeah. That's a great place to start. Anxiety is simply defined as that worry for an imminent possible event or worry about uncertainty. So, look around, pandemic Delta variant, what could be more uncertain than that? And fall coming with us and school going back and all of that, so not surprising, that basic base definition of anxiety going up. And before the pandemic, 90% of the population raised their hands when asked, "Do you feel anxiety during the day?" That has clearly gone up, and so this is something that we're not suffering all alone. Look around the room, 90% plus more people in this room are feeling the same feelings as you are, so that's the important place to start.

So where does it stem in the brain? It stems from our stress response system. This is an evolutionarily ancient system that was developed, and this is a key point in the book, the stress and anxiety response system was evolved to protect us, it is a protective mechanism. And I'd like to say that over and over again, because all of us, including me, it's like, ah, stress, anxiety, just get it out, just make it leave. But this is one of the key messages in Good Anxiety, at its core, it is protective, how can we reshape and re-funnel the activation energy in stress and anxiety to help it protect us more, get back to that core feature. And so how do we do that? Everybody's heard of the fight or flight response, it is undergirded by a part of the nervous system called the sympathetic nervous system, that's automatic... If there is a danger or a possible danger, what happens, your heart rate goes up, your respiration goes up, all your blood leaves from your digestive and reproductive systems goes to your muscles to allow you to either fight or run away.

And that happens whether there's a lion coming at you or whether there's a big worry of global warming, pandemic, all these things, even the threat of that possibility, that anxiety can activate the same system. So that's where we're getting tripped up in our modern society. Way back 2.5 million years ago, our ancestors had the same system, but they weren't bombarded with stress and anxiety every single day. There's an occasional lion that might come our way and we can run and get rid of it and then go back to normal. Today, 24-hour news cycles, Instagram feeds, all the time reminding us of the beautiful clothes and the beautiful life we don't have, and all of the dangers in our world, which are real. And so, it's activating our stress system to an overload, and that is not healthy, that is not normal, and Good Anxiety gives you a huge list of tools to start to address that overload of stress and anxiety.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Oh, my goodness, it's so powerful. Yeah, I love the detail that you gave, the ancient human example and then a modern circumstance, and really what I took away from that, it's a very clear indication that this overwhelming fear, stress, anxiety, those very important systems that we have, they can respond to what is an imminent, real threat and to what is imagined as well. And your brain doesn't know the difference. Is that right?

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yeah, your brain and your bodily response does not know the difference, so you can be worried about global warming even when we're not experiencing it, even though we are, and that will give us the same fear response. And again, it's protective, we're getting ready to move, to act on it. And that's the other problem, a lot of these issues are, there isn't the lion to run away from, and so what I've talked about in the book, and what I've given tools for is to help you turn that worry into some kind of action to dissipate... To use that energy in a positive way. Why am I doing that? Because that is what the system was evolved to do, and it gives you a way to dissipate that, it decreases your anxiety, it uses that activation energy, but in a way that is beneficial for us.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah. So, this experience... So first of all, I want to reiterate this, our experience of anxiety is actually biological feedback.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yes.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And it's giving way to a new change in perception, in action. And our issue though, and I want to ask you about this, instead of addressing this critical feedback that the anxiety is giving us, and also, I want to mention this, too, that the anxiety can be the superficial thing that we see, but it can be something that's an unconscious, essentially, that's driving the anxiety...

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yeah, sure.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** So, it can be used more of an investigative tool, right?

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yes, yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** But in our society today, we often utilize things to basically suppress it.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Exactly.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And so, what are some of those things that we tend to do, like drinking, for example, or maybe being on social media, potentially making it worse?

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Right, right. So, we talk about this in the book as different categories of coping mechanisms. Everybody has their coping mechanisms from potato chips to chocolate, to Netflix watching. And there are definitely more positive coping mechanisms, if you turn to meditation, if you turn to calming breath work, positive, positive coping mechanisms. Alcohol is a common one that one can indulge in every once in a while, but too much, that becomes a negative coping mechanism because it feeds some of those negative feelings, and also going back to the importance of sleep, it can diminish your sleep, that makes your brain and your emotional regulation much more poor, and that does not help with your stress or anxiety at all.

So, there are different categories we talk about, and one of the exercises is to take a look and list out your particular coping mechanisms and start to categorize them. A lot of this book is helping you step back and take a look at what you are doing in your life around anxiety and be more mindful about that and learning from it, and as you're saying, I think anxiety can be one of the most powerful self-help tools that we never knew we had. I mean imagine that it goes from the thing that you want to throw out the door and never see to something that actually could help me learn about myself, make my life less stressful, if I just learn how to learn from it.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** That's so good. So, what could anxiety be trying to tell us, for example, what are some examples, if we're feeling that just existential angst or feeling impending doom, you describe a lot of the different feelings that people get. You mentioned there's a garden variety, daily anxiety, and there's more severe instances, but they're all giving us biological feedback.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Right, exactly.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** What could anxiety be trying to tell us?

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yeah, so I think the easiest thing to understand is what are... It tells us more about what we value, what we really love, and what we need in this life. And throughout the book, you will learn all about my own personal anxieties, because they are the examples that I turn to. And so one of the anxieties that I talk about, that has been with me for a very, very long time, that people don't initially appreciate, because I'm a speaker and I'm a teacher, is that I was very, very shy kid, and it was social anxiety that I had. I didn't like to speak out, I was very awkward in social situations, I was never one of the cool kids, I was the wallflower. And even in class, I loved... I love learning, I love school, but I found it hard to raise my hand and jump into those conversations like I wanted to. And that really taught me about how much I wanted to be a part of social interactions, even though I was afraid to do it. And over the years,



I've learned how to speak out, how to become a good and effective teacher and speaker, and those were things... That fear is something that I needed to get over, but it's really taught me how much...

Ever since I was a young girl, I valued those friendships, those social interactions, and it's changed the way that I appreciate my friends, my family. As I started... As I... In fact, this has changed as I wrote the book, and I'll just bring up one of the other things I learned from that particular anxiety, which is I realized it was one of my special gifts that came from my form of anxiety. Because I was working hard to figure out what are those lessons that come from anxiety? And I was like, "Oh my god, I've been doing this all of my teaching career because..." So what have I've been doing? I have been spending extra time and effort making sure that the shy students in my class, the students that didn't raise their hands like Hermione Granger and Ron, "Pick me, pick me, pick me..." I love those students too, but I was concerned with the ones that were too shy to do that, that still wanted to interact with me, they wanted to show me what they knew. How did I know that, because I wanted to show my teacher what I knew, like, "See what I am thinking about and see how I understand this."

And so, I spend the time before class and after class and during office hours, making sure that there are safe spaces for the less bold students to come and just chat casually, so that I could get their gear inside and kind of take the pulse of the class that way. "Why do I do that? It takes a lot of time." I do that because I know how they feel. That form of empathy comes from my anxiety, and everybody has that. What is your worst anxiety? You know how that feels, and you can turn that around and make that into a gift of anxiety... A gift of empathy that is unique and special to you. And once I realized that I'm like, Okay, that is the core... That is, that is the lesson that is the learning that teaches me about myself, it also gives me gifts to give to other people.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yes, yes. So that anxiety that you experienced as a kid coming up, and of course, I'm sure that evolved into adulthood somewhat as well, it just...

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yes, yes it did.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** But it offered the ability to serve other people once you crack the code a little bit, and being able to see from the perspective people who are in the same circumstance, it's very powerful, but also, I want to mention this again, it helped... That anxiety, which is... It sounds crazy, it actually was a really big gift and disguised because it helps you to activate a superpower.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yes.



**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Because not only did the shy kid who was terrified to talk and raise their hand in school... Now she has the biggest TED Talk of the year in that category, was that 2018?

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** 2018 Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** The second biggest. No offense, number one, screw number one, but that is a massive deal. You stood on stage, and you created such a connection to the audience, stood in your power, to the degree that it became that popular. So, it's like a superhero story, but you could have just used that anxiety and just stayed in it in a sense...

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Oh yeah. Easily.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And/or using coping mechanisms, which I want to circle back to and talk a little bit more about this because I don't think folks realize this... Sometimes I wait for the right person to bring up these things, but this is one of the most overlooked issues right here. So, another coping... We mentioned alcohol can be a coping mechanism, sales for alcohol exploded when the pandemic hit, but also see drugs, both prescription and non-prescription. In 2020, drug overdose deaths hit the highest number ever recorded.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Wow, I didn't know that stat.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** So that's another big issue. And again, it's one of those things, we can mask symptoms, we can try to suppress what this biological feedback is trying to give us, which again, it's offering up a new change of perception, a new way of living, opportunity, but we suppress it. And we mentioned food being another suppressive factor, television, social media, and these things often not just suppress, but they can end up making things worse.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yeah, absolutely, absolutely. Even though they feel so good at the moment, I mean, that is their draw. And I think that part of the kind of ju-jitsu move that I try to lay out for people in Good Anxiety is that if you lean into those feelings, those negative feelings... And I know I'm asking something big, like I'm not saying, "Come to me it'll be all happiness and rainbows." But the thing I found myself doing as I wrote this book, is I found myself making friends with my own anxiety, not treating it as the thing that I was about to kick it out because I never want to see it again, but really treating it as part of me, part of me that needs attention. And I'm not saying that I can do this when I'm at the depths when it's really, really bad. But when you're in a better state, think about what this information is giving you, why are you turning to the alcohol? Why are you turning to the chocolate?

And can you use that and turn it into a different kind of action? So, you might think, "Oh, I have a great action, I just get that bottle and I'm going into my activity." But one of the other best

gifts that I got from this book came from a lawyer who I was describing the book too, and they said, "Oh well, you know, I am the high paid lawyer that I am because of my anxiety." And I said, "Oh, do tell." And she said, "You know, I have this to-do list that comes and becomes overwhelming." It's actually not a to-do list, sorry. It's a what-if list. What if the other side makes this argument, what does the judge does this? Then I'm going to lose my whole case and I'm going to be a lawyer without a job. And that resonated with me because when I am kept awake from my anxiety is because of that what-if list.

"What if they asked me a really hard question on the podcast, what if I can't answer? What if I forget something I wrote about in the book?" All these terrible things that come up. And so what did she do, what did this lawyer do? She simply turned that what-if list into an action item list, and doing that, she ended up filling all the possible gaps in the case that she was building and going dotting all the Is, crossing all the Ts. And in filling that out, she diminished her anxiety, she instead of using alcohol and chocolate, she did a positive action, used her own what-if list that was coming up because of her anxiety, and that is that ju-jitsu moves.

Why don't you just take that and address it. Address each one of them, or address all of them that you can. Some of them you might not be able to address, you know, what if the planet explodes, okay, so you can't really do that, but what if... You know, there's this argument, what if they look at it this way, what if they ask me this question? Well, I could prepare for all of these questions that Shawn might be there asking me, being curious about and I'm going to feel so much better because I'm going to feel like I have that answer, I know my stuff and it becomes a super power. It really does.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah. And all of it's a learning opportunity regardless of how it goes in a sense, and also, we're so adaptable, we don't give ourselves credit for this. We tend to think that this thing that's happening is permanent, "I'm just stuck in this, this anxiety is who I am, I'm a anxious person," when in reality... And this is, I want to ask you about this Professor Diamond's work, really starting to demonstrate how adaptable we are and the plasticity of the brain, so let's talk about that.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yeah, so that is such a great topic because at the core of this book, the reason why I'm optimistic that anybody that has this kind of everyday anxiety can learn to adapt is because the last 25 years, I've studied brain plasticity, the brain's amazing ability to learn and respond and adapt to the environment. There's different categories of brain plasticity, there's positive brain plasticity that allows you to adopt, and this is what I write about in Good Anxiety. There's negative brain plasticity and here we go back to our negative coping mechanisms like, "Oh, I try to... Let me just try alcohol, let's see whether that's helpful," and alcohol, long-term alcohol, it's not good for your brain, it's not adaptable. But there...

Our brains are the most complex and amazing structures known to humankind, and that brain plasticity, the ability to learn and adapt, is on the top of that list of things that make the human brain so amazing. We have that capacity. Every single brain. And I like to remind people, I'm not talking about Einstein's brain, Marie Curie's brain that is most amazing. I'm talking about your brain, the one in your head, it has the capacity to learn, to grow, to adapt the environment, and so the toolbox that I will talk about in Good Anxiety taps that ability.

Let's shift our perspective, shift our mindset, turn a what-if list into a to-do list, that is an example of positive brain plasticity. You can't do it when you're at the depth of an anxiety attack, but use some of the coping mechanisms, breathwork is one of the easiest, direct ways that you could help yourself get out of those feelings of anxiety, and once you have it in a manageable way, that's when you can turn your anxiety into something good for yourself and for your life.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** So good. Let's talk about the environment that influences all of this as well, because I come from an environment where it's more similar to the other mice in the study from Professor Diamond...

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** The impoverished environment, are you talking about?

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yes, yes. But then there's the Disneyland type environment as well. So let's talk about that because I think this leads into our template in a sense, when we're dealing with life as we get older.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Right. You are referring to a classic experiment that Marian Diamond, my mentor at UC Berkeley did way back in the 1960s. And this is at a time when we didn't think that the adult brain could change in any appreciable way. And so she said, "I don't think that's true, but let me try and do an experiment to show the rest of the scientists that this is not true." And so she turned to the environment, how... What kind of lifestyle or life environment do these mice or rats have and she created two different ones.

One was the enriched environment, which I like to call the Disney World of rat cages with lots of toys to play with other rats around, the toys got changed out every day, so it was like living in a real-life Disney World for three months. And the other was an impoverished environment where there were no toys, maybe one other rat. Both rats got free food and water, as much food and water as they could eat or drink, and if the adult brain didn't change, then those environments wouldn't change the anatomy of the brain at all. Well, three months later, they went back, they looked at the anatomy, and what they found was the rats that lived in that Disney World of rat cages, the outer covering of the brain, the cortex, was significantly thicker. It had actually grown significantly so that she could measure that. And it... Not grown all over

the place, but grown in brain areas that made sense, the visual cortex was bigger, the visual environment was much richer in that Disney World of rat cages than in the impoverished environment.

The motor cortex was bigger, they were playing around, they were multiple levels and they had lots of toys to play with. The somatosensory cortex, the touch cortical area was bigger, and so you can change your brain, you can learn and grow in those positive environments. And they learned better as well.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And these are things that knowing this bit of data, we can proactively engage...

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yes.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And we can change our brains, I've just... I've been talking about this a lot lately, because it really hit me one day that our brains are completely unique to any other person who's ever existed before us and anybody to come, because they're based on our own experiences, and also our own thoughts, our own thinking. And so, it's incredibly powerful and we can give ourselves... We can create our own virtual Disneyland for ourselves externally and internally, especially.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And so, it was very empowering to know that because we're basically... One of the things I've also been thinking about is that why is the most... As Michio Kaku said, "The human brain is the most complicated organ in the known universe."

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yes.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Why is it that it's that powerful, but yet so fragile?

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And I was really thinking about this one day, it's the only organ fully encased in hard bone, it's very protected, but it's also very fragile.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** It is.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And the reason that it's so soft and so fragile that it changes so much, it has to remain in this kind of malleable state, because there's so much activity going on.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** So, it really hit me one day this is why. It's the paradox of this amazing brain of ours.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And knowing this, so let's talk more about some of the things that we can do to actually tap into this resilience. And that resilience word is a key word, because in the book, you talk about how, for example, having good fun experiences helps to build up resilience to anxiety. How is that?

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yeah, so you know resilience comes from appreciation of the positive experiences that we have in our life. But the other important aspect is, imagine if all you had was positive experiences, what we would call a positive experience, that would turn into just normal. It's positive, but because we have negative or a different kind of experience to compare and contrast. And this really gets to our whole cavalcade of emotions that we have. We tend to want to migrate only to the happiness and the joy... Don't get me wrong, I love happiness and joy, but it's only the happiness and joy that we imagine, because there's also the sadness and the worry and the anxiety as one of the emotions, those are critical emotions as well.

And I think part of resilience is that very practical appreciation of all kinds of emotions, and not kind of giving into the dream or the non-realistic idea that we could be happy all the time, that happiness is the goal of our whole existence. So it's about realism about our emotions and appreciating those 'negative emotions'. I hate that because we don't have any other thing to call them, they're not negative, there are different kinds of emotions that are protective, that help us, they tell us what's good and bad about our lives. What if we didn't have that? We would be puddles of just Netflix-watching, TV watchers all the time. Just to be happy all the time.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Have you seen the movie Wall-E by chance? It's an animated movie...

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yeah, no, I know it, but I didn't see it.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Basically, the premise is that humankind does evolve to being that Netflix-watching, sitting, literally just you're in a chair that gives you everything that you need, and you know what's so crazy is that hearing what you just said... And I just sprinkled a little bit of this earlier when I asked you an earlier question, but that impoverished environment that I was in, prior to that, really my earliest memories, I lived with my grandmother, which was the

Disneyland version. It was incredibly enriching. Everything about it, so many wonderful experiences, the wonderful toys, the wonderful education opportunities and friends, and safety and certainty and all these things were laying down and wiring my brain for a certain experience.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** But then my grandmother moved away, and I moved with my mother and stepfather. It's a completely opposite environment, a lot of violence, a lot of uncertainty, a lot of... You can see the alcohol and drug use and all these different things. And my brain had this template, so now I'm experiencing the challenge. I'm experiencing a place where now the anxiety and the worry are bubbling up...

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yes.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** But I also have this template of strength that I've built. And I know that I'm not going to be this, I'm going to last beyond this circumstance, I'm going to make the best of it, all these things that I've never put words to, but I can see them there in my character...

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** You know? And also, the people around, even my family's like, "Shawn's going to..." He's going to skyrocket at some point, regardless of the circumstance. But the thing is, we can do this at any time.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yeah. Exactly.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** That's how powerful we are to utilize those... And I love that you said this, these are not bad emotions, they're not negative emotions...

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yeah, they're not negative emotions.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** They're giving us feedback and opportunity, what is this trying to instruct me to do?

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And also know some of this stuff is going to be some heavy lifting. With some stuff, you can start stacking conditions with little things. And so, I want to ask you about that because when talking about that resilience and resilience building, you mentioned a

couple of very specific brain chemicals, you talk about BDNF, for example. Let's talk about BDNF. And let's talk about what are some things we can do to boost that resiliency factor with BDNF.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Right. So BDNF is a growth factor that we know quite a bit about and... What does BDNF do? It helps synapses form, it is... One of the best things that it's known for, is that it helps brand new brain cells be born and survive and thrive in my favorite brain structure called the hippocampus. Very important for long-term memory. Why is memory so important? I like to remind people because people don't necessarily put this together, they're like, "Memory... Memory's good, I like to have a good memory," but your hippocampus is building your own personal history. Who would you be without those memories of your grandmother and then moving to your mom and stepdad's house, you would not be Shawn Stevenson if you didn't have those memories, and that is because you have your hippocampus? And BDNF builds more brain cells in your hippocampus that makes your memories more... Well, it makes your memory work better. It...

In fact, the new brain cells that get born today in adulthood, relative to the ones that have been there since you were born, they actually get incorporated in memory circuits more easily than the older ones. So, I think of them as like teenage brain cells. They always want to be involved. So BDNF, you want BDNF to be in the brain, to have that happen because I want the biggest, fattest, fluffiest hippocampus that I could ever have. How do I get that? What is the secret ingredient? Moving your body. Exercise, and particularly aerobic exercise, that is simply exercise that increases your heart rate.

That does not necessarily mean I have to become a marathon runner. A good power walk, a walk up the stairs, is aerobic. So, start with that. Know that that counts. That is increasing levels of BDNF in your brain. And so, imagine, I like to give the analogy that every single time you work out, you are... Or you move your body, you are giving your brain this wonderful neurochemical bubble bath of features, of proteins including BDNF, but also neurotransmitters that you might have heard of: Dopamine, serotonin, noradrenaline. So that is the image that I want to give everybody so that they realize every time I walk farther to... In Costco, around the store, I'm giving my brain this bubble bath. Every time I go for a walk, every time I take my dog for the walk, I'm getting this bubble bath and I'm strengthening my hippocampus.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yes. Making your brain more resilient.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yes.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** I shared this on an episode, this was years ago, and it was a peer-reviewed study, and they found that strength training does in fact make folks more resilient



when put up against different stressful tasks and things like that. So, we've got the aerobics side, we've got... Just the most important thing that you said is moving your body.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yeah, moving your body.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And I'm a big proponent of moving your body in a way that you enjoy, as well, and I know that you are, too.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yes, yes.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** So, whether that's roller skating, whether that's playing tennis, or if you've been watching the Olympics, badminton! Have you seen this?

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Oh god, that's hard! You've got to be like a gazelle with a racket to play... To play badminton.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** For some folks, they can see that like, "I can do that." No, it's a whole different ball game. The ping pong, though, that's another one of those things that's just like, "Are you a robot?" It's so crazy. So, but anything that you feel good about, but also incorporates movement, our genes expect us to move. It's just tapping into being more human. So I love that. I love that you mentioned that. And also, another one you talk about in the book, and I talked about this in my book, my most recent one as well, NPY.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yes.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** So, Neuropeptide Y.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yeah, Neuropeptide Y, really important for resilience. Studied in soldiers that do or do not develop PTSD, and that is one of the factors that can be identified, if you have more of that, that is better for your overall brain resilience. We don't know how to enrich our brains specifically with Neuropeptide Y, but I like to share with people that all of our life experiences, particularly those challenging ones, those ones that come with some pain, including weight training workouts, every single one of those experiences help build certain aspects of our resilience. And sometimes you get a big shot in the arm of it and you think, "I'm never going to get out of this," but you come out, and you come out changed, with more resilience. And I think it's important to realize that and not welcome it but know that with great pain comes the wisdom and the power of resilience.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah, yeah. And it's amazing that we get to talk about all the different chemistry taking place, but it boils down to these real-world principles, as well, and... But just

a little sidebar with NPY and that PTSD resilience, I talked about in the context, we know it's associated with our appetite, for example. And this just looks at how all of these things are really connected. We tend to separate these things in parts, and it's great to talk about, but our brains are so interconnected with our bodies. And if we talk about the hypothalamus, for example, being like an integration center is kind of how I think about it. So powerful, and there are things that we can do... We don't really know how they work, but we know they... I guess they're kind of the ingredients again of just being more human.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** We've got a quick break coming up. We'll be right back. One of the biggest issues facing our world today is the health of our immune system, and our immune system has many different dynamic parts. We have an innate immune system, and we also have an adaptive immune system. Our adaptive immune system has an intelligence that helps us to adapt to any pathogen that we are faced with. And our nutrition is a big part of this equation because our immune cells are made from the foods and nutrients that we consume. And one of the most powerful nutritive sources proven to help fortify our immune system is highlighted in a study published in *Mediators of Inflammation*. They discovered that the polysaccharides in reishi medicinal mushroom were found to enhance the proliferation of T-cells and B-cells of our adaptive immune system. These were found to have the capacity to be immunomodulators, helping to up-level the function and intelligence of our immune system, or if our immune system is overactive, to help to reduce and bring down that immune activity.

Again, this is called immunomodulation. And also, inflammation of many different viruses that we might be exposed to is one of the big issues. And one of the viruses that we're facing right now is a tropism or target towards inflammation of our lungs. And another study published in *Patents on inflammation and drug discovery* revealed that the renowned medicinal mushroom reishi has potent anti-inflammatory and anti-allergic action. Plus, again, it possesses immunomodulating capabilities. Super remarkable. It's one of the things that's been utilized for centuries that we have access to today, but we want to make sure that it is dual extracted, meaning that it's a hot water extract and alcohol extract, so we're getting all of these benefits that are noted in studies like these. And the place that I get my reishi from that does it the right way, organic, high quality, reishi without any nefarious substances coming along from these random companies that are putting these formulas together is from Foursigmatic.

Go to [foursigmatic.com/model](http://foursigmatic.com/model). That's F-O-U-R-S-I-G-M-A-T-I-C.com/model. And you're going to get 10 to 15% off all of the medicinal mushrooms that they carry. And by the way, reishi is great for your sleep as well. This is another peer-reviewed study published in *Pharmacology, Biochemistry and Behavior*, found that the renowned medicinal mushroom, reishi, was able to significantly decrease latency, meaning you fall asleep faster and increase your overall sleep

time and also increase your sleep efficiency. So much good stuff. And this is one of the things about real foods that have a storied history, is that they're not just good for one thing, they're good for many things. Alright, it's why I'm a big fan of reishi and I have a cup many nights of the week before bed, about 30-45 minutes before bed. Definitely helps with improving sleep quality, but also beneficial for our immune system. Maybe have it with a little bit of whole natural source high quality fats like MCT oil, coconut oil, maybe a little bit of ghee, whatever it is that you're into. It helps to cut the bitterness, maybe a little bit, couple little drops of some Stevia, some English toffee Stevia, chocolate Stevia, just to make it nice and palatable. Or some folks have the reishi tea all by itself.

Either way, it's one of the most effective things right now when immune health is a top priority. Check it out [foursigmatic.com/model](http://foursigmatic.com/model), and now back to the show. So you mentioned in the book, you talk about these seven characteristics that show signs of strong resilience, and I want to talk about some of these. One is an optimistic outlook.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Why is that? How does that play into it?

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** It really is. People that are optimistic are really experts at mindset. They are people that have learned how to use their mindset in positive ways, to take that, "Oh, you got paired with the one, the person that you really didn't want, the one that causes you lots of anxiety," and the optimistic person will say, "This is an opportunity for me to learn how to deal with this anxiety-provoking person instead of, "Oh, the universe is against me," and that is a part of that positive brain plasticity. And that is one of the long-term kind of tools that I talk about, learning how to shift and use your mindset to create optimism in any situation that comes up. I think that optimistic people are not born, they are made, and they are always working on, "What is that... What is another way that I can look at this situation?" And that is part of the homework or a practice that I give in Good Anxiety, to build that muscle of optimism.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah, so good. So, another one is social support.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yeah, yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** I think there's a big deficiency.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yes.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** A perceived deficiency, because we tend to be a little bit more isolated today, a lot more isolated.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yeah, right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** So social support, how does that add to resilience?

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Just like we were evolved as humans to move our bodies, we were also evolved to be social creatures. There are huge brain areas that are purely devoted to perceiving the face and emotions of the face because it is so expressive, our facial emotions, and it's part of that social interaction that happens. How is Shawn feeling today? Is he relaxed? Is he feeling good? Does he have that beautiful smile that I always see on him, and I know that he's feeling good, or is there some tension there. And we're so good, we're so good at identifying that in other people because we've evolved to do that.

And so, when we're cut off, when we are isolated or isolate ourselves because of how our society has developed, we lose something, we get lonely. There's a minister of loneliness in the UK, I always noted that, that it's so pervasive, this kind of epidemic of loneliness. They created a minister to try and alleviate that, but you don't necessarily need a minister or governmental person to help. Turn to those people, friends' families, neighbors, even the people that you see in your everyday interactions. Make those social interactions as positive as you can. You don't have to make them your life-long friends, and you send Christmas presents and birthday presents. You just need to be friendly, and that helps that social muscle get activity.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah, and I love that they have on the loneliness minister, is that?

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yeah, yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Somebody who's addressing that, but at the same time, again, this boils down to our own capacity.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yes.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** But the former Surgeon General here in the US, prior to the pandemic, his team reached out to me, and he had a new book coming out on what he deemed to be the most threatening issue in our world today, and here in the United States specifically, which is loneliness.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** At first glance, it is just like, "Oh, that is kind of..." It's a tough pill to swallow, but then I start to look at some of this evidence, I was like, "Oh wow, this is really, really a problem."

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And then the pandemic happened. So, talk about taking that loneliness and just...

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Amplifying.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Absolutely. Strapping it to a rocket. And then we try to pivot a little bit, some folks did, to social, online interactions, which again there is a layer there that is helpful for sure, but there is nothing that can replace, again, we are evolved to be in the presence with other human beings, is something I do not think we have really figured out what the difference is, but I love the fact that we still can have that bridge today where we have technology to keep us connected.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** But a lot of us though kind of got our ostrich on and ducked our head in the sand even more. And so having that awareness that how important social support is, and I want to encourage people to... I'm saying this because, again, this is my potential anxiety or thought process historically, which was, "I will handle it myself. This is on my shoulders. My shoulders alone, I got this," and taking on so much that it can actually diminish my capacity to serve or to help to make a change, whatever case might be.

Once I started opening myself up more to sharing my perspective, my thoughts, what my mission is, things that I want to work on, whatever the case might be, everything started getting so much better. So, I just want to encourage people to not think so much about asking for help, asking questions, reaching out to a friend. For me, it is like I will send a study to somebody that I'm just mulling over, like looking at it from multiple perspectives, from my perspective. But then, "What do you think about this?" And so, it just helps so much to open things up. Yeah, so I just want to encourage people to reach out, send a text, call somebody, get together with a friend on counseling can help as well, obviously, but just please know that we are not hard-wired to be by ourselves and to figure everything out alone, and to work with others, so yeah.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yeah, such an important message.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** I want to ask you about this other one, so another of the seven characteristics that show signs of strong resilience is humor.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** I knew you were going to go for that one, so I have personal anxiety about humor. I always have the feeling that everybody else is more funny than I am, it's like, "Oh, I am not funny enough, I have an anxiety of not being funny enough." But what I always appreciate is the people that make me laugh, and I do not know whether it was a reaction to the pandemic, but my reading list over the pandemic gravitated towards autobiographies of comedians.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Oh interesting!

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** And so, I read the autobiography of Steve Martin. During his stand-up days, Billy Crystal, Martin Short, Colin Jost, Laraine Newman. And I just love them because they are both amazing and humorous story tellers, they... And also, maybe it reminding me of Good Anxiety because you learn about often there is pain and they is suffering in their background that informed this performative drive to make others laugh and to bring joy to the rest of the world. And it is like, "I see, I see some of that magic when I read about your full story," but part of it is like I've always wanted to be more funny.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Even that... This is another thing that is the quality about us as humans, just wanting to engage, to laugh, to have a good time, and also knowing that it's contagious as well, isn't it?

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** You know, it is so contagious, smiling, laughter. It is very difficult if somebody... You might not even know who they are, you might not know what is going on in their life, but you see somebody just cracking up, dying, and laughing, and it is just like you kind of giggle, it was so funny. But with that said, I think that as far as resiliency, this one really jumps out at me because moving away from humor could make the anxiety stronger in a sense, make things where everything is so serious, everything is so black and white, we can't find the humor in it, or the light-heartedness...

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** You know, like today, there is this kind of running joke that people are just looking for ways to be offended, for example, especially by comedy. And so, these comedians, like I think about George Carlin today, how would he even exist in a medium like this, when through his time, he was such a warrior of insight, in a sense, and also just that

humor lens... Because also making things so that even tough circumstances and things that are difficult to talk about, when you bring humor into it also engages the brain in a different way.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** It does, it does. It really takes a certain kind of genius to be able to do that and... Yeah, I have just always, always admired that. And not there, I am not going to be on the stand-up stage any time soon, but...

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Listen. So, I did not tell you this, but we are going to give you five minutes at the end of the show, for your stand up... I'm just kidding, I'm just kidding.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Okay, Okay.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** I saw like you sort of tensed up a little bit. It's like, "No, you're just... "

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** I am going to use my deep breathing because you just made me anxious.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Perfect. Right out the superhero utility belt. Sorry, I just pictured you as Batman with the utility belt and I am very visual person. Alright, so again, you talk about this more in-depth to the book, we've got these seven characteristics that show signs of resilience. I want to hop over to a couple more things I want to ask you about. One of them is digging a little bit deeper on that optimistic outlook, because I think that can sound a little bit...

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Pollyanna?

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah. A little Pollyanna, little fluffy, little cloud-based, but you talk about cultivating an activist mindset in the book. Let's dig in and talk about that more.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yeah, so it's another variation of an optimistic mindset or growth mindset. It really gets down to, what can I learn from this? Life is an opportunity of learning. It's not an opportunity of, is this a good experience, is this a bad experience? Is this going to be a good day or a bad day? It's all days to learn something new and to try things out. And my big thing that I had to learn is to fail sometimes too. You can't be the A student all the time. And you can't judge yourself that if you fall off that A, then you're a failure, you automatically go to a failure. So it really is about learning how to learn from every situation. And that's where that humor comes in, it's like, "Oh well."

Here's another example, I'll use one of my skills that I absolutely don't have, I can't spell. I've never been able to spell. And I could beat myself up about it, or I could use a little bit of humor, and I could think about it a little bit and say, "You know what, I can learn how to spell if I



memorize all the words that I always misspell, because I'm too lazy to learn." And you see that nothing is impossible. There's always a way to approach it in a positive, activity-based way. This also gets back to that goal of our stress system to put us into action. That activist mindset is just another way to take a challenge and make an activity out of it, make a learning experience out of it, where the goal isn't to be the best one in the world. The goal is to learn a little bit more this next time.

And I think it's taken me so long to learn that and to incorporate that into my life, which makes every day much more fun than it used to be, rather than, "You better get an A, you better be the top 2%," it's what can I learn today? And I was not 100%, I was 60, but last time I was 50, so that is a good learning curve. Can you do that for yourself? Can you do that for your kids? I think that's also something really great to give and to teach your kids.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah, that's so powerful. That's exactly what I'm thinking about, is my kids. Because also, that perfectionism perspective can push you away from trying new things if you're not great at it right of the gate for example. So just giving yourself permission to fail, give yourself permission to just even having the perspective of, "Oh, this is a learning curve. I'm starting this thing off from the beginners' place, and I'm going to get better as long as I... " fill in the blank. One of my kids does have this tendency towards they have to be the best right out of the gate, or they're just like, "Oh, I don't like this anyways." You know what I mean? Because we can condition ourselves to constantly be that straight A, "got to do everything right" personality, which can serve us in one domain and then hinder us in another. So having some flexibility, having some humor about it... When you told me that you can't spell, I felt like, "Oh, my neuroscientist friend can't spell." But it's just like, for me, spell check was invented for you. You don't need to handle that. You know what I mean?

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yes, but then you have to notice where that little red line is, and I'm too lazy to read it carefully enough to... I'm the "big idea" person, so I can get the idea down. But I am that terrible to go and make sure that they're all the "the's" and the "in's" are all in the right place. And that's not spelling, but also the words are spelled right. I'm really bad at that.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Well, actually, so after we wrap here to close up the episode, we're going to have your five-minute stand-up in a spelling bee.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** A spelling bee, yes. Alright.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** So, be ready. Wendy and the Bee. Alright, so you mentioned this growth mindset and the fixed mindset. I was looking at Carol Dweck's work, the fixed mindset. Can you talk a little bit about that? Because I think, again, a lot of us unknowingly subscribe to that.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Right. And again, one can feel that it's helpful, "I only can get an A on this, I can only be perfect, or I'm a failure." And there's no in-between, and so it's either this way or that way. And there's no room to grow, there's no alternative possibility, and in a sense, that growth mindset that gives you five different other ways to do something, that is really another way of saying you have a creativity mindset. Right? You are always thinking about different ways to do it, other possibilities, and the fixed mindset is like, "It's this way or the highway." There's only one. And it really is not tapping one of our most valuable brain functions, which is creativity and the vision to be able to see multiple possible outcomes.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** This leads to right to the next thing I want to ask you about, which is how does creativity actually help to... Boosting our creativity help in reduce our experience with anxiety? But before we get to that, I want to reiterate this point, when we're looking at this fixed mindset and every day... And I want to just implore people to think about this is you don't have to take this on, but this has just been helpful for me...

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** I decided many years ago that every day, I'm going to just get 1% better. I'm just going to wake up today and I'm going to do something that makes me at least a little bit better, and that's really helped me to go to bed every day feeling accomplished, because I know that I got a little bit better. It might be a little bit better with my fitness, a little bit better with my education, whatever the case... A little bit better as a parent or a husband. And so just striving to get a little bit better each day because this is one of our needs as humans, we can try to stifle that, but we have a basic need for growth. And this is... Our brain is again very... It's constantly looking for things to engage with, and so you can take on that, but also understanding that fixed mindset can show up and kind of be that stifling mechanism where we don't necessarily engage with things that can grow us and move us forward because, and this is the point I want to make, it's moving into a discomfort. And so getting a little bit more comfortable with discomfort.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yes.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** So, I just want to mention that in the context of the fixed mindset, because when you are coming with the perspective that there's only one way, and this is the only way, we're missing out on the fact that truly... I mean in so many instances, it's not just two ways or five, there's like a thousand other ways, where we can limit our ability to see that with that fixed mindset. So, question, how does boosting our creativity potentially help with our anxiety?

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yeah. So, I'm going to flip that around and I'm going to say that having anxiety is a wonderful way to help boost your creativity. Why? Because in anxiety, there are many different kinds of emotional regulation, there are kind of environmental changes that you could make to improve your anxiety level, that is a wonderful exercise in creativity. "I'm about to have a meeting with the person that makes me the most anxious in my life, how do I mitigate that anxiety, what kind of mechanism can I use?" And we give lots of tools in the book about preparation, putting yourself in a nice calm mindset before you go there, if trigger issues come up, you can kind of deflect that and go to other things that are planned, you know what you're going to talk about. You can do that thing where you say, "I'm really anxious about this conversation, and I really want to try and make the best outcome as possible," just address it full-on fully presently.

Those are all creative mechanisms that you have, and you're probably already using to deal with your anxiety, but you don't maybe categorize it as creative mechanisms. Think about it as creative mechanisms, kind of enrich that, that practice of creativity, and that's how your own anxiety can help enrich your creativity to help your anxiety. The other way I talk about the relationship between anxiety and creativity is that sometimes our biggest challenges in our life that includes the anxieties that we have, stimulate some of the biggest creative kind of bursts that we have. And you can read biographies of lots of creative people, where all of these challenges have defined the beautiful creative burst or thing that this person is known for, and without knowing that backstory, you think, "Oh, this person is just bursting with creativity." No, it came because the poet had dyslexia and couldn't read quickly, and instead had to read very slowly, that gave him the appreciation of the rhythm of the language or the sadness that comes from... That informs songwriting of some of our most famous song writers.

I'm pulling my examples from a wonderful book called Spark: How Creativity Works from my friend... Written by my friend Julie Burstein, who has interviewed on her show, Studio 360, some of the most creative people in the whole world and has categorized where this creativity comes from. I talk about her, and I quote her in Good Anxiety. And for so many of our most creative people in our world today, a lot of their creativity comes from those negative emotions, those hardships that they have endured in their life. So, anxiety becomes a source of creativity and people don't think about it that way, but what if that... That is the case, that is a superpower, a little known and underappreciated superpower of anxiety.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Absolutely, absolutely. Should we choose it?

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Should you choose to take on the challenge.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** The last thing I want to ask you about, and there's obviously so much in the book, it's one of my favorite books of the year, I'm going to make sure that everybody picks

up a copy. You provide a lot of insights and tips like what can we do, and this is why... I'm a very practical... Like we have to give some practical things, and so the section is Worrying Well, and these are tools to calm, flip and transform your anxiety, and again, there's so much here, let's just talk about one or two things. We already mentioned the... And there's so much science on this, the importance and value in movement, what are some of the other things we can look towards?

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yeah, so one of my favorite tools to help flip bad anxiety to good is a tool that I described that basically brings more of those positive, yummy, funny emotions into your life. And I love this tool because it uses a trick from my 25 years studying the hippocampus and how memory works. This trick is called, this tip is called joy conditioning. So, would you like some joy conditioning in your life?

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yes, please.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yes. Okay, so here's how it works. I want you to think about a lovely memory that is infused with whatever good emotion that suits your fancy right now, could be a funny one, funny with your family, funny with friends, or just a joyous one, or just like a moment of awe in your life. And then try and choose one that has an olfactory stimulation associated with it, maybe there's the smell of Lake Tahoe or whatever, wherever you were. Why do I do that? Because I know that the olfactory sense has a... It's direct connection, there's only one synapse, one connection between the olfactory bulb and the hippocampus, which is why olfactory stimulations and reminders can be so evocative of a memory.

We've all had that experience where you smell something, you say, "Oh my god, I've transported back to my piano teacher's home," because that's how it smelled. So how does it work? Let me give you, my example. My example that I use all the time for my joy conditioning is a yoga class that I took and I crushed it, I did so good in this yoga class, I was doing all the moves up, down, down dog, I flipped my dog and it was all great, and I felt so good, and I was in my best move that I do in yoga, which is shavasana. I was in shavasana and so feeling really good and the teacher came around unexpectedly, she had lavender hand lotion. She kind of waved it under my nose, so I got this whiff of wonderful lavender, then she gave me the most luscious five-second neck massage that I've ever had, unexpected.

It was like, "Oh, what could be better, I'm feeling good, I'm getting this neck massage," and it's just this yummy memory of feeling good in my body and an unexpected surprise, whatever memory, whatever emotion that is, but I use that for my joy conditioning, I want to bring that memory back. What do I do? In my purse right over there, I have a vial of lavender essence, and I smell that lavender essence when I want to bring back that "I am satisfied, I feel good, I got an extra special gift" kind of feeling, and the more I do it, the easier it is to evoke. I am

enhancing and enhancing the memory as I evoke it. And I love it because it is based on your own well of wonderful memories in your life, it's unique to you, and you can choose which one you want to bring up for whatever situations. Maybe you need some joy, maybe you need some humor, somebody that really made you laugh until you almost peed, find that memory and bring it up, and that can counteract anxiety and all those "negative" memories that you might have coming up in your day.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Powerful, joy conditioning.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Joy conditioning, yes.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Oh, I love that so much, I love that. One extra little bonus thing I want to ask you about, we talked a little bit about this when I saw you last, but you were engaged in a wonderful tea meditation that you were enjoying at the time. And this is another thing that plays it, again... Because the word is now very... A big part of our lexicon when we're talking about meditation and mindfulness. But the key here is, are you doing it or are you utilizing it? And if you look at the state of affairs right now where we are hyper-anxious, there's so much going on, so much stress in the world, it's like we have this miraculous tool within us already to access. So, can you talk just a little bit about how mindfulness or meditation could play into this equation?

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Absolutely. So, mindfulness meditation has been studied by neuroscientists and it's been shown to decrease anxiety levels, to improve our focus. We know about the patterns of brain activity as you are going through the meditation process. And let me just dispel the idea that you can completely clear your mind, it's a blank and then you go into Nirvana. No, what happens in meditation is you get into it and then you notice, "Oops, I'm thinking about my email," and then you go back into it, and then you try and get into it, and then some other thought comes. So it's a process of going back and as you practice it, you stay in longer periods, in a calm state where you're doing whatever. I do an open monitoring meditation where I'm basically doing a body scan. "How am I feeling in this moment?" And I spent years trying to find a kind of meditation that would allow me to do this easily, more easily, and I found this tea meditation, which is meditation over the brewing and drinking of tea.

And why does it help me? It helps me because tea is a ritual. It has a beginning, a middle, and an end. And it could continue on, so that you boil the water, you pour the water in the tea, you wait a few for it to brew, you pour it in your cup, you drink it, and then the cycle starts over again. So, it keeps me going as I do this tea ritual, and it keeps me in this mindful state, and boy, I do it every single morning, I did it this morning here in LA, and it helps me work on my ability to focus on the present moment. And I never think about my... About other things,

especially when I have a beautiful view to look at. The tea monk that taught me this said, "Always have some nature that you can look at, a houseplant if you're inside, look out the window at something living," and that...

I haven't done a study on exactly this form of meditation, but I can tell you that my anxiety levels are good, I am in good anxiety when I do this, and I prepare myself, for the day. We talked about resilience, it enhances my resilience when I do my meditation, because it keeps me in this good state, it reminds me of that good anxiety baseline. And I encourage people to start with a simple breath meditation and explore, there are thousands of kinds of meditations to do, find the one that you love, and it will bring you into good anxiety.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yeah, thank you so much, Wendy. You know, I don't see you very often, but you're one of my favorite people.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Oh, thank you. You are one of my favorite people.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** I remember when we met... It was Chicago. It was a speaking event in Chicago.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** It was Chicago at the Cusp Festival.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Yes, and I just knew right then in that moment like, this woman is amazing. You are so brilliant and so insightful, and I want to make sure that your book it... Coming out at this time, as I mentioned to you, it is not an accident. It's so needed. And I shared with you this recent CDC...

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yes. Yes.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Report, and this is the over 500,000 folks and looking at what are the biggest risk factors for death associated with COVID.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Yeah.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Number one was obesity, which we know number two was fear and anxiety-related disorders being the second biggest risk factor for death and it's just like it's not being talked about because we have to understand truly, when we're caught in a state of bad anxiety how depressive and suppressive it is to our immune system, for example, and just our biology overall. So, your book being a resource and a light, truly to turn that on its head and to utilize a superpower we have within us, so I want to make sure everybody... We need to make this a big, big best seller, and to make sure that this is a resource that people are easily finding

out there, so go and pre-order the book right now. Go to your Amazon retailer, Barnes & Noble, wherever your favorite book retailer is, or you can also go to [goodanxiety.com](http://goodanxiety.com), pre-order the book today, make sure that you get your copy as soon as it comes out. It's very, very important and very powerful. And again, I just want to thank you so much for being so amazing, thank you for having time to drop in and see me on your West Coast trip.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** It's my pleasure. What a fun conversation I love... I love what you bring to the world, I love talking to you. So, thank you for having me.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** It's my pleasure. Now, time for the spelling bee.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Oh God. Oh no.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** I appreciate you so much.

**DR. WENDY SUZUKI:** Thank you, Shawn.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Awesome, everybody, thank you so much for tuning in, Dr. Wendy Suzuki, truly managing our mental health, is of the utmost importance today, and we have resources, we have tools, but it's just a matter of us getting access, getting education and then getting access, taking action when it presents itself, so definitely pick up a copy of Good Anxiety today pre-order it ASAP. It's very, very important, powerful. Such an important part and dynamic of this conversation, is looking at what can we actually do with these epidemics of anxiety. And listen, if you got a lot of value out of this episode, please make sure to share it out with your friends and family on social media you can tag me, I'm @shawnmodel on Instagram and Twitter and on Facebook, I'm at The Model Health Show. And also, of course, you can send this episode direct from The Podcast App to somebody that you love and give them some good vibes for the day. I appreciate you so much for tuning into the show, take care, have an amazing day, and I'll talk with you soon.

And for more after the show, make sure to head over to [themodelhealthshow.com](http://themodelhealthshow.com), that's where you can find all of the show notes, you could find transcriptions, videos for each episode, and if you got a comment, you can leave me a comment there as well, and please make sure to head over to iTunes and leave us a rating to let everybody know that the show is awesome, and I appreciate that so much. And take care, I promise to keep giving you more powerful, empowering, great content to help you transform your life. Thanks for tuning in.