

THE MODEL HEALTH SHOW

EPISODE 725

The Truth About Anxiety and Lasting Solutions for Mental Health

With Guest Dr. Ellen Vora

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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 into me today. Several mental health challenges have been on the rise in recent decades, and of course, they've grown precipitously in the past few years due to some of the big changes that have happened globally. But as mentioned, rates of things like depression and anxiety have been on the rise. And today we're really going to understand at its core what is going on behind the scenes. In particular, looking at the condition of anxiety, which according to the NIH, about 20% of Americans are experiencing some form of an anxiety disorder annually, right? So this is one out of five people in our society today. And within this context, talking about anxiety. When do we stop to ask what it really is, what anxiety actually is at its core? And not only that, what are the contributing factors that create the symptoms of anxiety? We're going to be talking about that today and so much more because on top of that, what are the real world, clinically proven solutions to those things? And we're gonna be discussing this with a leading expert in this subject matter. And in fact, she wrote the book, "The Anatomy of Anxiety", and an absolutely brilliant thinker and practitioner. And I think that you're going to get so much value out of this episode.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Now, really quickly, one of the things that is often overlooked in the context of our mental health, and in particular even talking about anxiety, is how nutrient deficiencies can play a role in abnormalities in our mood. Abnormalities in our mental health. Well, a study that was published in the Journal of Ethnopharmacology points to this simple spice that's likely in your spice cabinet and its ability to impact our mental health. They found that turmeric has the potential to reduce the severity of both anxiety and depression. All right? This might sound absolutely crazy that a spice, a long traditionally used spice can impact our mental health, but this is absolutely true according to the data.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Now, on top of that, another study that was published in the European Journal of Nutrition uncovered that compounds in turmeric can downregulate inflammatory cytokines and upregulate the activity of satiety hormones like adiponectin. So helping us to feel more balanced in our bodies, helping to reduce inflammation, which we know that many of the symptoms of depression and anxiety have a root of inflammation, as well as one of the key components that can lead to anxiety, depression, and other mental health challenges like schizophrenia. And so, wow, this has this really remarkable whole body impact and is found in this simple spice. Now here's the key. We wanna make sure that it's organic and also it's going to be dependent on how much we're getting in.

SHAWN STEVENSON: You don't wanna put in so much turmeric that you're messing up the flow of the meal. And so this is why I'm such a huge fan of the Turmeric Complex from Paleovalley. They also have key proven bio potentiators that help the turmeric to be assimilated and work even better in your body. And this is something that I literally utilize for myself personally at least several times a week if I'm just trying to reduce inflammation, help to speed recovery, things like that. But these overarching benefits, even some benefits on improving cognitive function seen in the data with turmeric is really remarkable.

SHAWN STEVENSON: So I'm a huge fan of the turmeric complex. Head over to paleovalley.com/model. That's P-A-L-E-O-V-A-L-L-E-Y.com/model. You get 15% off their incredible turmeric complex and also storewide. They're hooking you up 15% off storewide. I love the folks over at Paleovalley. So again, head over to check them out, paleovalley.com/model. And now let's get to the Apple Podcast review of the week.

ITUNES REVIEW: Another five star review titled Game Changer by Ian Norquist. The guests are informative to accent Shawn's upbeat method of delivering the message, nothing but praise for this podcast.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Thank you so very much for leaving that review over on Apple Podcast. That means the world. I appreciate it immensely. And on that note let's get to our special guest and topic of the day. Dr. Ellen Vora is a board certified psychiatrist and she's the author of the bestselling book, The Anatomy of Anxiety. She takes a functional medicine approach to mental health, considering the whole person and addressing imbalances at their root. Dr. Vora received her undergraduate degree from Yale University and her MD from Columbia University. And again, this is addressing one of the biggest and fastest growing issues right now that's impacting our families and our community. So let's dive into this amazing conversation on anxiety and the anatomy of anxiety with Dr. Ellen Vora. Dr. Ellen Vora, welcome to the Model Health Show. It's so good to see you.

DR. ELLEN VORA: Shawn. Thanks so much for having me.

SHAWN STEVENSON: I was just looking at some stats today, and according to the NIH and Johns Hopkins, about 20% of Americans experience an anxiety disorder of some type every given year. Right now, there's something very strange happening. And so if you could, can you help us to understand and dissect why has rates of anxiety been going up recently?

DR. ELLEN VORA: So and it was already bad before the pandemic, and then we saw a precipitous rise in rates of anxiety and prescriptions for psychiatric medications. We have a big problem on our hands and we all feel it. We don't even need the statistics to know we feel it in ourselves, we see it around us, we see it in our kids. And I think that there's so much that

contributes to that rise in anxiety. There are social factors to this. There are real psychospiritual factors that are going on. I think that we are increasingly viscerally connected to what's not right in the world. And we're feeling that on a bodily level. And that's not actually pathologic. That's actually really here in service, making sure that we show up and help right the wrongs. But the underappreciated part that I'm most fascinated by is that we're physically out of balance and that is contributing to our mental health issues.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Unfortunately, that's not something that we're taught in our conventional education of how our physical structure interacts so deeply with our mind and our emotions. They're kind of like all separated.

DR. ELLEN VORA: That's right. We are taught that mental health exists from the neck up, that this is where it occurs. And we've all come of age with the monoamine hypothesis of depression and anxiety. It's the one that tells us that we have a genetic chemical imbalance that's impacting our serotonin levels, and that's what's creating depression and anxiety. And this has been a theory for a long time. I think it came from well-meaning researchers, physicians really trying to make sense of what's going on. There was a lot of derivative reasoning looking at, well, this tuberculosis med modulates serotonin and also seems to impact mood. So we've arrived at a place where we say depression and anxiety are serotonin, but that's always been myopic. And it's actually, it turns out it's really been inaccurate and it's been a story that we've been telling ourselves. And so, it's just time for us to think differently about mental health and to understand that even if we were just paying attention to the evidence-based determinants of our mental health, that list is so much more broad than a genetic chemical imbalance.

DR. ELLEN VORA: And it includes how we're sleeping, how we're feeding ourselves, the degree to which we have inflammatory molecules coursing through our bloodstream, our traumas, our ACEs from childhood, our ongoing stressors, and then these more psychospiritual factors. Do we have community, do we have ritual? Do we feel like we're being of service? Are we making a meaningful contribution? Do we have meaning and purpose in our lives? And I think when we're focused on the genetic basis of mental health, it's our least hopeful narrative about mental health. It tells us that our mental health issues are a fixed trait, something about us, like a destiny. And that's not serving us. When we shift to these environmental influences that impact our mental health, it helps us see mental health as a... With a growth mindset. And we can start to see we're empowered and there's reason for hope.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah, you just mentioned all of these inputs that create our own unique template for our mental health, whereas we have experienced a model where it's this isolated chemistry or chemistry imbalance based on this thing that we're taking a hammer to

essentially, if we're talking about serotonin. And we'll put a study up for everybody, a recent meta-analysis, because this has been known for actually for decades, but the serotonin theory of anxiety, depression, mental health conditions has largely been disproven. But now the scientific community is just kind of just catching up to it because it's one of those things that it's kind of like a meme or like a mind virus that spreads that this is just what it is.

DR. ELLEN VORA: Right.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And it's often, unfortunately, this was largely based on a conversation that you have a chemical imbalance. They're not actually running some kind of panel that check, a gene panel or running your hormones looking at your neurotransmitters, which can be very difficult to do. It's just based on symptom clusters basically. And then we prescribe an associated medication, which, you know, again, unfortunately some people would have a resolution, but the data is as it's kind of been spread out and recently we talked with Christopher Palmer out of Harvard. And he shared with us this really fascinating study that long term only 10% of people who seek out conventional treatment for anxiety depression actually have a resolution of their symptoms. And the question would be, why are we continuing to do the same thing if 90% of people are not actually getting better?

DR. ELLEN VORA: That's right. In certain ways, for lack of a better strategy, at least one that is understood on a mainstream level. And if you think about how much inertia is involved in the medical world. Take the kind of person who goes to medical school, I'm one of them, but I'm among the weirder ones. And so you have to start jumping through hoops beginning in college, and then you're pre-med and you're taking MCATs and you're applying to medical school, and then the hoops only just begin and 10 years later you're exhausted. You've been deeply indoctrinated with a certain way of looking at things. You come out the other end burned out and you're finally in practice. And if you get to that point and you have this awakening of holy sh*t, everything that I've been taught to do is not only not helping my patients adequately but might be doing harm, I think it's too tough of a pill to swallow as it were.

DR. ELLEN VORA: And so we're really stuck and we don't know a different strategy because it's a paradigm. It says mental health is a genetic chemical imbalance. It has to do with neurotransmitters. So all we know is to treat that with a pill and with certain types of psychotherapy. And we just don't have the Aha! moment for our physicians that says, hey, your brain is connected to your body. Mental health is in certain ways, physical health, mental health has a lot to do with these more psychospiritual factors. We're really squeamish about those. I'm now more than 10 years in practice and now I feel comfortable giving my patients permission to ask questions about spirituality, things like that. But for many years I thought, I do not touch that with a 10 foot pole. I thought that would be inappropriate. Now I realize I

was doing my patients a deep disservice because I recognize this can be a central part of somebody's overall wellbeing.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. I wanna unpack all these things. Let's start with the physical connection to our mental health in particular with anxiety. What are some of the typical components or things that we might fall into or struggle unknowingly that's leading to more incidents of anxiety?

DR. ELLEN VORA: Yeah, so I was really influenced by the work of a woman named Julia Ross. And she wrote a book called *The Mood Cure*, where she details that we have our real moods, that's when something happened and we're in a mood as a result and it makes sense. We've experienced a loss and now we're grieving. But she pointed out that we also have what she called emotional imposters or false moods, which are those times when seemingly out of nowhere, you wake up on the wrong side of the bed, you're suddenly irritable or anxious or sad or angry. And if we could actually peek under the hood and get an omniscient glance into what's going on in the body in that moment, we would see that something has tripped our body into a stress response. And it's usually pretty benign modern stuff. Like we're in a blood sugar crash, we had an extra cold brew coffee that day, we're a little hungover, we're sleep deprived.

DR. ELLEN VORA: Something is generating a stress response in the body, we subjectively experience that as a mood like anxiety. And our mind, the consummate meaning maker that it is, is always happy to swoop in and tell us a story to make sense of that experience of anxiety. It says, oh, I'm anxious right now. Of course I am. That makes sense. This thing is going on at work. This interpersonal dynamic from the seventh grade still irks me to this day. We'll tell ourselves a story to make sense of the sensation, but it's actually a retrofitted justification and what's really occurring there is a physically generated stress response.

DR. ELLEN VORA: And I consider that to be good news because seven years of psychotherapy on the couch to unpack all of our problems is a slower process. Figuring out how to keep your blood sugar stable or just having a slightly different relationship to alcohol or sleep. We can do something about that pretty readily. So I think a lot of our anxiety is based in the physical body. It's what I call false anxiety and it's avoidable and we can identify the root cause, address it at that level, and eliminate unnecessary suffering.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Wow, that is profound. And I love that you mentioned our minds are these meaning-making machines. And I really just based on, I've been in this field for 21 years now and just all the patients I've had the opportunity to work with, all the experts I've talked to, what I've learned is that the quote smarter that we get the better we become at making meanings and connecting things and justifying why we're experiencing said anxiety. Like you

said, we could tie that back to, such and such stole my lunch money. This is why I'm experiencing this anxiety. But really you're just hung over. [laughter] And it's just like we are very good at creating and putting in things. The more intelligence that we pick up or life experience or kind of spectrum, especially if we're studying this stuff, we can start to put things in place that don't necessarily fit and we become better at giving that belief legs and making it stronger.

DR. ELLEN VORA: And in therapy we call this intellectualization. And the more cerebral we are in many ways, the more we engage with the world from the head. The less we're able to drop into the body and say, well, here's how I'm feeling right now. But I think that people are savvy and a big part of how I practice mental health and psychiatry is to really validate someone's experience. And if they're in a false mood and they're thinking to themselves, this is because that interpersonal dynamic from the seventh grade is still bothering me, I really think it's important to validate that. 'Cause there's truth to it. There's always truth to the story we tell ourselves. So you can even speak to yourself in this way. You can say, okay, I am feeling anxious right now. It makes sense that I'm feeling anxious right now. And 'cause I give myself permission to feel anxious and those stressors, those challenges, they're real. And maybe I need a snack right now. It doesn't invalidate the stories we tell ourselves. It just helps us remember that our body plays a role in our mental health and we're not gonna eliminate our challenges by addressing our false anxiety. We're just gonna make ourselves more resilient in the face of our stressors.

SHAWN STEVENSON: What if that is the first go-to is making sure that your physical needs are met so that we can better assess the situation. And I'm curious, can we talk a little bit more about, you mentioned how blood sugar abnormalities can cause us to feel anxious. What's going on there? How does that translate?

DR. ELLEN VORA: Yeah. I like the way you put it. I consider this to be the low hanging fruit in the algorithm of how I approach anxiety. You start with false anxiety. You sort of shore up wherever the physical body might be out of balance and contributing to anxiety. And then you've cleared the air and it makes it easier to tune in to our true anxiety and to not get distracted by something that's not really a deep inner truth. It's just a blood sugar crash. So what's occurring in that case is we live in this modern American food landscape where our diet is built on a foundation of refined carbohydrates and coffee drinks that are secretly milkshakes and rose all day. So we're on this blood sugar rollercoaster, and when our blood sugar crashes, the design of the body is to secrete our stress hormones, cortisol, adrenaline, and that communicates to the liver to say, break down the storage of starch that you keep and then it breaks down the glycogen releases glucose into the bloodstream.

DR. ELLEN VORA: We have blood sugar restored. Our organs don't fail, we live to see another day. It's an overall beautiful thing that we can generate blood sugar when our blood sugar has crashed. It's just that it happens to have as a side effect, that this requires a five alarm fire stress response in the body. And that can feel identical to anxiety or even panic. It also pertains to our ability to have good attention, to have stress tolerance to sleep through the night. So this is impactful in a lot of different ways. It's good news because there's something we can do about this, we can keep our blood sugar stable. And there's different approaches, I think about it as the definitive solution, which is starting to train your body to have metabolic flexibility and eating a more blood sugar stabilizing diet, which is a little different for all of us, and we can talk about some of the different strategies, but it's not a one-size-fits-all thing, and there's...

DR. ELLEN VORA: To use the term hack. There is this hack that I find is profound for a lot of my patients, and they use something like coconut oil, almond butter, I use ghee personally. And you can take a spoon full in anticipation of your typical blood sugar crashes, and because it's basically pure fat or fat, a little bit of protein, it's slow to be digested, slow to be released into the bloodstream, and it gives you this safety net of stable blood sugar that can then blunt a superimposed blood sugar crash. So I have patients that ended their panic disorder with this strategy, they just started taking a spoonful of coconut oil every four or five hours or before they brush their teeth at night, or before they head out from home when they're not sure when they're gonna eat next, and that can just prevent these blood sugar crashes that were then generating unnecessary moments of peak anxiety.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Love that. So it's essentially looking at that as the treatment and even stretching that out long-term, so that is in a therapeutic moment potentially to help symptoms, but long-term, and this has impacted me personally as well, I realized we had this crazy low fat dogma that we existed in. And I remember this, and this is something I participated in. I was graduating from college around this time, and even when I started college, it was really on fire, and we didn't realize at the time, I know that I didn't that even our nervous system, that insulation requires fat, even myelin in our brain to be able to lay down those pathways, and what happens when we're deficient in these key nutrients like our wiring our sensitivity to the environment in the world around us, it's kind of like wires being exposed.

DR. ELLEN VORA: Completely.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Right. And so bringing in these key nutrients, especially fat to keep that insulation so we're not as sensitive, because again, this happened to me when I was doing this low fat protocol, I just used to feel like just very sensitive to other people to the environment. Don't even give me started, if I go to Walmart or something like that, I'm

leaving there feeling nauseous and of course, there's an energy shout out to everybody at Walmart, no disrespect. But there's a certain energy when you walk in the building and we become more sensitive to this stuff, because the thing is, at the core of all of this is that we are energy, we're made of this stuff and we're interacting with energy, and if you don't have some kind of ability to insulate yourself, you're going to be at the mercy of the environment and also at the mercy of every crazy thought that you're gonna have. So this is why just long-term, I love that, making sure that we're getting those fats in just so we give our bodies and nutrients to keep us insulated.

DR. ELLEN VORA: Going in two different directions with that, so I love everything you just said. On the one hand, I have had so many patients over the years who come to me, they're doing what they've been taught, they're supposed to do, limiting fat in their diet, limiting cholesterol, limiting animal foods, which we can talk about the pros and cons there. And they're coming to me, they're thin, they're wiry, they're chugging caffeine, they're soothing their afraid nerves in the evening with red wine, and they exist in a really high frequency wired state, and the stories are virtuous, I'm so bothered by the state of the world by this problem by this problem and true. And we do want to address all of those problems, we also wanna do it from a place of strength and resilience, we wanna be in our power when we take on those problems and when were our nerves are afraid, we're not really the best soldiers for that, and what people never realize is that they're... By juicing up their nutrition and getting them to a place of physiologic stability, then they're not as anxious. They can still be aware of everything that's wrong in the world, but they're stable and they have a calm outlook on it. And it was never just the problems of the world that was making them so anxious, it was actually the low-fat, low cholesterol, caffeine, alcohol diet, and it doesn't have to feel so hard.

DR. ELLEN VORA: The other place I wanna go with that is just sensitivity as a concept, and maybe we're all artists, maybe we're all writers, maybe we're all sensitive souls, I don't know, but it seems like we have slightly different roles in the human ecosystem, and there are folks who... I would think of as life Naturals. I think that's a term from Sarah Wilson. And the idea is, they're unflappable, they're surgeons, they're pilots, they're not dialed quite so open, and then we have our sensitive folks. Our artists, our healers are intuitives or anxious friends, and our antennas are wide open. And that is a gift and a liability. And I think it's really important to do the re-framing around that as a gift, as a super power. And when the world tells you why you so sensitive. What's wrong with you? You can remind yourself, this is actually a gift that I have that I can attune to all of the energy. I can feel what's going on here. It helps us show up, we can be attuned to the people in the room, we can be attuned to the problems in the world, it's an important calling and duty, but it... This is a loud world, so if you have a wide open antenna, you actually have to do a lot to take care of that antenna. We all need to brush and floss, and I think that sensitive folks need to ground and sleep and nourish

ourselves in particular ways, clear energy sometimes, and just give ourselves, a lot of energetic boundaries when we're in Walmart, for example.

SHAWN STEVENSON: [laughter] I love that so much and it's so true because you're describing the way that I felt, and it's one thing to embrace my sensitivity, but then to be debilitated because I'm not doing the things to process or to actually show up and do something with this when I'm experiencing, the suffering in the world, this is also around the time when I was really feeling that. And that was my modus operandi, it was like my mission was to do something about all this suffering that I'm feeling that I'm experiencing from the world around me, because it didn't feel like it was me, but I felt like... And I can see it, of course, there's a lot of tumultuous things going on, and but sometimes it would just literally knock me out and by shifting the way... that I was taking care of myself personally and not just being dogmatic in this framework of like this is what I'm supposed to be doing, but listening to my body, what a concept start to bring in these different compounds in different ways of movement. I felt more resilient. I'm still probably the Ralph Tresvant of my family. He had a song called man with sensitivity is for new edition, that's a Easter egg for everybody who knows about it.

SHAWN STEVENSON: I was definitely the more sensitive in many aspects, but now it's really a super power because I could take that and also, as you said, I can be a warrior and a champion for the people that I'm on a mission to help and to serve. Got a quick break coming up, we'll be right back.

[music]

SHAWN STEVENSON: I wanna share something with you that has been fueling my workouts recently, numerous studies, including a study published by the Federation of American societies for Experimental Biology, AKA the FASEB Journal, have found that exogenous ketones can be up to 28% more efficient in generating energy than glucose alone, and because of this, something that... Listen, there are so many different supplements that are out there on the market, very few things do you experience a change the first day. Now, this isn't true for everybody, but for me, this was the case, I was shocked. I actually took time stepping away from everything else that I was doing as far as supplementation around training, gave myself a break and then did this with a lot of focus and intention to see, hey, what are the kind of results that I could see by utilizing Ketone-IQ, and I was really just blown away.

SHAWN STEVENSON: My stamina was significantly increased, but more so my recovery afterwards, it was really impressive, I just felt like I could do so much more than I normally do, and I'm somebody who really pride myself on being a high performer and being able to really

challenge my limits and do exceptional things. And so to do what I was typically doing and didn't have energy left in the tank, I was just like, wow, this is something special, I need to tell more people about this. So right now, you can head over to hvmn.com/model, and they're going to give you 30% off of your first subscription order, it'll be taken off automatically at checkout, and I'm telling you, this is the real deal. Go to hvmn.com/model, check out Ketone-IQ today. And now, back to the show.

SHAWN STEVENSON: One of my favorite things that you've said already is a really important insight about anxiety, which is, this is at its core, a stress response. At its core, this is a stress response that we're experiencing, and a lot of times because we have a label for it, we put it in this certain category, it's something totally different, this isn't a stress response, this is anxiety.

SHAWN STEVENSON: This is my anxiety. And tying it back to this blood sugar connection, if we could just kind of put a cherry on top of this, you mentioned that the body will find a way to normalize things to reach homeostasis. And when our blood sugar is low, your body can even break down your muscle and turn into glucose Gluconeogenesis, and but what we're doing is we're activating that stress response system in the body. Right.

DR. ELLEN VORA: Yeah, that's right. Well, I have 100 different directions to go in response to all the gems you just put out there. I think that we have this culture around mental health right now, which has taught us that mental health diagnoses are trait. There's something about you, and I actually think that that gets us more stuck than it actually empowers us, and so when we think, I have anxiety, I am someone with depression, this is me, this is my destiny, this is a fixed trait about me, it's inaccurate.

DR. ELLEN VORA: And I've now been in practice more than 10 years as a psychiatrist, I have observed far too many times, somebody really taking off their mental health diagnosis almost like an article of clothing. To me, these are not diagnoses, that's an old-fashioned concept that comes from the glory days of Western medicine, which was when we could start to diagnose an infectious disease and say, you have syphilis, you have this infection and it requires this antibiotic, and we've actually cured it and solve the problem, and we feel so powerful and helpful, and we like that as doctors. And we've been trying to get back to that state of diagnosis treatment cure done ever since. And it's actually not applicable with most of what we're up against. These chronic degenerative diseases, mental health issues. Mental health issues for the most part are not truly a diagnosis, they are symptoms, they are collections of symptoms. What that is, is oftentimes the body communicating, it's saying, I have some state of physical imbalance, I have some unresolved trauma or grief, I have some psycho-spiritual unmet need. These symptoms that we call diagnoses and sticks us in that

path, it's always been a communication from the body. And it's a really nice and hopeful path to just get good at listening, is this some kind of physical imbalance.

DR. ELLEN VORA: Let's address it at that level. Eliminate unnecessary suffering. Is this some deep inner truth about a lack of community in our lives or the fact that we don't feel that we're being of service or making our unique meaningful contribution. And you mentioned being able to tune in to what's needed of you, and this is really what I think of as true anxiety. It's not something to pathologise, it's not what's wrong with us, true anxiety is our inner compass. It's nudging us, it's like an electric fence when we've gotten off our path. It's asking us to slow down and get still and pay attention to what feels out of alignment, and it's not what's wrong with us, it's what's right with us when we are able to viscerally connect to what's wrong in the world around us. That can be our media, personal lives, our communities, the world at large, but we wanna get our physiology stable so that we're not suffering unnecessarily, and then we want a practice for tuning and torture anxiety so that we can make a contribution. And I just wanna point out, no pressure there. It doesn't have to be grand, we don't have to orient our entire life around that. We just need to listen, if our inner compass is telling us there is some contribution that you're uniquely in a position to make, and you're not yet showing up for it.

SHAWN STEVENSON: This is so good. Alright, so just to dabble in the physical aspect a little bit more. So we've talked about blood sugar and you did briefly mention sleep as well. Do we have some data on sleep deprivation, potentially increasing our incidents of anxiety.

DR. ELLEN VORA: Yes, yeah, sleep is my favorite physical treatment to do for anxiety. We're in a world right now where we say, I don't sleep well, it's because of my anxiety, it's my depression that is impacting my sleep, it's the bipolar that's making me not sleep. There's validity to all of that, but what we're not yet appreciating is that it's a bi-directional relationship and sleep quality impacts every single mental health diagnosis, and it's the easier entry point. So on the one hand, we might say the seven years of psychotherapy fixed the anxiety and then you fix the sleep, or you could give this a couple of weeks of effort, fix the sleep, and then you've improved the anxiety. So with sleep, I think that there are a few caveats: shift labor, jet lag and perimenopausal, postmenopausal sleep. Let's put them aside because those are trickier puzzles, but for the most part, I think we're suffering from what I think of as modern insomnia. Our body knows how to sleep, it wants to sleep, but there are aspects of the modern environment that are dis-regulating our circadian rhythm. We're not sleeping, and it used to be we weren't prioritizing sleep, but to the credit of people like Arianna Huffington, we've had a cultural shift around that from, sleep is for the weak or the lazy, I'll sleep when I'm dead to sleep is my secret weapon.

DR. ELLEN VORA: So now we're like, oh, I wanna be good at sleep, and it still alludes us. So we just have to be aware that there are inputs that impact our circadian rhythm by far and away, and your viewers know this, but the lion's share of that is light. Light is what cures our circadian rhythm. We have an internal clock in our brain, but it's not connected to a satellite, it's connected to our eye balls, and the only way our internal clock has of knowing what time of day it is is based on light. That system was full proof on the proverbial savanna of human evolution, you couldn't get it wrong. We had a bright daylight during the day, and then in the evening we had darkness. And I don't blame evolution for not anticipating this plot twist, which is that we were going to harness electricity and invent the light bulb, and eventually the iPhone and eventually succession, and nobody was gonna sleep anymore. So we have to flip the script. The onus is on us as individuals to make sure we're giving our eyes and therefore our brain, the proper light cues so that we can have a healthy regulated circadian rhythm.

DR. ELLEN VORA: It starts first thing in the morning, you wanna actually see sunshine with your eyeballs, not through sunglasses, not through a car windshield, not through a window, but the real thing, and then after sunset is really where the magic happens because we evolved seeing fire and moonlight, and now we are surrounded by the psychedelic light show of modern life. So short of moving off the grid and homesteading and making your own Sauerkraut raising chickens, you can just get orange glasses. It's not a perfect solution, but I think it's the best harm reduction strategy we have. And you put on blue blocking glasses after sunset, you wear them till bedtime, and at the very least, it blocks the blue spectrum light from suppressing your melatonin release and it protects your ability to get tired and fall asleep at an appropriate time in the evening.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Very practical. Simple things. The tip of the spear here is just understanding how light impacts our biology deeply, and you just made me remember when you said psychedelic light show, I thought of Austin Powers, you know all the... But that's like this everywhere that we go right now, and this is a really, really, really new thing in human evolution. We're talking hundreds of thousands of years in this kind of current or similar form, versus a little over 100 years having light to some degree, not to mention just a couple of decades of where it is so invasive. We can basically manufacture daytime whenever we want. But there's something special and different, as you mentioned, just going outside in the morning, the first part of the day with the sun going up and getting that exposure looking off into the horizon where the sun is. Something's different about the sun than any other form of light, there is a deep, deep DNA connection with that burning ball of light. Even if we're talking about the magnitude of the light itself, the lux it's very different, and so getting that bit in and then paying attention, not getting too much in the evening, it's a very simple practical thing that we all can do, but I think you just shared it the first thing is becoming

aware like, oh, this is what's keeping my body on time, this internal clock, the circadian rhythm of all my stuff is getting dictated first and foremost by light. It matters that much.

DR. ELLEN VORA: It matters that much. I think that there are certain lights that you can take in that sort of punch out of their weight class, I think that we're not yet even fully appreciating, not just the fixed how bright is the light, but.... this is like calculus, it's sort of like, what is it doing over time, and I think that experiencing sunrise and sunset is particularly potent for regulating the circadian rhythm. I think that our Suprachiasmatic Nucleus is basically getting that that is... This is sunrise. That starts the clock. This is sunset, I know what's coming next. Night time, and we can... If we really wanna be efficient about it, seeing those two witnessing, sunrise and sunset are very potent signals, and I really recommend them to anyone who feels really off with their circadian rhythm, it's like, where do I begin? Start there. See those two things and your brain starts to get it.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Awesome, awesome. Light medicine.

DR. ELLEN VORA: Light medicine. Well, in so many senses of the word. Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. TM.

DR. ELLEN VORA: [laughter]

SHAWN STEVENSON: Alright, so let's move on, we've talked about the physical implications that can lead to symptoms of anxiety, and of course, there are many more, and it depends on you, that's one of the big takeaways from today, is that we're all unique, but all of these inputs, because we are human existing in this reality are affecting us, and one of the things you mentioned, which was really awesome, I'm so glad that you brought this up, is the social inputs or how social dynamics and social cues and interactions can affect levels of anxiety as well. So how does social science tie in with anxiety.

DR. ELLEN VORA: And this is where we have vast amounts of research that really tell us that human happiness comes down to relationships, full stop. And I love to be in the weeds with like, oh, should you eat sour dough, should you avoid all of round up and American gluten, and I wanna be in the weeds with all the things about optimizing our physical health, but if you want to focus in one place, it's community in our lives, and sadly, we are just getting further and further from that. In fact, we experience an acceleration of that with the pandemic, we even formalized isolation. We said, this is quarantine, this is social distancing, we started to do things over Zoom and we started to meet up with our friends digitally. We became more and more side works through that process. As someone who goes into companies and does speaking engagements, it's been so stark how I used to go into a

company and give a talk in person and there'd be an energy in the room, there'd be an exchange of energy. Now that the pandemic is over I've come to go back into companies again, but it doesn't seem like it will ever be the same as when I do a talk now it's hybrid. I'm talking to the majority of people still over Zoom some of the people in person, but there isn't that energy in the room.

DR. ELLEN VORA: And I'm not saying we should all go back to the office, like I too, as an employee would not wanna have to go back to an office, but we just need a hearth in our lives, and there's... I think an astrophysics concept of heat death. A sort of theory of what's the end of the universe while we're expanding seemingly infinitely and at an accelerating rate. If you play that out to its logical extreme at a certain point molecules are so far from each other, it's almost like we don't have gravitational pull on each other. I will first, just caveat, I don't understand astrophysics, so I could have explained that completely wrong, but the poetry of it resonates for me that part of what this earth school is seems to be about love and relationships, and there's an energy exchange, and... I'm not saying it can't happen on Zoom, I think I do good work in psychiatry over Zoom, but something else happens when we're physically in connection with each other. I think that we just wanna have an eye towards where is there... Where are headed towards heat death in our lives.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Listen, this is really speaking my language, this is where my work and my mission has really evolved to, is that social impact, which some of the best signs that we have now, of course, is affirming that our relationships are the biggest determinant of our lifespan. Not to mention our health span, not to mention our success in life. Obviously our happiness and our mental health, all of these... Our relationships impact all of these things, your proclivity towards exercise and what you do for exercise.

DR. ELLEN VORA: Yes.

SHAWN STEVENSON: The list goes on and on, that's why it's such a powerful thing to focus on. At the same time, we've kind of been devolving and moving further and further away from each other and then going inside of a screen to try to connect, now, both of us have seen the same thing, it's great that we have access to these things, and they could be incredibly helpful in supplemental. But I love you went into Astrophysics with this, this is awesome. I've also, for many years, have been a student of places like the Noetic sciences, the Institute of Noetic Sciences, HeartMath, and looking at the energy fields that we emit as people, but all...

SHAWN STEVENSON: Everything has that. Everything that is living, and even in organic things have an energy field, but in particular with us as humans, we have an electromagnetic field that is beyond our bodies and they interact when we're in proximity to other people. But

if we wanna get even more tangible, we're sharing microbial data. Just being in close proximity to another person, your immune system is getting critical training that what happens when we are suddenly distance from each other. Do you actually have a really highly evolved immune system with a lot of intelligent bits of data? or is it vanilla? and shutout to vanilla, vanilla is cool. But...

DR. ELLEN VORA: Underrated flavor. [chuckle]

SHAWN STEVENSON: It can have a lot of... With vanilla, you can take it so many different ways, but if you're not doing that, you're just gonna live life as vanilla and you might get hit with some sh*t and now you guys sh*t ice cream. Alright, that was a terrible analogy. [laughter]

SHAWN STEVENSON: But if we have a plethora of things beyond just vanilla, beyond just ice cream that's making us up, we become more resilient. So this makes so much sense, even speaking to our resiliency in the face of anxiety by focusing on our social connections.

DR. ELLEN VORA: Here's where I wanna take us with this, because I think that We're really biased against the invisible, and if it has a kind of hippy quality to it, we're further biased against it. We're missing half the truth of this world right now, and I think to me, this connects to patriarchy. It connects to the ancient Taoist symbol of the yin yang, and if you picture that symbol, the yang aspect. This is the sun energy the masculine aspect, it's the doing, it's the productivity, it's the objective and the rational, it's the part that we are culturally obsessed with. It's what we value, it's what we pay for, it's what we celebrate in ourselves. Meanwhile, we have systemically devalued Yin, the moon, feminine aspect of rest, receptivity, non-doing, intuition, sensing. We beat ourselves up. If we're in that, you know, I was so lazy today, I didn't accomplish anything. I know as a woman, I disavowed my own intuition for many decades because I accurately perceived that this is a boys club. That if I wanted to be accepted and thought of as smart, I had to perform being objective, being rational, issuing things of intuition.

DR. ELLEN VORA: God forbid, I believed in astrology or crystals or something like that. So I got the memo, I understood the assignment, and I really played that well until I was in my 30s and had a direct experience with, for lack of a better word, magic. It all came crashing back, it felt like this had been my own internalized self-loathing misogyny, that made methink of my intuition as impermissible and something to silence, and I then started to appreciate that intuition isn't the whole way to understand the world. We need both, we need the objective and the rational. We need the intuitive and the sensing, and it's not that one is better or the other. The ancient Taoist symbol has always represented these two things exist in dynamic equilibrium, but we've been missing half the truth. And so I think that when we think about

why it feels different to be physically in person with someone, it's all of the invisible and energetic, and we're almost not allowed to believe that or talk about that, but I'm done with that. I think that we're overdue for embracing it and trusting our subjective experience of there's an energy in the room.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah, absolutely. Of course I approached this... I knew when I started this show over 10 years ago, this was underpinning all of it, so people are like, why do they resonate so much with this. This is behind all of it, I'm aware of the energy factor of all of these things, and being that going to a traditional university, being a man in the society as well, leaning into my analytical thinking and just like how a lot of people are programmed to look at things, I've always tried to provide a soft place to land in talking about these subjects, but what it really boils down to is there's this dichotomy between what we know and what we don't know, and what we know, we think is... Unfortunately, what we know is everything, we know what we know is how it is in reality, most things we don't know, we have no idea. We're not even close to understanding how stuff works, we've picked up a couple of principles guidelines, and most of it, we're leaning on to our ancestors figuring these things out, just doing what they did, funny enough. But in reality, there's so much that we can't see and because we get so dependent on our senses, and this kind of tangibly, I haven't said that when I was setting it up like something more tangible, we fail to realize that 99.99999... Just keep on going, we cannot see.

SHAWN STEVENSON: We don't see what's all going on, we just see from our one limited view of things, and as soon as we become aware of that, that there's so much more, suddenly we start to realize, not Jack into the magic, but realize that we are in it. We've been in it the whole time, and that's when really fun stuff can start to happen as well.

DR. ELLEN VORA: Magic is my real super power, and it's not that I'm magic, it's that I believe in it, and that I'm receptive to it, listening for it, looking for it, and it's dangerous territory, 'cause we can get into spiritual bypasses with that, kind of like everything happens for a reason, and everything has been benevolently ordained for us. I don't necessarily feel that I'm just very available for the idea that something vastly beyond our comprehension is occurring here, and when I do feel affirmed in, there is something here that is a bit magical, it gives me great comfort and it helps me make meaning of challenges that I face. Grief is something we can go into with this, but I think that it's really interesting how when it comes to the tangibles, we're just missing half the truth and it's a shame, and I think that as you're saying 99.999, we don't know we're toddlers in terms of understanding what the heck is occurring here, what is this human experience, and there was even some ancient knowledge that we've lost, because I think that that more Yin way of understanding the world was perceived as a threat to certain power structures, it's been silenced, it's been killed off at times.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah, yeah, we're so silly.

DR. ELLEN VORA: We're so silly.

SHAWN STEVENSON: We're so silly geeses. Silly geese.

DR. ELLEN VORA: That's right.

SHAWN STEVENSON: You know, again...

[music]

SHAWN STEVENSON: Did you know that there's a spice in your spice cabinet that can very likely improve your insulin sensitivity and help you to burn more fat? This spice has been utilized for thousands of years, and now today we got tons of peer-reviewed evidence showing how incredible it is for so many aspects of human health. I'm talking about the renowned spice turmeric, a turmeric is actually in the ginger family, but it has its own claim to fame today, and researchers at the Department of Neurology at USC found that one of the active ingredients in turmeric, curcumin is able to help eliminate amyloid plaque in the brain, slow down the aging of our brain cells and also help to remove heavy metals, and reduce information in the brain.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And by the way, I'm talking about its impact on body fat, turmeric has been found to both improve insulin sensitivity, reduce blood fats and directly act upon our fat cells and to take it up one more mental notch, research published in the Journal of ethno pharmacology points to turmeric's potential to reduce both anxiety and depression, turmeric functions like a Swiss army knife for human health and benefits, and today, more than ever, people are going beyond the casual curry and doing one of most remarkable teas that you're going to find, and that is having a turmeric latte, and my favorite turmeric latte, my favorite turmeric drink is coming from Organifi Gold, and this is because it also has other bio-potentiators that make turmeric work even better in the human body.

SHAWN STEVENSON: I'm talking about cinnamon, I'm talking about ginger, and also, here's the thing that makes Organifi's Gold so remarkable, it also has a medicinal mushroom Reishi, which according to research published in pharmacology, biochemistry and behavior, they found that Reishi was able to decrease our sleep latency, meaning that we fall asleep faster, it was found to improve our overall sleep time and also improve our deep sleep time and light sleep time, so our REM sleep and non-REM sleep pretty remarkable. So I highly encourage you to check out this incredible or Organifi Gold blend, go to organifi.com/model, that's

O-R-G-A-N-I-F-I.com/model, you get 20% off their incredible gold blend as well as their green juice blend, their red juice blend, and actually store wide.

SHAWN STEVENSON: So definitely take advantage of this and make yourself your own turmeric latte, I love the turmeric blend the Organifi Gold with some almond milk or milk of your choice, warm it up if you're feeling spicy, and it's one of those things that really helps to add another layer to your health and well-being. Check them out, go to organifi.com/model for 20% off. And now, back to the show.

SHAWN STEVENSON: There's a revolution happening and more integration with again what our ancestors already knew, and I'm a huge advocate of believing in miracles and realizing that you are a miracle, that's another underlying energy that I put into this is just like I'm always expecting miracles and creating a space for people to realize how amazing they are and infinite, and you're connected to that. But a part of that anxiety is a feeling of disconnect from that, and that's what I wanna ask you about next, because you mentioned in these kind of three big tiers, the physical, the social, and the psycho-spiritual. So let's talk about that. How can that contribute to our feelings of anxiety.

DR. ELLEN VORA: Let's say that there are some sort of entry-level psycho-spiritual ways that we are feeling anxious and there are things we can do about that, our need for community as we've discussed, our need to feel that we're being of service in some way. I think that we need ritual in our lives, we need play and goofiness and sensual pleasures from the body, and I think we also need to feel that we have some sense of meaning or purpose, and there's a broad range there, it doesn't have to be... You believe in God, it can be that you experience a sense of awe around nature or music or physics, and I think that those are like the entry level of psycho-spiritual, but I'm always interested in exploring what I think is the ultimate true anxiety, which we come by honestly it's the inherent fragility of walking this earth in a human body, and we will one day die, we will lose the people that we love, we might suffer at times, that's scary sh*t, and I've been through a lot of it, and I have found...

DR. ELLEN VORA: Let's say this, I have chosen a world view that helps me feel more resilient in the face of that, I wasn't raised with this worldview, I grew up in the New York area in the '80s and '90s, skepticism and atheism was cool, and religion was seen as other parts of the country did religion, the country music station might accidentally come on the radio and you'd hear a song about God and you'd be like get it. You're like turn the dial. Get back to hip-hop, whatever, I love hip-hop. But I think that I got a memo in childhood, which was like God is silly to believe in. And it wasn't until my 30s that I had my own experience of, hey, wait a minute, did we potentially throw the baby out with the bath water? Am I allowed to define for myself a version of a spiritual relationship to this existence that feels true for me?

DR. ELLEN VORA: And once I stepped on that path, everything has gotten better. And I'm not saying everything... None of my problems were solved, my problems got bigger, but everything got better. And I have gotten immense comfort from that because I think that inherent fragility of being a human, if we see that as exclusively rational and material, we should be pretty anxious. Because why wouldn't you feel like a hypochondriac and wanna get every body scan and live in fear of going out your front door because it could be the end. But when I start to see things as a little bit beyond my comprehension, loss feels less absolute and it softens all of the edges around the fragility of human existence. And so I get a lot of comfort from that and it makes me less anxious. It feels like the ultimate self for true anxiety is to have some attitude of trust and surrender to whatever this ride we're on is.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Oh, that's a tough one. Surrender is tough.

DR. ELLEN VORA: It's tough.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Especially again, when we are inundated from jump to hang on for dear life. We're gripping the steering wheel. You gotta drive this thing, learn how to drive, drive faster, drive more skillful. And I think a good bridge for this is practice. Practice letting go. Practice softening. Practice... And some of these things we say in culture, but just lightening up and shifting our perspective. You mentioned play, for example, and time to be goofy, and just like, I remember this teacher and this... Thanks to my mother-in-law, I was able to pick this up that seriousness is a sickness. Serious can be a sickness. Seriousness can be a sickness because again, we're so latching on to something with impermanence and also that we don't really even understand. But it gives us comfort in a way to believe that we do understand it completely and to hang on to it, that sense of certainty. And when in reality, is one of the most uncertain things that we can do. And so it's just kind of like ping-pong match going on in our brains that can manifest anxiety as you're saying. And so I love that you said this, your problems got bigger, but things got better.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah.

DR. ELLEN VORA: Your problems got bigger, come to find out, but things got better is because you became bigger. You expanded. You expanded yourself. Well, you realized your expansion in a sense. And that's the thing that we don't understand because we try to really just hammer away almost problems and then hope that we're not gonna experience more problems. But the reality is, if you want to be successful or experience fulfillment, it's growing you is really one of the hallmark things I'm hearing.

DR. ELLEN VORA: Well, I do think, just like with false anxiety, I always wanna validate. And we do owe it to fear to just express some gratitude toward it. Fear does keep us safe in certain

ways, and especially if you're starting from a place of scarcity, of survival in question, fear serves us and taking life really seriously serves us. So we do need to honor that. We just also need to catch the moment when we've cross the threshold when what was once an adaptive strategy has now become maladaptive. So if survival is tucked, if you actually are lucky enough to have physical safety, if the threat has passed, then the task becomes how can we shed that limbic system baseline and be open to trust and receiving and feeling more of a sense of abundance and safety. It's hard to change sets in that way, but we miss out when we don't do that. And I think that we really just have to give fear some respect, but then also I think that helps free us up even to say, okay, now I've started to fear death or fear loss so much that it's standing in the way of getting to be wide awake for that this is happening right now.

DR. ELLEN VORA: And I catch myself all the time. When fear of losing my child, losing my partner, I am blocked from the present moment by my fear of losing them. And you see that it's a little bit of a paradox because you only get this moment with them, and if you're missing it in fear of losing them, you've missed it. You've lost them. And so I really just try and it's an ongoing life-long practice, and it does require some trust and some surrender that we don't get to control the outcome and the effort of trying to control the outcome, which might have at one point in our lives, insured survival starts to become the thing that causes us to absolutely miss the outcome we were hoping for in the first place.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Thank you for sharing that. I don't think we've talked about fear in that context before. And if you take the word “fear” and you get rid of the “F”, drop the F off, you've got “ear”. Listen. Listen to what the fear is telling you.

DR. ELLEN VORA: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Ask questions, be inquisitive. What is this experience of this feeling of fear trying to teach me? What is the lesson in this or the value that I can extract so that I can put this to the side because it's just that internal, as you called it early, we've got that electric fence. And with anxiety, this overarching conversation, that internal navigation. The fear is there, it has its value. We don't want to get rid of fear. This is another one of those things in our culture, like we want to be fearless and we frame courage as lacking fear, like having no fear. And if you don't have fear, you're dangerous, straight up dangerous. You could be a dangerous person in other ways, but fear is incredibly healthy.

DR. ELLEN VORA: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: It's just not allowing fear to control you and to take over your life, in essence. And so this so good. So what are some of the things that we can do to help build up

our psychospiritual health in an effort to reduce those symptoms that we experience as anxiety?

DR. ELLEN VORA: I like that you pointed out the ear within fear. And I once had a patient described therapy with me as couples therapy between her and her body, and I think back to that all the time. I think a lot of our psychospiritual work is couples therapy between us and you name it. We need to go into a communicative relationship with our fear, not just tamping it down, not just drinking ourselves into distraction, not just social media and ourselves into distraction. Not avoiding, but just going into it, which I acknowledge is scary. It reminds me of when we're having a difficult relationship with someone and what we actually need to say is, I'm sorry, but we're scared to cross the threshold into that.

DR. ELLEN VORA: Something about that accountability or that vulnerability or feeling like the world is keeping score, and if you admit wrong and somehow that hurts you down the road, I think that the more we can push ourselves over those uncomfortable thresholds and have the communication, the crucial communication that seems uncomfortable, we actually feel better afterward. So we wanna listen to our fear, we wanna stay present to discomfort. We want to do the apologies when necessary. We just wanna keep keeping ourselves leaning into the present moment rather than escaping. And I think that once you're listening to your body, to what it's trying to tell you, to your heart, what it's trying to tell you, to what your fear is trying to tell you, you won't miss anything.

DR. ELLEN VORA: You'll know what you need because your body is telling you all the time. It's whispering, it's communicating with symptoms, that's the language it has to offer. But once we start to listen, and it's a craft that we can continue to improve, we can get better and better at taking that sacred pause. I'm thinking, oh, hold on a second, I just felt a passing feeling. Something went tight, something contracted in me, something felt uneasy. And we usually just steamroll over all of that, it's invisible to us. And the more that you can slow down, and even it sometimes requires running back a conversation. You said something, I said something the other day in conversation, and then I left the room. I dissociated as my mind was like, that didn't feel right. And so then I was like, we have to go back to that point. I wanna resend that, I wanna rephrase that. And so we just wanna keep catching when our body says no. And I think that that's such powerful tool to use in our lives is to know our bodies yes and our bodies no. And for me, for many people, yes feels expansive. There's a sense of ease, sometimes warmth. No feels like tightness, contraction, maybe cold, maybe uneasy. And when you start to know that language from your body, you can take a sacred pause and you can say, okay, I got this offer for a job.

DR. ELLEN VORA: I got this request from a friend and you can tune in and know if that's a true yes or a true no. That's language from Marshall Rosenberg, Nonviolent communication.

And another psychospiritual practice, I'll name two more, one is shaking and one is crying. So a lot of times what we really need to do for our psychospiritual health is metabolize what we're carrying. We have un-metabolized grief and un-metabolized trauma. We have so much grief and we have a cultural bankruptcy around rituals for grief. We don't do the ritual. And so we have grief from losing loved ones, but we also have grief from divorce, from pregnancy loss, abortion, job change, empty nest, there's so many dimensions of our lives that need to be properly mourned and we don't do it. And so I really like shaking as a practice in general. It seems to be what the animals do, they have an acute life or death stressor, and afterward they shake. Seems to be how they press control, alt, delete on the stress response. They excavate whatever we carry in our connective tissue and it helps tell the nervous system the threat has passed, it's once again safe to be in the body.

DR. ELLEN VORA: I think for humans, it's also just inherently therapeutic to let your body call the shots and move in the way your body feels like not just what looks cool or appropriate or normal. And so I shake about every day to shamanic drum music, and it's weird and hippy-dippy, but it's free and it takes five minutes and it's incredibly effective. And crying is another really good practice for our psychospiritual health. We are due for a cultural rebranding around crying because we're taught that it's weakness, that it's embarrassing, it's a burden on the people around us. The minute we start crying, we apologize, and then we try to suck it back in and make it as small and brief as possible. And it's outrageous, we've been missing out on free therapy all this time. It's not weakness, this is actually the wisdom of our body giving us a much needed opportunity for release. In fact, a component of the stress response, ACTH or adrenocorticotrophic hormone comes out in our tears.

DR. ELLEN VORA: It basically cuts our stress response off at the root. So if we just allow ourselves to cry fully and get better at crying, let it be bigger and uglier and more complete, it's therapeutic for us, it's actually bonding. It's not a burden on the people around us, it's a gift to them. They mirror it and experience a release of oxytocin and it bonds a relationship. It's a good thing, and we just need to give ourselves permission, we need to give other people permission, and we can do that with our body language. If someone else starts to cry, usually we're like, oh, this got awkward. But now we can start to hum and nod and lean in and basically convey, yeah, keep going. And it's a really powerful way that we can all support each other and caring a little bit less of the un-metabolized grief and trauma that we all have weighing us down.

SHAWN STEVENSON: That's remarkable. This is again something that our ancestors knew, many of these things and nature knows. And also even recently, even a few decades ago, there's a song from the O'Jays called Cry Together, and he's talking about him and his lady cry together. But it was such a strong but beautiful, soft kind of melding this song. We'll put it in the show notes for everybody. But it just jumped into my mind that, yeah, it's one of those

things that we've devolved in our perception of this natural response. We come here crying, but then over time, life, the way that our culture is constructed is just kind of in a weird way beating the cry out of you and now we suppress. And so thank you for sharing those. It's very unique and helpful. And also if you could, can you talk a little bit about your recent book and what people can expect when they read it?

DR. ELLEN VORA: I'm still reeling over here from we come here crying, which, yes. Yeah, so my book, it's called "The Anatomy of Anxiety". And it's my life's work wrapped into one. It's really taking a whole new approach to understanding anxiety, seeing it as not what we're taught, but that we have our false anxiety or avoidable anxiety based in the physical body. And we can identify those root causes, address them at that level, and eliminate unnecessary suffering. That's like the first half of the book is just very actionable strategies to address false anxiety. And the second half, I think of it as like, come for the sleep advice, stay for the metaphysical discussion. But it's really just a reflection on that true anxiety and our psychospiritual needs. And it's not dogmatic, but I just want to give people permission to seek, to live the questions and to look up from our mortgages and our taxes and our social media and contemplate what the hell is happening here. And I think when we are living those questions and opening to that perhaps something vastly beyond our comprehension is occurring here, perhaps if we make ourselves available for the magic, we start to see it.

DR. ELLEN VORA: I think it's a salve for the ways that the pH of our age is anxiety. And I don't want people suffering in that way, so I try to take every angle I can to give people a path to feel a bit better.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Awesome. Can you share where people can pick up the book and also where they can follow you and just get more into your universe.

DR. ELLEN VORA: Yeah. Wherever you buy books, "The Anatomy of Anxiety" it's pink. You can't miss it. And I am on Instagram, pretty active. My handle is Ellen Vora, MD.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Awesome. This has been special. This has been really, really cool. And just being able to unpack what's happening internally and just our bigger connection to everything. Like we've really traveled a great deal in this time and I can't wait to talk more. Thank you so much for doing what you're doing.

DR. ELLEN VORA: Thank you, Shawn, for doing what you're doing.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Awesome. We come here crying. Remember that. Dr. Ellen Vora, everybody. This is such an important conversation, and I highly recommend that you share this out with your friends and family because you never know who's battling with anxiety and

other mental health challenges. So truly, in this context, sharing is caring. You can, of course, share this out on social media, take a screenshot of the episode, tag me, I'm @shawnmodel on Instagram and tag Dr. Vora as well. And share the love, let her know what you thought about this episode. And of course, you could send this directly from the podcast app that you're listening on, right to somebody that you love, right to their phone, so that they have this powerful resource. We've got some epic masterclasses and world class guests coming your way very, very soon, so make sure to stay tuned. Take care, have an amazing day, and I'll talk with you soon.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And for more after the show, make sure to head over to themodelhealthshow.com. That's where you can find all of the show notes, you can 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.