

# Relationship Rehab Show

## FREE DOWNLOAD: Episode # 22

### How to Banish Worry!

I recently listened to the audio version of a book, ["The Burnout Generation"](#) by Anne Helen Peterson. Then my publicist asked me to respond to a reporter about how to deal with parenting burnout. A few weeks ago, I noticed symptoms in myself that I identified as approaching burnout. Although most of us have shelter and regular meals, why is it that so many of us complain about stress? Why do I, at times, feel stressed? Anxious? Worried?

During the illness and impending death of my son, Steven, I felt an enormous amount of stress. How do I get him medical care without insurance? When will he die? If he sleeps in, should I check to see if he died during the night? Will he die when he's alone?

One thing I knew was that it was impractical and would be irritating to him if I followed him around constantly checking on his well being. Providentially, I was enrolled in the first year of my Masters Degree program. Every month we had to write a self-counseling paper...a dialogue between our conscious thoughts/feelings and our inner spiritual Guide or inner knowing.

I'll never forget the month I tackled my intense anxiety as the topic. I asked myself, "Why do I worry? What do I believe worry is accomplishing? Is there any value in worrying?" The answer was startlingly clear. I believed that worry actually improved the situation, whatever it was. I believed the worry was an inevitable part of my love for Steve. When I asked myself, "Are these beliefs true?" The clear answer was "No. Worry doesn't make a positive change in the situation and it isn't needed in order to convey my love for Steve." In fact, worry/anxiety reduced my ability to think clearly, make good decisions, and because my mind and feelings were jumbled up with worry thoughts, I was less able to take advantage of opportunities to have loving interactions with Steve.

I'd been dealing with high anxiety ever since the death of my first husband. I did what I could to reduce my anxiety by memorizing and repeating comforting scriptures. It helped. But facing the death of my son demanded even more from me. I needed a basic, fundamental change in my beliefs. I chose to believe that *worry is counter-productive. It blocks clear thought and is bad for my mental, emotional, physical and spiritual health.*

That was a foundational change. In addition, I crafted an affirmation to help refocus my thoughts when they turned to worry. "I am walking in Peace as I'm Trusting the path to unfold." Some days I repeated that every few minutes, all day long!

As time has gone on, I've learned more about worry and how to replace it with peace, quietness, confidence or faith.

**Whenever you have a feeling, it is preceded by a thought. Feelings and thoughts are inextricably connected.** When I feel anxious now, I ask myself, "What thoughts am I dwelling on that are producing this feeling?" The connection between thoughts and the resulting feelings is *always* there. Sometimes the thoughts are coming from the unconscious. It requires a bit of patience to bring out into consciousness the troublesome thought that is producing anxiety. Carl Jung said, "We must bring the unconscious into the conscious or it will run our lives and we will just call it fate."

Just today a friend told me that she awoke a few days ago full of anxiety. It seemed nameless, but she asked herself, "What is behind this anxiety? What is causing it?" The answer soon came. She is recently divorced and on her own for the first time. She was just feeling sad. She accepted the sadness. But unacknowledged, the sadness morphed into intense anxiety. She reported that the anxiety immediately left and didn't return. It was OK to feel sad for a while.

"I can't stop worrying" is a common complaint. A worried thought has to be replaced with another, more positive thought or the anxiety will continue.

A few years ago, a therapist friend of mine taught me about the Circle of Ease and Grace. Here is an illustration that helped me put what she taught into practice...

### The Circle of Ease and Grace

I don't know what to do!

I want this person to change!

I hate this circumstance.

Why me?

I'm afraid that....

I should have...  
had...

What if.... I can't think of any solution!

This problem is Impossible!

I am loved and being looked after by God  
who knows what I need.

The answers I need will come to me in  
perfect timing.

Help will come whenever I ask for it.

Peace is mine everytime I choose to trust.

Everything,  
everyone is  
against me.

I'm a loser!

I wish I

I'm helpless!

Notice as you read the statements outside of the Circle of Ease and Grace. What feelings are evoked? Do some of the thoughts sound familiar to you? Banishing or reducing anxiety/worry is a game of identifying the thoughts that produce anxiety and replacing them with thoughts that produce a sense of Ease and Grace. The goal is to stay inside the **Circle of Ease and Grace** more and more of the time, no matter the circumstances or challenges that are present. I'm not perfect at staying in that Circle...yet...but I've gotten better and better at it with practice.

About Steve? The more I replaced fear and worry with trust in the ultimate good of the path we were both on, the more spiritual power was unleashed for both of us. He accepted that his death was imminent. He decided the only way he could die with self-respect was to die clean. He stopped all use of speed, pot, beer, and smoking, cold turkey. He did all he could to make amends with those whom he had hurt. He died at peace. Although I grieved, I also was at peace, believing...no, knowing that he was in a place of ultimate loving. In ways I was too human to understand, he had fulfilled his purpose on earth. Many of the lessons I learned as a result of being Steve's mom are shared in my book, [Pungent Boundaries](#).

Another definition of worry that I believe is so true is: *Worry is sending negative prayers toward the person or situation. Worry delivers negative energy into that circumstance.* Why would I choose to do that?!! That thought helps me stop the negative energy inside myself that is being projected toward that person or circumstance, (or myself!) and consciously choose a positive thought or prayer to replace it. One of my most frequent and powerful prayers for Steve was, “I release you to God’s loving care.” This can be used for a financial condition, a job, a wayward child, a health condition...anything that attaches itself to worry thoughts.

You don’t have to go through what I did in order to benefit from this practice of exchanging worry thoughts for thoughts that bring you peace and comfort...that help you to relax. You can do this!

Together, let’s banish the negative thoughts that do so much damage to our bodies and our peace of mind and do NOTHING to help!

Wishing us all more peaceful days, dwelling inside the Circle of Ease and Grace!

*Nancy Landrum*

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