

BEFRIENDING OUR ANXIETY

NATALIE H: Welcome to Episode 303 of the Flying Free Podcast. Today, we have the honor of visiting with Natalie Deering. Natalie is a licensed mental health therapist and IFS Level 2 practitioner and the host of That Wellness Podcast, which is a podcast that provides interesting interviews and IFS meditations for people who are doing some healing work on their inner parts using IFS, which we've talked about here in the past.

And today she is going to be here talking with us about managing anxiety, which is something that I have been challenged with much of my life to the point of even having panic attacks at times, middle-of-the-night nausea and heart racing, and other debilitating symptoms that have impacted my health and wellbeing in the past, and sometimes it still pops up and I need to manage it. So I'm excited to have this conversation. Welcome, Natalie.

NATALIE D: Thank you, Natalie.

NATALIE H: So she had me on her podcast a little while ago. It's kind of weird when you're talking to someone with the same name. And then I'm wondering what the AI transcript things are going to do. "Oh, Natalie. Natalie."

NATALIE D: "Man, Natalie says a lot."

NATALIE H: That's so funny. Okay, so when I was on your podcast, you were telling me—I don't know if it was before or after—that you had an exciting project that you were working on. Do you want to just tell us what that is?

NATALIE D: Yeah. Well, first off, thank you so much for having me on here on your podcast. I'm so excited. What'd you say? This is Episode 303? That's a lot.

NATALIE H: Isn't that crazy?

NATALIE D: Yeah, congratulations. The project that I'm working on right now is a book, and the working title is Befriend Your Anxiety, and specifically looking at befriending our anxiety with nervous system awareness and IFS. I keep hearing this, I'm like, "Man, this is so true," and I wonder if you feel the same having written your book, we write the book that like we need. This is me writing a book that parts of me needed in my 20s. This is a book that I'm writing for what I still need today. And that is my relationship with anxiety and how it's been a rollercoaster in terms of my relationship with anxiety throughout my life.

I'm excited to eventually complete the book, and I will of course let you know when that is ready to go. Fingers crossed maybe sometime in 2025, next year, as we're recording this in 2024. This is something that has been a journey for me in writing this book because it's like, yes, I'm writing about, education-wise, some things, but it's also a lot of personal sharing in the book as well from my life and experiences that I've been through in regards to anxiety.

Because I didn't want to write something that was just like a textbook. That's just not my style, at least at this point in my life. And I appreciate those books and the people that make those things because they're very informative. But I know for me, I really appreciate it when someone is sharing their own personal stuff in the midst of sharing information as well. I feel like that just helps my brain make sense of it.

And so that's what I'm hoping with this as well, is that when people read this, they're able to relate and they're able to maybe feel validated in their own experiences and to know that they're not alone. Because I know—I'm sure you feel this way—that going through especially anxiety stuff, there's just like times where you're just like, "I'm the only one. I'm the only one that feels this way and no one else understands, or I don't feel like I can connect with anyone in this moment in this." That's one of my hopes is that when people read this book that they don't feel alone and they feel connected.

NATALIE H: Speaking of not feeling alone, you use the word "befriended." I just heard from someone in the Kaleidoscope, they were just asking an IFS question and they were like, "I've got these firefighters. How do I get rid of them?" So we can think about anxiety or any negative emotion or any negative body sensation that we have as being like an enemy, but now you're talking about befriending our anxiety using IFS and nervous system regulation, polyvagal theory. Why should we be thinking about it in terms of befriending our anxiety?

NATALIE D: Yeah, that's a great question. Because so often I will meet with clients, and rightfully so, they sit down and they're like, "Help me get rid of my anxiety." And I'm like, "Dude, I totally get it. I totally understand why parts of you are like, 'Please make this stop.'" Because it can be extremely distressing and creating a lot of problems in the person's ability to live their life, so totally get that.

And I will also say when I was in my 20s when I had really big anxiety peaks, I for sure was going at this from the lens of like, "Target and kill." It was not from this befriend way of doing it. And this was before I knew about IFS as well. I was looking at it from the perspective of kind of like a traditional therapy, CBT kind of way. And that way was very much like, "Okay, this is happening, it's distressing, let's challenge it, and let's try and

find ways to make it stop and make it go away." Which again, I get it. I have compassion for that because it's not helpful to be stuck in a sympathetic flight response. That is a level of suffering that you're going to feel if you're stuck there, so I totally get it.

And what I've learned over the course of personal growth and learning IFS and all of this kind of stuff is the power of befriending as opposed to rejecting or fighting against. One of the things I love about IFS is that it's very compassionate and it's helping us move towards the thing that's causing us distress.

I like to think of it too, I used to teach a class when I was a therapist at a university. And one of the exercises I would do with the class is using those finger traps. You put a finger in either side of the finger trap, and then when you try and pull against it you get stuck, both fingers get stuck. But the way you get out of it is just gently soften the fingers and you even have them move towards each other. And then there's a softening and then the fingers can be free.

NATALIE H: Yes, that's a great analogy.

NATALIE D: Yeah, I love to reference that for myself when I'm noticing parts within me getting activated either with fear about something else that's going on within, with the intention of, "Yeah, get it out of there," it's like, "Hold on a second. Let's take a moment," and I'll remind myself of that finger trap and just be like, "Okay, let's lean towards this." And I just found that has invited such a shift within my system in my relationship with anxiety. So that's why I want to use the title, hopefully, of Befriend Your Anxiety. Instead of Manage Anxiety or Stop Anxiety, I want it to be Befriend Your Anxiety.

NATALIE H: Yes. Why don't you tell us more about what anxiety is from a biological perspective?

NATALIE D: Yeah. I like to look at it from the polyvagal nervous system standpoint, and that is also connected to the brain. And so if we look at ourselves biologically, if we look at the nervous system, if we look at the brain, then we're going to be able to see where we are wired for survival, which is a beautiful thing. That's amazing that we're not going extinct because we have this system built within us to keep us safe. And that's awesome.

And so this is where I feel like having awareness of our nervous system and the brain and this natural wiring can help with that befriending process because once we understand that it's there and why it's there, how it's working, the purpose that it has, then you can feel a sense of gratitude, a sense of appreciation for that, of, "Oh, thank

you so much, nervous system. I appreciate what you're doing for me so much. Thank you, thank you, thank you."

NATALIE H: Yeah, there's not something going wrong. There's not something wrong with what's happening to you. It's actually shows that your body is working exactly the way it's supposed to.

NATALIE D: Yeah, exactly. That's how we're made. Yes, then some things can get stuck, but it's having a compassionate awareness and understanding that yeah, there's nothing wrong with you. We're meant to have anxiety. We're meant to have shut down. We're meant to have calmness and connectedness. We're meant to have a fight response. That's all natural within us.

So the nervous system for listeners that aren't familiar with polyvagal theory, that comes from Dr. Stephen Porges and Deb Dana, who have really done the pioneering work in regards to polyvagal work. And the way that they've laid it out is that we have our parasympathetic nervous system and our sympathetic nervous system, and the parasympathetic nervous system is both our groundedness, which is called ventral, but it also houses our dorsal, which is shut down.

So Deb Dana will talk about it like a ladder. And so at the top of the ladder, that's where we have parasympathetic ventral. So that's the state where we feel safe, calm, connected, present, grounded. And I look at it in the lens now with IFS too, of like, that's where we're accessing self-energy. And so then as we shift on that ladder though, stuff happens, obviously, we're human, nervous system gets activated and then we go down the ladder next to that sympathetic fight or flight state.

And so it doesn't mean that someone's going to be both fighting and flighting. Our system can tend to favor one or the other. My system favors flight and the sense of anxiety, panic symptoms, heart racing, things like that. But for some people they may favor fight, which is more moving towards aggression, that energy.

And so we move into that sympathetic state again, because it helps keep us alive in certain situations where maybe that energy is needed and warranted. So this is where our body's releasing adrenaline and cortisol that's going to amp us up because we are either going to fight this thing that's a threat or we're going to run away from it and escape.

And if those two things don't work, then that's where we can shift even farther down the ladder to that dorsal response, which is the shutdown, which is basically a way in

which our body prepares us kind of for death, where we don't feel pain, necessarily. We might feel sensations of certain kinds, like a heaviness in our limbs, maybe even like kind of like a dissociative mental quality. And if we're in a situation where there's life threat and we go into dorsal, I guess the hope in a biological sense is that if we are going to die, it won't be that painful. Which, when we think of it in that way, how sweet is that?

NATALIE H: I know, seriously. Well, and what I've heard is sometimes animals will play dead as a way of hiding or making themselves not seem that appealing.

NATALIE D: I love that example, and that was in the back of my mind, and I'll share that real quickly with the listeners because I do feel like this example with the antelope and the lion, it really helps me get a sense of early understanding all this. So let's say you're observing an antelope in the Serengeti, and they're grazing and eating grasses and loving life, but then all of a sudden, here comes a lion. And the antelope's first reaction is, to go into that fight or flight, that sympathetic state. They can't fight the lion. They're not going to win. So they run, they go into that flight response and they run, run, run.

Well, let's say, though, the lion catches up with the antelope or the gazelle or whatever it is and tackles the animal. The animal will probably then shift into that dorsal shutdown where even the heart rate can go down so low that, like you just said, it almost looks like they're dead. And even to the lion sometimes they may mistake it for being already dead. And so what they've observed, scientists, is the lion will sometimes leave it, not to just not eat it, but it might be like, "Oh, it's already dead, and I'm going to save this for maybe an hour or so," and it will walk away.

And then they'll observe the antelope open its eyes and look around. So now if you're on that ladder, now it's starting to shift back up that ladder because once you're in dorsal, you then have to go back through sympathetic fight or flight in order to get back to ventral. So they observe the antelope, it's looking around, and then it realizes, "Okay, the threat is gone." So it jumps up and it has like a big shaking moment. So in that way, it's releasing and regulating all of that pent-up cortisol and adrenaline. And then it runs and it runs, runs, runs. So it's shifting back into that sympathetic flight response, and in that running, it's discharging that energy.

So then by the time it gets to a safe location, it stops running. Maybe it does another little shaky shake and then it goes about its day. And now it's back into ventral. And so that is an example of again, how beautiful our nervous system is wired. But as humans, because we have a neocortex in our brain, which is again, so amazing, but that leads to stories. It leads to memories and stuckness sometimes. And so that's where I love that

book, "Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers."

NATALIE H: I haven't heard of that one.

NATALIE D: It's this story of this example of the antelope and the zebras and all of this stuff, that they're releasing, they're discharging that energy and they're aligned and connected with their body in that way, whereas humans, we're not being taught this or we're not necessarily being encouraged. Because this is, I believe, an innate thing within us where we go through a stressful moment... Let's say we're almost hit by a car. We're walking across the street and a car doesn't see us until the last minute. It's like, "Oh my gosh." And they almost hit us, but they don't.

And let's say we're with a little kid, and the kid starts crying, and the adult, though, looks down at the kid and says, "Stop crying." Well, that crying is a release. It's a release, and it's trying to regulate the nervous system back to that ventral state. Same thing with shaking or jumping around. It's like our culture has labeled those things as "weird." So just part of us are like, "Just keep it together. It's okay. We're all good. We're fine." But then that can lead to stuckness in terms of this energetic but also like literally adrenaline and cortisol pulsing through our body.

So yeah, I love using that example of the antelope or the gazelle and the lion as a way to show how we can shift so quickly in that ladder and that also there's this importance of understanding that if we're going to dorsal, we got to move back through sympathetic. And if we're in sympathetic, we have to invite a release to invite a discharge of that energy.

NATALIE H: Okay, so let's get back to that because I want you to share some examples of how we can get that release, how we can manufacture that for ourselves if we're feeling stuck. So what I'm hearing you say is that anxiety actually is a natural response that happens in our body, and it actually has a lot of benefits.

NATALIE D: Yes.

NATALIE H: For example, a lot of us, you, me, others who are listening, we have these anxiety moments. Let's say in the middle of the night I wake up and I don't know why, but I feel really nauseated, I'm sweating, and my heart starts racing. And I can sort of sense that there are stories—you mentioned stories—that there's this low level, I'm thinking about things, but they're not really conscious. They're more like non-conscious, but if I stop and really focus on them, I can kind of bring them up. "Oh, this thing happened with my daughter and her baby yesterday, and I think there was some worry

that I had about something. Maybe that's what it is." I'll try to go through the file system in my brain to go, "Okay, what would I be worrying about right now?" Or sometimes I can't come up with anything specific. It's just like, I am just so anxious and I don't know why." What's the benefit of that?

NATALIE D: Yeah, that's a great question, isn't it? "What's the benefit of that?" And I think the quick answer is, I don't feel like I have an answer specifically that just answers that simply. Because as you were sharing that story, there were just some things floating in my brain, one of those things being like, well, this is where I would weave in my understanding of both the biological and the psychological, where biologically, especially around that, like 1:00 am to 3:30 am time, our blood sugar can drop.

And so in that dropping of our blood sugar, we can then have a spike in adrenaline in response to that drop in our blood sugar. And so then that's where for some of us who are prone to those maybe bigger drops and maybe have more sensitivity in our nervous system already for various reasons, we can have those wakeups where our heart is racing and we're sweating and we're agitated, and it might be because your blood sugar dropped.

And so that's where, again, it can be this understanding of, "Okay, so this could be a blood sugar thing. And so maybe that means then I need to have stuff on my bedstand or my nightstand that's like some nuts. Something for fiber and protein where I can just pop a few nuts in my mouth, a few almonds, and take a couple sips of water or even have like a little bit of some sort of juice to help again, like bring some balance to the blood sugar."

That's called a lizard brain treat, and it's so cute, right? I did not make that up. That comes from Dr. Kristen Allott, who's amazing. She wrote a book on understanding anxiety through a nutritional standpoint with blood sugar. It's great. She calls them lizard brain treats and they're adorable, but it's a way to help that reptilian part that's connected to our brain, that's connected to our nervous system, to feel balanced from this biological standpoint.

So this is something that I will utilize at times. This is information that I give to my family and clients and the feedback that I get from people is like, "I got up and I ate some nuts and I took a couple of sips of apple juice, and I felt better."

NATALIE H: Oh my gosh. I'm totally trying that next time.

NATALIE D: "After ten minutes, my heart rate went down and I went back to sleep," and

I'm like, "Oh, that's so cool." And then sometimes it can also be like you were saying, maybe connected to some parts psychologically that are maybe thinking about something in the background. And maybe that's being activated by dreams or whatever. And so in those cases, that's where, if that's happening, and this happened to me a couple months ago where I woke up and I was really activated, and I did the same thing. Parts of me were like going through the files in my mind, like, "Okay, wait, why, why, why, why, why, why, why, why?" And I couldn't find anything.

But what I did find was parts that were afraid of those symptoms. So then there's fear that gets activated in reaction to those symptoms, which then I feel like is what gets us stuck is we get so blended with the fear of the symptoms, at least in my case. So in that situation, I laid there, I took a couple of breaths. I did some breathing techniques where I invited a longer exhale because I know that will naturally slow down my heart rate.

And then I turned towards the parts because I knew there was fear. And I talked to those parts that were having fear about those symptoms. And I opened it up in my mind to like, "Okay, tell me what's going on. What are you afraid of? Yes, yes, yes. I get that," so validating, and then also asking and noticing, "What are those parts need in order to feel safer with this right now?" And so I sent them like words of safety and love and comfort, and then I fell back asleep.

And what's interesting is I wear this biofeedback ring, it's called the Oura ring. And so when I woke up that next morning, I was like, "Ooh, I want to look at my sleep stats." And sure enough, that time in the night where I woke up in the morning, my heart rate had skyrocketed. And then I knew what time I had fallen back asleep, and it was fascinating to see that my heart rate dropped to its lowest point in that whole night when I had fallen back asleep after turning towards and addressing the parts that had fear towards the symptoms. And that was really validating for me to just be able to also see it.

NATALIE H: Can I just jump in and share something too? The listeners here, it's a Christian audience. And I like to say that we're doing when we're talking to those parts of us inside is partnering with God inside of us because we believe that our Creator loves us and is for us and always moving towards us no matter whether we're scared, angry, experiencing anything. God always moves towards us in love. And so when we partner with God in doing that, we're moving towards those parts in love also.

And I think sometimes there's so much shame in the Christian community that we're not measuring up or we're bad or maybe I shouldn't have anxiety because I'm a Christian or I must not be trusting God if I have anxiety or if I have fears then I'm not

trusting God.

And then what we're doing is taking on the role of the enemy, really, in our lives. We're taking on the role of those voices in our minds that maybe were programmed into us when we were kids or programmed into us at school—any of those negative voices that are condemning or criticizing us—and we're buying into those voices instead of partnering with God. God's always in there wanting to move toward us and we can partner.

So I think it just eliminates some of the shame because sometimes people will think too, “Well, that's selfish if I'm trying to rah, rah, rah, and cheer myself on inside or move towards myself. I'm being selfish because I'm moving towards myself.” No. That's our main, number one responsibility that God gives to us is to manage and have self-leadership over ourselves. And then God partners with us in that. And loving that person inside is our life's work. It's really our life's mission, and only through that love will we then be able to love others without judgment and with open arms and with acceptance, the way that God loves us.

So anyway, I just wanted to weave that in there. Because of my own past programming, I can hear those voices are like, “Well, what about this? Well, what about that? Well, what about the other thing?” And just in case any of the rest of you have those voices, I wanted to address that and nip it in the bud.

NATALE D: Yeah, I think that's great. Thank you for sharing that because totally. Those are great trailheads. If people are listening to what you just said and what I was just saying and they're noticing parts within themselves being like, “No, that's not okay. Nope. I can't turn towards myself in that way,” great trailheads.

NATALIE H: Yes, very much so. Just in case there's people listening who don't know that much about IFS—I have talked about it. I talk about it a lot more inside of my Kaleidoscope program—but tell people what a trailhead is. It's not that difficult of a concept.

NATALIE D: I love the term “trailhead” because I immediately get like an image in my mind of like a trail in the forest. And you can think of it like if you're on a hike in the woods and you're coming across multiple trail options, and so then inside of ourselves, we can look at these different symptoms that we notice within ourselves, whether those be thoughts that we're having or physical symptoms in the body, images or memories that we're having in our mind, we can look at those as trailheads in the sense that we may not fully understand what they're connected to or leading to, but it's the start of a trail

where we're like, "Oh, I'm noticing tightness in my chest. Maybe I'm going to follow down this trailhead and see where this goes," with curiosity.

NATALIE H: Yes. I love that because instead of being afraid of it or going, "Oh my gosh, what is around the corner of this thing that I'm looking at?" it's more like, "Oh, I wonder what's around the corner. Let's go down this trail and find out what we discover."

NATALIE D: Exactly. Because with ventral vagal, which is that parasympathetic rest and digest as we're used to calling it, that is also the place where we can feel curious. Deb Dana talks about that, where she's like, if you can feel even just a little bit of curiosity towards maybe what's happening within you and the sympathetic fight or flight state, or even dorsal, she's like, that's great because it's like you've got a foot and ventral, and in IFS terms I would see that as like we're accessing some self energy to have a sense of safety, to then be able to float and visit with what's connected to the fight, flight, or freeze.

NATALIE H: Yeah. Isn't it fun to see how these different theories are really woven together in so many ways, and you start layering them on top of each other and you get this very multidimensional view of how the human brain and body work together? And spirit—I think there's a spirit involved too. It's amazing. Okay, there's one thing we didn't really cover. We talked about some of the benefits of anxiety, but let's just cover a little bit about when we get stuck and we're unable to move forward, and maybe you could give us some exercises that we could do to help us get unstuck.

You kind of gave us your example of waking up in the middle of the night and you gave us like a biological solution, but let's say that we're driving down the road and all of a sudden we start feeling... I don't know if you've ever experienced this, but I'll feel, it's like a weird buzz in my body. And it almost feels like my body's going cold and clammy. It almost feels like I'm going to blackout, like if I am not careful, I'm going to blackout. It's having a negative impact because it actually could cause an accident if I'm not careful. So what are some other times or things that you've observed in your practice where people really struggle with anxiety and it can become a very negative thing, and then what are some ways that we can work with that in the moment?

NATALIE D: Yeah, that's a great question because that's what can be a reality. So this is where I really believe in the importance of incorporating what I'm calling self-embodiment exercises. And I'm trying to be cute with that because it's spelled SEE for the short and it's like the "see's".

NATALIE H: I love that—that's great!

NATALIE D: So we've got the self-energy see's, like the qualities of self, and then we can also have self-embodiment exercises, these other see's, that can help us have that foot and ventral to be accessing that self-energy, especially in these times that you're describing.

And so self-embodiment exercises can be things like breathing. That's kind of one that's been talked about a lot, but it's pretty important because it's one of the things that we do have control over and yet no control over at the same time. It's both voluntary and involuntary, meaning we breathe naturally, which is amazing, keeps us alive, and we have the capability to alter our breaths with practice.

So practicing learning how to breathe down to your diaphragm or practicing inviting the type of breathing where you're inhaling for, let's say a count of four, but maybe exhaling for a count of six, so a little bit longer than the inhale. Because when we exhale, our heart rate drops and it slows down. So if we can exhale longer, then we're inviting the heart to literally slow down.

So I'm a big fan of pausing, checking in my breath, checking on how I'm breathing, because a lot of the time when I am getting activated with that anxiety in my body, I'm usually already tense. I'm usually already hunched. Maybe my shoulders are tight and up a little bit. Maybe I'm leaning forward in a way where my chest is coming together. It's not open anymore. I am turning in.

NATALIE H: Closing in on yourself.

NATALIE D: Closing in, yeah. But I don't even have this conscious awareness of it yet until I'm noticing some of these other symptoms that do get my attention. So I'll check my body posture. I'll sit up straight and roll my shoulders. I'll check in with my breath. How am I breathing? Has it been shallow? Do I feel now tightness in my chest? And that's where now with my more open body stance, I'll invite some breathing, longer exhales.

There's so much power and making sounds with our breath.. That's another often trailhead for people—is then you start to realize the parts of us that are afraid of making sounds.

NATALIE H: Yes. Oh my gosh, I definitely have parts of myself that don't like that at all.

NATALIE D: Oh, for sure. And I think it's a lot more in women, but I've also witnessed in a lot of men as well who I've been in my office with and I'm like, "Let's make some

noises," and they're not. So just pay attention to that. Just notice how that feels. Even as you're listening to this right now, if you feel comfortable taking an inhale and on the exhale just opening your mouth and "Ahh." Just notice how that feels.

And if there are parts of you that are like, "No, I can't do that. I can't do that. That's strange," then just see if you can get curious about that and maybe just get an understanding of why. We don't want to shame that, but just to understand.

I love using big exhales, opening my mouth wide, and then utilizing our limbs—so our hands, our legs, our feet—in a way that when we are in ventral, that safety space, we naturally, our body posture will be up, it will be open. We're more likely to move our arms and move our legs in a way that is maybe free-flowing. We're okay to take up space. We're not making ourselves small. And I've done this in the car multiple times where I'll do my body posture check, I'll invite some breath, I'll have my hands on the wheel and as I breathe, I'll expand my fingers as I'm still holding onto the wheel. So I want to make that clear—please keep your hand on the wheel unless you're pulling over.

But I have my hands on the wheel, but as I inhale, I spread my fingers really wide and then exhale, relax them. Inhale, spread, exhale, let them relax. And so you can do that spreading of the fingers. If you're not driving, you can expand your arms on the inhale and then let them relax on the exhale, expand your arms, let them relax with your feet. So again, if I'm driving, sometimes—of course I'll keep the foot on the gas or access to the brake—but maybe the other foot, on the inhale, maybe I'll be pushing down against the car on the inhale and then relaxing on the exhale and then maybe inviting my toes to kind of come towards me on the inhale, and then on the exhale, relaxing.

Those are some of the physiological things that you can invite with your body to invite that resetting, again, that foot and ventral, and then just noticing how that shifts anything within your system to then also psychologically, mentally, see if you can access some curiosity. See if you can access even just a little bit of openness toward the activation that you're having in the moment. Because as you're engaging in the body posture, the breathing, the subtle movements of the body, you can then turn towards maybe the parts connected to the activation to get an understanding of, "Okay, so what's going on?" You can even ask that question of, "Okay, so what's going on? What do you want me to know? What's happening here? What do you need right now? What do you need?"

And I have found that when I ask those questions of, "What's going on; what do you need?" it's fascinating to me what comes forward. And for me, at least recently, when I

had some activation happening in my body with anxiety and I turned towards it, I did my embodiment stuff and then I turned towards it mentally in terms of parts, and what I heard and saw within was something in connection to something I had posted on Instagram.

And parts of me were worried that I was going to make someone mad. And it wasn't anything controversial at all, but these parts within me were like, "Oh God, oh no, someone's going to get mad, and then that's going to lead to us being rejected, and then it's going to lead to us feeling shame." And so then stuff was getting triggered within in that sense, and so then I was able to have clarity to then be able to be like, "I totally get that. And what do you need from me in regards to that and what will help you feel a sense of safety with this?" And then I was able to say or do what I needed to do. And it softened and it softened.

So I think where we can get stuck and where I have gotten stuck many times in my anxiety was when I was blended with the fear and I was letting those fear parts take over, and I wasn't inviting a sense of curiosity. I didn't have the tools also in my toolbox in terms of the breathing and the heart rate awareness, the awareness of what we need to do with our body. Literally, as we're feeling a rush of adrenaline, what our body needs in that moment to release, to... What's the word I was using before? I'm forgetting it now.

NATALIE H: It's like the finger trap thing. When there's so much fear and anxiety, you're panicking and pulling: "I got to get out, I got to get out, I got to get out." And resisting the feeling, resisting and fighting against it and wanting to get rid of it, actually makes it worse.

NATALIE D: Makes it worse when you get stuck. So if you can lean towards it... But again, the way I look at these self-embodiment exercises, these are things that we need to be inviting every day, not just when we're in a moment of high anxiety or panic because these are things that we want to be... Just throughout the day taking moments to breathe, taking moments to move our body, taking moments to check in with our parts, to check in with our body posture.

Because that's going to really strengthen this awareness within yourself, and it's going to help make the process less intense when you actually are feeling that state of nervous system activation. It's kind of like, "Okay, okay, I'm familiar with this," and you kind of have like a game plan and a way to be with it as opposed to, like we were saying, be fighting against it and stuck in that fight against and stuck in that fear. Because I've been there and it's awful.

NATALIE H: Yeah, it is. Well, this has been amazing. There's so much that you've given us to think about. I was just thinking as you're talking, I'm like, "I don't want to wait for people to hear this," because I usually record two or three months out. I think I'm going to drop this video actually in my program for the people who are in there so they can just quickly access it. But can you tell us, how can people get ahold of you? I mentioned your podcast, That Wellness Podcast, but where do you do your IFS work in case there are people that are local to you who actually might be interested in getting help from you locally?

NATALIE D: Yeah. So where I'm physically located, I'm in Fort Thomas, Kentucky, which is right across the Ohio River from Cincinnati, Ohio. So I'm licensed in the state of Kentucky to do psychotherapy. And so if you're in the state of Kentucky, I can see you virtually, or even if you're in Ohio and you can get to my office in northern Kentucky, I can see you then.

I also provide consultation services. And so those are open to anyone in the world, and that's utilized a lot with people who may work within some type of wellness field or advocacy field, medical field, things like that. And you can go to my website, ndwellnessservices.com. That's where you can find the podcast, that's where you can contact me. But you can also go to Spotify and Apple and any of those places and just type in my name and the podcast should show up.

And then I'm on Instagram @NatalieDeering. I'd love to hear from anyone who would love to talk more about this in terms of anxiety and parts, of course, using IFS to befriend your anxiety.

NATALIE H: I love it. That's a great way to end. Thank you again, Natalie, for joining us.

NATALIE D: Thank you so much.