

# Disrupt Yourself Podcast

## EPISODE 178: MARK METRY

*Dan Rutty: Before we get started, a quick warning, there are a few points in this episode where we discuss sensitive topics with our guest that involve mental health and thoughts of suicide. So please be aware of that. And if you or a loved one is in crisis; we encourage you to seek help. We've included some resources in today's show notes, but if you're unable to access those notes and need some immediate help, if you're listening in the United States, you can text home. That's H-O-M-E to 741741 to connect with a crisis counselor. Or you can simply call 1-800-273-TALK. That's 1-800-273-8255. Thanks a lot for joining us today, let's get back to the episode.*

Welcome to the Disrupt Yourself podcast, where we discuss strategies and advice for how to climb the S Curve of Learning™, disrupting who you are now to slingshot into who you want to be. I'm your host, Whitney Johnson, and today our guest is Mark Metry. Mark is the host of Humans 2.0, a global top 100 podcast founder of the VU Dream, a virtual reality tech company based in Boston, Massachusetts. And he recently published the book, "Screw Being Shy: How to Eliminate Social Anxiety." Mark, welcome.

**Mark Metry:** Thank you so much.

**Whitney Johnson:** Tell us about where you grew up and what you wanted to be.

**Mark Metry:** I grew up in Massachusetts on the East Coast, and my parents actually immigrated to America from Egypt two years before I was born, and they came to this country with two hundred dollars. And I remember just kind of living a very simple childhood. And, you know, honestly, I don't really think I wanted to be anything when I grew up. I mean, I've kind of asked myself that same question. And when I go back to when I was a kid, I was either, like, super, super in a dream world where I was, like, pretending I'd be a superhero. And then as I sort of got older into high school, I didn't really have a clear, definitive idea of who I wanted to be, to be quite honest with you.

**Whitney Johnson:** Interesting, so what did you like to do when you were in high school, what did you spend your time doing?

**Mark Metry:** I spent most of my time not socializing and spending most of my time online and with technology. And the reason for that is I began to develop social anxiety at around 10, 11 years old until I was about 18. And I began to see that it had placed a lot of boundaries on my life from having the right kinds of friends, from joining groups to being on sports. And it really just made me sort of retract from the world and not really care much about doing anything. So, for me, that was mostly video games, started different kinds of businesses online, early as a kid, a lot of different kinds of communities. And so that was for me, sort of my way of coping with those circumstances.

**Whitney Johnson:** How old are you now, Mark?

**Mark Metry:** I'm twenty-two.

**Whitney Johnson:** You're twenty-two. Ok, you just kind of glossed over. You're like, yeah, I started a couple of businesses online. This is not the time for you to be shy because you screw being shy, I cannot believe those words are coming out of my mouth. Just so you know, everybody, it's a little uncomfortable for me to say that, but we're going to go with it because this is really important to Mark. Tell us about the businesses that you started, because lots of people play video games. You figured out a way to make money around it. Talk to us about what that looked like.

**Mark Metry:** I got really into like the YouTube scene early on in 2009, and I had a YouTube channel that had thirty-five thousand subscribers.

**Whitney Johnson:** Wait, how old were you? How old were you?

**Mark Metry:** I think I was like 12, 13. And then I really dabbled a lot. Like I remember I learned how to code at first and I began to make websites and then and then the iPhone came out and that, you know, enabled me to make mobile apps.

**Mark Metry:** And so, you know, I started some businesses here and there, like just like freelance services where I would help people make websites and design them and code them into iPhone apps early on. And then eventually that led me to discovering a video game that's called Minecraft that I'm sure, you know, if you're a parent listening to this, I'm sure your kids, if they're younger, play it. And at first, it kind of started just as a way for me to communicate with people, with my friends. And eventually we kind of opened up this little community on this video game to the public. And that led to, you know, this sort of ecosystem kind of grow. And I did not start it as a way to make money to really start a business. But as sort of our costs grew like our server expenses and people wanted more features, then that really led to us kind of looking around and seeing what else are other people doing and begin to take some elements here and there.

**Whitney Johnson:** Interesting. So, OK, let's back up just for background. Can you just explain very briefly what the, the server is? So, you're playing this video game. Just give us a little bit of details that we have that.

**Mark Metry:** Basically, this game is open sourced and so anybody can go into this game and customize it and add anything they want to. And so, everyone can play this game on like their own computer, but if you want to play with other people, then you join a server. And so, I end up creating this server, this community for this game, for people to kind of join in and, and play together.

**Whitney Johnson:** You're basically hosting a Minecraft party -

**Mark Metry:** Yes.

**Whitney Johnson:** - on your server.

**Mark Metry:** That's exactly it. Anybody can join and play on it. But what we did was we began to just offer more things for people who, you know, maybe did have the money and they wanted to spend it on like, you know, intangible micro transactions, like similar. It's like an iPhone game. You know, if you want to buy like three hundred tokens, then you can pay three dollars. We kind of took a similar, similar approach to that. And so for the most part, we didn't, we kind of had infinite stock since we weren't selling, you know, sort of permanent physical products. I had started this when I was about 15. Within about seven months. It was making quite a considerable amount of money. And at one point in the world, it became the world's number one Minecraft server. We had like millions of people on our website. I was making six figures at that time. And so, you know, it was very, very interesting and is especially interesting because I had never really had access to that kind of money. And that really led me down a road of kind of asking myself what true success was.

**Whitney Johnson:** Ok, so here you are. You're now fourteen, fifteen years old. You're making over one hundred thousand dollars a year. And before we go to your experience, what experience did your parents have as they were

like, whoa, OK. Mark is making a hundred thousand dollars a year, how did they process that, how did they help you process it?

**Mark Metry:** Yeah, I mean, it's, it's such an excellent question, and I always think back to like when my parents first came here to America and they didn't even have, like, cell phones. And then I think of trying to explain to them how I'm basically pressing buttons on a computer and, you know, money is popping out. So it was definitely a little bit hard to grasp at first. But, you know, at first my parents were like, all right, Mark, like, what do you, you know, what do you sort of, what are you doing here? You should kind of focus more on school. We don't really know what this is. And then eventually they began to accept it after like a year and they began to support me and they began to kind of realize what this was. And I'm not necessarily someone who kind of following the traditional career path. Because I had always built just like this unconscious narrative, their vision in my head of when I get out of school and I go to college and I got a job and I make enough money one day, then I'll be happy. And so when I was able to reach that point and kind of skipping some of these steps and realizing that I had access to this money very quickly realized this is not success. And so, quite frankly, that made me confused for two, three years of my life. And it kind of set me on a on a kind of a journey. I think video games can be potentially a good way for people to sort of, I don't know, maybe be a little bit creative, to have some fun every once in a while.

But I also see video games as a potential like virtual black hole where, you know, I remember the video games that I played. I feel like I spent more hours working on my character in that video game, then the hours that I spent working on the character of my own life. And that made me kind of realize that, you know, life in and of itself is almost kind of like a video game. And the way that I view it is, you know, you start off with level one and then you go to level two. And then, you know, at the end of each level, there is often like a boss or some kind of major challenge that the person has to overcome. And I remember sitting down, playing video games, and I remember if I died a thousand times in that video game, I would just keep hitting retry. And so that's, that's what I benefited from video games now to sort of take that analogy and apply it to, to real life. And the fact that, you know, my podcast is called Humans 2.0 and the way that my brain thinks is very much in this technology logical way. And so for me, when I was really disrupting myself and in the middle of transforming who I was, I kind of view that, as, you know, human version 1.0, Mark Metry Version 1.0. And then now as, as some of these elements begin to become conscious, you begin to learn more and you begin to walk on a path that promotes growth and, and innovation. Then you can eventually get to Mark Metry, Version 2.0.

**Whitney Johnson:** You've made all this money and it set you off on this journey of discovery of like what does success really mean? And, and sounds like partly as a consequence of that, you've written a book. So tell us about the book you've written and how that came about.

**Mark Metry:** Yeah, absolutely. So, you know, believe it or not, the more success that I gained, the more my insecurity, overall anxiety and social anxiety began to actually get worse. And it really just kind of made me confused in the world because I was kind of walking around and, you know, I had always viewed this money as such an important aspect of my life because I didn't have it. And so I remember walking around almost feeling like a sense of superiority because I had made a ton of money. But deep down, I still thought to myself, like, wow, nothing has changed about me. I still don't like myself. I still kind of view myself as that same old loser. And so for me, that really got me confused. And when I went to college, when I was 18, I actually began to realize that I had social anxiety. Because previously up to that point, whenever I would walk into a room or some sort of a social setting, my brain would always tell me to look down, to be quiet, to go to the back of the room. I remember my brain would just always automatically compare myself to other people sitting in the room and almost kind of giving me this this feeling that I was somehow deficient and I had to almost sort of make up for that, or else people are going to judge and mock me. And so when I was in college and I realized that I actually had social anxiety and I wasn't just some sort of a moral failing, then that kind of began to shift my mind in terms of me thinking about this, as in like a character flaw, like there's something inherently wrong with me. I can't talk to people to it really being more of like an equation that I can change the inputs and maybe I could get a different output. And so when that happened, it really gave me two options in my head. One option was to begin to actually go on the path of trying to manage my social anxiety and to actually talk to people and be who I have always wanted to be.

And then I saw this other path of almost not taking that responsibility and just trying to escape it and to not tackle or begin to at least learn more and work on that fear. And so I chose the path that I think a lot of people choose,

which is the second path. And so for me, I tried to kind of escape that voice in my head that was telling me that, you know, I knew I had potential. I knew I could do more. And so for me, that looked like I almost flunked out of college. My first year, I began to binge, eat a lot of food. I gained like sixty-five seventy pounds. Next thing I know, I'm like over two hundred twenty pounds. And I kind of begin to develop kind of serious depression where I can't get out of bed. And my sort of lifelong social anxiety transforms into just social isolation. And I don't really want to see anybody. I just kind of trapped myself in my in my apartment. And then that eventually led me to not being able to sleep at night, which eventually led me to even kind of stumbling onto the path of even being suicidal.

I would go on these walks in Boston in a neighboring city that isn't that nice and that has a lot of crime and, and violence. And I would walk there in the middle of the night because I would, you know, really try to almost fantasize about somebody walking up to me and ending my life because I was in that much pain. And so on one of those nights, I remember listening to a podcast from Tim Ferriss, and it was a podcast where he talked about the time where he was suicidal in college. And so that was one reference point that my mind looked at where I was like, wow, I'm, I'm literally going through the same exact thing that this guy on this podcast has been through. And yet today, you know, he's doing really amazing things. I remember walking on one of these nights and almost hearing an eerie sense of silence where there were no cars in the street. I wasn't on my phone, there were no distractions. And I almost sort of, you know, felt very kind of subjectively my own intuition, kind of my own voice, the real voice that I felt like had always been trying to talk to me throughout my entire life bubble up. And I think, you know, when I look at that today, I think that is, you know, whether whatever you believe in, whether it's the universe, intuition, God, I definitely think I kind of experience something like that, whether it is due to desperation or sleep deprivation, where I almost. Kind of just kind of felt this warm, warm feeling.

And I remember kind of running home after that and looking at myself in the mirror, and I remember realizing at that time that my pants that I was wearing weren't even fitting kind of around my, my hip. they were super tight. And that was the first moment that I at least think that I was in kind of the present moment. Because as I was sort of spiraling down and doing a lot of damaging behavior, I had no idea this was happening. And so, you know, that experience kind of made me snap into the present moment where I actually realized that I was overweight and it was that sort of initial realization and initial action that kind of tumbled down the domino pieces that eventually enabled me to get healthier and then finally begin to look at this thing that's plagued me my whole life, social anxiety, and that, quite frankly, a lot of the world doesn't really understand. And then also when I was looking at the data too, you know, social anxiety is one of the most common anxiety conditions in America, and it's also one of the most correlated with substance abuse and social isolation, with both, with which both lead to suicide, where, you know, I almost fell down that path. And so kind of taking a look at these different things, I was like, I really have to create some sort of a book, some sort of a guide that people can use based on, you know, what I've experimented with, what I've gotten from research, from doctors, from neuroscientists. And so I kind of packaged it up into this book.

**Whitney Johnson:** One of the things that's interesting for me as I listen to you talk about this is you probably don't know this, but I have a younger brother who did take his life, not when he was young, but when he was about 40. But he had always struggled with, with, with social anxiety and just just struggling with a sense of self generally. And so one of the things that's really interesting and I'm intrigued by is you said, you said you had this moment where you were listening to the Tim Ferriss podcast, even as you were kind of hoping someone would mug you. And then you also were, you know, snapped back into the present because you had this sort of epiphany. And I would say it's probably because I'm a believer in God, something related to that. But for whatever anybody defines it as, what was the culminating experience for you?

**Mark Metry:** Yes, so the real one for me was I read this book by this guy named Dave Asprey and he's the founder of Bulletproof, the whole Bulletproof Coffee. And that's where I began to understand more things about food and nutrition, other than my basic understanding that I had known my entire life of, you know, if you eat too much food, you'll gain weight and you'll be fat. And when I read his book, I began to learn more about like, all these different vitamins, minerals, hormones, how our metabolism, how our biochemistry works, how that influences our brain. And so I kind of began to dig deep into, like the science of the brain and how somebody can begin to do things that can really help them from an anxiety standpoint, from a social anxiety standpoint, and it completely changed my life. And so that for me was the actual foundation that I needed to begin to actually learn social skills, to begin to put myself through exposure therapy.

**Whitney Johnson:** What's exposure therapy?

**Mark Metry:** Essentially, like incrementally exposing yourself to a fear. And so I remember I would try to walk outside and try to talk to random people. And I tried doing this like 10 times and it just didn't work. And I actually think I got more stressed. And it was only until where I began to kind of handle what I referred to as kind of the hardware of life, like software being your mind set your thoughts, how you think about things and then your hardware kind of being, you know, what your mind runs on, which is your brain, how sort of different biochemicals and neurotransmitters help create and sort of prop up our software. And so when I was able to kind of take care of those things, then that finally gave me a foundation as to where my brain and my nervous system was not like trying to kill me every time that I would think about trying to approach someone. And as I sort of approached it from a different angle, so to speak, I began to get more leverage and I began to put myself through, I remember I would pull out a piece of paper and I tell myself, like, hey, Mark, today you're going to go outside and you're going to ask five random people what the timer is. And so I go outside and I'd ask five people what the time is. And so that for me was a very kind of straightforward and sort of logical task that I could do, because just telling myself to walk up to someone and to start a conversation, that's like the worst-case scenario in my brain. And then eventually I would walk up to five people and ask what the time was and the directions. And then I would do it to ten people. And then eventually I would, you know, maybe give somebody a compliment after they told me what the time and the directions were.

And then eventually, you know, you did, you would incrementally expose yourself to having full on conversations. And then that led to, you know, starting to go to events where there's many people sort of by myself. And you just sort of expose yourself to the social, the social fears that a lot of us have. Another thing that I began to do was, you know, going back to as to why I even had social anxiety in the first place, a big part of it had to do with my physical appearance. A big part of it has to do with the fact that I actually went to school in a very small town with 5000 people and there was zero racial diversity in this town. And so I had my fair share of experiencing racism. And this was kind of post 9/11 when I was a kid. And a major, you know major part of sort of my physical appearance was my clothes, because my parents and my family didn't really have that much money to spend on clothes. And so I remember wearing the same clothes to school over and over again, and I remember kids would make fun of me. And so that was sort of a layer of social anxiety that I had. And so what I would do is I would sort of forcibly sort of make myself wear really interesting clothes. Like I would wear, like pink shorts with like a bright pink floral T-shirt in very public places. And I wear like a weird hat. And I would just condition my mind to, to you know, not think it's the end of the world, whatever people think about me. But it's a whole sort of process that somebody can go through. And it makes it much easier to kind of take care of sort of the biochemistry first and then just learning more about human behavior.

**Whitney Johnson:** So how are you defining social anxiety?

**Mark Metry:** The definition that I am a favor for comes from Ellen Hendrickson, who's a clinical psychologist at Boston University, and she defines social anxiety as a perceived social deficiency in various layers that I just sort of briefly went through, whether that's your physical appearance or your character that make you feel like you have to compensate or you have to try extra hard, because if you don't, then people are going to judge and mock you. And so social anxiety is not, you know, you being afraid to ask a girl to the prom, you know, that's just called being shy and that's completely normal and that's totally healthy. And what I learned is there are certain people and naturally speaking, they usually tend to be more introverted, although I have met extroverts who have social anxiety that fall in this pattern that is often not random. That is something due to something very specific earlier on in their life or a set of experiences or circumstances that make them eventually become shy in sort of every environment they walk into. It's not about who they're talking about. It's not about sort of who they're socializing with. They'll fall into that. And because relationships are so important in our lives, then you often see people with social anxiety have really low self-esteem and often have these other issues that begin to rise up.

And what I learned firsthand was that, you know, if you really do struggle with this issue and if it's not addressed, this goes on to affect almost every single area of your life. And that's why we see a very large percentage of people that suffer with this fall down the road of substance abuse and social isolation and maybe even suicide. And so when I was really taking a look at this and I began to take a look at the experience that I went through, I

remember when I was at rock bottom where I was really flirting with suicide, I didn't call the suicide hotline. I didn't go see a doctor. I didn't go call a therapist. And the reason why is people with social anxiety, they already really, really struggle with talking to people. And then the average person in general already has a major stigma, a major issue around talking to somebody about their mental health. And people with social anxiety have it even worse. And so a major part of my book, too, is, you know, of course, a lot of it has to do with how you interact with people, but a big part of it is things that people can do on their own.

**Whitney Johnson:** What are three things that people can do on their own if they are struggling with this?

**Mark Metry:** Yeah, it's a great question. So number one is you have to understand that social anxiety is not really the main problem. It's not the root. It's almost sort of at the surface layer. And so for me and what I recommend to a lot of people is you really you know, as much as this is not like a quick tip that I can give out, just a major element is to really understand how psychological trauma can really influence us. And so for me, when I was going through an environment where everyone was extremely violently racist to me and bullying and abusive, that put my brain in a mode where, you know, I would rather not speak up or else people are going to make fun of me and judge me. And also, at that same time, a lot of physical health issues come with social anxiety. And so I remember having a stomach surgery.

I remember having issues with my gastrointestinal, my respiratory system. And gastrointestinal symptoms have been linked to people that struggle with social anxiety. And so, number one, you sort of have to look at the root cause of this issue. Number two, you have to address the biochemistry. And so I can go a lot into it. But I think the biggest thing that I can talk about that has just blown my mind and has really blown a lot of the scientists and researchers that I talked to. And it's the fact that, you know, there is a neurotransmitter in our brain called serotonin. And serotonin does a lot in our body from regulating our mood to our appetite to even regulating our functioning in social groups. And so this is extremely important for people with social anxiety. And I know a lot of this is spoken on in the mental health and also, like the leadership community is like I know Simon Sinek has talked about this.

And when you actually look at it, most of our serotonin is actually not in our brain. Last 15 years, we found that 90 to 95 percent of serotonin is in our gut microbiome, which is not in our brain. And it is this ecosystem of bacteria between our stomach and our intestines that, you know, when we eat foods like just everyday plant foods, for example, we can't actually digest those. And so our gut microbiome digest those first and then passes it off to our body. And so that is a major area that I would suggest people to look at. Like how your neurotransmitters are functioning, especially with serotonin and the two biggest causes of your gut microbiome being heavily, heavily affected is trauma, which puts it under a constant chronic stress day and then also your dietary choices.

**Whitney Johnson:** What's one or two foods that you can eat that will help with that that you can eat?

**Mark Metry:** There's no such thing as a universal, healthy diet that I've learned, but one good guideline that I can tell people is don't eat anything that comes from an industrialized factory that's been made by a scientist.

It's like if you go to the grocery store and you take a box of whatever you're buying and you flip the ingredients list, and it's not just normal ingredients that you can recognize, like cucumber, salt, pepper. And it's all of like these very long name things like sodium hydroxide, blue six, yellow five, all those artificial ingredients, they do not really do well. And, you know, there's this study that was done in the U.K. with children and they had them kind of eat these different foods like that, have different food dyes, that are basically in everything brightly colored at the supermarket. And they show that there is a percentage of those kids that have a higher likelihood of developing ADHD behavioral issues from the food that they're eating. And so when you kind of look at this, there's no such thing as a universal diet, but just try to stay away from artificial ingredients.

**Whitney Johnson:** Ok, great. And what's the third one? The third suggestion for people.

**Mark Metry:** Yeah, the third suggestion is, you know, one of the most important things that I found when it came to social interactions, when it came to events is to not use Band-Aid solutions. And what I mean is very, very often people who are socially anxious, they will go to an event and they will often head for the bar first, or they will

head towards the dessert table, or they might vape or smoke something outside. And that's because people with social anxiety really, really struggle with getting their state of mind in order before a social event. And so many, many of them I've done a lot of times in my past where you try to artificially shift your state of mind. And, you know, when you're talking about things like alcohol, like heavy alcohol abuse, I mean, that's extremely, extremely damaging.

And so a lot of people with social anxiety, unfortunately, are using a lot of these, you know, whether it's alcohol or drugs, as you know, self-medication. And the truth of the matter is it doesn't work. And it actually makes the problem much harder to deal with and not actually get to the root cause. And so that that is sort of a number three that I would really, really want to focus on. You know, I'm using the term substances loosely, like I remember for me, substances anywhere from sugar to excessive sugar to caffeine, all things that can shift your state of mind and to be careful to not rely on those because it's just so common. I mean, the American Association for Depression Anxiety has said that social anxiety is the most commonly linked to substance abuse for this reason.

And so that's a big area of no, no that I look out for. But but if you, you know, if you flip this on the positive side, you know, we know that, for example, if you go for a run, you know, it causes something called an endorphin high. And, you know, endorphins, a major part of what those do in our body is help regulate our perception of pain. And for people with social anxiety, social interactions can cause them pain. And so I think if you can begin to look at your relationship with pain, whether it's social anxiety or uncertainty or pain or frustration, and you're looking at maybe the potential negative coping mechanisms that you're using to treat this, whether it's alcohol or some other kind of drug or something that's just not healthy and good for you. And you begin to switch those out with better healing coping mechanisms, then I think you will go very far with, you know, if you do experience social anxiety.

**Whitney Johnson:** So you've got this book out. And prior to that, you started a podcast. What has been exciting about doing the podcast?

**Mark Metry:** I was already on sort of this path in my life and it was extremely, extremely hard, but it's also very rewarding. And so I just realized that I have a lot to learn. And one of the greatest ways that I've learned anything is by, you know, just kind of sitting down with someone and having a direct conversation with someone who is actually out there, you know, doing the thing. Whether it's, you know, they are you know, a well-established author or they happen to be an entrepreneur or they're a neuroscientist.

I really used my podcast, honestly, in a very selfish way, as my own system, to constantly educate and constantly develop myself. And, you know, even to this day, if there's anything that I'm interested in, like if I get interested in meditation or anything like that, I'll try to seek out like the top five, top 10 experts in the world that I can get access to that would be willing to, you know, kind of come on my podcast. And I read their book beforehand and I kind of, you know, get a real chance to learn from some of the smartest people in the world. And so I think that the podcast has been an accelerant to everything that I've been doing because of the amazing network and the relationships that I've grown. And then also just the education of sitting down with someone has quite honestly, it's been one of the biggest blessings of my life.

**Whitney Johnson:** So you've had a lot of really interesting guests. And if you were to pick two women that you think of as professional role models and two men that you perceive as professional role models, who would, who would you choose? A guest that you've just been like, wow, I've learned a lot from those two women, I've learned a lot from those two men, that just come to mind recently.

**Mark Metry:** Yeah, that's like the best, that's the best question I've been asked all day. Two women that come to mind. One is Dr. Nicole LePera, she's also known as the holistic psychologist. She has like, something like two million followers on Instagram. She is someone who has really been a, a compass and kind of crafting these things, because a lot of times the ideas that I'm talking about may not necessarily be super well-received by people. And so she's really given me and helped me form the language around that. And she's, she, her, her endorsement is on the back of my book. Another, another woman that comes to mind is my friend Claude Silver. And she is I don't know if you know her, but she is the Chief Heart Officer, at Vayner Media, Gary Vaynerchuk's Company. Yeah, she's wonderful. I mean, Claude is kind of someone that I lean on all the time. Like I've, I've had many, many

interactions where I've called her before making like a big, massive decision. And she's such a such an amazing role model for me. I don't even know how she does all the things that she does. She's a she's a real sort of legend.

**Whitney Johnson:** I agree. She's wonderful.

**Mark Metry:** I'm so glad you know her. Yeah. Two guys that come to mind, one of them is Dan Schawbel. I don't know if you know him, but Dan Schawbel, he's a New York Times best-selling author of "Back to Human" and "Promote Yourself". And he's been someone who not only has endorsed my book, but has also, again, been another great role model and has introduced me to some amazing people that have completely changed the course of my podcast and my career. Somebody else that comes to mind is Jay Shetty. And his story is super interesting. And it, and it, again, kind of gave me familiarity because he was telling me that he also experienced shyness a lot, too. And he kind of lived in an area, lived in a school where nobody looked like him. And so that was the same exact case for me. And so it kind of gave me familiarity. And then also, I mean, he's just been so helpful for someone who both has like a very deep, like, philosophical understanding, he used to be a former monk. And then also, you know, he's a massive content creator online with a massive brand. And so it sort of, he showed me like, like how do you take, like, this really deep stuff that I mean, quite frankly, whether other than like sort of new science, you know, various traditions, cultures, religions had always sort of known. And how do you bring that into sort of the modern mainstream? And so that's been invaluable on the process of learning that. And yeah, I mean, I could I keep going, but I know.

**Whitney Johnson:** I know. I just I wanted to do off the top of your head. So that's fun. Fun to give those people shout outs to say thank you. So where can people find you.

**Mark Metry:** Yeah, people can find me on LinkedIn, Instagram, anywhere they listen to podcasts. But a good central spot is just my website, which is just my first and last name.com, M A R K M E T R Y.com.

**Whitney Johnson:** Ok, awesome. All right. So I, I found this one quote of yours, which I love. You said "The battle ground, the entire game is over your identity, you versus you."

**Mark Metry:** Yeah, absolutely. So I actually remember when I was at my lowest point when I was suicidal, that was like a major realization that I had in hindsight. And what I realized was a major part of the source that was causing me pain was I was always trying to be the same character, the same person, the same identity that I have always had. Because I always had this fear of like, you know, me being my socially anxious self and then me seeing the real authentic version of myself, maybe in, like you point five percent of my interactions. And I realized that a major part of that was because how other people's in their mind, how they viewed my identity and how I was so fixated on that. And, you know, people with social anxiety on the surface level, that might seem like they just have, you know, some issues interacting. But people with social anxiety, they can stay up for four hours at night because there are rethinking every single social interaction they've had over the day and then regretting what they should have said or what they shouldn't have said. And so a major part of me kind of being the person who I wanted to be, was realizing that the identity of who I had that was being almost propped up and backed by other people's experiences of me in social interactions. When I realized that, I just realized that I need to almost just hit like new game, like another video game analogy. You just hit a reset. And kind of make my own identity for myself, because what I've learned is if you don't, depending on your circumstances in life, we are often defaulted into the scarcity, fear-based sort of identity of who we are. And a big part of that has to do with, you know, our survival reasons. And so, I mean, I could get really into it. But identity is sort of the baseline that if you can shift that, then it'll shift a lot of the underlying pieces as well.

**Whitney Johnson:** Hmm, I love it. So any final thoughts for us as we wrap up?

**Mark Metry:** Yeah, I mean, what I would say is that, you know, I hope I wasn't too forward in the book and the title of the book Screw Being Shy, but it was just sort of meant to kind of give people that really do struggle with this, that don't want to struggle with it anymore, that don't want to be shy anymore, a chance to just sort of stand up and be like, you know what, screw it. I'm not doing this anymore. I'm going to try to sort of follow my own path of who I knew I always could be, but I never could. And so I'm sorry if it's a little bit too bold, but that that's sort of the meaning behind it. And I appreciate you so much Whitney for having me on.



**Whitney Johnson:** Oh, thank you for being here, Mark. It's just it's exciting to have you here. And I guess my very last question for you is, what are you excited about in 2020? What are you excited about? You've got your book published and maybe you're focused on that. But is there anything else that you're, you're thinking and contemplating?

**Mark Metry:** Yeah, I mean I definitely want to make like a program for my book and break it out. But I was not expecting the state of the world. And it's really enabled me to I'm just trying to sort of pause right now and kind of look at what's happening while trying to figure out what to do. And so I think one big thing for sure is definitely the priority of, of digital. But then also thinking that, you know, eventually, I hope when the world does open back up and we start to have, you know, events and various, you know, in-person things like normal, I think there's going to be such an insane hunger, especially because of what's going on and what it's making a lot of people sort of re-shift their mind and ask questions. And so I think I'm looking forward to both of those, of understanding, like the importance of digital because of what's happening now, while also understanding that this world is going, is so hungry for leadership. And when the world does turn back on, I think it's going to come full swing. And so that's what I'm sort of in the middle of trying to prepare for.

**Whitney Johnson:** Yeah, I love that. I guess my question then just is this idea of there may be this this willingness, this pent up willingness that will come for people who are struggling with social anxiety to say this is it, I'm going to figure this out because I've realized that I haven't liked being isolated. I was and I thought I wanted it, but now I realize I don't. So what am I going to do? So people are going to have their own, this is going to force the epiphany that was forced for you for three or four years ago. I just wonder, I think it's something for you to explore, because I suspect that there's going to be this opportunity. This is going to be that catalyst for a lot of people to overcome something that they've struggled with but haven't quite had the impetus to do it.

**Mark Metry:** Whitney I've never thought about it that way. Wow, OK, I got to, man my mind is, has just been blown right now. I got to -

**Whitney Johnson:** Awesome!

**Mark Metry:** - got to rethink this entire thing. This is awesome. Thank you so much, that was golden. Never thought of that way. That's brilliant.

**Whitney Johnson:** Well, there you go. It's my gift to you. I do think there's an opportunity. So, Mark Metry, thank you so much for being with us.

**Mark Metry:** Yeah. Whitney, you're the best. Thank you so much for having me on.

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Social anxiety disorder, according to experts, is the most common anxiety disorder. Why? We humans, we all want to be liked. We all want to fit in. But Mark helps us understand that social anxiety disorder is more than just worrying about fitting in. It is something much deeper. Although outwardly, Mark appeared to be a highly successful young entrepreneur, inwardly he was struggling. He was hurtling down a path of increased isolation and thoughts of self-harm. Fortunately for Mark, he was able to find hope. Listening to that Tim Ferriss podcast signaled to Mark that he was not alone. Other people struggle with anxiety and they find their way out. This, this simple act of sharing one's story was enough to inspire Mark to pursue healing. It also underscores the importance of telling our stories, sharing the joy and pain, because we never know who might be listening, who might need to hear, "I know where you are. I made it through. And trust me, you can make it through too". I love that Mark is finding purpose in his pain rather than letting his past hold him back, it is propelling him to new learning curves like writing a book. There's a lesson here for all of us, we can turn our weaknesses into defining strengths.

Thank you again to Mark Metry for being our guest, if you want to learn more about his work, check out his site, [markmetry.com](http://markmetry.com). M A R K M E T R Y.com. Or you can buy his book, "Screw Being Shy", we will provide a link in the show notes.

Thank you to our team, Jennifer Brotherson, Sarah Duran, Whitney Jobe, Virginia Kivlighan, Melissa Rutty and Nancy Wilson.

I'm Whitney Johnson. And this is Disrupt Yourself.