

ADDRESSING ANXIETY & STRESS (COUNSELING, 2 OF 4)

<https://fiercemarriage.com/addressing-anxiety-stress-counseling-2-of-4>

[00:00:00]

Ryan: Stress and anxiety I feel like get a really...I don't know, bad rap or they don't get addressed fully in Christian circles very well.

Selena: Yeah, I think we have a limited understanding if we're not psychologists or we're not counselors. I know I have a friend who is a counselor and who has illuminated those terms for me in-depth, and I think we definitely throw them around to frivolously and without regard.

Ryan: Right. And we deal with those who...

Selena: Not intentionally.

Ryan: ...struggle with this stuff. We tend to feel like, "Oh, if I'm feeling anxiety, then it's somehow rooted in..." It should just be fixed. If I read the right Bible verse or if I hear the right truth, it should just be fixed.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: And I think there's some truth in that, but there's also some room for understanding to a greater degree what's happening. Does that do it justice?

Selena: Yeah. I mean, I think that the point of counseling, I don't want to bury the lede here...Well, you know what? We'll just see you on the other side, and then I'll jump into that.

[00:01:05] <Intro>

Selena: Welcome to the Fierce Marriage podcast where we believe that marriage takes a fierce tenacity that never gives up and refuses to give in.

Ryan: Here, we'll share openly and honestly about all things marriage—

Selena: Sex—

Ryan: Communication—

Selena: Finances—

- Ryan:** Priorities—
- Selena:** Purpose—
- Ryan:** And everything in between.
- Selena:** Laugh, ponder, and join in our candid, gospel-centered conversations. This is Fierce Marriage.
- [00:01:36]** <podcast begins>
- Selena:** Does that make sense?
- Ryan:** Yeah. I struggle with this because it's one of those things that until you've experienced it, it's really hard to relate to.
- Selena:** There's varying degrees.
- Ryan:** And there's varying degrees, and we'll talk to that in a little bit here. Also, I've struggled with this because the history of mental health is so recent. There's not a lot of historical...Prior to the 19th to 20th century—
- Selena:** It was misunderstood. Yeah, it was misunderstood.
- Ryan:** Nobody's talking about it.
- Selena:** It's labeled and misidentified.
- Ryan:** We don't have this canon of information or even this diction of words that have been used in a timeless way. The Bible does mention anxiety in cast your anxieties, but you won't see in the Bible sums up a kind of a therapy session unfolding in the Bible, where someone's dealing with...So I struggle with it because I just don't know how to place it a lot of times in the scriptural context. So we have to view anxiety more generally, and fear and those sorts of things kind of together. Then...I don't know. It's tricky. Do you see why it's tricky? *[chuckles]* It feels tricky to me.
- Selena:** Yeah. But I think the Holy Spirit is our counselor. So then I'm like, well, yeah, it doesn't have a modern-day counseling session. But are there ways that Jesus was counseling people in how He asked questions, what He asked, how He led them...
- Ryan:** Yes, and no.

- Selena:** ...to understand beliefs and or challenge beliefs. Right?
- Ryan:** Right. I mean, the woman at the well, Jesus is basically reading her mail and saying, "You have all these husbands and you keep trying to find what you want, but really you need to drink this. I'm giving you living water." So he was kind of in a sense...I'm going to use the word dredging up. I don't think that was His motive. He wasn't trying to throw it in her face just to throw in her face. He was trying to show her something, that he was the only source of satisfaction, of salvation, especially for this woman. That's why he's looking at her past and looking at some of her choices, some of her decisions.
- Selena:** Which is what like counselors do. Right? *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** Right.
- Selena:** He's teaching and showing about Himself versus someone else teaching and showing us about Him in some way.
- Ryan:** Okay. You see Jesus reprimanding the Pharisees. Were there issues with the Pharisees' childhood that were causing them to want to prove themselves by praying loudly in the square and being so self-righteous and so law-oriented? What was going on? We don't see Jesus addressing that. So that's why I kind of struggle with it because there's almost a sense that we put a lot more emphasis today on mental health on the aspects of like family of origin and personal history. I think some of that's good. I'm not saying that all that should be thrown out. But that's why I struggle with this.
- Selena:** Okay. *[chuckles]* This is a hard topic. I think we need to be—
- Ryan:** I'm trying to address the whole thing in a Christian room.
- Selena:** And we will talk about it. Yeah.
- Ryan:** My dad struggles with anxiety a lot. A lot. I remember as a kid, we would go...as a kid we...I forget. My parents have this place out on the coast. They bought it a long time ago. I remember going there, spending the weekend there, and then [00:05:00] we'd drive home. Two hours home. And I'm in the back of the car and my dad's like, "I think I left the stove on." And I'm sitting there. And automatic because this was a theme in my childhood, I thought, "Oh, no, we're going to go back for two hours away. It's 10 o'clock at night."
- And I remember thinking, "Dad, no, you did not. I know you didn't. I saw you turn it off." He's like, "Well, I think I did." You know what I mean? So that's kind of the generalized anxiety. And that's the theme in my dad's life. And he

would tell you about it. He's walked through that. So I've always struggled to understand him and be like, "Just stop worrying about it. Don't worry."

Selena: That's like the epitome response of two sides of this, right? *[both chuckles]*

Ryan: Yes.

Selena: There's the one that's like, "Nope, you don't understand. I can't not worry about this. I can't be in this alone." And you're like, "It's fiiiine."

Ryan: The Bible says, cast your cares on the Lord. Cast it on the Lord." What else is there to do? And he's like, "Well, I just...yeah."

Selena: I guess I would have to say counseling would probably help us understand that process of casting, right?

Ryan: Sure

Selena: And help us to walk in that. Well, we've already jumped in. So we're going to just skip some of the upfront stuff here?

Ryan: Yeah. Well, I do want to do justice to this series. So this is number two in a four-part series, specifically on counseling. We had actually seen this desire to go to counseling in our own marriage.

Selena: Not for any major reason.

Ryan: Yeah, that's without having some sort of cataclysmic event. We've realized in conversation getting to know each other that there's probably some... *[Selena chuckles]*

Selena: 17 years. 20 years later.

Ryan: Kind of get to know you at this point. *[Selena chuckles]* And we thought, "Well, maybe it's something that we need help with so to walk through issues maybe in a more circumspect manner." So we've wanted to do a theme on counseling for a while and then we had an excuse to do that. We're doing something very unusual for us for these four episodes. We're actually partnering with a company that we feel like really meets this need. They approached us and I said, "Bah, probably not."

Selena: About a year you said no.

- Ryan:** Yeah, for a year. And then they came back and I said, "Well, if you want to do it, then I'd want it to be a partnership, not just we're reading off a script. But instead, we're going to partner with you to meet this need." Actually, they're helping to meet the need for us, right?
- Selena:** We're not selling a product here. We are bringing a tool to the table because it's a very—
- Ryan:** We have our first counseling session scheduled with them.
- Selena:** People, you're going to hear about this later, I'm nervous. So not going there yet.
- Ryan:** So this episode is in partnership with them. Actually, go to faithfulcounseling.com/FMP and you can get 10% off your first month and some monthly thing. It's all telehealth. So you can do it online.
- Selena:** Telehealth? That sounds like a new term.
- Ryan:** It is becoming more ubiquitous. But you can do it online through video, kind of a Zoom type of thing. They have the proprietary platform. Also, you can phone call, text message. I was messaging a...
- Selena:** The counselor on behalf. *[Ryan laughs]* How dare you?
- Ryan:** I was breaking all sorts of HIPAA laws texting as Selena.
- Selena:** Oh, my goodness. *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** We'll share more about that specific experience. But I want to put that up front so that you know it's there for you. You can find the link in the show notes as well. So what does the Bible say about anxiety and worry? Let's start there.
- Selena:** How do we put everything together? Because I think we really...is it dichotomize? Historically, psychology and... I hate to say religion, but like Christianity, the church...
- Ryan:** Religion is a good word.
- Selena:** Okay, maybe that is. But I'm saying that mental health and psychology was kind of put under science and then the Bible and everything was put under religion. And historically, the two have never meshed. They've always been kind of at other ends of the spectrum. But also battling each other, but also reflecting each other in some weird ways.

- Ryan:** I want to *[sighs]* push back on that. I'm sorry. Because I don't think science and religion...So for instance, most of the hospitals that we see are founded on by Christian or Judeo Christian or even Catholic. So that's healthcare.
- Selena:** Yes, I'm saying mental health has not...and psychology. Sorry, I guess I should say that. Mental health and psychology has historically been exclusively secular and how it's dealt with. Maybe that's a more precise...
- Ryan:** Okay, so the church hasn't...? I can see that.
- Selena:** Yes. Christian psychology is newer, I would say. I mean, your dad's been doing it his whole life.
- Ryan:** So you're saying the church is like Dwight shouting up to Michael on the rooftop saying, "Depressed?" Isn't that just a fancy word for being bummed out? *[chuckles]*
- Selena:** No.
- Ryan:** Sadly that what happened.
- Selena:** Yes, that is what happened I think for many, many years, hundreds of years, probably in church history. So fortunately and unfortunately, we're here today. We are reading our Bibles. We are learning that in Matthew it talks about not to worry or be anxious, right? Jesus says, "I tell you do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or drink, about your body, what you'll wear. [00:10:00] Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?"
- So we see, don't be anxious about tomorrow. He's saying, "Oh, you have little faith." And I'm like, "Ah, but what if we feel this, God? What about if we're seeking your kingdom, and we're seeking your righteousness, and we're still feeling worrisome or still feeling anxious, maybe now more than ever?" Stepping into motherhood, I think, new fears and anxiety definitely, it's a new battle. It's a different kind of battle. I never would have considered myself an anxious person. And then I had kids and I'm not anxious, I'm not anxious. You're anxious. *[both laughs]* And so begins the battle
- Ryan:** So I want to sit on the Matthew 6 for a little bit because you just read it. Matthew 6:25. "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds

of the air..." I don't want to reread the whole thing. So depending on how we view this verse will determine how we use this verse. Does that make sense?

Selena: Nice.

Ryan: And I don't mean nice the use...we don't use scripture. That's a really bad way to put. Scripture informs our very existence. But what I'm saying is that if we view this verse as aspirin, as a medicine to be taken, then we will just go to the cabinet, we'll pull this verse out and say, "Oh, boy, I'm worried about thing I'm doing right now..." Whether it's an assignment at school, or whether it's...I don't why I used that example. Or it's something going on in your life...

Selena: All the smoke in the air. We sound little raspy people because we've been breathing in smoke for a week.

Ryan: All right. I'm worried. So I'm going to pull this off the shelf and say, Jesus said, "Don't be anxious about anything."

Selena: Okay, I'm just going to not be anxious.

Ryan: I'm not going to be anxious.

Selena: I will this.

Ryan: Okay. I think there's some merit to that. When we find ourselves getting anxious, we can go to God's Word...

Selena: Absolutely.

Ryan: But Jesus was not just saying when you're getting the grumpies in terms of your own emotions, and you can't manage the anxiety part, just think of this. I think He was saying, "Are you not of more value than this?" He is trying to draw our eyes up?

Selena: Right. Right.

Ryan: And this is a deep, eternal truth. It's not a band aid fix. It is a cellular transformation that happens in the life of a believer.

Selena: He says that too. Verse 32. "For the Gentile seek after these things of what shall we eat, what shall we drink? Gentiles were typically referred to basically unbelievers, right?"

Ryan: Yes. Anyone not Jewish.

Selena: "...they seek after these things. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all." And then it's kind of a reference to some common grace. "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," verse 33, "and all these things will be added to you. Therefore, to not be anxious about tomorrow for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

So we see verses 33 and 34, when you lift...You're right, it's a call to lift our eyes to seek first God's kingdom, His righteousness, and not allow maybe some of the...I think that's an invitation into peace of...God will supply your food. He is the ultimate provider. He's the creator. Not just provider, but He created all of these things. So there is this lifting of our head, right, a gentle lifting of our head saying, "Look, I will provide these things for you. There's enough for you to worry about, and to think about and to deal with than these just basic provisions on some level." Like you said, it's a bigger call looking and seeking God's kingdom, not just what am I going to eat next.

Ryan: Again, as opposed to just you're bleeding, so put a band aid on top of this thing that you're feeling. It's a cellular transformation that happens when you realize that you are called into a kingdom that is otherworldly, that is God's kingdom. It's not a worldly kingdom. So your whole priority matrix is upended at this point.

Selena: Right. Right.

Ryan: Anyway, how does this actually deal with anxiety? We should talk about the difference between feeling anxious and anxiety disorder. Those are two different things.

Selena: Those are different things. Yes.

Ryan: I feel like maybe this one speaks more to the former. Feelings of anxiety or having situational anxiety versus anxiety disorder, which is actually been proven. I think science has proving this. Science. I just reference science. *[both chuckles]* Science said that I think anxiety disorder is actually a genetic thing. It's shown genetic signals I should say. Anyway, I don't know. Maybe we will talk about that later. I don't want to jump the gun with your outline here.

Selena: It's all right. So we're talking about worry and anxiety. I think we should also talk about what Scripture says about fear. Because a lot of our fears or anxiety and stress can come from fear. Not a reverent sense like fear of the Lord, but in an afraid sense, just to be clear. We read verses like 1 John 4:18. "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been [00:15:00] perfected in love."

So if I have any sort of fear, am I imperfect in my love? Well, yes, to some extent because we're broken sinners. Jesus just continues to come and says, "Fear not. Fear not. Fear not." Angels come and says, "Fear not. Fear not." So we see fear as a big theme in our humanity [*chuckles*] and in our minds, in our mental health. In the Western world, we don't necessarily have to fear physical harm in some ways that perhaps like in Eastern Europe or in Africa, you know, there is a lot more, I think, fear around bodily, physical harm versus for us, we're dealing with more mental battles, which we also talk about. [*chuckles*] Like identifying what those battles are.

Ryan: [*sighs*] Okay. I want to speak to this. In 1 John 4, you said that there was no fear in love. Scripture is a redemptive story. Okay, we have to keep that in mind. I'm saying this because it's what I'm reading about currently. This letter is specifically dealing with this doctrine of God is love. It's very popular. So God is love and love is everything. So anything that I want to do, basically a loving God wouldn't want me to not do that thing, right? That's a lie. Okay, God is love, but love is not God. Meaning that we don't submit to whatever we say love is. Instead, we submit to God, and He happens to have love kind of wrapped up in His character. So we look to Him for that. That's the first piece.

But this passage specifically is speaking to a soul level of fear, I feel like. Then there's going to be natural bubbling up to the surface. It says, "Let us love one another, for love is from God. Whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. And anyone who does not love God does not know God." So it's using love as kind of this plumb line to compare ourselves to the love of God.

Then down in verse 13, it says, "By this, we know that we abide in Him, He in us because He has given us of the Spirit. We have seen and testify that the Father has sent His Son to be the savior of the world." That's a salvific message. It's revealing salvation.

Then, in the end, it says, "By this love is perfected with us so that we may have confidence for the Day of Judgment." He's talking about judgment. He's talking about fear in the Day of Judgment. I guess what I'm asking you is, if I'm afraid that we're not going to be able to make ends meet this month, is this a good verse for that? I think Matthew 6 is probably a better verse for that. This one is speaking more to this deep soul level fear. And honestly, it does speak to me worrying about not making ends meet financially because I can look at—

Selena: That's an indicator of...

Ryan: I can look at, oh, man, I'm saved by grace in Christ and God, who is rightfully, I should bear his wrath. He has borne it Himself. And so I am now love and I have no fear and judgment because of Christ.

Selena: Right. And that can build confidence in us...

Ryan: Right.

Selena: ...and trust I think in who God is no matter what we face. If it's because of either bad decisions or just an outside, external force that we're facing, that smoke, COVID, whatever, we can trust and rest that God is still...He is not only our Savior, but He is our provider. He is Jehovah Jireh.

Ryan: It contextualizes our God in us and that He is good and we are not. But He has called us good. That ultimate truth informs all the little truth.

Selena: Well, it's interesting that you said a soul level piece. Because when I was reading doing research last week on the episode before on gotquestions.com, where I was reading just a little bit about this, again, secular psychology versus Christian psychologist or biblical psychology. Or biblical counselor, sorry. Let me take those terms back.

So having a biblical counselor versus a secular counselor. A biblical counselor will deal with things 'at a soul level' is the term that they used. Versus secular will kind of help you deal with the externals and some of the feelings and emotions, but it won't actually get to the source because as believers we're made in the image of God. Everything begins and ends with Him. So how can we try to work on ourselves or engage in that information in counseling that we might be getting if it's not pointing us back to Him, pointing us back to His definition of love, scripture, the Word, all those things?

Ryan: It's really good. It's really good.

Selena: I want to put up a little bit of a bow on this.

Ryan: It's a bit...I want to—

Selena: It's complex. [00:20:00] We're trying not to go into it insensitive because there's a lot around this.

Ryan: We're just saying that start with the authority and of Scripture and who God is and who He says we are. Start there. And that's the gospel.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: It's a bit like going to a doctor. Say you broke your leg and you're going to a doctor who doesn't recognize the same, who basically is using a different

textbook, that doesn't even think human blood works a certain way, or whatever. What will happen is you'll end up inevitably getting a bad solution that would otherwise—

Selena: Right. I just wanted to say, as believers, as a couple, and if you see, okay, I'm reading Matthew 6 about anxiety and worry, I'm reading 1 John about fear, what about what Jesus says about peace. John 16:33. "I have said these things to you that in me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take heart, I've overcome the world."

John 14. "Jesus has given us peace. It's otherworldly not I give to you. Not as the world gives." Galatians 5, it's a fruit of the Spirit. So if I don't have peace, the question is, am I not walking in the Spirit? Am I not engaging in the peace or receiving the peace that Jesus says that He's given me? I think this is primarily what this episode hopefully helps to answer. Questions like, well, am I sinning then? If anxiety and stress are in my marriage and in my life, am I engaging in some sort of sin? Or am I not believing the Bible enough? Am I not walking in the Spirit or believing God or the gospel?

Ryan: I think those are all really good questions to ask.

Selena: Which is hopefully what we're going to—

Ryan: But I do want to say that those questions aren't necessarily going to...okay. This is again, the elephant in the room. Someone's feeling anxiety and someone says, "Jesus gave you peace, in John 14, and Galatians says, it's the fruit of the Spirit. So, therefore, you're probably sinning or whatever." Instead of actually saying—

Selena: Dismissive. Yeah.

Ryan: They can be very dismissive of it. That's the elephant in the room. So I think it is healthy to say, "Okay, am I feeling anxiety because I'm sinning? Sinning looks like a number of things.

Selena: It can cause stress.

Ryan: I'm not saying it's the sole source. There is a mental disorder that is, honestly, it's the result of a deeper sin. And that's the fallenness of humanity. Okay. So yes, in a sense, everything that you deal with in terms of anxiety and fear, and stress, and even depression has to do on some level with sin.

Selena: Yes, it's brokenness.

Ryan: Okay. Let's move it up a little bit. Am I actually sinning? Well, that could be possible that you have maybe unreconciled sin and you've unconfessed sin or you have something that's eating away at you that it's causing anxiety and you have yet to recognize it, confess it, repent of it, reconcile with the person you've sinned against. So that could be the answer. It's not a bad question to ask. I just don't want to ask it in a dismissive way.

Selena: Right. Right.

Ryan: The next one is, am I not believing the Bible enough? Not taking God at His Word is the root cause of all sin. That's Genesis 3. That's where they tried to be God, they call them a liar essentially. Am I not believing the Bible enough? I think it's safe to say we're all not believing the Bible enough.

Selena: Sure.

Ryan: The question is, in whatever anxiety situation it is, is that an opportunity for you to be sanctified? Am I not living by the Spirit? I mean, we can keep going on. Am I not believing or understanding God or the gospel enough? I think the answer could be yes, yes, yes, and yes to all these things. But again, we don't mean to ask them in a very dismissive way.

Selena: Yeah. Or even just like this is the exact cause of it, right?

Ryan: Right.

Selena: We are not counselors. I think, ideally, if a Christian counselors pointing us back to Jesus, back to Scripture, then they're also loving us as someone in the body of Christ. They're using their gifts to love and edify the body of Christ. I think understanding counseling and the position that it can be given is awesome. But counseling I think it doesn't replace the church and the body of Christ. And community is a part of that.

Sometimes I think we can either underestimate it or overestimate it. So again, identifying, saying, "Okay, this is the purpose of counseling. This is how we valuing it." We talked about that in the last episode. Valuing it. But we got a lot still to cover. So I want to keep moving forward here.

Let's define anxiety and stress real quick. Our little definition of it is it's often caused by an external source.

Ryan: What is?

- Selena:** Stress, sorry. Stress. What we talked about was it's often caused by an external source and typically out of our control. If you've watched the news, you see there's a lot of fires at Pacific Northwest—
- Ryan:** Sorry, pause. [00:25:00] I want to do this real quick. You're contracting stress and anxiety. Stress, we would say we're not clinicians...
- Selena:** I have a clinical definition and [inaudible] definition.
- Ryan:** But I want to finish. Stress, we would say is something imposed from the outside in. Stressors. By smoke, we have wildfires flooding the area.
- Selena:** That's what I was trying to say.
- Ryan:** To contrast that, anxiety is something that's more inside us, right? So stress is on the outside, anxiety is coming from within. I wanted to say that first before we talk about smoke and all that kind of stuff.
- Selena:** Okay.
- Ryan:** We're not seeing eye to eye on this. *[Selena chuckles]*
- Selena:** I went through it with you and you're like, "It sounds good. Huh?" I was like, "Okay. *[chuckles]* No, that's good. I think that's good to say that anxiety is external and stress is more internal. Just generally speaking, label that in your head.
- Ryan:** Stress is external, anxiety is internal.
- Selena:** That's what I meant. Sorry. Stress is external. So external, as in smoke. We have had wildfires. everywhere around us. We've been breathing in smoke as little as we can. But it's still a lot for the last week. It's really weird. And we're over it. We're ready to breathe in some clean air.
- Ryan:** How is it stressing us?
- Selena:** It's stressing us because we can't go outside. It's literally the AQ, air quality index is very unhealthy. It's been in the two hundreds for the last...
- Ryan:** Two and three hundreds, yeah. The issue is it's creating all kinds of problems with our kiddos because they can't go outside.
- Selena:** They can't.

Ryan: They are bouncing off the walls, and I'm losing patience and I'm trying to get stuff done.

Selena: It's just cabin fever. And it's terrible because it's not raining, it's not cold. It's just completely smoky. So it's causing a lot of stress that we can't control. So looking at a clinical definition of stress, I think is kind of important to...because we're not clinicians or anything like that. But stress can be defined as the degree to which you feel overwhelmed or unable to cope as a result of pressures that are manageable.

Another one is, in a medical or biological context, stress is a physical, mental, or emotional factor that causes bodily or mental tension. Stress can cause or influence the cause of any medical conditions, including psychological conditions such as depression and anxiety.

Ryan: Interesting.

Selena: So again, stress is...

Ryan: It's the degree to which you feel overwhelmed or unable to cope.

Selena: Right.

Ryan: Based on our other reading is that stress in this sense is almost like situational anxiety, except seeing that distinction between situational anxiety and then anxiety disorder, which I think you are to define next.

Selena: Right. The clinical definition for anxiety from APA, American Psychological Association defines it as an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts, and physical changes, like increased blood pressure. And knowing the difference between normal feelings of anxiety and an anxiety disorder requires medical attention. It can help a person identify and treat it.

In the article, they look at the differences between anxiety and the disorder. There are different types and they each need different types of treatment. I want to say these last few things. While anxiety can cause distress. It's not always a medical condition. When an individual faces potentially harmful or worrying triggers, feelings of anxiety are not only normal but necessary for survival.

Ryan: Interesting. To speak to that, we talked about these questions, right? Am I feeling anxious because I've sinned or because I'm not walking in step with the Spirit? That's interesting when you read that APA definition of it, which is an individual faces potentially harmful, worrying triggers, feelings of anxiety are

not only normal but necessary for survival. So could it be that there's soul survival at stake in some of these cases where there is an unhealthy habit in your life?

Okay, I'm going to always go back to this example because I feel like it's prevalent. If a husband who is addicted to pornography and they are hiding this addiction and they are fueling this addiction secretly at night, and when they're on business trips, or on their phone, however, and he is feeling a good level of anxiety. Okay? Could it be that there's anxiety? Whether he realizes it or not, but could it be that that addiction, that ongoing unrepentant sin is causing distress in their marriage, in their family that he's unaware of that's causing them this general sense of anxiety?

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: Could that be?

Selena: Yeah.

Ryan: I don't know. I can't answer that across the board. But I'm saying that...

Selena: No, yeah. I'm saying yeah. I am saying yes, I'm agreeing with you on those are good questions, not saying yes, this is the answer. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: I know that anytime I've had something that I've done early in our marriage, that's something that I've hidden from you. We've talked a lot about transparency and this is because we've been on both sides of that. It wreaks havoc on my heart. I feel like I am living in a nightmare [00:30:00] when I have to hide something from you. This is why I couldn't imagine...Man, I just pray that God shields us from making *[chuckles]* devastating mistakes because I'm so afraid of having to live in light of that reality. I think that's a healthy fear, right? So there's a healthy amount of anxiety around that, even being kind of...I don't want to go down that rabbit trail.

But the point I'm trying to make is that, could it be that there's this sense of soul survival or like this disagrees with me on a soul level so it's causing these bodily symptoms?

Selena: Yeah, for sure. Yeah, those are good questions to ask, for sure.

Ryan: Speaking of which...

- Selena:** So speaking of which...going back to marriage and counseling and all of that, as you mentioned, we do have our first session scheduled for Monday. It is Thursday, and right now we're recording.
- Ryan:** What are your feelings? Are you...?
- Selena:** I wrote my feelings down. You have question marks because I don't know how you feel. I feel... nervous.
- Ryan:** I feel nothing. *[both chuckles]*
- Selena:** ...a little anxious, fearful. Just kind of all the things because, I mean, it's the first counseling session and we were just going to see what they...it's a kind of...I don't know. I feel like *[both chuckles]* I get to know you thing...
- Ryan:** But I'm not ready.
- Selena:** ...but it's also, well, but you're really going to get to know you. Right? Like, it's not just like a meet and greet.
- Ryan:** I think I know why you are afraid. Because you can't predict it because you don't know how it's going to go. Selena you—
- Selena:** I anticipate.
- Ryan:** You drive on anticipating.
- Selena:** Because it lowers the blow. Like it's not like as like—
- Ryan:** Aka predicting the future. *[laughs]* What are we going to say and do?
- Selena:** Because I'm not good at dealing with the ambiguity of things sometimes. And they ask questions that I'm like, "I don't know. I'm just trying to like survive one day at a time." So generally speaking, I don't know what the themes of my past have been. *[laughs]*
- Ryan:** This is a paradigm shifting thing for us because we've never done counsel like this with a stranger. It's always been with somebody who knows us, and there's context there. So it's helpful to remember. And I'm saying this to you as much as I am saying it to you, listener.
- Selena:** To yourself, you mean?

- Ryan:** No. It's all I'm going to say. *[both laughs]* It's helpful to remember that the counselor is on your side and they want to help. And that's their whole mission is *[Selena laughing]* to get you to a place of health. And then to not just...
- Selena:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** ...rub your face in whatever shame or whatever history you're sharing, but to get to help on the other side of that.
- Selena:** Can we write a book on this? Like transparency in marriage?
- Ryan:** *[sighing]* I don't know. It's somewhere more toward the back. *[both laughs]* I don't know.
- Selena:** Again, we're human, right? We're created in God's image. It's not something we can always deal with on our own. There's stuff that we just we have blind spots, we have probably habits we've fallen into and things that we've dealt with that we just don't know.
- Ryan:** Speaking of which, you haven't really asked me how I feel about it.
- Selena:** I did. I said, "I don't know how you feel. There's question marks on our rundown." *[chuckles]*
- Ryan:** And then you carried the conversation forward from there. *[laughs]*
- Selena:** Uhhh, fine. How are you feeling? I asked you and you were like, "I already know this stuff."
- Ryan:** I was thinking of a funny joke.
- Selena:** Okay. That's what he *[Ryan laughing]* does when he is probably feeling nervous, I imagine.
- Ryan:** Actually, I feel nothing. *[both laughs]* Sorry.
- Selena:** This is the second time you say that. Do you want me to ask you? Or do you really want an opportunity to answer?
- Ryan:** Yes. I don't really feel anything. I'm curious. I'm not afraid. I'm excited.
- Selena:** See, this is like so Ryan and so Selena. I'm nervous. I'm a little bit fearful because it's new. I'm a little anxious because I've never...I feel like I've never tried something, been bad at it and walked away saying like, "Okay, whatever."

I'll try it again and be better." It's always devastating for me. Whereas you go try something, suck at it, and you're like, "It's fine. I'm going to..."

Ryan: I don't really suck at that many things. *[laughs]*

Selena: No, I don't mean that. I just mean you're not afraid to fail I think in a lot of things and you're not afraid to expose yourself in terms of like your fears, or like, "I'm not good at this. I've never tried this."

Ryan: I don't know. I think it's a coping mechanism if I'm honest. I think I've had to deal with a lot of stuff that I don't know what to do and it's constant...So just with the work—

Selena: So you kind of laugh about it, where I just clam up and....

Ryan: Well, I just figure there's nothing I can do at this juncture.

Selena: ...just fold up into the fetal position, and then you're like, "Why are you laying then?"

Ryan: It's like saying...

Selena: I can't laugh at that. *[chuckles]*

Ryan: You just you don't know what's going to come at, so you can't make that decision or anticipate until it's there. So I think I'm used to making kind of the...I'll say—

Selena: The last minute decision.

Ryan: ...the read plays. Like once I see what I'm facing, then I can read it and go the way that I can go—

Selena: But I can see parts of what I'm going to face since I'm like, "Well, when that faces me, and that comes here, I'm going to try to use this mechanism."

Ryan: So I don't know. People listening to this, [00:35:00] husband, wife, you might identify with what we've just described. I think I'm more comfortable with ambiguity. I'm more of the runningback, I would say, and you're more of the coach. You want to look at all the game footage and anticipate the enemy's moves. And I'm like, "Hey, if there's somebody in front of me, I'll just shoot to the left." That's all I need to know right now.

Selena: So in a lot of ways, that's how we help each other I think.

Ryan: And encourage each other crazy.

Selena: Yes. *[both laughs]* If you're a married couple listening, you're saying, okay, seriously, though, "How do we hope that counseling would help us? We're on the fence we do, we have a lot of stress, we're feeling a lot of anxiety. All those things you read about it, yes, those are us. What should we do? What should be our hope in all of this?" Well, ideally, we would fix it or we get we get through it. It'd be all good. Well, we'll learn how to deal with it.

I think the first step for us was and is right now is diagnosing—identifying the sources of stress and anxiety. Understand the battle that might be happening inside of you more clearly.

Ryan: Okay, I'm thinking of there's diagnosing it and calling it by what it is, and then there's getting to the source of the diagnosis. And that's what you're getting at. So one of the things that we talked about in diagnosis is there's situational anxiety. And that's like, okay, you're feeling the way you're feeling, but then there's a disorder.

Selena: Right. And that's where I was thinking you could pull up that little helpful chart that talks about some of it.

Ryan: I thought you might put it in here.

Selena: I don't know if I put charts and things. *[Ryan chuckles]* It's right here.

Ryan: There it is.

Selena: Oops.

Ryan: We can't find it. So there is a chart, and the chart says, how do you identify everyday anxiety versus anxiety disorder? Do you want to read a few of those?

Selena: Sure. Everyday anxiety might look like worry about paying bills, or landing a job or romantic breakup, or other important life events. An anxiety disorder would be constant and unsubstantiated worry that causes significant distress and interferes with daily life. Everyday anxiety might look like a case of nerves or sweating before big test, business presentation, stage performance or other significant event. Anxiety disorder seemingly out of the blue panic attacks and the preoccupation with the fear of having another one.

Ryan: Very real.

- Selena:** Yes.
- Ryan:** Again, having grown up with my awesome dad who deals with anxiety disorder, I would say, he calls it generalized anxiety. So in other words, I mentioned the stove example. Honestly, if it's not the stove, it's something else. So he'll find something to fixate on. Again, we've talked about this a lot. You've been there for those conversations. So it's really hard to know how to navigate that.
- Selena:** [inaudible] I have that scripture in my heart, I'm saying that, I'm living in that moment, but still, these are the things that overtake me.
- Ryan:** My dad's a psychologist. If you didn't know, he's a psychologist. He knows all of this in his head. The problem is he still feels something in his heart. And He knows God. He knows scripture. He says, "I know I have deep peace, but I still am obsessing about..."
- Selena:** Yeah. So the hope here...
- Ryan:** I want to read a few more. I just feel like they're helpful.
- Selena:** Okay.
- Ryan:** So everyday anxiety is realistic fear of a dangerous object, place, or situation. So you're standing on a bridge—we've crossed bridges recently and you walk and it just kind of makes you feel afraid. I watched a video on Instagram the other day where this girl dives into this little rock hole...I showed you yesterday?
- Selena:** Yeah.
- Ryan:** Oh, my goodness. I got so...And you even just like, "Whooh" She dive in this rock hole...
- Selena:** Because she's barely fits into this little hole.
- Ryan:** It's filled with water and she swims through the other side. Who knows how? I just pictured myself getting stuck halfway through and drowning in a... I'm sorry. I got situational anxiety and it was on the internet. Anxiety disorder version of that is irrational fear, avoidance, or an object, place, or situation that poses little or no threat of danger. I'll read this last one.

Everyday anxiety is sadness or difficulty sleeping immediately after a traumatic event. Anxiety disorder is recurring nightmares, flashbacks,

emotional numbing related to a traumatic event that occurred several months or years before.

Selena: I think counselors are really good at understanding everyday anxiety versus an anxiety disorder. That's their job is to help diagnose accurately what we're dealing with, understanding the battles that we face.

Ryan: A biblical counselor will help you get to the heart, soul route to that. I love this verse. Ephesians 6:12-13. "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood..." The humanistic view with a materialistic view of the universe, like you're just atoms and matter that just happened to be assembled in this place in this space and time. [00:40:00]

Selena: Matter that don't matter.

Ryan: Oh, baby.

Selena: Wow. Here it is. I'm done. *[both chuckles]*

Ryan: We don't wrestle against flesh and blood. We don't wrestle against just matter and mass, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. These are all very non-scientific things. These are all spiritual things.

Selena: It's so good. I'm going to stop you right there because I think that Christ understands all of the spiritual realm and the earthly realm. They see God is outside of it, they see it all for what it is. So if God says to do something, we should want to do that more than anything else in our lives. Right?

Ryan: Because He knows. Yeah.

Selena: Because He knows. And we can trust that.

Ryan: Again, that is if we do see Kim as King of kings.

Selena: And I'm sorry, I don't mean to say that as a dismissive answer of like, if you're dealing with depression, or anxiety or stress like just find peace. Again, this is not the Pat answer. I think counseling will help us say, yes, you are dealing with some of these...I hate to say about powers of the darkness, right? The present darkness. There are spiritual forces maybe at work here. I'm not going to get hyper-spiritual. But there is brokenness and sin and darkness that we are waging war against. And a counselor will help us see that and a counselor will help us wage battle on that.

Selena: You had a little disclaimer: I don't want to get hyper-spiritual. I do mean that. Meaning that we can go too far on either end of the spectrum. We can go hyper-spiritual, meaning that everything is the devil's fault and everything about that I experience is the devil. *[chuckles]*

Selena: Say it jokingly, but people do give them way too much credit.

Ryan: Or we can go too far on the other end and say everything is just cause and effect. Like everything that I experienced is because somebody did it or I did it to myself, and there are no spiritual forces at work. And Paul is saying that no, we don't only wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the ruler and all these spiritual forces of evil and authorities and things which are physical.

So the point is, is that a counselor will help you see right through that lens while also helping peel back the layers and start dealing with maybe whatever that is, is causing the disorder on a deeper, even a relational level or somewhere in your path, somewhere in your family of origin. Personal history, yeah.

Selena: As a married couple, understanding that we're going to a counselor hoping that they will help diagnose and help us find those sources of stress and anxiety. And then they'll help us deal with them. And I don't mean deal just to have an alliteration there. But counselors give us tools on how to better deal with our stress and anxiety. Ideally, they're Christian counselors in light of Scripture. So how are we going to wage war? How are we going to wrestle against the flesh and blood? How are we going to receive the peace of Jesus that is otherworldly? I truly believe that counselors bring tangible tools to the table when it comes to all of this. How much, you know...?

Ryan: A good counselor will.

Selena: Yeah, yeah. So ideally, these tools will guide us clarify our walk with God, help us find freedom and breakthrough in Christ in dealing with anxiety, dealing with stress. They're helping us on a journey so we can be better about taking our thoughts captives, right, in 2 Corinthians 10, we can find peace that is not circumstantial, but is in Christ and we can put on the full armor of God, which is, again, in 2 Corinthians.

I think as a couple we can help each other in our respective journeys. Like if we're both on this journey, we're discovering different sources of stress, maybe things from our past or things that we're currently dealing with, we are now faced with one of the biggest opportunities as a spouse to love one another.

Ryan: It's good.

Selena: 1 Corinthians 13:4, we reference it I feel like almost every podcast episode, but it's worth reading here and now. "Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

What better time can we exemplify love to our spouse as to when maybe we or they, as a couple or individually, are going through some of the hard yucky parts of their life that they are facing? This is one great time that your spouse gets to step into that role and say, "I am here to support you. I'm your biggest fan. I'm going to encourage you. I'm sticking with you. We're going to get through this." And can help maybe gently lift your chin a little bit when things feel really hard to deal with, really hard to say, or really hard to talk about. [00:45:00]

Know that you're building unity within your marriage. You're journaling and battling together. So again, encourage one another in this journey. Pray and read scripture together through it all. But just know that that line...we always talked about that, how a spouse has a direct line to your spouse's heart. This is the time to start engaging that.

Ryan: Yeah. I love that you said that. You're bringing in the definition of marriage that we see in Genesis 2. You or your spouse is helpmate, a helper fit for him. So Eve was. And you are one flesh. So knowing that you're one flesh, knowing that you're the helper fit for your spouse, you can come along them.

We also know, and we talked about this, the whole episode is that we have the Holy Spirit as our helper. He's our counselor. And we have that. But beyond those two, not that we have really moved beyond those two things, especially the Holy Spirit, He is always working in sanctifying us, Christ is also graciously grafted us into the body that is His church as brothers and sisters in Christ. So we have other people. That's why we're talking about biblical counselors. Not just psychologists, not just secular counselors, but biblical counselors who will walk you through this and Shepherd you through this and be your helper through this. Just like you have a helpmate in your spouse, just like you have a helper in the Holy Spirit.

Actually, that's one of the first things we did when we got on faithfulcounseling.com, I should say, you got on there and created an account. And then I was messaging a counselor. *[both chuckles]*

Selena: On my behalf. She has all the credentials, right? We filled out the forms and said, "We want somebody who's going to give us biblical counseling." And she said, "I'm here to help you get healing and so on and so forth." She said, "Do you have any questions?" And I got on there because your computer was in the office...

Selena: Oh, did you ask questions you know I want to ask?

Ryan: Yeah. And I just said, "Yeah, I just have one question? What is your view of Scripture? And how will scripture aid in helping us?"

Selena: Hmm, go you.

Ryan: And I said, "That's all I really want to know." And she wrote back within minutes. And this is why it's a great platform, not trying to be just...I was really impressed, genuinely impressed.

Selena: It takes a lot, people on the internet. *[Ryan chuckles]*

Ryan: I was expecting like a two-hour turnaround or even a day turnaround. But within minutes, she said, "I believe the Bible is the inerrant Word of God, I believe that is helpful and instructional for us in every aspect of our lives" type of thing. And she goes, "Do you have any other questions?" And I said, "Nope, that's all I care about." *[Selena laughs]* Now we can talk.

Selena: Now we can talk.

Ryan: So I guess that's the theme. That's why we wanted to partner with Faithful Counseling. Now, you do have to do the work to make sure that the counselor you're...because somebody can check the Christian box, they can check the Bible box without actually ascribing authority to Scripture, without actually walking the way of Christ as a Christian, being a disciple themselves. So you have to go about doing the work.

But the thing about faithfulcounseling.com...and here's, I guess, the pitch, right? Like I said, we are partnering with them and they've given us a link for you to get 10% off your first month. Go to faithfulcounseling.com/fmp and you will get a 10% off.

Selena: Fierce Marriage podcast.

Ryan: Thank you. And you'll get 10% off immediately you apply for your first month. And here's how it works. Basically, you fill out this whole form. I don't love

filling out forms but this is actually pretty easy. Because I did it once and then never actually submitted. That's why I don't have a counselor. So it's a really easy thing to fill out. You tell them what you're dealing with, who you're comfortable meeting with, a man or a woman. If you're a guy, I'd highly recommend having a guy counselor, so on and so forth. Same for ladies. And then they spend, I don't know, a day or two? And then they'll pair you with who they think will be a good counselor for you. And then you can ask some questions, get acquainted with them. You can either say yes, or you can say, "I want a different person."

Selena: You can even have a counseling session I think with them. They were checking in with me afterwards. Faithful Counselors, was like, "We wanted to make sure that everything's good. That it's going to work out you think." So they'll check in with you quickly. It's very responsive. You can switch counselors I think in the middle of it.

Ryan: Anytime. Actually, our friends that we mentioned in the last week's episode, they did that. And they found a counselor that actually it kind of works better with their personalities and ascribes to a deeper authority in Scripture. So all I have to say is the help is there, you guys. COVID is weird, these times are weird, we're more isolated than ever, it's hard to connect with people in your community or in your church. I think one solution for this body of Christ, counseling one other could be faithfulcounseling.com. So yeah.

Anyway, they can help with all kinds of things: depression, stress, anxiety, relationships, sleeping trauma, family conflicts, couples counseling, obviously. I think you could probably get help with sex issues, obviously sexual addiction, but also if we're having a hard time with our intimate life. So anyway, that's the pitch.

Selena: That's the pitch.

Ryan: Faithfulcounseling.com/fmp for 10% off. Anyway, you guys, appreciate you sitting through this. I'm excited to go into counseling. [00:50:00] So on Monday, we have a...

Selena: Did you say, "My husband's going to be joining me?" Because I do fear that she's expecting just me. So I guess I should know if I have...

Ryan: We have time between now and then to say that. She may say...

Selena: My fears are showing right now. My interpretation of...

Ryan: You can assuage those fears by sending a message.

Selena: No. *[laughs]*

Ryan: So next week we'll be talking about that experience and just some of the stuff that we unearth in our own lives. If you have something that you want us to talk about, this actually topic was the most asked for topic. If you go to fiercemarriage.com/counseling, you can fill out a little form there that lets you say what you want to hear about in terms of therapy, counseling, psychology. This was the top one. So go there and fill it out. Fiercemarriage.com/counseling. That will inform along with our own experience our next episode. All right?

Selena: All right.

Ryan: All right. Well, I hope this episode was helpful. Let me pray us out and then we're going to get some lunch because I'm famished. *[both chuckles]* Lord, thank you for the common grace that you've given us in being able to think and think introspectively, but also to ask each other hard questions and to read your Word and let it bear weight on our hearts, our deep, deep hearts. Lord and Holy Spirit, I pray that you would inform those conversations that we have with each other and with those who would counsel us, and with us as we counsel others.

Father, I pray for the husband who's struggling right now, the wife who's struggling right now. They might feel like they are up against a wall, like they've lost hope, like their marriage is doomed, that their life is going to be ruined. I pray that you would give them hope in you, that you would give them peace in this storm. And then Lord I pray that you would set their foot on firm ground, you'd help them take steps toward reconciliation whatever issue they're facing in their marriage. And I pray that they would feel encouraged, and they would be bold and brave and facing whatever challenge stands before them.

God, they're not bold and brave because of themselves, but they're bold and brave, because, Jesus you have conquered death and you have conquered sin, and you have promised to walk beside us and to lead us. So we follow your lead in Jesus' name. Amen.

Selena: Amen.

Ryan: All right. This episode is—

Selena: In the can.

Ryan: Ladies and gentlemen, thank you once again for joining us on the Fierce Marriage Podcast. We will see you again in about seven days. Until next time—

Ryan: Stay fierce.

[00:52:27] <outro>

Ryan: Thank you for listening to the Fierce Marriage podcast. For more resources for your marriage, please visit FierceMarriage.com, or you can find us with our handle @Fiercemarriage on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Thank you so much for listening. We hope this has blessed you. Take care.

PODCAST NOTES

- **[00:10:44]**
 - Scripture references:
 - Matthew 6:25, ESV
 - 1 John 4:18
 - John 16:33
 - Galatians 5
 - 2 Corinthians 10
 - Ephesians 6:12
 - 1 Corinthians 13:4

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