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**What if Anxiety was your friend?**

What if Anxiety was your friend? An over-protective, sometimes annoying, but well-meaning friend, constantly trying to warn you of dangers and protect you from harm. What if this well-meaning friend makes mistakes once in awhile and warns you of dangers that are not really there? Imagine walking along a street and your friend grabs your arm and screams at you to “Watch out!!” because a car is driving at you. Your heart starts to race, your breathing speeds up, you get laser focus and for a moment you think you might die. Then you look up and see the car is actually 2 blocks away and you are totally fine. You roll your eyes at your over-protective and sometimes dramatic friend and the two of you carry on, safely with no danger of being hit by the car. You don’t berate your friend, or say “what is wrong with you?” And, yet, when we get an anxious response, we can judge ourselves harshly and be mean. We may even create a barrier to the anxiety symptoms, work hard to get rid of it, block it out, ignore it, or even hate it or hate ourselves for having an anxious response. What if anxiety was a good thing? Anxiety can help us get up in the morning, get out the door on time, and drive with focussed awareness. Anxiety can help us stay motivated, make changes, set goals, focus on a project, be organized, and complete tasks. What if anxiety, when leveraged well, can even be like a superpower? Providing you with incredible focus, heightened awareness to your surroundings, and muscles ready to go on demand. Think of an athlete at the start of the 100m race. This athlete would need to be able to shift their nervous system to make all those anxious butterflies in their stomach into heightened focus and engaged muscles to race their best race. What if we could transform the anxiety symptoms from something holding us back in our life, to something that helps us thrive?

However, sometimes, anxiety symptoms can overcomes us. Washing over us like a massive tidal wave, with no control. When our anxiety becomes overwhelming, we need to recruit our supports to help the anxiety symptoms stabilize so we can function again. Supports may include the help of mental health and medical professionals, talking to loved ones, possibly medications, lifestyle shifts, among other supports. But, even when the anxiety symptoms become all-consuming, can we still view them with compassion, like a friend that is struggling? A friend that is misreading the cues, and sending off intense warning symptoms, but still a friend, that ultimately cares. Even if that care and love is a little misplaced?

Imagine if we worked harder at befriending the anxiety symptoms, rather than trying to get rid of them or ignore them? Trusting that those symptoms are there for a reason, often to help us feel safe, or provide a sense of felt safety, connection, and love. What if in turn, we provide love, connection, and felt safety to ourselves, including our anxiety symptoms? What effect would it have on anxiety symptoms if we became loving, caring friends to ourselves?