

00:00:01:02 - 00:00:06:07

You're listening to the Forum Podcast, a production of Calvin Theological Seminary

00:00:08:12 - 00:00:21:15

Aaron

Today, my guest is Kurt Visker, a licensed therapist, and we're going to be talking about anxiety. Specifically, building resilience in anxious times. So, Kurt, thanks for sitting with me and have the conversation today.

00:00:21:15 - 00:00:23:20

Kurt

Yeah. Happy to be here. Thanks for having me.

00:00:23:22 - 00:00:43:05

Aaron

So, you know, I want to ask you just a little bit about counseling just to jump right in. Like people have all kinds of opinions and things come to mind when you talk about the word counseling. So like, what is it what happens in counseling? Why is it so important? Why is it powerful? Like help us understand what this thing is?

00:00:43:07 - 00:01:07:23

Kurt

Yeah, that's a good question. I think a lot of times people have some fear around counseling. They think of it as you have to have some huge issue going on in your life, or like, you almost have to, like, have the right to go to counseling or like something's really wrong with you. And I mean, counseling a lot of times is just helping people get some things that they're holding inside out.

00:01:08:04 - 00:01:26:19

Kurt

It's a lot of times, something where, people can learn more about themselves and like, build some awareness, navigate relationships differently and, I mean, counseling is like having someone just walk with you through things a lot of times,

00:01:26:19 - 00:01:40:00

Kurt

it's really not as scary as maybe it can feel for some people. Because, you know, people think like, oh, I got to bear my soul or share all these deep things.

00:01:40:00 - 00:01:59:15

Kurt

And, I think therapists are pretty thoughtful about letting things come out kind of at the pace and like, letting them come out as needed. Okay. And not trying to, like, force it. Yeah, I don't know. Yeah.

00:01:59:17 - 00:02:15:06

Aaron

Well, I can think of my times I used to work as a hall director at a university and work with college students. It seemed like, we are always referring people to counseling for any number of things. And one thing I noticed as a barrier was it seemed like people thought they should be able to do it on their own.

00:02:16:02 - 00:02:28:17

Aaron

I don't know if it's gendered to of men seem to be like that, but yeah. What are some of the barriers I think you name some of the fears. But yeah. What are some of the other barriers that people have to like getting that guy that you talked about.

00:02:28:22 - 00:02:57:13

Kurt

Yeah. And I think that's definitely a barrier of like, I should know this or like, why can't I figure this out? But like, I think we all don't have the full perspective about every aspect of our lives. And to have somebody who's worked with a lot of people, and has their own experiences and training to like, help people see different sides of things can just be really beneficial.

00:02:57:15 - 00:03:27:06

Kurt

I mean, other barriers, I mean, a lot of times it's like maybe fear of having to face something that they're, I mean, keeping, you know, in a hidden spot in their life. So sometimes people aren't quite ready to dig into parts of them, and so that fear can be a barrier. Sometimes people have, like.

00:03:27:07 - 00:03:31:10

Kurt

Home environments or cultures they've grown up in that don't support it.

00:03:31:11 - 00:03:32:14

Aaron

Okay.

00:03:32:16 - 00:03:36:16

Kurt

So yeah those are the things that I'd see as barriers.

00:03:36:16 - 00:03:41:00

Aaron

Yeah.

00:03:41:02 - 00:04:04:07

Aaron

So let me ask one more question just about, yeah, counseling itself and what it's like to help us and our listeners kind of get our heads around what actually happens in counseling. Many of us have been to counseling. Some of us haven't. What's the end result, if that's even a fair question. Well when counseling quote unquote works or when you say, hey this client's making lots of progress.

00:04:04:07 - 00:04:10:22

Aaron

Like what are those outcomes like what happens as a result of that guide walking with you.

00:04:11:00 - 00:04:48:01

Kurt

Yeah, I would say the the outcome typically is like a person getting to a place where they feel, like they know themselves more, they feel like they're more aware, more authentic. And because of that, they feel like they're able to manage with confidence, like what comes at them. And. That can take quite a bit of time.

00:04:48:03 - 00:05:16:10

Kurt

It can take like kind of multiple chunks, you know, it could take like oh you go to therapy for six months. Take a break. Revisit it in a year. You know. And so yeah I think at the end if there is an end I mean I think you don't have to be in counseling your whole life, but I think you're constantly trying to figure out and learn about yourself.

00:05:16:10 - 00:05:31:19

Kurt

And so that process is what counseling can help with. And then yeah, kind of the end is of like a session would be, kind of knowing more about, who you are.

00:05:32:01 - 00:05:46:16

Aaron

Okay. So which could be an outcome out of itself, which is healthy. And then sometimes it goes further that self-awareness helps people with a specific thing maybe. Right. That drove them. Yes. I'm trying to help my kid or my marriage or something specific. Right.

00:05:46:16 - 00:06:11:04

Kurt

Yeah. Yeah. It could look like a relationship issue that gets then resolved. Yeah. Or you know, people think about some of the main things with, mental health issues of like anxiety or depression and getting those to getting people to a more functional state, where the anxiety, the depression isn't like a dominant force in their life.

00:06:11:07 - 00:06:21:11

Kurt

It's okay that they learn to, adapter, you know, learn to your different skills to cope with. Yeah.

00:06:21:13 - 00:06:27:19

Aaron

So so it might not go away, but it's it's shrunk. Maybe it's less powerful. Yeah. Less powerful. Okay.

00:06:27:19 - 00:06:29:23

Kurt

So yeah.

00:06:30:01 - 00:06:35:00

Aaron

So what about you, though? What motivated you to go into counseling to be this guy that you talked about.

00:06:36:02 - 00:06:40:22

Aaron

Certainly there's something there. Right that triggered you to say I think I want to help people.

00:06:41:00 - 00:07:24:12

Kurt

Yeah. I think it, it wasn't something that I thought I was going to do when I was like a kid. You know, as you, as I got older into high school, I just get into, like, more in-depth conversations with friends in, friendships, family, go through challenging times. Yeah. I mean, specifically, there was, in high school, I had a couple friends whose parents went through a divorce, and then kind of to see how they went through it and how it impacted them, and really wanting that to not happen to people.

00:07:25:12 - 00:07:27:10

Aaron

The divorce itself or the impact.

00:07:27:13 - 00:07:44:11

Kurt

Okay. You know. Yeah. And kind of like thinking, how can I be influential in producing the divorce, you know, so that the kids aren't going through it? So that that was.

00:07:44:15 - 00:07:45:17

Aaron

How old were you at that point?

00:07:45:17 - 00:08:14:11

Kurt

So I was, senior in high school. Okay. Yeah. So just starting to see kind of some of the realities of the world. Yeah. And wanting to be an an influence to help it. So that was kind of initially what got me thinking about it and then having some conversations with friends, listening, being a support and feeling like I was helpful.

00:08:14:12 - 00:08:14:19

Kurt

Yeah.

00:08:14:21 - 00:08:15:23

Aaron

So maybe you're good at this.

00:08:16:02 - 00:08:19:18

Kurt

Yeah. Yeah. Maybe there's maybe there's a way forward here. Yeah. So yeah.

00:08:19:18 - 00:08:21:08

Aaron

Okay okay.

00:08:22:06 - 00:08:35:09

Aaron

Well we want to talk about resilience today. So this is a big word that. Yeah it's kind of thrown around a lot. I think sometimes people think of resilience as, you know, some superhero who is just iron clad.

00:08:36:02 - 00:08:38:21

Aaron

Able to withstand anything. Yeah. But.

00:08:38:23 - 00:08:39:06

Kurt

Yeah.

00:08:39:07 - 00:08:44:01

Aaron

How did therapists talk about resilience as far as what it actually is.

00:08:44:03 - 00:09:19:01

Kurt

Yeah. I mean I think yeah. When I think about resilience, in some ways I just think about the ability to keep going. And obviously you get things that come at you. Whatever it is in life, you know, challenges that come at you and it's the ability to like, cope and manage, your emotions in order to get back to that kind of like pre-pre-crisis.

00:09:19:04 - 00:09:19:09

Aaron
Okay.

00:09:19:12 - 00:09:21:13

Kurt
State. So,

00:09:21:13 - 00:09:34:14

Kurt
you could think about something as simple as, like you, you're a student, and you had, like, a final or an exam, right? And then, it doesn't go well, right? You get.

00:09:34:14 - 00:09:35:19

Aaron
Yeah.

00:09:35:21 - 00:10:01:06

Kurt
You don't get a good grade on it or something like that. So you feel the emotion of it, you know, like disappointment, frustration. And then it's and then it's like the resilience part is like, well, what do I do from there? Right. So you feel it and then it's like, can I get back to that point of how I was like going into it?

00:10:01:08 - 00:10:22:16

Kurt
You know, and I think some people can do that. Some people have kind of built up that ability. Some people develop it relatively quickly and, and other people, it takes more time. Yeah. To be able to bounce back in a way.

00:10:22:18 - 00:10:27:10

Aaron
Is that a lot of your work with clients is trying to help build their muscles for resilience or.

00:10:27:11 - 00:10:58:05

Kurt
Yeah. Yeah, I think it is. I mean, I think it takes, some people fall into these kind of these traps of they identify a lot with their, hardship. And then they get stuck in it and they don't it becomes

part of their, the hardship becomes part of their who they are versus the recovery from the hardship becoming who they are.

00:10:58:07 - 00:11:00:09

Aaron

I see. Yeah. So an example of your friends.

00:11:00:23 - 00:11:02:01

Aaron

Their parents.

00:11:02:18 - 00:11:13:06

Aaron

With a divorce. Yeah. Maybe that becomes that's who I am. Is this child who's experienced this. Yeah. But you're saying there's this other way of.

00:11:14:04 - 00:11:22:08

Aaron

Not disowning the past or distancing but kind of looking at it differently that it doesn't have power over you again or you. Yeah. How do we think about that.

00:11:22:08 - 00:11:50:17

Kurt

Yeah I think it's like figuring out like what you learned from it, how you grew from it. What you discovered about yourself through the process and then not being like, well, I'm a kid who went through a divorce, and so it can, it can become an excuse. In your life. Versus my parents got a divorce.

00:11:50:19 - 00:12:06:15

Kurt

It was tough. Like I had to be able to do this. I had to be able to have conversations with my parents that were uncomfortable. Yeah I had to be able to figure out what I wanted for me. In the midst of it.

00:12:06:18 - 00:12:07:04

Aaron

Okay.

00:12:07:05 - 00:12:12:09

Kurt

I needed to, you know, trust my friends to talk to them.

00:12:12:11 - 00:12:31:07

Aaron

Things like that. Yeah. So, so as you know, you and I have had conversations about parenting quite a bit in our personal lives. Yeah. How do you build resilience in a kid? It almost seems like you have to let them experience pain, which is hard. Yeah. But, yeah. How do you how do you build resilience in kids?

00:12:31:09 - 00:13:01:06

Kurt

Well, I mean, we're we're in it, right? I have three kids and you have two kids. And so yeah, we're trying to trying to build that resilience all the time. Right. And it's I think building resilience a lot of it. Is about letting people letting your kids experience some discomfort. So they get an opportunity to have that like discomfort come at them.

00:13:01:08 - 00:13:16:12

Kurt

They have to feel what it's like. They have to experience the emotion of discomfort and then make a choice of like well what do I do next. Yeah. What's an appropriate thing to do with this feeling.

00:13:16:14 - 00:13:18:20

Aaron

So it's almost like walking alongside of them.

00:13:19:08 - 00:13:23:04

Aaron

Helping them develop that muscle then protecting them from.

00:13:24:17 - 00:13:27:09

Aaron

The hard thing at school with friends. Yeah. Okay.

00:13:27:10 - 00:13:43:19

Kurt

Yeah. And this can be, this can be simple things. Right. Like yeah I mean there's discomfort in like bringing your plate from the dining room table to the sink. You know if you're doing that for your kid.

00:13:43:21 - 00:13:44:14

Aaron

Yeah.

00:13:44:16 - 00:14:07:04

Kurt

You know like. Maybe you let them experience the. Oh, I don't want have to carry this. Like, I don't have to clean my plate. It's like, well, that's a small, like, micro discomfort that if they don't

have that in their life, then they're less likely to build on bigger discomfort and be able to be resilient through that.

00:14:07:05 - 00:14:16:22

Aaron

Yeah. Because the goal is for them to be able to do really hard things. Yeah. As they grow up, because the world is not kind to everybody. Yeah. All the time. You say.

00:14:16:22 - 00:14:17:23

Kurt

It like it's not, you know, like.

00:14:17:23 - 00:14:19:01

Aaron

Yeah.

00:14:19:03 - 00:14:20:10

Kurt

Protect you. Right?

00:14:20:12 - 00:14:21:01

Aaron

Yeah.

00:14:21:03 - 00:14:28:22

Kurt

So yeah, big things like, like our example. Like a kid going through a divorce. Yeah. That's significant, you know?

00:14:29:03 - 00:14:30:12

Aaron

Yeah.

00:14:30:14 - 00:14:56:04

Kurt

So I think as adults, too. The same thing, like, you know, we go through, we're more prepared in a lot of ways, like we've gone through childhood and we've developed just resilience just through all the experiences of childhood. But then we get introduced to more difficult things as adults. Yeah. More challenges and new challenges. Things that are outside of our control at times.

00:14:56:05 - 00:14:58:14

Kurt

Yeah. So.

00:14:58:16 - 00:15:25:21

Aaron

So what are just like practical tips that you give clients or for adults as far as things like resilience. Like what are there some real easy takeaways of habits we can do to make ourselves more resilient or, ways of thinking, even of those small things? You know, what can we do? Hearing you, I feel compelled. Okay. I've gotta help myself experienced discomfort and grow through that.

00:15:25:21 - 00:15:27:03

Kurt

Yeah.

00:15:27:05 - 00:15:29:20

Aaron

What? Where are some of the ways we can do that?

00:15:29:22 - 00:16:02:23

Kurt

Yeah. I mean, I think, like, some habits that people like routines and disciplines and things like that become, you know, and on certain days they become things that you just don't want to do. You know, we were talking about earlier like exercise. Yeah. And you have an exercise this morning. There's maybe a part of you that doesn't want to do that, doesn't want, doesn't want to get up and go for the run or do the workout whatever it is.

00:16:03:01 - 00:16:19:18

Kurt

That in itself can help build some resilience. Yeah. Right. You don't necessarily want to do it. It's a hard thing to do. You know you're going to feel exertion and tired but you do it. Mentally there's like some strength in that.

00:16:19:20 - 00:16:23:12

Aaron

Sure. And that builds momentum over time.

00:16:23:12 - 00:16:46:16

Kurt

Builds momentum over time. Yeah. So yeah, if you start I mean, if you think about people that have just lived a life that's like a lot of hardship. Yeah. And they're continuously having to their normal is difficult days. Yeah. You know, you introduce them to, kind of a lighter day. Everything just feels so free and easy.

00:16:46:16 - 00:16:58:10

Aaron

you know a lot of the research out there talks about the power of how we interpret our environment. Yeah. Can either amplify the stress or can actually reframe or reduce the stress.

00:16:59:05 - 00:17:19:09

Aaron

And so I just wonder like how much can we convince ourselves that we're okay in some ways. Like how much power does our mind have. Yeah. To, to reframe or reinterpret situations as oh that's not so bad because I have done hard things before. Yeah. I don't know. Yeah. Talk to me.

00:17:19:09 - 00:17:19:23

Kurt

About. Yeah.

00:17:19:23 - 00:17:20:18

Aaron

In the mindset.

00:17:20:18 - 00:17:58:05

Kurt

I think that's, that's I mean what you're, what you're cuing into I think is developing like confidence in yourself. Okay. And I think part of reframing or changing the mindset can have a tone of confidence that I have the ability to get through or manage situations, which confidence is going to come from, like trusting yourself. Right. So I trust myself not to maybe have all the answers, but I trust myself to figure it out.

00:17:58:07 - 00:17:59:00

Aaron

Yeah.

00:17:59:02 - 00:18:05:23

Kurt

Which can be it's probably one of the hallmarks of being resilient.

00:18:06:01 - 00:18:06:18

Aaron

Is.

00:18:06:18 - 00:18:16:05

Kurt

Is to be confident in yourself and trust yourself that you'll be able to figure it out.

00:18:16:07 - 00:18:24:22

Aaron

Yeah, and people don't often have confidence. Right. So I bet in your work is trying to help. Yeah. Have small victories where people start to build that confidence.

00:18:25:00 - 00:18:52:10

Kurt

You know, over time. Yeah. And reframing, like you said, can help with that, right. Like, if you work at someone kind of comes in with a presenting problem. They come in with a perspective on that problem. And then your working with them on different ways to think about new ways to think about that issue or problem.

00:18:52:10 - 00:18:53:00

Aaron

Okay.

00:18:53:02 - 00:18:57:09

Kurt

Right. So,

00:18:57:11 - 00:19:12:12

Kurt

And if they're able to do that right, start to learn how to do that, that increases their confidence in themselves and their ability to trust that they'll be able to manage difficult situations.

00:19:12:14 - 00:19:15:22

Aaron

Maybe even if that worst case scenario, the dreaded scenario happens.

00:19:17:07 - 00:19:20:16

Aaron

I want like a vow be okay because I know I'll be able to.

00:19:21:04 - 00:19:23:16

Aaron

Continue on. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

00:19:23:18 - 00:19:36:20

Kurt

Yeah. Because resilience. It's it's about bouncing back. It's also about just being able to endure. Right. To be able to like emotionally cope through a difficult situation.

00:19:36:22 - 00:19:38:20

Aaron

So maybe just take an example of grief.

00:19:38:21 - 00:19:40:17

Kurt
Yeah.

00:19:40:19 - 00:19:44:13

Aaron
Someone's experiencing deep grief, the loss of a loved one. Maybe a dramatic loss.

00:19:45:09 - 00:19:55:15

Aaron
And we're not talking about you're going to be happy because you've done these five things and reframed it and like well it's not so bad. Kind of minimizing your feelings. You're saying I can endure my grief.

00:19:58:02 - 00:19:58:14

Aaron
Yeah.

00:19:58:16 - 00:20:33:11

Kurt
Yeah. Yeah. You're you know grief is tough because a lot of times grief you have to like just let yourself be in it. Yeah. I think when you have developed resilience over time, your mindset around, you know, grief or your emotional management around grief is going to be knowing what you're feeling. Identifying and have the awareness and then letting yourself feel it.

00:20:33:13 - 00:20:37:20

Kurt
Yes. You, you know you have to like go through it.

00:20:37:22 - 00:20:39:19

Aaron
Okay.

00:20:39:21 - 00:20:41:23

Kurt
Comes out now or comes out later kind of thing.

00:20:41:23 - 00:20:43:14

Aaron
Right.

00:20:43:16 - 00:21:13:01

Kurt

So that can elicit some, you know, can maybe feel as confident. I mean, like, feeling confident in that. I don't know, it doesn't always feel right with grief. Like, it's like you're walk around feeling confident, but I maybe that just that, like, assuredness that, like, you're going to be okay. That's maybe how resiliency will work with the grief.

00:21:13:04 - 00:21:19:09

Aaron

Okay. So. I want to talk about anxiety too.

00:21:19:10 - 00:21:20:03

Kurt

Yeah.

00:21:20:04 - 00:21:26:05

Aaron

So. It seems like when I look at headlines and publications.

00:21:26:22 - 00:21:31:12

Aaron

There's a general thesis of anxiety on the rise, whether it's in kids or adults.

00:21:31:14 - 00:21:32:20

Kurt

Yeah.

00:21:32:22 - 00:21:35:08

Aaron

And it's closely linked to resilience, I'm sure.

00:21:39:09 - 00:21:42:11

Aaron

How do we how do we manage our anxiety.

00:21:42:13 - 00:21:43:05

Kurt

Yeah. It's good.

00:21:43:05 - 00:21:44:12

Aaron

Question. Big question.

00:21:44:13 - 00:22:09:14

Kurt

Big question. It's a great question. You're right. We see anxiety constantly in in therapy. And there's a wide range of it from. Yeah. So yeah. I mean you think about kind of like, well what is anxiety? Yeah. Might be a good place to start. Yes. Like what is it? And people describe it differently.

00:22:09:16 - 00:22:32:21

Kurt

I would say it's, you know, it's the fear of what's coming. A lot of times I think about, like, sometimes I explain it like this, like, anxiety is when you look to the future. Yeah. Depression. Many, many times, like when you look to the past. And our goal is to be present.

00:22:32:23 - 00:22:33:07

Aaron

Yeah.

00:22:33:10 - 00:22:53:20

Kurt

And so when you feel yourself looking to the future, often or more consistently than you are present, a lot of times that feels like that's where that fear comes in. That's where the anxiety comes in. Out of the what if. So what if this happens. What if that happens.

00:22:53:22 - 00:22:59:00

Aaron

And that can be productive. In some ways you think about well what if this happens I can be prepared.

00:22:59:03 - 00:23:12:23

Kurt

Yeah. Yeah. But anxiety comes when you have gotten past preparation. Okay. I mean, you know, like you prepare for a trip or you plan for a trip at some point, you're done.

00:23:13:01 - 00:23:13:19

Aaron

Yeah. You've prepared.

00:23:13:19 - 00:23:31:16

Kurt

Yeah. You're prepared. Right. You don't have to, like, keep going back and like, scrutinizing every detail, and forecasting possible scenarios. At some point you're done. Yeah. So if you find yourself forecasting frequently what's to come, you're probably starting to get into an anxiety state.

00:23:31:17 - 00:23:37:17

Aaron

Okay. So like when I travel, maybe this is too personal when I travel and I go to the airport.

00:23:38:09 - 00:23:54:02

Aaron

I prepare. I bring I always have some food and my carry on in case we get stuck on the tarmac somewhere. I always go the bathroom before I go in the airplane in case we get stuck. But then like I, there's only so much I can do. At some point I got to get on the plane.

00:23:54:04 - 00:23:57:19

Aaron

And if we're gonna get stuck on the tarmac we're getting hit stuck on the tarmac.

00:23:57:20 - 00:23:58:10

Kurt

Yeah.

00:23:58:12 - 00:24:01:15

Aaron

Yeah. So it's kind of like being beyond that. Okay. I'm prepared for my trip.

00:24:01:17 - 00:24:06:20

Kurt

Yeah. With what you just said. Yeah. Right. Yeah. And things that you can't control.

00:24:06:20 - 00:24:07:17

Aaron

Sure.

00:24:07:19 - 00:24:15:19

Kurt

You mean that's where that, like, trust again? That confidence, that self-esteem or that trust of, like, I'll be able to get through it or I'll be able to figure it out.

00:24:15:19 - 00:24:16:09

Aaron

Yeah. Right.

00:24:16:09 - 00:24:32:04

Kurt

If you're stuck on the tarmac and you have the confidence in yourself to manage the situation. Yeah, I think you'll figure something out. You don't have to know what you'll do. Yeah, but you do have to have trust in yourself that, like, you'll be okay.

00:24:32:06 - 00:24:38:09

Aaron

It seems like some of us, probably just because of our life experience, we've been told we don't have that.

00:24:39:06 - 00:24:43:20

Aaron

And that we just have a lot more of an uphill battle.

00:24:43:22 - 00:25:16:19

Kurt

Absolutely. I mean I think I think depending on childhood and you know, early life experience, different people have different levels of self-esteem and confidence. And so yeah, some people really need to develop that confidence. You know, that sense of like, I'm okay. And part of that development process too, is like, you get into your self-concept and like your identity.

00:25:16:21 - 00:25:17:14

Aaron

Okay. Right.

00:25:17:15 - 00:25:20:04

Kurt

Like, I am a person that can do hard things.

00:25:20:04 - 00:25:21:04

Aaron

Yeah.

00:25:21:06 - 00:25:33:08

Kurt

Right. It's not just like, I've done hard things. You know, I did this thing once. That was difficult. It's like, no, I am a person. That's who I am. That can do difficult things.

00:25:33:09 - 00:25:34:21

Aaron

Yeah.

00:25:34:23 - 00:25:57:05

Kurt

And sometimes that's one of the most helpful things to remind my clients is just like, you can do hard things and like to give them evidence from, like, their experiences and their rights that we've talked about. So, yeah, I think once you adopt that. Right. That's part of you. Yeah. Your resilience goes way up.

00:25:57:07 - 00:26:03:04

Aaron

So your whole in some ways it's simple practice is another way. It's pretty deep sense of.

00:26:03:18 - 00:26:05:09

Aaron

Your identity shifts. Yeah.

00:26:05:11 - 00:26:06:08

Kurt

Yeah.

00:26:06:10 - 00:26:07:05

Aaron

Yeah.

00:26:07:07 - 00:26:33:08

Kurt

So yeah. So I guess that's like kind of what anxiety is. And I think there's definitely ways to reduce it. Yeah. And that's, that's a lot of what people are coming into sessions for. They're like, yeah, I want this to go down. I want this to go away. And the feeling of like, anxiety isn't necessarily going to go away.

00:26:33:10 - 00:26:43:14

Kurt

However, like your interaction, your response to it will start to make it start to feel like it's going away.

00:26:43:16 - 00:26:44:08

Aaron

Oh, yeah.

00:26:44:09 - 00:26:45:04

Kurt

That makes sense.

00:26:45:08 - 00:26:47:03

Aaron

That's powerful. Yeah. Yeah.

00:26:47:05 - 00:27:22:04

Kurt

So, I've definitely had people that come in and their body is kind of wound tight and their mind is racing and they don't. Their mind is racing and scattered and they just feel this like something's

coming. That's not going to be good. Kind of dread and we, we start to increase their awareness around what they're feeling.

00:27:22:06 - 00:27:54:02

Kurt

What their thoughts are trying to find some structure to their thinking and start to label what they're experiencing. And as we start to do that, their anxiety can start to feel like it's just, it's starting to decrease, in part because they start to change how they interact with it. Because they're facing it. Yeah.

00:27:54:03 - 00:27:56:07

Kurt

And they're trying to understand it.

00:27:56:09 - 00:27:58:10

Aaron

Yeah.

00:27:58:12 - 00:28:06:00

Kurt

And a lot of times the fear is the unknown. And so as you become like you make it more known.

00:28:06:02 - 00:28:08:01

Aaron

Yeah.

00:28:08:03 - 00:28:10:13

Kurt

The fear goes down.

00:28:10:15 - 00:28:21:22

Aaron

Just strikes me. So my kids go to Christian school. And they do performances and, you know, almost every prayer before a performance.

00:28:22:18 - 00:28:24:17

Aaron

Is to pray away the anxiety.

00:28:25:19 - 00:28:29:06

Aaron

We lower anxiety God reducing anxiety.

00:28:30:10 - 00:28:32:20

Aaron

And it's one of my pet peeves actually.

00:28:32:21 - 00:28:33:12

Kurt

Okay.

00:28:33:14 - 00:28:48:17

Aaron

When I was growing up when I was in I took drama class. They always say you gotta leverage the anxiety and turn it into performance energy. And so this is like you tell a different story and say this is my body amping up to deliver.

00:28:49:20 - 00:28:50:21

Aaron

Kick ass performance.

00:28:50:22 - 00:28:52:11

Kurt

Yes. Yes.

00:28:52:13 - 00:29:00:00

Aaron

And so I love that. And that was really powerful me. So whenever I see people saying just pray it away, it's almost like it's saying let's just mute ourselves.

00:29:00:02 - 00:29:01:08

Kurt

Yeah.

00:29:01:09 - 00:29:02:20

Aaron

But am I off.

00:29:02:22 - 00:29:11:00

Kurt

No I don't think you're. Oh I mean I think it's part of it's like, let's let's not necessarily. I guess you're saying it could exist, but they're not really addressing it.

00:29:11:02 - 00:29:12:00

Aaron

Yeah.

00:29:12:02 - 00:29:24:18

Kurt

Like, in a way that it's almost like wishful, you know, like, let's just hope that it doesn't happen. Yeah. You know. Yeah. And maybe they're saying, let's put it in God's hands.

00:29:24:20 - 00:29:27:03

Aaron

Yeah. Help me be nicer. So.

00:29:27:03 - 00:29:45:12

Kurt

Yeah. Yeah. But, I like what you're saying. I mean, that's kind of how I've always tried to manage anxiety for myself. Especially, like, if there's, like, performance or like an event or something for me to be involved in, it's like, oh, anxiety, a little nervousness or that anxiety means I'm ready.

00:29:45:14 - 00:29:53:14

Aaron

Yeah. So you're retelling the story of what The signal is? Yeah. The butterflies are preparation and not something bad is going to happen.

00:29:55:03 - 00:29:56:14

Aaron

So there's this big awareness.

00:29:57:05 - 00:30:05:21

Aaron

That we have about what we're experiencing. And then there's kind of reframing it changing how we interact with it. Then what.

00:30:05:23 - 00:30:35:03

Kurt

Yeah. So I think there's also Identifying like what's going on in your body with anxiety too. Because that's another avenue of reducing it, reducing the feeling. So some things that we do in therapy are you know, we talk and educate about meditation. And it does a couple different things. One to just gets you more aware of what your body's going through.

00:30:35:04 - 00:30:35:20

Aaron

Yeah.

00:30:35:22 - 00:31:03:20

Kurt

And then also learning to kind of, calm yourself down. Yeah. And almost observe yourself. Calm down. Right. Okay. And like a heightened state and you start to meditate and your breathing

slows. And you get in a more restful state. Yeah. Feel your heart rate go down and different parts of your body start to relax.

00:31:03:22 - 00:31:11:21

Kurt

So there's a lot of different ways to do that. Meditation is one. Exercise helps a lot.

00:31:11:22 - 00:31:14:15

Aaron

Yeah.

00:31:14:17 - 00:31:31:05

Kurt

There's just doing one task instead of doing a bunch of tasks or mono tasking. Yeah. It's really helpful. A lot of like mindfulness activities. Things that require just thought about one thing and just focused on that.

00:31:31:07 - 00:31:36:19

Aaron

A lot of bringing to the present. It sounds like just bringing like literally right to my breathing.

00:31:36:21 - 00:31:52:02

Kurt

Yeah. That's a good way to connect it. Right. Like we said before, like looking ahead is going to create a lot of anxiety. Yeah. And so it's like, yeah. How do we get back to that present moment. You know and it's cueing in into what's happening right now.

00:31:52:04 - 00:31:54:07

Aaron

Yeah.

00:31:54:09 - 00:31:58:23

Kurt

That also ties into just like what you asked earlier. Like what happens in therapy.

00:31:59:00 - 00:32:00:14

Aaron

Yeah.

00:32:00:16 - 00:32:24:03

Kurt

The best counselor that I've, I've been around or experienced, they have the ability to see what's happening in the moment in the session. Right. So it's not about, you know, the

relationship outside of the session or the anxiety about the thing that's come in. Some of it is just like right now in this session, what's happening between you and the therapist.

00:32:24:05 - 00:32:26:23

Aaron

And you help the person notice that the client notice.

00:32:26:23 - 00:32:28:06

Kurt

Yeah, you.

00:32:28:08 - 00:32:28:22

Aaron

Point to it.

00:32:28:22 - 00:32:29:09

Kurt

You call.

00:32:29:09 - 00:32:30:21

Aaron

That out? Yeah.

00:32:30:23 - 00:33:06:13

Kurt

You know, or you ask questions for them to think about. You know what's happening in that moment. So that's really effective. So I think with anxiety starting to, to be able to use that tool sometimes can like call out or help people become aware of even in the session. Yeah. How they're increasing their anxiety levels based on how they're interacting or what they're saying.

00:33:06:15 - 00:33:12:02

Aaron

Yeah. Yeah. Because maybe you're noticing them elevate how they talk about something.

00:33:12:22 - 00:33:15:22

Aaron

And just notice it. Yeah. Together. Yeah. Yeah. Okay.

00:33:16:04 - 00:33:27:12

Kurt

Yeah. Like what are you feeling. You know, how did that statement, how did that, phrasing impact you.

00:33:27:14 - 00:33:31:07

Aaron

So you've spent thousands and thousands of hours.

00:33:33:05 - 00:33:33:13

Aaron

In your.

00:33:33:13 - 00:33:36:18

Kurt

Practice. Yes.

00:33:36:20 - 00:33:53:05

Aaron

Like what is it that unlocks when someone is, is able to all of a sudden get in front of something they're facing. Whether it's they can really endure something like grief or recover from something traumatic like a divorce.

00:33:55:08 - 00:33:58:10

Aaron

Like, what is that thing that happens?

00:33:58:13 - 00:34:08:14

Kurt

It's a really good question. I mean, there's probably a couple of things, but, one thing that really comes to mind is like ownership.

00:34:08:16 - 00:34:09:10

Aaron

Okay.

00:34:09:12 - 00:34:42:18

Kurt

Like, when they when a client starts to own, like, this is a thing that I'm dealing with, and this is the thing that I'm going to, take responsibility for. So like I do couples counseling as well. Yeah. And so like that's one of the biggest things in couples counseling is when when both parties, both partners are able to take ownership of their stuff.

00:34:42:18 - 00:34:43:15

Aaron

Their own stuff.

00:34:43:16 - 00:35:06:03

Kurt

Yeah. Yeah. Because so much of it is bent on like, a lot of times couples come in and you see a lot of the like looking for the other person to change and. Right. And so when they can take ownership of their own stuff. Yeah. And work on that, that's when I see that relationship start to heal and start to function better.

00:35:06:05 - 00:35:16:23

Kurt

And I think individuals too, when they take ownership of like I have anxiety. Right. So I then have to like have coping skills.

00:35:17:00 - 00:35:17:17

Aaron

Yeah. Yeah.

00:35:17:17 - 00:35:29:15

Kurt

I have to do things maybe differently than someone who doesn't have anxiety. Yeah. Like does that ownership. I think can go a long ways.

00:35:29:17 - 00:35:32:06

Aaron

So it's like saying as an anxious person.

00:35:32:16 - 00:35:33:22

Aaron

Here's how I manage.

00:35:34:02 - 00:35:34:21

Kurt

Yeah.

00:35:34:23 - 00:35:35:21

Aaron

And stay healthy.

00:35:36:19 - 00:35:43:17

Aaron

Or as an anxious person here's a here's or a person who experiences anxiety maybe a little elevated than the population or something.

00:35:45:21 - 00:35:51:19

Aaron

This is how I prevent it from me living in to the way God wired me to be. Right.

00:35:52:20 - 00:35:53:14

Aaron

Yeah.

00:35:53:16 - 00:36:16:18

Kurt

Yeah. And to go further on the exact, it's like and like ownership of I know what's happening. Like I know my nervous system I know like what's getting activated I know so ownership partnered with like I think some knowledge. Yeah. Efforts at seeking out like becoming more of an expert on yourself.

00:36:16:23 - 00:36:19:21

Aaron

Yeah. Okay. Yeah.

00:36:19:23 - 00:36:37:02

Kurt

That's typical. Typically when, like, I see clients really take that next step is when they start to to do that, to really take that ownership. Yeah. So they're doing things outside of session. They're coming up with ideas. Yeah. Things that could help them.

00:36:37:03 - 00:36:39:00

Aaron

Yeah.

00:36:39:02 - 00:36:44:03

Kurt

So that's the that's the exciting things to see. Yeah. You know.

00:36:44:14 - 00:36:50:21

Aaron

All right. So, you know we've talked a lot about taking ownership. We've talked about things that people can actively do.

00:36:51:15 - 00:36:59:10

Aaron

To get healthy or to be able to do what they want to do. Again you spent thousands of hours.

00:37:00:01 - 00:37:02:17

Aaron

Listening to people talk about you know their most intimate things.

00:37:03:19 - 00:37:08:17

Aaron

What's the encouragement they need to hear often. What do people just need to hear.

00:37:08:19 - 00:37:09:09

Kurt
Yeah.

00:37:09:11 - 00:37:10:17

Aaron
Yeah. There's a word of encouragement.

00:37:10:18 - 00:37:33:21

Kurt
Yeah. Some of it's as simple as just being like you're going to be okay. They need to hear that. It's going to be okay. And it sounds really simple. Like that's something that maybe, like a family member would say. I think coming from a therapist, that's like maybe seen a lot of different challenges in people's lives, sometimes that can be really effective.

00:37:33:23 - 00:37:54:03

Kurt
I said it earlier, but like just saying like you can do hard things. Because a lot of times it's not a situation where you know some things are outside of people's control. Yeah. There's put in situations that are just hard. And so telling them that they can like I've seen you you know you've experienced hard things.

00:37:54:03 - 00:37:56:16

Kurt
You've gone through it. Like you can do it.

00:37:56:18 - 00:37:58:20

Aaron
Yeah.

00:37:58:22 - 00:38:20:10

Kurt
So yeah I think those are big ones. I think also encouragement like sometimes they just need to hear like this is part of the process. And like people hate to hear process because they're like oh they want it to be done. You know. Yeah. But if they're in it long enough, they can start to reflect back and be like, yeah, it is a process.

00:38:20:12 - 00:38:28:03

Kurt
It does take, you know, weeks, months, sometimes years for people, you know. So.

00:38:28:05 - 00:38:33:08

Aaron

So similar question on the other side of the coin though, which maybe you already lean into, this is the challenge.

00:38:34:19 - 00:38:38:05

Aaron

As I hear you talk I almost feel like an encouraging challenge.

00:38:39:00 - 00:38:41:19

Aaron

That it's okay. And then go ahead and do the hard thing.

00:38:41:20 - 00:38:42:12

Kurt

Yeah.

00:38:42:13 - 00:38:48:19

Aaron

But is there a word, a challenge like a gentle challenge that people often need to hear. And maybe different than what you just said.

00:38:48:21 - 00:38:52:14

Kurt

Yeah. Sometimes people need a gentle challenge. Sometimes they need a big challenge.

00:38:52:17 - 00:38:53:03

Aaron

Okay.

00:38:53:05 - 00:39:16:13

Kurt

It's interesting. I've kind of learned that with people is that some people want the like, you know, the zero entry to the pool, like, just like this slow, gradual walking in. And some people want to jump off the diving board. Okay. And so some people it's like, well, let's start here with this step that like doesn't feel like there's many barriers to it.

00:39:16:15 - 00:39:27:22

Kurt

And then other people that challenge is like, hey you can do this. It seems like you want to just go all in. So let's set up a plan to go all in. Do it. You know,

00:39:28:00 - 00:39:28:15

Aaron

Do the thing.

00:39:28:16 - 00:40:00:23

Kurt

Yeah. Yeah. So, and sometimes that sparks something where we do. Sometimes I'll do, like, calm, like comfort challenges with people that have some, like, insecurity about themselves. And you want them to just, like, get through that fear. And so, like, I've had someone that has, like, gone to, a restaurant by themselves. They brought a book and they ate a meal and read a book.

00:40:01:01 - 00:40:26:22

Kurt

And they felt the discomfort in themselves of like what that was like. They talked about thinking of like well what are people thinking of me. Which is exactly what the challenge was about. Yeah. Like are we to focus on what people think of us. And so this person that was a big thing. And so it was having them walk into that fear feel what it's like.

00:40:27:00 - 00:40:45:19

Kurt

And realize kind of what's on the other side of the fear. Yeah. And what they realized he was like they could get over it pretty quickly. It didn't really matter. Like once they like they're, they're just eating you know you're reading and yeah they could they could start to be like, well, I know what I'm doing.

00:40:45:19 - 00:40:52:17

Kurt

I know why I'm here. So it doesn't matter.

00:40:52:19 - 00:40:58:14

Aaron

Yeah. It's almost a theme of correct me if I'm wrong but exertion.

00:40:59:13 - 00:41:08:14

Aaron

Like almost like what you do is people have avoidance. And you're, and you're encouraging people to just lean in and the pathway through health is pathway to health.

00:41:09:05 - 00:41:10:22

Aaron

Is actually through discomfort.

00:41:11:00 - 00:41:37:00

Kurt

Yeah. Yeah. That's a good way to say it. Because you think about all the things that like make you healthy in a lot of ways has an element of discomfort to it. So like you're right a lot of the

challenges for clients includes that element of discomfort. Yeah. And some people want to just go into it and other people need like small dosage.

00:41:37:03 - 00:41:38:20

Kurt

Sure. You know.

00:41:38:23 - 00:41:52:06

Aaron

So one place where. Maybe there is a fair amount of anxiety, and a need for resilience can be the church.

00:41:52:08 - 00:41:57:13

Kurt

Absolutely.

00:41:57:15 - 00:42:00:09

Aaron

Let's think about pastors for a minute.

00:42:00:11 - 00:42:02:00

Kurt

I'm familiar.

00:42:02:02 - 00:42:07:05

Aaron

So we both are sons of pastors.

00:42:07:05 - 00:42:19:15

Aaron

Let's think about some examples of, of how pastors may be uniquely equipped to either help people through what we are talking about with resilience.

00:42:21:06 - 00:42:45:08

Aaron

And managing anxiety or just is there something specific about pastors and leaders in their world where there's a particular practice or a particular way of being that might be helpful in pastors managing their their resilience and anxiety? Yeah.

00:42:45:10 - 00:43:15:23

Kurt

Yeah. I think about pastors. The ones that I've connected with the most are very, very authentic people. And part of their authenticity is that they they care about their congregation and they

show that in a very authentic way. Which I think, as you know, a lot, I think authenticity ties into a lot of the stuff we're talking about today.

00:43:16:01 - 00:43:46:23

Kurt

And I think you learn a lot about yourself when you go through hard times. And building that resilience. Of like, this is who I am. This is what I know about myself and being able to get through it. So I think people also like they feel connected. To, to pastors that are very authentic.

00:43:47:01 - 00:43:57:04

Kurt

And so being able to I think I don't know display that as a pastor is is important.

00:43:57:04 - 00:44:02:00

Aaron

You know, Kurt, you mentioned the example of a client who went to a restaurant.

00:44:03:10 - 00:44:08:16

Aaron

To read a book and be by themselves. And part of that was the experiment or the experience of discomfort.

00:44:09:07 - 00:44:13:02

Aaron

Of experiencing what people may be thinking.

00:44:13:03 - 00:44:16:20

Kurt

Yeah.

00:44:16:22 - 00:44:45:17

Aaron

You know in my work at Calvin and Lifelong Learning where we support pastors in stages of their growth. I think probably a lot of pastors can relate to that. And having quite a high view of, whether they like it or not or want to or not, the opinion of the church about them. Yeah. And almost, the calling of the pastor is so high.

00:44:45:19 - 00:44:49:11

Aaron

That it's almost like to use a psychological turn identity and measurement.

00:44:50:12 - 00:44:58:19

Aaron

Where the identity of the role that they play in a church is so attached to their identity that their self-concept isn't separated from.

00:44:58:21 - 00:45:01:13

Kurt
Pastor.

00:45:01:15 - 00:45:14:02

Aaron
And then the success of their ministry or the, the opinion or the acceptance or rejections of the church of them as a person becomes. Whoa. Heightened.

00:45:15:07 - 00:45:25:13

Aaron
And so it's maybe just an observation of some of the things that we've walked people through in some of our cohorts about kind of separating, getting outside of that.

00:45:26:13 - 00:45:28:03

Aaron
And recognizing who you are.

00:45:29:08 - 00:45:44:11

Aaron
Outside of the specific vocational calling. Yeah. Anyway I guess what I'm just saying is it, it seems like the ability that you've been talking about to kind of get outside of yourself.

00:45:45:15 - 00:45:47:15

Aaron
Be self aware of what's happening in the moment.

00:45:48:06 - 00:45:57:21

Aaron
And then reframe it and tell another story. Yeah. It could be really important for people who are so enmeshed in their career identity.

00:45:57:23 - 00:45:58:16

Kurt
Yeah.

00:45:58:18 - 00:46:04:22

Aaron
Especially for pastors. Yeah. Because it's a holy calling.

00:46:04:22 - 00:46:15:11

Kurt

Yeah. What do you think there. What do you think there like primary need is. And those when they're so entrenched in their

00:46:15:13 - 00:46:20:22

Aaron

I think many are hoping to be able to say to God I've done enough.

00:46:21:20 - 00:46:23:07

Aaron

In their most honest moments.

00:46:25:14 - 00:46:28:17

Aaron

Or there's so much pressure to deliver.

00:46:29:08 - 00:46:42:09

Aaron

To grow. To preach multiple times a week. Sometimes there's just such a demand to perform. The acts of ministry that when you're not feeling on stable legs yourself.

00:46:45:12 - 00:46:51:15

Aaron

It gets really hard to keep pushing through. Yeah. And so there's living up to the expectations that maybe churches put on.

00:46:52:16 - 00:46:55:04

Aaron

It's leaders to not show doubt for example.

00:46:55:06 - 00:46:57:08

Kurt

Right.

00:46:57:08 - 00:47:09:08

Kurt

Yeah. I think yeah the authenticity can look like verbalizing where you're at.

00:47:09:10 - 00:47:10:14

Aaron

Okay.

00:47:10:15 - 00:47:22:08

Kurt

It could look it could look like verbalizing a period of doubt. But still showing the resilience of like here's the things I know.

00:47:22:10 - 00:47:23:08

Aaron

Yeah.

00:47:23:10 - 00:47:26:01

Kurt

However this is the season I'm in.

00:47:26:03 - 00:47:27:11

Aaron

Yes. Right.

00:47:27:12 - 00:47:34:06

Kurt

You know and and having the courage to do that. There's got to be a lot of fear around.

00:47:34:08 - 00:47:34:19

Aaron

Oh yeah.

00:47:34:22 - 00:47:50:09

Kurt

Verbalizing that to I mean a congregation for sure, but. Yeah. I think, you know, those are situations that are pretty delicate. However, a lot of the same concepts apply.

00:47:50:11 - 00:47:51:07

Aaron

Yeah.

00:47:51:09 - 00:48:17:01

Kurt

Where if you have that anxiety about being seen a certain way. Stepping into it. You know and that's where the courage comes from. You'll be like this is who I am. What will happen is it'll be extremely validating to the congregation members. Because everybody's been there.

00:48:17:06 - 00:48:19:00

Aaron

Of course. Yeah.

00:48:19:02 - 00:48:24:02

Kurt

So it normalizes. And even our pastor feels that way.

00:48:24:03 - 00:48:30:15

Aaron

Yeah. Yeah. So again it's leaning into that exertion. Yeah. Of that.

00:48:32:19 - 00:48:40:05

Aaron

Again and the Calvin Seminary side of things we've provided we provide these cohort experiences where people can really let their guard down.

00:48:40:19 - 00:48:47:09

Aaron

You know almost get up the courage. To do these kinds of things. So of course it's not therapy but it's a group process.

00:48:47:09 - 00:48:48:16

Kurt

Yeah.

00:48:48:18 - 00:48:52:03

Aaron

Where we go pretty deep into kind of who are you.

00:48:52:16 - 00:49:05:17

Aaron

What are the things underneath. Yeah. Being self-aware and, and kind of rightsizing some of our concerns and fears and anxieties even. To then be able to step into confidence into these really challenging environments.

00:49:05:18 - 00:49:13:07

Kurt

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I feel like that'd be a huge experience and tool for people. Yeah. To grow.

00:49:13:14 - 00:49:15:02

Aaron

All right. So I like to ask everybody.

00:49:15:20 - 00:49:18:17

Aaron

What gives you hope.

00:49:18:19 - 00:49:55:20

Kurt

Yeah I think what gives me hope is I get to talk to so many different people and so many different people grow in different ways. And people are growing. People are healing. People are learning about themselves. People are seeking authenticity. And they, they are doing it. Right. So. Yeah. I know there's a lot of things that tell us that, you know, things are going, you know, this way or that way, like to the negative.

00:49:56:22 - 00:50:21:03

Kurt

But I do get to see people. Yeah. They go through challenges but they also come out on the other side. And I get to see the resilience. Yeah. And people like it develop it grow. People demonstrate it. And like we said sometimes the, the reminder like hey you can do hard things. And I've had clients say sometimes I just remember I can do hard things.

00:50:21:03 - 00:50:40:02

Kurt

And I'm like, yeah, absolutely. And then we and they do and they do really hard things. Yeah. They have hard conversations. They, you know, they go to their spouse and talk to them about something that they've been holding inside, or they talk to a parent or they just go through an experience. So that gives that gives me hope.

00:50:40:04 - 00:50:41:17

Aaron

Yeah. You get a front row seat to a lot.

00:50:41:17 - 00:50:42:15

Kurt

Of a.

00:50:42:18 - 00:50:43:18

Aaron

Lot of growth and.

00:50:43:18 - 00:50:46:01

Kurt

Health. Yeah.

00:50:46:03 - 00:50:48:18

Aaron

Well thing thanks for sitting with me and talking about this.

00:50:48:21 - 00:50:49:14

Kurt

Absolutely.

00:50:49:15 - 00:50:50:00

Aaron

Appreciate it.

00:50:50:06 - 00:50:52:04

Kurt

Yeah. You bet.