

E53: "Just Do Nothing"

With Joanna Hardis

HEATHER DRAGO: Welcome to That's a Hard No, the podcast about learning to say no and set boundaries to live our best lives. I'm your host, Heather Drago. You may think because of this podcast that I'm a boundary setting expert, but I'm not. I'm an expert at struggling to set boundaries, but you know what? I'm working on it and it is getting easier. Follow along with me as I learn from fellow strugglers and experts so that you too can start saying no without feeling fear, guilt, or FOMO.

HEATHER DRAGO: I'm so excited, you guys. We've been talking about this for a while. Our friend Joanna Hardis, part of our Hard No family, is back for a third time to talk about her book, Just Do Nothing. As you can see, I've, with all my Post-It notes. I love it. I love this book. Aw, thank you. It's, if you haven't read it, guys, I would highly recommend it. It takes, it didn't take me very long. The way you recommend reading it is kind of absorbing a part, kind of working on the exercise, recording your wins, and then coming back and going on. I will admit I didn't do that because I was preparing for this, but I do plan on going back. And as you can see, I've flagged a couple of exercises I need to work on. But anyway, the book is Just Do Nothing, A Paradoxical Guide to Getting Out of Your Way. And if you haven't met her already, Joanna Hardis. Our friend is a cognitive behavioral therapist based in Cleveland who specializes in anxiety and obsessive compulsive disorders.

JOANNA HARDIS: Hi, welcome back. Thank you. I'm so happy to be here. I'm so excited for this.

HEATHER DRAGO: Oh, good, good, good. So what's so funny about this is looking at myself from the objective third person, I was like, you know, I don't really suffer from anxiety. I don't really have intrusive thoughts. But this will be so helpful for the people in my life and for the people who listen to the podcast. I think this would be really helpful. And as I'm reading it, I was like, oh, I do that. Oh, oh, that's me. Oh. I realized I this was very helpful to me personally because I was it helped me Even though you know, I think I've got all my shit sorted I recognize things that I hadn't recognized before so it's very helpful to kind of just See the different behaviors. And so I really love that. I love this is

not a dry book you guys this is this is personal you tell your story and how you kind of I came to this awareness about doing nothing in the face of anxiety. I won't give away any spoilers. But because of that, it's not dry. It's not clinical.

JOANNA HARDIS: Thank you.

HEATHER DRAGO: There's a lot of humor.

JOANNA HARDIS: Thank you.

HEATHER DRAGO: You and I share pet peeves about these toxic positivity word art things, you know.

JOANNA HARDIS: Yes.

HEATHER DRAGO: No, what is it? No bad vibes or good vibes only.

JOANNA HARDIS: Good vibes only. Vibrate high.

HEATHER DRAGO: Yeah, I love that you like you named chapters of these things. It's so funny, so funny. And I also love that you offer kind of an explanation of what's happening so you can, like me, identify what's going on. You give strategies and techniques to help allow these feelings and how to get through. And then what I really love is at the end, you're going to you say, this is how you're going to fuck up. These are all the ways you're going to mess up and what to do when that happens.

JOANNA HARDIS: Oh, part two, sure.

HEATHER DRAGO: I love that because how many self-help books are just like, just do this thing and everything's solved. And then people mess up and then they have these terrible thoughts about themselves and they say, I can't do this. And then they give up.

JOANNA HARDIS: Right.

HEATHER DRAGO: So I love that you kind of were like, OK, but in reality, this is what's going to happen. Right. Yeah. So, I made a bunch of notes, as you can see, and so I just thought I would kind of share the stuff I love.

JOANNA HARDIS: Oh, I can't wait. I can't wait.

And so here are the two things, well, three things, really, that I noticed about myself in this, because it's all about me, right? You talked about when kids are uncomfortable with their pain, being the people pleasers and moms that we are. You want to solve it. I always want to solve people's problems, especially with my kids. But I realize I do it with my friends, and I really had to teach myself to just listen. and be there with them, not fix it. It's still really hard for me to do. And I actually verbalize. I say, well, the fixer in me wants to tell you how to fix this or what you should do, but I'm not going to do that because you're not asking me to. I literally have to verbalize it.

JOANNA HARDIS: Me too.

HEATHER DRAGO: Sure. OK, good. It's really hard. And then the other thing is, growing up in school and even now if I'm like in a situation where there's a speaker or a teacher or something and they ask for questions or volunteers if there's silence in the room that is very painful to me. I feel like I feel bad for the person and I wanna alleviate the distress they may be feeling. So I feel I have to raise my hand and ask the question. Or I have to volunteer because no one else is doing it. And this just happened to me a couple of weeks ago. I was at one of my business networking groups and someone asked for mentors to volunteer. And the person looked right at me. and I am, I'm busy, I'm sorry, I can't do it right now. And so I had to, you know, I know my boundary right now, I can't do extra things. And so I was looking right at her and I didn't respond, I didn't, you know, raise my hand and it was painful for me to do that. I felt very uncomfortable, but I knew I had to keep that boundary and it passed and other people volunteered. Lo and behold, other people raised their hands. So that was, Interesting. So I wanted to start with a little excerpt from page 17 because I think it really matches the whole impetus of this podcast.

JOANNA HARDIS: Okay. I'm curious what it is.

HEATHER DRAGO: It's about practice and repetition of building neural pathways. So you may know my story about how I said no to one thing every day, beginning in 2019, because it was so hard for me to say no. And it had to be little tiny things, right? Before you start teaching how to recognize the different kinds of anxiety and intrusive thoughts and things, and how to go about dealing with them, or not dealing with them, you say, These skills are meant to be practiced as often as you possibly can. We cannot lay new neural pathways, which is what we're trying to do, without a ton of practice and repetition. I cannot stress this enough. If you want to stop overthinking and letting your feelings control you, it will require intentional practice and repetition. Let's talk about that.

JOANNA HARDIS: Well, and I want to back up a couple steps. Oh, yeah. Go ahead. I just raced in. So I'm a therapist that specializes in anxiety disorders and OCD. And anyone who's read the book knows I've struggled with different iterations of an anxiety disorder. But this book is not just for people who struggle with anxiety disorders. So my premise is, that any feeling that's unpleasant or uncomfortable, that we struggle to experience. So that's why this book I really think is for anybody.

HEATHER DRAGO: So it could be- 100%, like I don't have an anxiety disorder. I'm feeling very well adjusted. I may be full of myself. But you know what I mean? I do have these moments where I'm very uncomfortable, and it causes me to do something that I then later regret. And I didn't realize that was what was part of your conversation until I read this.

JOANNA HARDIS: Right. The book is really how to change our relationship with distress and discomfort, under which we can find worry. We can find anxiety. We can find panic. We can also find boredom. Right. We can find embarrassment, we can find shame, we can find vulnerable. So it's really any feeling or sensation that we don't like how it feels. Right. Right. And because that can propel people, just like you said, to, without even realizing it, to act in ways that they get in their way. Right. For instance, a lot of people who don't go to the gym, I mean, and everyone now, I hate it, but it's talking about these New Year, New Me bullshit. But it's not a bad thing. But a lot of people that don't go to the gym or struggle with their eating resolutions, it may not be because they're anxious. It may be because they're bored, and they eat out of boredom. So they have to learn how to do bored differently. And so that's why, again, it's still learning how to do board differently, which requires a ton of practice and repetition.

HEATHER DRAGO: Not falling back into those habits.

JOANNA HARDIS: Right. And doing something differently when they get bored other than going and eating because that's what they've always done.

HEATHER DRAGO: Or scrolling on their phone. Sure. Or going on social media or whatever. Yeah. Yeah. And so the third thing I was going to talk about for me was that I'm heavier than I've ever been in my life. I've never really been into fitness. I've always aspired to, but never got around to it. I have fibromyalgia, which is a chronic pain thing. So One of the things they say that helps with chronic pain and fibromyalgia is movement. But then when you do it and you move, it hurts. And so as I was reading this, I recognized that I'm in my comfort zone when I'm not exercising and I'm worried about the pain and not being comfortable. And so again, it's not like I'm having a major problem per se, I'm fine. The problem is I'm too fine, I'm too comfortable. I don't want

to get up early. I don't want to go out in the cold. You know, whatever it is. Yes. So that's something I have to work on.

JOANNA HARDIS: Right. Right. Yeah. A comfort zoner.

HEATHER DRAGO: Yeah. Just avoiding it, because I'm like, yeah. So it's hard to change when you're comfortable.

JOANNA HARDIS: Yes. One of the chapters is I put in different categories to help people identify what might be getting in their way. And for a lot of people, being comfortable can get in people's way. It's very hard to change. Yeah. Despite what all the influencers and all the people that we hear on a lot of podcasts say, it is very hard to change. And it's not sexy. It's not fun. It's not sexy. It's a slog. But I think staying the same often causes people Perhaps suffering may be too strong in some cases, but that's not easy either in the long run.

HEATHER DRAGO: Right. So one of your exercises in here is it talks about making a list of what's the positive for doing it and the negative for doing it, and what's the positive and negative not doing it, and understanding your why and where you want to go. Sure. So that has a red flag of all these different things. because I'm going to work on it. I found that very interesting. So again, it's not necessarily, I'm not having a crisis, an anxiety disorder crisis, but I'm realizing I'm a little bit stuck. And you say a couple of times, if you're reading this, there's a space between where you are now and where you want to be. And I love the way you phrase that. It's not a judgment. It's not a, you're doing anything wrong. It's just, you're not where you want to be. Right. Yeah. Right. Yeah. Um, so one of the things you talk about, and I think this relates to what you were just saying, is that sometimes when we're having this uncomfortable feeling, we don't like it, whether it's boredom or whatever, is we put solutions in place to stop feeling that feeling. And you say what we do, what we think is helping eventually becomes our real problem. The leaving, avoiding, drinking, sleeping, overthinking, shutting down, procrastinating, all the coping behaviors become the problem. And ironically, we generally do these things to avoid feeling something unpleasant or uncomfortable.

JOANNA HARDIS: I mean, I think, again, I'm going to take three steps back, a little primer on thoughts and feelings.

HEATHER DRAGO: That's in here. I just put it in the wrong order. Oh, it is? That's good. Keep going. We're on the same page.

JOANNA HARDIS: I think it helps to explain. I think that helps to explain a little bit better. Because people get confused because, and I hear this a lot, there's a difference between having a thought and thinking. Yes, I love this. You do? OK, so this is OK. OK, so we cannot control what thoughts pop in our heads. And so that is having a thought. So anyone who has ever sat quietly or meditated or been bored, you notice like the thoughts that pop up in your head and they're random. They may be strange. They may be distressing. They may be distracting. They may be You know, they may be highly disturbing to someone, to someone else they're just weird. But it is, we cannot control the presence of that spontaneous thought.

HEATHER DRAGO: It doesn't make us a bad person if we have a thought that we think isn't quote unquote normal.

JOANNA HARDIS: Correct. It doesn't mean anything about us that we had this thought pop in our head. Thinking, however, is getting hooked, as we say in my field, it's getting hooked on that thought or engaging with it. So say you have a random thought that pops up. You're driving down the highway. This is one we always say in the anxiety field. I could, you know, the thought pops up, I could drive my car off the bridge. I mean, it's a very common thought. If you say, oh my gosh, why did I have that thought? What does that mean about me? Do I really want to kill myself? Am I suicidal? Am I a horrible person? What does it mean?

HEATHER DRAGO: That is thinking. And you're choosing to engage with the thought and choosing to play those scenarios out. Right.

JOANNA HARDIS: It may not feel like it's conscious or an intentional choice, but it is something that is in our control. Right. And oftentimes, most people are just going so fast and on automatic, it just happens. And it's married with so much adrenaline that it's just like they're just off to the races. So I say that because we have to know that there is a distinction between the presence of something and a behavior. Same with a feeling or a sensation in our body. We cannot control a sensation in our body, which is our brain releasing a stress hormone that then we feel. The problem is, is that most people feel a sensation and attach a story to it, and they're off to the races. But we really cannot control the presence of that sensation. So say, you say something happens, a car pulls out in front of you and you feel that jolt of adrenaline, your heart starts beating and you say, oh my gosh, I feel so anxious. We can't control that, okay? Now, if you're someone who attaches a story to how that feels, that's gonna be different. But what people, especially a lot of people do, especially if they're prone to an anxiety disorder, they may say, why am I feeling like this? Why am I thinking this? Why am I feeling so intensely? Why am I having this thought? What does this mean? And they may start worrying. And

they'll say, oh my gosh, what does this mean? Why am I worrying? Why was my heart beating so fast? It could be something cardiac. So they'll go to Google, and they'll start researching, for instance. And then Google's going to make them more worried. And then they're going to seek reassurance from a friend. or call a doctor, and that probably won't do it for them. And so they're gonna replay it in their head. And the next time they feel that sensation, they're gonna compare it. And all of these things, all the Googling and all the overthinking of the sensation and all the reassurance seeking is actually making them more anxious. Right. So that, what they think is helping, Googling, seeking reassurance, worrying, talking about it, actually makes them more anxious. And if we're getting into what happens to the brain, It is marking in the brain that this is something we need to be paying attention to because this person is spending a whole lot of time and energy focused on this.

HEATHER DRAGO: So the thing we just talked about, how you have to practice things to build neuropathways, you can do this negatively in a way that's harmful to yourself. by spending all this energy thinking.

JOANNA HARDIS: Exactly. That's how people become kind of lost in their sauce or get stuck in these worry spirals or depression, sadness spirals. or panic spirals, or shame spirals, whatever the spiral that's happening is, because they are, whatever they think is helping, and of course, in the moment, it feels like they may be doing something because they just want to get rid of that feeling, but unintentionally, they're pouring gas on it. Right.

HEATHER DRAGO: You say the more you try to control those feelings, the more they persist.

JOANNA HARDIS: Exactly. So what we want to learn how to do is, how do we learn to accept what we're feeling and not make it worse? That's the just do nothing.

HEATHER DRAGO: Right. Well, there are lots of ways you talk about doing this. One of the ways I like the analogy I like is, is you think of intrusive thoughts as like a puppy you're trying to do leash training with and how they wander off and you rein them back and then they wander off and they rein them back and you just keep doing it. It's to bring yourself back to to what you're supposed to be thinking about or whatever. Can you describe that a little more? Sure. I don't know if I summarized that very well.

JOANNA HARDIS: Well, it's not just for, it's to start training our attention to go where we want it to go. Right. Because when someone is distressed, whether they're in an anxiety, whatever the spiral is, they are being controlled by their feelings or their

thoughts. And so what we want to do is we want to get back in the driver's seat. And so I use the analogy of a puppy, like our brain is like a puppy that is untrained. And so we have to train the puppy to heal. And anyone who has ever trained a puppy how to heal knows about the consistency and the repetition. So an anxious, I use anxious just because that's most familiar to me, an anxious brain is going to go to, probably to the future. And it will go to try and make sense of whatever is happening and connect dots that shouldn't be connected. And so what we have to learn how to do is, how do we shift our awareness and our attention out of that story, out of that worry, into something that's actually happening? Out of the what if, into the what is. And that is metaphorically choking up on the leash and that gentle yank of, nope, we're right here next to me. And it is that practice of getting better at noticing when your mind is starting to wander and bringing it back. and wander and bringing it back and coming back to something that is actually happening. Right. And it takes, you know, and I encourage people to start. You don't start this when you're anxious. You have to start practicing this. And this is why I encourage people to sit and set a timer and get bored and start practicing this stuff.

HEATHER DRAGO: Right. I have tried meditation many times. Not many times, a dozen times, let's say, okay. That's not very many. That's not very many. No. And the thing I, you know, I have ADHD, so the thing I struggle with are the wandering thoughts and that, you know, it goes into like, I should be doing this and that. Yeah, so normal. And so I found that very helpful. And so that's one of the things I intend to start practicing, even if it's just to practice controlling my thoughts a little bit, you know. Not controlling, controlling, but you know what I mean. Sure, bringing it back. Bringing it back. Bringing it back.

JOANNA HARDIS: Yeah, yeah. Think of that like bicep curls. Because the strength is in the return. It doesn't matter that your mind is wandering. It doesn't matter how many times your mind wanders. Think of your brain as like a Jack Russell terrier. It just wants to keep wandering. That's fine. There's nothing wrong with you. Just bring it back. So the strength is in just keep bringing it back. And every time you bring it back, it's like you've done another rep.

HEATHER DRAGO: Yeah, I like that. Okay. Yeah, yeah, yeah. So you were kind of describing future tripping a little bit. you call it future tripping, where you kind of tell yourself the story of all the things that are going to happen. And there's someone in my life who does this or has done this on occasion, not necessarily because of a bad thing that happened, like a decision was made or a new a new stage of life happened or a purchase was made or something. And it's a good thing, right? But then there's sort of like this, what did I do? What did I get myself into? Was this the right decision? Now all

these bad things are gonna happen. This storytelling starts happening and this movie starts playing in their head. And then they're like, why am I like this? Why am I thinking that there's something wrong with me? Do I need to go to the doctor? Like, why am I always doing this? Like it just is- It's metathoughts. We call those metathoughts. Yeah, yeah, yeah. So this can happen. in all different kinds of ways, in all different directions. The other thing you talk about is the stories we tell ourselves. One of the things you talk about is there's a woman you talk about who's not very self-confident or whatever. And you said to her, you know, what would you do if you were confident? She said, I would make eye contact. I'd stand up straighter. And then through doing those thought exercises, she was able to then do those things. And it reminded me of many years ago, I had this sort of crazy campaign where I tried to do this thing and I founded a nonprofit and all this and I had to like go meet the governor and I had to go speak in public and do all these things I'd never done before and it was terrifying. I was the kind of person who if I had to stand up and talk at work like I would get all sweaty and nervous and stuff so I had to figure out how to do this and so I told this story of today the role of Heather Drago will be played by Heather Drago and I was like a whole other persona and and I'm going to just pretend I know what I'm doing. I know and I'm confident doing this even though I'm not. I'm going to just put this little shell around myself and like this coat and just pretend that I'm comfortable doing this. And did I collapse when I got home? Yes. But after a while, of doing that, it's become, like, I could walk into a room and talk to anybody. I could stand up on a stage and talk. It doesn't bother me anymore. Took a while. Took many instances of just doing that. Yes. And seeing what happened. I thought that was very interesting. Yes. That you touched on.

JOANNA HARDIS: Yes. Oftentimes, and this is why talk therapy for someone who, talk therapy for especially people with anxiety disorders can be, you know, contraindicated because we need the behavioral piece. It is through behavior change, exactly as you talk about, that then through the act of doing things differently, that your perception, your thoughts can change. But talking about it, so when people get stuck in talk therapy, especially when they have an anxiety disorder, they get stuck, because all that talking, it may eventually lead to some behavior change, but it may not. It's just another form of ruminating, right? It can be, yes, especially for an anxiety disorder. So we really, you're right, that we want the behavior, we want to try different things, because that's our best teacher. And then through that, we can change the stories we tell ourselves, we can change our perception about what we can do. And for a lot of people, they wanna do it. It's just, you were able to work through all the feelings you felt inside. For a lot of people, those feelings and what they're feeling inside can stop them dead in their tracks.

HEATHER DRAGO: And I think the reason I could is I had a very strong why. I had a mission I was on. And I was like, I'm willing to go through this discomfort because I

know what I'm trying to achieve. Did I ultimately succeed? No, but it led me down some other paths and some other successes. So it ended up being a win anyway. But that was like, I had a clear vision of why I was doing this. So can you talk about that, about the why and understanding?

JOANNA HARDIS: Yes, that makes a lot of sense why you were willing to get out of your comfort zone too. So it ties into what we were talking about before, which is behavior change is hard. Yeah. So to change our behavior in any measurable way is incredibly difficult. And to do things that scare us, to do things that are hard, to do things that take us out of our comfort zone is hard. So it helps to lock into our why or what's on the other side. Because when our back is against the wall, we need to be able to lock into something bigger than us. And it has to be bigger than, I want to feel better.

HEATHER DRAGO: I want to lose 20 pounds.

JOANNA HARDIS: Yeah, that's not enough. Yeah, that is not enough. And I hear that, you know, I hear that all the time. You know, I want to feel better. And like, of course, we all want to feel better. But that's not enough that when you're really when you're at that fork in the road, You want, you need a reason to keep going. And so that becomes your why. And it could be, you know, everybody's why is different. And oftentimes people don't change until, you know, their back is against the wall. you have to have a... and it doesn't have... everyone's reasons are different and there's no judgment about the reason. Right. But I think that always becomes one of the... for any time I meet with someone that always becomes something that we talk about in the first or second session. And I can tell pretty quickly if someone has a... if I think that someone has a compelling enough reason or someone doesn't have a compelling enough reason.

HEATHER DRAGO: We'll be back shortly with Joanna Hartis. So Joanna, the premise of this book has to do with distress, intolerance, and distressed and building distress tolerance, right? Yes. So why don't you start there and tell us at a high level kind of what these concepts mean and how you approach the book.

JOANNA HARDIS: Sure. And so distress tolerance is a well-known construct in the field of mental health, and it's got two parts. So it's got someone's perception that they can't tolerate negative internal states. And then the behavioral part, where the person will then avoid or try to get rid of those negative internal states. And by internal states, it's those feelings that we don't like. So distress intolerance is really important because we know from loads of literature that if someone has high distress intolerance, they are more vulnerable to develop a slew of anxiety disorders, depressive disorders, eating disorders, obsessive compulsive disorder. So it is not the primary cause of those

problems, but it is a contributing factor. If someone says, I can't possibly, I can't stand feeling this way, so I'm going to avoid. Or I can't, I can't bear, bear to do that. I can't bear to feel that. so I'm gonna drink or I'm gonna watch Netflix. And so it's a really important concept because it makes people vulnerable and it keeps people stuck.

HEATHER DRAGO: Yeah, I'm thinking about people you hear who say, I know I should be doing these things, but I always end up falling back in these same patterns. I'm always making these bad choices. I'm always dating these terrible guys, or I always end up eating the junk food. Like it's, it's...

JOANNA HARDIS: could be. And so something else that I talk about in the book is the function of what drives the behavior. So what drives the poor decision or whatever it is, is I don't want to feel the way I'm feeling. I can't possibly feel that way. I can't, I can't work through an urge.

HEATHER DRAGO: This is too painful.

JOANNA HARDIS: This is too hard. It's too hard. It's too, I don't like feeling bored. I don't know what to do with myself. And so I'm going to do X, Y, Z. Yeah, then, and it becomes a pattern of behavior. It could really interfere. It's not, this is not, distress intolerance is not, sure, there may be an instance where like, oh yeah, I'm just intolerant. Like I don't wanna feel upset and so I'm gonna do this. That wouldn't be what we call clinical distress intolerance. But I'm writing this because I want people to be aware of this, because I want people to be aware of patterns that may be happening in their lives. And A, noticing the patterns, B, starting to think about what is driving that? What is the function of my avoiding? What am I trying? What am I, am I avoiding something? Do I think I can't handle something? And then maybe they have a name for it and then have a process that they can feel like they can work through difficult feelings and emotions. To build that distress tolerance muscle.

HEATHER DRAGO: And instead of worrying, why am I feeling this way? You know, acknowledge, I'm feeling this way.

JOANNA HARDIS: I'm feeling this way. It may suck. And I know how to move through it.

HEATHER DRAGO: I can get through this. Yeah. I can ride that wave. Yes.

JOANNA HARDIS: Yeah, exactly. Very cool. Thank you.

HEATHER DRAGO: But as I alluded to earlier, this comes to you from a personal discovery point of view, not just as a clinician. This is personal to you. You've experienced this. So why don't we back up a few steps, as you say, and talk to us about how this concept came to you and how you've How the book came to be. How the book came to be and how you've applied this in your life.

JOANNA HARDIS: Oh my gosh, this could be three hours. Oh boy, here we go. No one's going home tonight. No. I mean, well, the genesis for the book was that I had been dating someone. I had had a really painful divorce. It's all in the book now. I had had a painful divorce about 11 years ago now, and was not an experienced dater. I had dated somewhat, but primarily was raising three kids, 75% by myself. and not an experienced dater, and found someone, and we had been dating, I think, three months-ish, and all of a sudden got ghosted. We were about to go away for my birthday, and out of the blue got ghosted. And it brought up things from when my husband left, and it really was a gut punch. And it was so much, it wasn't so much anxiety. I mean, I have a very, you know, I know anxiety disorders very well from struggling with them since I was a kid, but this was pain and distress and so many other emotions. And through, you know, as I say in the book, My life is so boring. I could not, if someone else could have written a book where they had like a healing ceremony and something cool happened to them and the idea for the book came along, nothing, that would never happen to me because my life tends to be boring. But no, I was just like, I had this moment. I don't need, you know, I was on a run and I was like, this experience is going to be a book. And because people had always recommended, you know, I write a book because I like to write and I've had a blog, but it was really healing. It was it was that experience because I had been exploring this concept, which is really well known in mental health, distress tolerance. And we can talk about that. But I was now living that. I was really living what I had been teaching and exploring with a colleague of mine in a very personal way. And it wasn't so much anxious feelings, although there was a lot of uncertainty when you've been ghosted, but it was a lot of other feelings that I thought a lot of people could resonate with.

JOANNA HARDIS: And so it brought in the scope of what I was doing and I had this moment of bravery because I'm a very private person. I'm very introverted. And I had a moment of bravery and decided to put a lot of my life out there into a book. And it was probably the scariest thing I've done.

HEATHER DRAGO: I think a lot of people can relate to that experience or something similar to it. Especially these days, people are more prone to this ghosting or dual-lives kind of thing going on. Yeah, it's bizarre to me.

JOANNA HARDIS: Right. But people will say, and I had people say to me, OK, you're a therapist. several months, you survived what happened with your husband, like, what the f***, Joanna? Why is this? And so I think it was that, you know, I think it was that experience that was a head trip for me. But it was also, it made it a very real experience and something with which I could connect with. Yeah. a lot of, I really, you know, it really kind of, I don't know that it made me, it made my client, I connected more with my clients, but it certainly, I have such a rich, it brought these skills right back home as if I needed a refresher course, but I got the intensive refresher course. Wow.

HEATHER DRAGO: Wow. So, I mean, it doesn't have to be anxiety. It can be any kind of feeling. It can be a mix of feelings.

JOANNA HARDIS: It's whatever the feel, as I say in the book, it's whatever the unpleasant or uncomfortable feeling of the moment is. Because in the course of a day, I may have 20 different feelings that I don't like how they feel, and so I have a choice. Am I going to try and make it go away, or can I learn how to be with it and respond differently to it?

HEATHER DRAGO: So back to my little story about when I learned how to set boundaries. Yes. I mean, the reason I decided I needed to do that was because I was just so uncomfortable doing it. It was literally nauseating to me. Wow. To say no to someone. I would get sweaty and red and nervous and anxious. I would lay awake at night thinking, why did I say yes to this thing when I shouldn't have? Or this person wants me to do this thing and I want to say no, but if I do, then what's going to happen? I mean, it was intense. And so much like you do in your book, you say put these challenges on a scale, what's from easiest to hardest. So I was like, I'm going to try to say no to one thing a day, no matter how small. And it was really hard. I felt sick doing it sometimes. I hurt feelings doing it sometimes. I messed up the way I did it sometimes. But it took a while, and I'm still working on it. I literally was in a staff meeting today, and people were like, we need to cancel some meetings for you. You've got too many meetings on your calendar. Wouldn't that help you? Yeah, like they're, they're enforcing it for me, you know. So it's still a challenge. It's still, I'm still trying to build that neural pathway, you know, to learn how to set boundaries. That's why we still do this all the time. It's part of the process.

JOANNA HARDIS: Yeah, there's no finish line. Yeah. There's no finish line. I mean, I cannot emphasize that. With my clients, I emphasize it. But I think for a broader population, especially with all the nonsense on social media, Again, it's not sexy, but there's no finish line. I mean, we make, we can certainly make our life better. We can

achieve goals. I'm all for goals. I'm all for self-improvement, but these skills that help make us feel better, we have to continue them to keep feeling better.

HEATHER DRAGO: Right, right. And it's, you were saying, people were saying to you, like, it's only been a few months and why is it such a big deal? Don't judge the feelings. Of course. Right? That's not for them to decide if it's an important thing or not. You feel what you feel. Thoughts are just thoughts. Feelings are just feelings. Sure. And you're allowed to have them. It's just what you do with them that matters. Right. I feel like we could go on for a whole nother 45 minutes, hour. Yeah, that'd be fun. Is there anything we didn't cover you want to cover that's in this book you feel is important for people to know? I know there's a lot in here, as you can see from all my little notes.

JOANNA HARDIS: Well, I think, no, I just want people to know that it is for anyone that struggles with any feeling that they don't like. So it's not just for people who identify themselves as having an anxiety disorder. Right.

HEATHER DRAGO: So, yeah, I mean, for sure. My complacency and me beating myself up all the time about like, why can't I get out of Why can't I just do the thing, this new behavior I wanna do? Why can't I just go work out every day? It's that classic New Year thing where you start and then you quit. I've made this decision, I wanna do this thing, why can't I do it? Yeah, you've really helped me identify the fact that I'm too comfortable, I'm in my comfort zone and I'm falling back into patterns. There are lots of actual, exercises to do. I love that you have this area in the back for wins. And so that's along the same lines of when you say no, you write it down and how you're feeling and what happened and note your successes and your failures. I love that you put that in there.

JOANNA HARDIS: That was my daughter and my dad's contribution. Well, that was good. I know. It was good. I was happy to put that in.

HEATHER DRAGO: Yeah, very good. I love this book. I highly recommend it, guys. Oh, thank you. We're going to have our little book club discussion next week. And I can't wait to hear what the gens, the two gens, say. I am so curious, too. So there's lots of really good tangible advice in here, you guys, and really good information just to understand how your brain works, little scientific nerdy parts, funny parts. Exercises to do. Exercises to do. So I highly recommend, and Joanna, thank you so much for coming on again. Thank you, thank you. And yeah, we hope we get the word out so more people can benefit.

JOANNA HARDIS: The audio book is available today.

JOANNA HARDIS: So this was a great day to be here. Well, I don't know when this recording will actually air, but the audio book is, yeah, so the audio book is available. Okay, on Amazon? Audible, Amazon, and Apple.

HEATHER DRAGO: Okay, on Amazon? Audible, Amazon, and Apple. Okay, Just Do Nothing by Joanna Hardis. Thanks. Thank you. Thank you. Okay, so that's it for now. Thanks for listening. That's A Hard No is a production of Clever Girl Marketing, my little agency in Cleveland, in partnership with our friends at Evergreen Podcasts. Many thanks to our amazing team, including Maura Del Rosario, our production and marketing coordinator. Noah Fouts, our amazing producer, editor, and composer, who wrote our theme music and performed it with his band, The Big Leagues. and our new video producer and editor Kay Holmberg. You can find show notes and resources on our website, and you can find other fun stuff on our socials. We're Hard No Podcast, and we're now on YouTube, so check us out there. Make sure to like and subscribe on your favorite listening platforms, but especially Apple. Can you please do us a favor? Give us a rating and review so more people can find us and learn how to say no. So until next time, thanks for listening. And remember, saying no isn't just okay. Saying no is key to living an authentic, fulfilling life. So do it. Find your no, then say it with me.