

Part One
Putting Neurotic and Mindful Together Somehow

“You know, if you take everything I’ve accomplished in my entire life and condense it down into one day,
it looks decent.”

-George Costanza, *Seinfeld*

Hi.

Anxiety has become the dark lord that valiant wellness products all seek to slay. Fidgets, bean bag chairs, tubs of slime. Anything that grounds the mind away from anxious thoughts can offer relief. But what about those anxious thoughts? Worries, problems, or aversions that buck against our baseline peace and feel so real in the moment. Then later, we look back, and they're irrational.

Those thoughts may also still appear perfectly rational and I'm not saying you're irrational, it's cool, we're cool! However they turn out, anxious thoughts can often be tied to our personal perspectives and comfort levels rooted in our neuroses. These are the thoughts that drive our decisions and personalities in strange and interesting ways.

Come get Neurotic with me.

A couple years before I wrote this, a pandemic shut down the world and I was put on furlough. I won't say which pandemic because I assume there will be plenty more and I want this book to remain relevant. That furlough was supposed to last two weeks but, I'm sure you know, it became an ongoing question of "is it over"? That furlough kickstarted a course of events forever changing me and leading to some pretty great stuff. It also led to some garbage, like insomnia.

For many years, I was so accustomed my anxiety that I often forgot it was a part of me. Then the sinking reality of how fragile my career was inspired a new color of anxiety that screamed I had to branch out and find other work or I would fail. I branched, baby. I took on side jobs that were extremely rewarding. I had a stronger drive in my professional life than ever before. But it was fueled by fear. My neuroses dictated that if I didn't work hard, I'd fail. If I failed, I'd lose everything.

I have two small children that rely on my ability to provide. I have a wife that needs me. I had to do more each day so I could keep them safe and comfortable. That logic said I couldn't go to sleep at night because there was always more to do.

I was regularly reassured that I was far from the only one dealing with sleep trouble and, while that was comforting, it didn't help me sleep. I was also aware that most of those fears were irrational. For one, my wife is very talented both professionally and financially. She could provide for all of us. But I didn't want that! I'm a big man (5'8") and I had to go hunt down those dollars, kill them with my spear and drag them back to the house.

I was instilled with the work ethic of stoic south side Chicago. If Chicago Folk lose our job, we find a new one. We don't let the stress of unemployment cloud our ability to kill dollars. This is the hearty "Chicago tough" stock I grew from where adversity is shrugged off and broken ankles are "merely tweaked". This mentality has and still will serve me well. Being tough can go a long way to finding some balance amid chaos.

Of course, tough can only carry you so far. And I was soon to learn that.

I stuffed down my fears and hunted for anything that would make my problems go away. When I didn't think I'd have a job to return to, I found a new one selling luxury cars until my original job called me back. In the thirty days I was on the sales floor, I sold fourteen cars. Chicago savvy!

The next summer I broke my ankle while improperly using a boogie board. I popped right up and walked away on that “merely tweaked” joint. I continued to walk (limp) around until the next morning when it so much resembled an eggplant that my RN brother-in-law said, “You know it’s broke, right?”. I got surgery, propped up my foot and started a contracted ghostwriting job. Chicago tough and savvy!

But while all that was going on, I was coping and justifying and flat out ignoring the anxiety that grew from neuroses saying I wasn’t doing enough. I pretended the chaos of life couldn’t get to me if I worked harder. I lay awake at night planning ridiculous creative projects that were somehow meant to generate income.

This continued to get worse for months until I couldn’t sleep enough nights in a row and finally went to my doctor. She had me tested and, obviously, I was suffering from anxiety. I was wearing a face mask due to the prevalence of (insert your favorite pandemic here), but she could tell I wasn’t shocked. This visit confirmed that I was so stressed I couldn’t sleep. But the sleep issues had gotten progressively worse over the last few years. Furlough was almost two years behind me, and my ankle had been healed for a year. Why now?

What I failed to see is how not dealing with those neuroses in my mind would cause my anxiety to fester in my body and manifest as insomnia. I had avoided my fight, flight or freeze reflex so often that I became stuck in a state of readiness for the next terrible thing to happen. I was massaging my resume into something full of half-truths in an attempt to secure an interview for a job that would provide me with the unending ability to provide (there’s no such job). I was shoving down the fact that I was traumatized by the pandemic and ankle fracture and general facing of my mortality. Chicagoans don’t die!

While anxiety may be the dark lord, this is about neuroticism. Of course, these two are as close as a couple of Chicago neighbors, but neuroses are the origin thoughts that pollinate anxiety. My job and health worries were neurotic trains of thought, fueling anxiety and pumping through endless channels of over-thinking. In the end, I wanted to find enough so I didn’t have to be afraid.

There is no “enough”. There is no amount of money that will remove the stress of trying to stay ahead. There is no amount of being physically healed to wipe away the impact a serious injury can have on the rest of you. The only solution is to accept what you have right this moment as enough. I know that now. I sleep better, still not great as of this writing, but this awareness is offering peace of mind that speared and skewered dollars never could.

Either right now is enough or it’s never enough. Accepting the simplicity of the present is a core tenet of a mindful practice.

There, I’ve already ruined my big wisdom for this book. To be fair, I’m not the first, or millionth, person to say that. The great thing about good ideas, is they are simple and easily shared. All I’m going to do for the remainder of these pages is wrap that single idea in a variety of orbiting ideas that apply more specifically to neurotic people seeking mindfulness.

Wait, that reminds me. I have one more big point to make. While I’ve been focusing on explaining the negative ways neuroses can influence us, these unique perspectives on life create plenty of

opportunity for positive change. Neuroses are powerful thoughts spurred by negative experience. But the moment neuroses become loud enough, they also become free agents to be employed however you please. We can take worry from a broken ankle use it creatively to look for new opportunities in ghost writing.

Neurotics are not misfits or misanthropes. They are not less than. To be neurotic is enough, because it comes with all sorts of wonderful gifts you can harness in your own journey for peace, better sleep, or even a dang moment when you don't feel afraid.

For me, it was about achieving that great stuff without all the garbage. I'm still working on that balance, but it's getting clearer. Whatever your personal brand of neuroticism, I hope you find something here.

How to Use This Book

I love a good conversation, so I tried to write one. This book is curated information and experiences from myself and other self-proclaimed Neurotics meant to reframe the experience for anyone that thinks they think too much.

Part One will get into what being neurotic and mindful and neurotically mindful can mean for you. I've got some history and science and quite a bit about meditation. Harnessing the power of neuroses means feeling in control of our minds. Meditation is an excellent way to practice doing that but, as I'll say often, do what works for you.

In Part Two, I'm going to share stray thoughts and stories that can all tie into a Neurotic lifestyle. In my own efforts to feel in control of my neuroses, I've tried to get playful with them. Take the playful bits that stand out and try to have a good time with your neuroses before moving onto Part Three-

-Which is where I'll offer a 10-day program complete with meditation and suggested mental exercises. I've read so many books where I didn't participate in the exercises, so I don't expect you to either. Part Three serves to reiterate that this entire book is a suggestion made by someone that would love to talk about neuroses further.

Part Four is the secrete shadow part that doesn't appear directly in the book.

Don't worry about Part Four.

Part Four is always watching.

How Neurotic Mindfulness Came About

This is the culmination of digging into what bothered me to stop sleeping. Once I started pinpointing how neuroses played a role, I got curious and began applying it to other aspects of my life. When enough of these “how bout that?” moments came together, I thought there could be something here, so I asked this question:

Can a sincere mindfulness and meditation practice gel with a vibrant neurotic mind to make a brain baby with the best of both?

Apart from being a performer and ghostwriter and temporary car salesperson, I am also a certified meditation instructor and wellness writer. I had plenty of time to get certified to teach meditation during that pandemic that was supposed to last two weeks.

Initially, I wanted to address the anxiety I was feeling by deepening my practice through a better understanding of meditation. I came to see that my meditation practice had to be a conscientious effort that was building towards something. When we're swirling in neurotic thoughts, it's simple to automate behaviors as a way to check them off the list. We may feel we need to complete our lists quickly because there's always more being added to said list. By stepping back from the list and reevaluating how my meditation and mindfulness practice fit into my neurotic life, I was able to find new clarity in the same content.

My teaching certification led to teaching and publishing a kid's book about meditation. I kept being Chicago saavy and added a few volunteer writing gigs to my resume in the wellness space as I continued to explore my personal understanding.

Then, I was hired as a writer for a holistic wellness company where some of the topics I was assigned to cover were stress and sleep. Talk about serendipity! Researching and writing on these topics created so many more links. Soon, I began to see neuroses everywhere in my body and mind. Even when I slept better, I could still identify how unchecked neurotic thoughts were coloring the effort.

I've also applied neurotic awareness to my role as a husband, father, soccer coach, bookstore customer that really wants to be a regular everyone knows by name, and member of a great camping group of Dads. In each unique situation, I've discovered how my neurotic trains of thought can be encouraged with traditional mindfulness to identify helpful bits while discarding the rest. Rather than trying to be the non-reactive and peaceful state of traditional mindfulness, I ride waves of emotion and curiosity that create potential moments of neurotic magic.

One reader suggested I spend a little more time talking about my expertise. This is the most I can stomach. I'm passionate about the subject matter!

For many years, I pursued a traditional mindfulness practice. These are truly an invaluable set of skills that can build resilience against stress or negative experience. Mindfulness establishes a foundation of security where we see and trust ourselves.

And here I am trying to customize it because seeing our thoughts and choosing which to respond to is invaluable to the Neurotic. We may never be relaxed, but we can still experience peace by understanding how we have control. Ah, that's a digression, sorry. I'll justify that later.

I've had plenty of inspiration when it comes to meditation and mindfulness teachers. Ram Dass, Sharon Salzberg, Thich Nhat Hahn, Pema Chodren and Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw have all been instrumental in getting me this far. But it also occurred to me I had no real-life role models for how to function effectively as a Neurotic.

To my knowledge, and apologies to any Neurotic life coaches out there crushing it, no one is celebrating how to be successfully Neurotic. There are famous people renowned for their genius and creativity who are labeled as Neurotic but that merely reflects one small aspect of their grand genius. No one is pointing at Albert Einstein and saying he was great because he was Neurotic.

Of course, no one is just one thing. Further complicating the idea of Neurotic role models is the negative connotation the word still has. I do have some real-life Neurotic role models but I won't name them. Instead, I will celebrate the characters from tv, movies, and books that have neurotically taught me life lessons since I was probably too young to be watching the things my parents wanted to watch. I would like to start with my first and arguably most unsuccessful role model for successful neuroticism by highlighting George Costanza from Seinfeld.

Played by Jason Alexander and inspired by the real life of creator Larry David, George overthinks every decision he makes. He carefully sculpts social interactions to paint himself as a marine biologist or architect when he's unemployed. He agonizes over talking to women and can't let go of a grudge.

I always related to George because I too was unable to take action as there were 1,000 reasons I should remain inactive. Prisoner to my thoughts, endless worrying about what could happen. But the amount of time George spends being George leads him to moments of brilliance. Not only does he get a job with his favorite team, the New York Yankees, his career survives several missteps that would have gotten anyone else fired. Building a nap spot under his desk, for instance. George's story is a roller coaster so ridiculous it could only mirror real life. And while I have been happily married, proving more successful than him when it comes to romance, we both spent a summer laid up with broken lower extremities.

If you don't watch Seinfeld, the good news is that there is a Neurotic character in virtually any ensemble. The Neurotic is the one asking questions, and creating truly original circumstances that can only come from swirling inside one's own head for so long.

Other examples include Samwise Gamgee from The Lord of the Rings, Doug Funny from the cartoon Doug, Leslie Knope in Parks and Recreation, Felix Unger in The Odd Couple, Dr. House from House, Rex the T-Rex from Toy Story and Marge Simpson. At 37, I finally started watching Friends to find both Ross and Monica on that list too. Monica is a clean freak who struggles with self-esteem while Ross's famous low-energy "hi" reflects how he can't stay out of his own way long enough to greet someone.

Finding your own Neurotic teachers can enlighten you to the way forward when it feels like you're stuck in second gear (Friends reference). I encourage you take my gathered tips to spot the tell-tale signs of neuroses in the wild and take comfort in knowing there are more of us out there than all those obnoxiously well-adjusted people would like to admit. Speaking of honesty, it's also important to embrace yourself as a Neurotic person. But, you know, in a good way.

My moment of acceptance came after I playfully labeled myself neurotic at work. Here's how it went down...

I walked by a group of coworkers and said "good morning" on my way to the break room. After getting a cup of water, I needed to head back the other direction. But I had just walked by these people, I had just said "good morning" and asked them how they were doing. To walk back now would require either ignoring them entirely or coming up with something new to say. I had only gotten to work a few moments ago and couldn't be expected to construct a second conversation. The logical solution was the walk back through the building the long way. The problem with this decision is that a coworker noticed. Laughing, he asked me if I had just made a complete circle. I explained to him my plight about the conversations and then said, "I'm not neurotic, why would you say that?"

This felt like something George would do. George would not want to have two conversations. In fact, I'd be willing to bet that that moment happens somewhere on the show. While I saw this moment as humorously problematic for my overall mental well-being, I also got curious about what that little neurotic swirl meant on a grand scale. How were neurotic trains of thought creating anxiety-filled or irrational choices?

Then how was that conflicting with the mindfulness tools I was trying to develop?

Before we go forward into neurotic mindfulness, we need to spend a lot more time with traditional neuroticism.

All Things Neurotic

Neurotic is commonly an insult or blanket description for antisocial behavior. When a movie synopsis tells you a character is neurotic, they mean this person is going to have obsessive compulsive tendencies and yell at strangers in at least one scene. I had been using it to explain irrational choices. Books on mindfulness may mention neuroses as thoughts that detract from the practice. Neuroses are characterized as an inhibiting factor on the path towards peaceful mindfulness. These negatives were making me doubt the validity of pursuing a healthy exercise of neuroticism.

So, I looked it up.

The search engine we all have on our phone browsers defines neurotic as, “abnormally sensitive, obsessive, tense or anxious.” What the heck? Say someone, on the suspicion that they may be neurotic, looks this up to find they are first and foremost “abnormal”? Forget that, Neurotics are beautiful, complex, perfectly normal people. I know this is true because I looked deeper than one cocky search engine that will probably be our future overlord.

Well well well...wouldn't you know that one stat I cherry picked says 30% of all people measure moderate to high on the neuroticism scale. I'd comfortably argue that one in three is a large enough population to label those people as normal. What's more, neuroticism is one of five designated primary personality types that make up the OCEAN model devised by psychologists to explain us. Here they are in all their acronymic glory.

Openness
Conscientiousness
Extraversion
Agreeableness
Neurotic

This model makes it quite clear that Neuroticism is a part of enough personalities to be normal. We're all swimming in this OCEAN like colorful fish. Every one of us is a mixture of these five personalities complete with the strengths and weaknesses. I am Neurotic, but I am also Open and Agreeable. Those colors of my makeup go a long way to diluting these abnormal symptoms. This is an overly verbose way to say, again, that no person is only one thing.

Neurotic too is not only one thing. To be Neurotic is to be sensitive, obsessive, tense and anxious. It is also to be empathic, creative, and humble.

Because Neurotics are sensitive and anxious, they know how difficult it is to exist in the world. This teaches them the necessity of being empathetic and humble. Because Neurotics tend to overthink and obsess, they spend more mental bandwidth on ideas which can lead to creative conclusions only accessible through patient thought swirls. Because Neurotics are tense, they have a hard time relaxing. Of course, the relaxed primitive human would get eaten by predators while the Neurotic would be paranoid

enough to find a tiger in every bush and thought swirl about if that the fermented fruit on the ground might one day be beer.

At this point, I'm asking myself, "is this is working?" I am doubting my ability to successfully analyze, distill, and translate these ideas into something that you as a reader can benefit from. Good. I'll double down on that insecurity and use it to push myself outside my comfort zone to finish this. Thanks for riding that wave.

Seeing how neuroticism works with the other members of OCEAN can help you understand how all five can come together like a boy band. Let's expand on those a bit more. And don't feel you have to absorb all of this now. We will be returning to these personalities in Part Three and they'll have cute characterizations.

In the boy band, Neurotics are the quirky one.

Openness

Open people are curious. They allow new experiences to carry them along. This is fantastic because the more experiences you have, the more you understand. This constant newness can be intoxicating and can sometimes lead Open people to risky behavior as they seek to taste the most extreme experiences. Open people are good listeners and can consider other points of view. Open people make friends easily.

Neurotics are more reserved. Their natural penchant for pessimism can inspire some notions about what those risky experiences the Open people are trying may lead to. (Death, Destruction, Dinosaur Uprising)

Conscientiousness

Conscientious people are disciplined. They take the time to know what a situation will require and exercise clear awareness. This thoughtful approach can result in stubbornness, but that's only because Conscientious people have already taken the time to know that they're probably making the right decision. Conscientious people choose their words carefully and are probably great at chess.

Neurotics are more flexible on account of their tendency to react. Instead of taking a step back to observe a situation, Neurotics are in it. They might not have a choice, but they can still make the best of it. Neurotics aren't great at chess because they feel bad for the Pawns and waste time wondering if the Rook is the tower or someone hiding inside.

Extraversion

Simply put, these are Extroverts. They, like Open people, are interested in what external forces have to offer. They engage enthusiastically and aren't shy about talking. This can lead to dominating a social situation or being a confident leader. Extraverted people will dive headfirst into exploration, which makes sense because those words sound alike.

Neurotics are likely introverts. Rather than attack the world with gusto, they see the world as something that is happening to them. Neurotics aren't often leaders because who would want to follow them? They're neurotic!

False. Neurotics are great leaders. Their sensitivity lends itself to empathy which makes them very attuned to the maniacs that would want to follow a Neurotic leader.

Agreeableness

This is super self-explanatory, but I've already created this pattern of description. Agreeable people tend to be transformational as they embrace and understand different perspectives. Agreeable people make excellent leaders in nearly every circumstance as they genuinely care about others.

Neurotics aren't always great at agreeing because that would require responding right away to a situation. Instead, the Neurotic wants to chew on a question until it's cow cud.

As you can see, there's overlap in the OCEAN. You've probably spotted bits and bobs of yourself in some of those. If you want a really fun game, go back and see how many apply to your parents.

But while the OCEAN model is helpful for understanding how we aren't abnormal, there's still a lot about the neurotic experience that can be challenging. Let's rewind to the beginning and see how we Neurotics have come to find our place in the world.

History

In 450 BC, when the Greeks identified the four humors that make up all personalities. Predominant melancholy or gloomy moods were characterized by too much black bile in the system. A sense of melancholy is sadness stemming from no specific cause. Any of the variety of ways people could feel down in the BCs were attributed to melancholy. If you had too much black bile, the prescribed treatment was bloodletting. I can't think of anything I'd like less on an especially neurotic day than to have someone open my vein with a sharpened piece of wood until I felt better. To summarize, Greek Neurotics had it rough.

To fill the considerably large gap in time between the Greeks and my next example, I'll detour into Shakespeare. Hamlet is one of literature's most famous neurotics. His soliloquies are chock full of self-pity and shame.

"O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!"

See? Hamlet's story doesn't end well, but he was also haunted by his father's ghost which makes happy endings difficult. However, it's Hamlet's baseline agitation that is set off by the traumatic events of his story which drives him deeper into the most unfortunate aspects of neuroticism. Which leads us back to psychology.

In the 1950's, German psychologist Hans Eysenck popularized the term neuroticism by adding it into his personality inventory. Eysenck believed that a combination of genetic predisposition and childhood influences would work together to construct our personalities.

Instead of five types, Eysenck defined three main types of personalities in extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism. The extraverts get most of the good traits, the neurotics represent emotional instability and psychotics were...yikes? Perhaps best not to dig into that one. However, Eysenck maintained a similar stance to the Greeks in attributing neuroticism to those experiencing high stress reactions or feelings of depression. They weren't wrong, but they were also looking at neuroses as a problem to be removed rather than an aspect of a greater personality to be folded in.

It's not uncommon as a Neurotic to feel anxious or depressed without any specific reason. Being generally stressed out by life is often enough to trigger these symptoms. Of course, the Greeks would say that it's not life that's stressing you out, you're loaded head to toe with black bile and will feel much better after you're slashed open with a splinter knife.

Still today, research into neuroticism focuses primarily on the negative symptoms that can sprout from neuroses while also accepting that it is a fundamental aspect of many personalities. This dichotomy is a perfect opportunity for Neurotics to seize on those weird feelings and use them as tools for growth. But it's equally important to know what we're up against and where our personal limitations may lie.

And so, we turn to...

The Downside of Neuroses

The big thing to look out for as a Neurotic is when the normal stress becomes abnormal for you. Neuroses can lead to anxiety, depression, obsessive compulsive disorder, and substance abuse. The typical spirals of neurotic thought, reaction, and emotional response can become overwhelming. It stands to reason that if you are constantly overwhelmed, you're liable to look for relief through distraction and coping.

Neurotic guilt is an entire category itself. Neurotics don't simply feel guilty, they stretch that guilt to cover every aspect of their being. Like this-

How could you say such a thing? What compelled you to call Jill's sweater "different"? Jill didn't put on that sweater so you could come down from your twisty tower and cast judgment upon it. You've disrespected Jill and every thread of that sweater. Do you even know if sweaters with a picture of a highland cow on them are different or is everyone into highland cows right now? Probably the latter because those cows have shaggy hair that hangs over their eyes in the most adorable way. If you'd done any cow or sweater research, you might know that but noooooooo, you called it "different". You even said different in a way that made different sound like "as dummy choice for pudding brains". Your tone was harsh, your face was scowling. Your hair even got in on the game and framed your face to make it more accusatory. On a cellular level you were out to ruin Jill's day, you flippin' monster.

See? Neurotic guilt is special. Watch out for it.

Buddhist prayers refer to the neuroses as that which are pulling you away from the practice. The intrusive thoughts that lead to self-destruction and missing the moments of peace. Buddhist prayers certainly have a point. Neurotic thoughts aren't a welcome addition to our inner monologue and the more we feed them, the more they become our entire monologue with an overly negative tone.

A Neurotic perception of the self is going to look for weaknesses. This will be coupled with high expectations of what we should be capable of and a strict policy of not falling anywhere short of perfect. If your coach was always pointing out your flaws while expecting you to be perfect, you would think that coach was a butthole. Neurotics can be total buttholes to themselves.

With that said, it's crucial that you are open to seeking professional help when the downsides become too much for daily self-care. None of what I'm doing here is a replacement for sincere medical intervention and your safety.

In my case, I started with simmering anxiety that grew into a fear I'd lose my ability to provide for my family or achieve career success. Since there wasn't much I could do on a daily basis to prevent that fear, it manifested as obsessive behavior in the form of constantly reorganizing my "to be read" list and trying to plow through upwards of 200 pages a day. I had to read this many pages so I could read at least three books a week. I had to read three books a week so I could finish 150 books by the end of the year while still working and being present with my family. I had to do this because the previous year I read 78 and I wanted to double it. I knew twice 78 is 156 but 150 was a pleasantly round number.

My neuroses said I had to read twice as many books as the year before to say that I did. Say to who? Myself. I wanted the sense of accomplishment that would come from reading so many books. I

would get a little jolt of accomplishment with each book, but it was only 1/150th of what I was going for, so the jolt didn't last long.

Then the sneaky neuroses kicked in and said that my obsession about reading needed to play into my life otherwise the rational side of my brain would eventually take over. So, I'd find ways to work it into conversations.

No one cares how many books I read. My jolts shrank and the logic of this being time well spent didn't fit with the real concern of financial stability. But financial stability can't be measured in the same way my book tracker can track books I've read (yes it can). My neurotic thoughts squiggled away from my real problem and doubled down on reading as a tangible proof of success. I read harder. I burned my eyes through the page and gripped the spines with sweaty palms.

I disrespected a lot of books I'd like to apologize to now. Hang on, is talking about my reading with regret any different than trying to brag about it when I was feverishly finishing books? No, still self-indulgent, but at least I'm aware of the contradiction. Okay then, I'll compromise and apologize to one book to transition into my next point.

Sorry *Guermantes Way* by Marcel Proust. (Obnoxious literary flex). I chose this because I sincerely wanted to read it. The seven volumes making up one massive book by Proust are famous for their insights into love, the human condition, success, art. These themes were directly applicable to my life. When reading it, I could tell the narrator was Neurotic in the way he analyzed and doubted and justified. I wanted to experience it in all of its brilliance and see what little ways it may change my life. By not being there for the experience, I robbed myself of that chance.

To summarize: I wasn't really enjoying the books I was reading, I was finishing them. Just like how I wasn't really looking for a new good job to alleviate my work anxiety, I was looking for any job. This was a microcosm of what was happening overall. I was worried, distracted, and disconnected from everything happening before me as I let my neurotic thoughts run the show.

My downside of neuroticism was a rough stretch that left some lasting imprints. I had emotional blow ups and break downs. I didn't sleep much. I did not get through my struggles without the help of my doctors, and it was only when things calmed down that I felt ready to harness the power of neuroticism as a force for good in my life.

I live the downsides every day. When I speak in clipped sentences to my family because the chatter in my head is so loud, I'm full of black bile that's making me lose sight of how easy it could be to step out of my head. When I'm almost late for work (but still on time) and the rush causes me to feel unsettled for hours, my neurotic thoughts were counting on a chill commute take over. When I still can't sleep for hours, ruminating over things I've done, things I need to do and how tired I'm going to be tomorrow, the neuroses are swirling.

Seeing these moments helps. Like the thousands of pages of Proust, they may be hard to get through, but patience helps.

So, this is where I want to say again that being Neurotic isn't this abnormal terrible thing. And I got facts to back it up. According to a single article in a reputable business magazine, successful people are more likely to be Neurotic. That's because they and we are able to channel that overthinking and

empathy into creative humble output. It is perhaps through the valleys that we are refined into someone both anxious and confident. We should embrace the bad days and look forward to the good ones while walking a path of healthy neuroticism. We should also find the good in the bad days, learn from those moments and give ourselves the grace to make mistakes. Being Neurotic only has downsides if we're not trying to be our best Neurotic self.

It's going to be fun.