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Episode 128:

“How to Get Over Big Nerves”

Mike Michalowicz:

Welcome back to the Don't Write That book podcast where you can learn how to write your bestseller and own your authorship. Follow along with us as we give you an insider's view of the book industry. Now, here are your hosts, myself, Mike Michalowicz and AJ Harper

Mike Michalowicz:

Nerves. We're gonna talk about nerves today. Do you still get nervous doing any, like, routine things, like stuff that you've done a thousand times

AJ Harper:

With respect to writing a book?

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. It does. Anything like something you've done a thousand times over but you're still nervous about it

AJ Harper:

Sometimes, like, I guess it depends on, I think it's related to stakes, you know? Oh, yeah. So if the stakes are higher, then yeah, I might be nervous about it. Yeah. Yeah,

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. I think, you know, that's a great point. You know, when it comes to speaking, I've noticed, and this is such an odd thing, I, my nerves get more intense, the smaller the audience. So the largest audience I ever spoke to, I think was 5,000 people. And the smallest audience is one. And the, the most nervous I get, if there's an audience of one, like doing a speech, but a typical, more typical small audience could be a, a small group of like business owners. And they invite me in and it's like 10 business owners, and they wanna ask questions, but they want me to present first. You think it'll be more intimate and more easy? 'cause like, that's like a cocktail party. But for me, like I get, oh, I can feel <laugh>, I get nervous.

AJ Harper:

Cocktail party? Okay. That, to me is the worst.

Mike Michalowicz:

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Oh, you don't like that? The networking.

AJ Harper:

Forget it. I really can't. I just get so nervous at one of those. I have to go to one tonight. And, um, I mean, I pretty much just spend the whole time trying to get out of it, <laugh>. But I try to make myself do a few and just stay for a little bit. Parties with friends, good cocktail parties, networking events. I really have to push myself. I get really nervous.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. Yeah. Actually, me too. I, I, I just feel there's an awkwardness of like, there's an expectation for some kind of level of surface conversation, and you move on to the next, if I'm into a conversation and it goes long, I feel guilty when the person's like, oh, hey, um, I'm just gonna hop over here and talk to some other folks. Like, oh, I messed that up. I, I distracted them. I'm just, yeah, that's not a talent of mine either. And maybe that's part of nerves too, as a, as a lack of talent in that category. I,

AJ Harper:

I mean, maybe I wouldn't be as nervous if I had some good question, some good things to ask or say to people. But I'm just not great at meeting strangers.

Mike Michalowicz:

There's a, uh, a thing I think, like, they call it the yikes or the yikes or something in sports where an athlete will overthink the steps. They go back to the beginner level. So they, they're so professional, they're so experienced, and now they're in the big moment and they're overthinking it. I think that a professional gets so confident what they're doing, that it becomes a process. There were no conscious thoughts happening. It's just a all subconscious stream. And you can start riffing again. I know in speaking, like there's an arc. The first time I do speech is usually better than the fifth or sixth speech. 'cause the first speech, while clunky is still at least the natural tone once I start building a pattern to it. But I haven't mastered it yet, I get nervous and I start thinking too mechanically and then clunky. And then he gets to the other side of it.

Mike Michalowicz:

I noticed with guitar, if I'm jamming solo, I'll play a backing track, which means there's a musical background and you can solo over it. I can do some pretty good stuff. And like, if you, if a course sounds good, but gosh, put me in front of another guitarist and now we're jamming out together. I go back to like, oh, I know three chords. And I don't know, there's, there's something happens at that moment. Well, all that to be said, that's where we can talk about today, is how successful authors handle the, the big nerve moments you are listening to. Don't write that book podcast. One of the most important books you can read, by the way, is write and must read by my co-host, my friend, my colleague, AJ Harper. So make sure you get that book. And, uh, AJ

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the thing I admire about you, which if I didn't acknowledge this in these 128 episodes, shame on Me is that you write an outline for every one of our episodes, and it's a big deal. 'cause it keeps this conversation moving and fluid and allows us to naturally lit riff, but not to get off subject. So just thank you for what you're doing there.

AJ Harper:

Yeah, of course. And, you know, we'll just do all just the flip side of that. I know you're gonna run with it. So you are not gonna say, you're not, you don't try to, you know, oh, nevermind. I wanna talk about this. Um, you have ideas and we'll get to them, but you kind of follow, follow on that, follow the lead and, and allow me to do that work.

Mike Michalowicz:

Have you, thank you. Have you seen authors, and I don't want to choose names, but in the big moments that the big nerves come on them, almost unexpectedly, have you seen someone like, wow, they are so competent, but now they're in the big stage and they go blank.

AJ Harper:

So, you know, most of the time, you know, I, I don't know if listeners know that I'm also the, um, lead writing faculty for heroics. So I teach speech writing mastery, and boy, do I see a lot of nerves in there. Yeah. Um, obviously, but when it come, when it comes to books, I, I really think I've, you'd be surprised how many big deal authors will talk to me about the next book and be very nervous about it. I mean, sometimes it's usually paired with excitement. It's not like, you know, they know it's gonna be good, but I think there's a lot of pressure when you're already successful. And then what's the next book gonna be? And is it gonna be up to par? And there's, there's usually some nerves there, but are they gonna be able to execute on that? And are people going to love it as much as their previous work? So there's success does not mean that you're not nervous. And I think anytime that you come up with a book idea, there's always this element of, is this good? Even if, even if you've sold millions of books, you're still wondering, Hmm, is this good?

Mike Michalowicz:

When, uh, my son Jake and I hiked, the Appalachian Trail we did was called Sectional hikes. Our biggest hike together so far has been seven days, seven consecutive days, like not coming outta the woods at all. And what I noticed starting on the first day, there was this extreme heat is the waffling of morale. This is the two of us, and there's this excitement. We're kicking into it, let's go hiking. And two or three hours now we're in the deep woods, a three hour hike in, and we overestimated our food supply and underestimated our water supply. So we're carrying weight and thirsty. It'll hack. And it's like, this is a, this could become a real problem. We need to find a water source in the middle of the summer on the top of a hill. The higher up you are, there's less water and morale tanks.

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Mike Michalowicz:

And then miraculously, half hour later, my sun spots dripping water a little stream, and it's enough to refill all of our stuff after pur uh, purifying the water and we're drinking again. And I'm morale skyrocketing. Like we've, we've overcome something that was super dangerous. Well, writing a book, and you know this from me. I'm like, this is the best thing we've ever done. And then I'm like, why are we even doing this? I'm an idiot. And I'm like, oh, no, no, this is amazing. It's changing lives. And it's like, it seems no one's life except for the worst. Like everyone's life is, is disapproved. And I waffle. And, and particularly as we get closer to the launch of the book, the morale around it waffles more and more. And the money habit, you know, it's funny. I'm like, this, this is absolutely our best work. And then I'm like, now that all the work is done, I'm like, I don't know. I don't know if it's sending to it. Like, I don't know. <laugh> bless you. And so, yeah, that was a big sneeze. And that's,

AJ Harper:

I held back, that was me holding back

Mike Michalowicz:

<laugh>. So my point is that, that there's these waffling nerves, and I'm wonder if there's a method to see through it. Like, do you have a technique or processes to, to see through it? Because it, it can really throw you through for a, a spin for a loop.

AJ Harper:

The nerves around books. Yeah. Yeah. I mean, it's this, okay, well, uh, it's closely related to the inner critic is what's happening there. And so there's not any one solution to that. Uh, you have to have a bag of tricks. You have to have, let me try this today. Let me try that today. Um, you know, I'm working through nerves on a book I'm writing right now, which is not, um, it's a little, it's, I feel like I am tackling a topic that has, you know, I have all the same nerves that my authors have song. So did this already. Yeah. We don't need another book on this topic. And even though you have a different way of looking at this, you're not qualified, really. Um, all this stuff comes up for you anyway. I mean, I've, I've coached people through those feelings. I've written, I don't even know how many books.

AJ Harper:

Dozens and dozens. It's, yeah, it still comes up. This, the way that I'm managing it right now is to remember what lights me up in that process and how I roll. So one of the things that I think I do best is taking a lot of input and organizing it in a way that makes sense. Finding the common threads. And so instead of, uh, kind of hovering in my little cave and worrying if this is gonna work, it's a lot of outreach. I think you can feel better when it comes to authorship when you are in communication and you get out of a cave. So, for example, I have a lot of conversations,

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interviews, ask a lot of questions, and then I start to get the input. And then I know how to interpret that and, and make it work for me. 'cause I know that's my skill.

AJ Harper:

But also just having the conversations builds confidence and the nerves go down. Another thing I do is stay in community. So if I'm feeling nervous and I go into one of the writing sprints that we host in my community, I know that there's other people in the room who are also feeling nervous about their book that day. And there's also people who aren't. And somehow that combination and just being able to express it or listen to other people, express it and get support will help. So there's, I think the nerves amplify when we keep them to ourselves.

Mike Michalowicz:

I like that a lot. The, the power of community is remarkable. Particularly community that, you know, like, and trust, like that you've built that rapport with over time. I do have some very specific things that, and when you were preparing the notes here, I was reflecting on this, it's like, oh my gosh, I do have very tactical things I wanna share for overcoming the nerves.

AJ Harper:

But let's save those. 'cause I wanna know about, I, I wanna know about some stuff from the past where you were super nervous and I wanted the good hear, the good and the bad. Because sometimes the, you let, when do you let the nerves got the better of you? Like, it, it, you didn't overcome it, and maybe what you did when you did overcome it, and it could, yeah. So the

Mike Michalowicz:

Money habit

AJ Harper:

Related to authorship.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. Yeah. The money habit specifically got my nerves going a lot because it's a new audience. I think I over relied on the entrepreneurial audience, audience even today because of a fear. It's all new of the new community, how to access them. You know, it's so funny, like when the nerves are going, there's this backfill of quote logic that justifies it. So I'm nervous about the new audience. I'm afraid I won't be received well, and that it's gonna be a flop. And then I said, well, it's probably gonna be a flop because the people are, that are gonna come in will say, this guy is so effing jaded. He, he's successful, he's made all his money. Who's he to talk about money, you know? And, and my my state today from the financial perspective is, is very healthy. Um, and, and it may change again in the future.

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Mike Michalowicz:

I hope not, but it may. But in the past it was horrible and rocky, and I'm like, people won't know my past. And so there's this, this fear. And, um, you know, one of the biggest challenges that I come over overcome regularly as I don't like many of the marketing tactics that are used. I was a few weeks ago, we, we were bus I was busting on that Tai chi AI thing. There's so many of these broy brands, and I can see these authors jumping on the new buzz positioning themselves as experts. Like everyone's an AI expert that just, uh, a year ago was efficiency experts on time management. And a year prior to that, uh, they were the experts on the Pomodoro method. And a year before that, they were experts on lifestyle and travel. Like it's, they're jumping on the newest whatever trend.

Mike Michalowicz:

And I come across this bro thing, and I'm like, I don't, I don't want to ever be that guy. And the easy answer or the easy solution is just don't show up then. But then comes, you know, that's the devil on the shoulder. The angel's like, you have a GD responsibility to show up. If you don't like what's happening, you gotta participate. In fact, I've been talking about my wife. I've never had historically an interest in politics. I don't like a lot of the, I don't like the conflict in our country. Um, it, it's us against them and everyone choosing who the US is and everyone who's choosing who the them is. And I think that can be change can be instated through politics. For the first time in my life, I'm like, I may have to get into politics because I don't like it. And the easiest thing is to run away. So authorship, the easiest thing, um, when my nerve kick in is to run away.

AJ Harper:

But can you think of one time when you, um, maybe caved and you didn't do something? Because I see you as somebody who faces it. I mean, you just do the, you'll do just about anything, I think. But I, you got to have had a time where you didn't do it 'cause of the nerves got the better of you. Maybe it was asking.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. But you know, and was the right move not to do things. So there, it, it's very speculative. It, it, it's funny. I heard an, uh, someone say the the best decisions ever made are not to make a decision in certain cases. And that's never credited. We weren't credited for things we didn't do. Okay. Like i's like, oh,

AJ Harper:

That's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about you wanted something. Yeah. You were nervous about it and you didn't do what you needed to do to get it, and it didn't work out

Mike Michalowicz:

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Well. Yeah. That's the don't work out part. I don't know. So here's one thing I wanted to do that the people around me said we can't do it. And I started getting nervous about it. It's not a great example, but I wanted to do, uh, the launch with the money habit. I wanted to go McMillan, who is the main publisher for distribution and put cutouts of me holding the book like a baby and saying, congratulations on our book, baby. Because I want to gain access to McMillan on, on an I'm not notice, notice or notable among that group at all. Page two's been amazing. They actually got me physical visits there, but to the whole company, I'm not noticed. So I wanted to put these poster boards in there, and I wanted to make it very social media friendly, where you take a picture with it and it's like, Hey, look at our new baby and just kind of make it jokey. And I was talked down from that. Um, and ultimately it was just squashed. I wanted to reach out to sales. This

AJ Harper:

Is not about nerves.

Mike Michalowicz:

Well, it was because now I'm ner I was nervous about doing it. Okay. I was afraid to. I'm like, maybe that's right. And I questioned if it was, I started to take the feedback of other people. And I, in my heart, it's the right move. So I'll tell you where I did do it and it worked. Um, relay, who's a major sponsor and supporter. I love that bank. By the way. If you're ever looking for a business bank, go to bank like mike.com. There's my plug. That's the bank I use. They support profit first inherently. And, uh, I went up to their offices and I shipped, I did, I did a test with her. I shipped a, a picture of a big cutout. Me dressed as Darth Vader saying, I'm your father. And the big joke was, everyone there is 25 years or younger. So then it says, technically I could be your father.

Mike Michalowicz:

That was six months ago. And I was talking to 'em, they're like, we love it. And it's like, anyone put a mustache on it or like, drawn on it, like, no, no one's touching. We love this thing. So I'm like, okay. So I told the office order all like mustaches and funny glasses that people can paste on this thing now to engage. I, I think I missed out an opportunity. 'cause I got, I got gun shy. I heard the logic and the logic is right, but my, my heart says what I was wanting to do was right, and I got too nervous and I backed out of it. I wonder,

AJ Harper:

So you're saying you got you, you a, you did ask to do it. I did. When they said, no, you didn't push because you were

Mike Michalowicz:

Correct. They said, we questioned this. Your

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AJ Harper:

Idea wasn't the right idea.

Mike Michalowicz:

That's right. And my mind started backfilling, you know what I'd, it'd be embarrassing. It would, it would damage the relationship page two's built with them. And it's, it would kind of come across as cheesy and gross, but it's who I am. It's real

AJ Harper:

Cheesy and gross. And, and it come across as cheesy and gross, but it's who I am.

Mike Michalowicz:

I'm cheesy and gross. Yeah. And, but, but relay, I did do it there. And I had the courage to do it because I, here's how I overcome things. I just do it before I think much more about it. I, I, I do listen. I don't say, is this gonna offend someone? I do ask those questions like, is this, am I, am I supporting someone else in this process? Am I self-deprecating this process? Um, is it something that just lets us go for it? And what's the cost, the risk? If it flops, what's the cost? And, um, if I, if it passed those tests, uh, the longer I wait, I, the longer it's not, it's not gonna happen. So I just move quick.

AJ Harper:

Yeah. I remember being on a, um, well, years ago when I was a ghost writer, I remember being on a bus and it was a bus full of people who were going out to this. I was at a conference, I, I can't remember why I was there. I was at a conference and there was, um, the people who ran the conference were going to have a party and they got a, a little coach bus to bring all the kind of VIPs out to their house, right?

Mike Michalowicz:

Hmm.

AJ Harper:

And I wanted to meet one of the authors there, but at the time, I was a true ghost. So unless, and I had written for people who were on the bus and, and I wanted to meet someone else, but a, I couldn't put any of those people in a position. Right. Like, it's, that wasn't gonna work. And so anyway, <laugh>, I wanted to meet this one person, and I chickened out because I thought to this person, they have no idea. I'm just this, whatever, you know? Yeah. Like, who, I can't even say why I'm there. So I remember feeling too embarrassed and a friend of mine then, you know, kind of like when you're, um, in school and you're like, your friend pushes you to ask this person out, you know, or to was Yeah. Yeah, yeah. So nice to you. It was kind of like that, like AJ went to beat you.

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AJ Harper:

Yeah. And then that person came over and said hi. And I said, hi, Beck. But I couldn't, I had had this whole thing I wanted to say, and ICI didn't, I just clammed it. I just clammed up because I, partly because I thought, how am I you know, I just, I'm just little old me here. Yeah. Um, and you know what, that would've been fine if it was just the little me. But I felt like he, that person had to know I had to have more gravitas for that person to take me seriously. Hmm. Um, I've had many, that's just one, I've had many situations like that. Hmm. I've been around a lot of really successful people and not just in thought leadership before I even started writing books. I've been around hugely successful playwrights and people in theater in my former career. And gosh, just getting the nerve to go have a conversation with them, um, that was, that's really hard for me.

Mike Michalowicz:

I think a big breakthrough moment for you was with Steven Pressfield or Steve for you in that. Didn't you force yourself to sit front row or speak with him? I can't remember the exact story.

AJ Harper:

I did force myself to sit in the very front row. I was a back row girl now I don't care so much, much. Um,

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah, I'll tell you of some, I wanna go over some of the techniques to overcome the nerves. But I think the first thing is this, this responsibility we have as authors is we're putting something great out in the world. You know, you're writing the greatest book you can, it is the most important work of your life. We have a responsibility to market it, particularly if it's better than the alternatives, because I think it's a sin to not stand up boldly for our book if another book is not gonna serve a client or a reader as well. So Yanick silver, uh, a long time friend of mine now, I met with him. He's, he's arguably a godfather in the internet marketing space back in like right when the internet was, you know, publicly available. 92, 93, somewhere around there. He, um, started marketing in the space and was very successful with it when I wrote Toy Paper Entrepreneur.

Mike Michalowicz:

And then you cleaned up that turd, no pun intended. I then started thinking about marketing. So the book is right now, I'm like, how am I gonna market this thing? 'cause I wanna sell a million copies of the book. I called, uh, upon him Yannick. 'cause he is introduced by somebody. And what was amazing is how accessible some people are. So I said, Hey, I wanna learn from you. He's like, Hey, if you're ever in, he's in Maryland ever in the area. Come on by. So I said, I happen to be in the area next week, which I didn't happen to be anywhere next week, so it was probably my area. And I went down and spent the day with him. And I'll never forget it, sitting

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there, he looks at me, he says, tell me about this book. And I tell him, and he goes, do you, is it the best of you?

Mike Michalowicz:

I said, it's the best of me. He goes, is it better than the alternatives? And I did feel and still feel that it was better than the alternatives. It was so much more approachable. And I al me, albeit soft mark in the way, uh, the language and the analogy. But, but it's better than the alternatives in my opinion. He goes, and you have a, a responsibility to market this. Don't shirk it. So I, I use that tool over and over again, as nervous as I get, if I feel I have to offer something that is a value to the community, I I'm bringing this to, I have a responsibility and that sits on in my mind and sees me through the nerves. You know, speaking is a big part of my career. And I, I do a lot of speaking and yes, the, all the events I still get some degree of nerves for. And you, you've actually witnessed me do this. I have a song I play, it's called Times Like These by the Foo Fighters. And there's a, a riff that I will, it, it just happens to be perfect. I say, I am here to serve them. It goes, it repeats over and over this riff in the very beginning. And I say in my head, I'm here to serve them at the exact time, same time that's riff to program myself to overcome that nervousness.

AJ Harper:

Yeah. You, I remember, we, we were at speaking event and you, you made me listen to it. I mean, you listen

Mike Michalowicz:

To it. Yeah. Yeah. Like, this is my ritual.

AJ Harper:

Well, it's like, um, you know, the US hockey teams, uh, and the song Freebird

Mike Michalowicz:

<laugh>,

AJ Harper:

Yeah. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. Yeah. Yeah. So you have a, you have a rev up song.

Mike Michalowicz:

I have a rev up song also, you know, you made a note in here, and I want to get a sense for this, that, that nervous is normal. I get, I, I think people don't see that as part of the human journey.

AJ Harper:

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No, I think we have to normalize it, because I think when they have nerves, they see it as evidence that something is wrong. Yeah. And it's not, it's, you know, if we're talking about nerves for writing a book, what, how that comes out is the little voices in your head that tell you, you shouldn't bother. Who am I to write this? Who's gonna care? You're not any good at this. That's inner critic trolls, which I talk about a lot. But I always say, if you, if they show up, if those nerves show up, it means you're onto something. And it wouldn't be there if you weren't putting, if you weren't doing something amazing, making something from nothing. So in my context, yes, marketing is a part of what I do too, but when you're facing the page and you're nervous about the creative work that you're doing, um, you know, the sign of nerves means that's good. That's like, um, oh, I'm doing something that is important to me. And so this natural sort of resistance is popping up and, um, fear is popping up that, that that's a good sign. But what we have instead is this belief that we, it's only worth doing if we're super confident about it. If we're nervous, that must be bad. It's not. It's, it's actually a good sign.

Mike Michalowicz:

I, I think it's a totally good sign. It is our natural preparation for fight, flight, or freeze. So there's this hiking trail here, and I was walking it, and all of a sudden I'm like, oh, something doesn't feel right. Nerves kicked in. And sure enough, there was a black bear in the distance, which sadly we had a, not we, but in New Jersey, there was a, a very sad outcome because, uh, someone saw a black bear and started running. You do not run from a bear. Um, but freezing is the right mode and maybe removing yourself slowly, but what it's doing is your body's preparing for the appropriate response. So I get nervous in writing a book when I get nervous in marketing a book, when I get nervous about speaking a book, it's my body preparing for flight, fight, or freeze to be really attentive that moment.

Mike Michalowicz:

And I would argue the right response is because I believe in this, I need to fight for it. But it's my body preparing for that. I feel it most acutely when speaking because it's such a, it's such a momentary, intense feeling. 'cause a, a speech for me is 45 minutes or 60 minutes, typically. And, uh, it's, it's the morning of the hour before, sometimes the night before the nerves aren't going. I'm like, this is, this is my body getting ready for this pinnacle moment. But when it comes to authorship, um, it's a much, much more longer journey. But there are these pinnacle moments and, and I just remind myself, this is a cult to get into the fight, to fight for something.

AJ Harper:

Yeah. I think there's also nerves when you're submitting work. So if we're talking authorship, you're saying work for consideration. And that could be a competition. It could be to get agent representation. It could be for, and actually submitting directly to a publisher will allow unsolicited submissions. Um, then there's also just submitting your final file, submitting to your editor. There's, that can be nerve wracking. Oh, yeah. Um, I think I have a few comments on that. One is to, um, I think our lack of understanding about the industry sometimes leads to the

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nerves. Hmm. Um, the not knowing what is this? Like how long is this supposed to take? I once had an, an author reach out to me and say, well, I, I, an agent requested my information and I sent it, but I haven't heard back. And it's been 10 days. And I just started laughing.

AJ Harper:

So I was like, 10 days. I mean, this is published. Hey man, wait. You know, it's glacial. Um, it's glacial, it's true. I <laugh>, I don't know. It just, I had to normalize it for that person because in their mind, they're thinking of like in the business world, right? W how fast do you respond to things? Publishing is its own culture. So if you don't know that, then your nerves are gonna get the better of you because you are gonna think that's negative. Um, so I think arming yourself with knowledge is a great way to beat nerves to just understand how to things roll. But I also, I remember when I was a playwright, I submitted to a lot of competitions. And the competitions weren't to, they were sometimes to win a prize, but they were mostly to get a workshop or a fellowship or reading or just, just to con continued development of your work.

AJ Harper:

Because that is something that, that costs money. And you need people for that. And, um, so a lot of the competitions were around further development of your work. And, um, I just put myself on a regimen of quantity. So to combat the nerves, I just made myself submit, you know, five times a week or whatever, I can't remember what my numbers were. And I would get this assembly line going, got the playwright source book, and, uh, find all my opportunities and then line up on the dining room table, the scripts that were going out, the address labels, my manila envelopes. And I would just be all about, hmm, less about it was like an assembly line. And I would just make it about quantity and not, you know, is it, is, are they gonna care about this script? No, I gotta get my five out or my 10 out.

AJ Harper:

And then I would drive my car down to the post office, and I always had this ritual of every time I would either hand them to the postmaster or stick them in the box, I would always say God's speed. Um, it was just like my little, my little ritual. And I let you go out into the world. And I had no expectation, honestly, because I knew that it was a, a game of odds, you know? Um, so I think sometimes if you, instead of thinking of every single ask or every single submission as having to, could this be the one to not even think it's possible for it to be the one? And just think of it as I'm, I have to hit a certain number of things I'm getting out and less, less putting less stock in any one in one of those. Um, I think can is a good little mind trick you can do to beat the nerve.

Mike Michalowicz:

I pulled up an article, uh, last night. You, you shared this with me and there was an article, I thought it was interesting. It's called A Writer's Worst Fear. It's written by Jane Friedman. So

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jane friedman.com and basically summarizing it. She says that what other people think of what I write is more important than what I think. That's, that's the fear, is that this fear of judgment, and then she's shared. And this is what the most important part, I think a resource I'd never heard of this. So, um, just understand that there's a book called Fearless Writing by, uh, a fellow named William Ken Hour. And she suggests, um, this is a resource to overcome the fear of the writing process, that imposter syndrome. Now for me, I have some tactical things that I do that I wanted to share with you, and maybe you can gimme some feedback on it.

Mike Michalowicz:

I, I play a little time game. So whenever I feel nervousness in the moment, and I know I'm entering the fight, flight, or freeze stage, I will ask myself, how am I gonna feel at the conclusion of this? So when it comes to speaking, two hours from now, I visualize that moment, I'm returning to the room, or I'm shaking hands with, uh, the guests that were there, or autographing books, when it comes to the writing process, how am I gonna feel when it's over? So with the, that marathon process of writing the money habit, um, that one particular phase I was going through, I think I wrote for 12 hours each day for three or four consecutive days. I visualized the, the week after. And this, this sense of accomplishment. So the, that's a technique written by Suzy Orman called the 10, 10, 10 Rule. I referred to it I think multiple times here.

Mike Michalowicz:

But instead of looking at the next 10 minutes or the short moments, the next 10 hours, perhaps, she says, look at the next 10 months, in 10 years. So you give a perspective of time. And that really helps me address not just the nerves, but understand why I need to do in the moment to make that next 10 months or 10 years or whatever the outcome reality. So that's time, kind of time management. Uh, another thing I do is, if not me, then who, if not now, then when. So I do ask those fairly basic questions, but that's super helpful. The, the weirdest thing I play, and this is a total game I play and it squashes my nerves totally. I believe, or maybe the word is choose to believe in a, a theory called block universe and quantum physics is, is related to this.

Mike Michalowicz:

And, um, one of the components that's relevant to me is there's so many possibilities, so many things going on that any decision, anything that you or I do in the moment, in the grand scheme of the universe is long forgotten. It'll, it'll vanish. And therefore the conclusion is nothing matters, which sounds very negative, but the yin and yang to this is when, if nothing matters in the big scope, that means everything matters in the moment. 'cause that's all we have. So it's really a cool tool I use when my nerves start building. I'm gonna say, well, no one's gonna remember this. I could do the, I could totally be a flop, totally burn out, and it's not gonna be remembered. Um, even historically, there's very few people that are remembered, uh, and is kind of faded away unless they've done extraordinary atrocious things that are recorded.

Mike Michalowicz:

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We don't remember things. So I'm like, if okay, if I really screwed things up and I'm, I'm doing things earnestly, I'll never do anything atrocious then. And if I, I flub and embarrass myself, uh, and people laugh and make fun of me, they'll, they'll, they'll forget within months or years or days. So it doesn't really matter. But therefore, since no one's gonna remember, including myself at a certain point, I gotta be all in on this now. And so I use that little yin and yang, and it's been an extraordinary tool for squashing those nerves. It works for me at least every single time you

AJ Harper:

Don't, like nothing matters. You can also say, no one cares.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. I, I have a sign. I mean, my little gym here that says, no one cares work harder. Like,

AJ Harper:

It's true. There's this, there's this funny scene in the show, Schitt's Creek. Did you ever watch it? Yeah,

Mike Michalowicz:

I did. Yeah.

AJ Harper:

There's this funny scene in the first season where David, um, it has lost his license. And so he has to go take the driver's test again and he has extreme test anxiety and he always fails them. And his sister comes with him to do the test, and she says, no one cares David. No one cares.

Mike Michalowicz:

<laugh> remember David? She's so

AJ Harper:

Funny. And he is like, uh, of course they do. What do you mean? Like her attitude is, you know, her attitude, right? Yeah. But then she turns out to be, she's always so, you know, you think she's so flippant, but she's actually profound. And she says this, the the person testing you today does not care. Does not care. Yeah. It's going, you know, and then he has that experience of he turns to look at the person who's on his phone while he is testing him. He is like, you don't really care, do you? He is like, nah, I'm a deep man. <laugh>, I'm a dj. Um, not a, I'm just here to, I'm just here to put some hours in. And I think that's helpful too, is most people are only thinking of themselves. Yeah. That's just how the universe rolls. Yeah, a hundred percent. Yeah. So they're not paying that close attention to you.

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Mike Michalowicz:

So yeah. So lean into it. Yeah. Aj, I wanna, I wanna get your final thoughts. Um, before we do that though, I want everyone listening in to visit ajharper.com. You have extraordinary resources and tools available. You wrote the book, write a must read, you have your retreats at Madeline Island. You have your book three, top three book workshop and your writing sprints. Is that all available@ajharper.com? Yeah.

AJ Harper:

Come on down. We've got, we've got lots of, um, um, opportunities there to connect and, um, a bunch of free things. I do. The best thing to do is, again, on my mailing list, which if you go to ajharper.com, you can sign up and I do a Friday newsletter that's free. And, uh, you'll hear about all the stuff I do that is also free because throughout the year, year I do a lot of outreach and cool things for people.

Mike Michalowicz:

I'm telling ya. Do it. Uh, if I may boldly ask our listeners to get a copy of *The Money Habit*, that's a book that AJ and I wrote together to serve you, because I'll tell you there, your nerves are in even more control when you have no financial worry behind it.

AJ Harper:

But can I do another plug for that book? Lemme explain.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah, please.

AJ Harper:

We documented the whole process of a, from the beginning of even, what is the next book we're gonna write is documented on this podcast. That's right. The decision to write it, the decision, the publishing decision, the trials of getting it written, the whole editorial process, the marketing process, every single component. The book, the book. We didn't even decide on writing this when we were doing this podcast. So if you get the money habit and then you kind of go back in time, you can pick and choose some episodes. You can actually listen to the full creation of the *Money Habit* and our collaboration. Yes. And Mike's work beyond that with the marketing and then compare it to the actual book. So my plug is actually for people to get the book, the *Money Habit*, to study in, in connection with this podcast, because that's the what came to fruition. And, um, but if you've listened to, if you go back and listen to the *Money Habit* episodes, you'll be able to compare what did we actually do? How did it, how did it all shake out? And I think that's a great education you can give yourself.

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Mike Michalowicz:

Thank you for that. Do you have any, I have one more kind of grand tip, but do you have any other tips on overcoming the yips, the big nerves?

AJ Harper:

I mean, I ha like I said before, I have an entire bag of tricks, but I think ultimately the main thing you have to remember is that, um, you're always gonna feel nervous about something.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. Right. Just accept. Yeah. Hundred percent. It's normal.

AJ Harper:

Yes. Human. Take it from me. I've seen people who I will not name, who have sold literally tens of millions of books come to me nervous about a book idea. So you're so you're not alone in it, you know? Yeah. And the difference between them and you is that they just keep writing. Anyway.

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh, I love that. My little final tip is, uh, you can do this one, uh, image editor. Any tool out there, I'm sure now is take a picture of yourself, current self, and then age yourself by 20 or 30 years and post that on your desk. I, I actually have that at my office at work, not this office at home. And I will look at that picture daily 'cause I have it right in front of me. And I say, is he grateful for what I did to serve him the future me? And that's been a great framing when I'm really nervous just to reset myself by saying, is he happy that I stepped in and did whatever it was that needed to get done? And I do. All right, my friends, I wanna invite you to check out our website, you know, it, dw tvb podcast.com. We love listener feedback. So email us at hello@dwtvpodcast.com and, uh, ask the same question. Tell us what you sh what you think, and we would really be honored if you rate and review our show. It really helps us. So please, I know I'm asking you to spend a, a moment or two doing that, but it, it's a big deal for us. Alright, aj, this is it. Don't write that book my friends. Write the greatest book. You can.