

[00:00:00] **Music:** “Oh No, Ross and Carrie! Theme Song” by Brian Keith Dalton. A jaunty, upbeat instrumental.

[00:00:08] **Carrie Poppy:** Hello! Welcome to *Oh No, Ross and Carrie!*, the show where we don't just report on fringe science, spirituality, claims to the paranormal. No way, we take part ourselves.

[00:00:18] **Ross Blocher:** Yesss! When they make the claims, we show up, so you don't have to.

(*Carrie “yesss”es.*)

I'm Rossss Blocher.

[00:00:23] **Carrie Poppy:** Very good. I'm Carrie... Soppsie.

[00:00:27] **Ross Blocher:** (*Chuckling smugly.*) You've got no S's anywhere in your name!

[00:00:28] **Carrie Poppy:** Also, you were making the jackoff motion? Earlier?

[00:00:32] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah, because (*chuckling*) we were talking about like we don't just report on them. That would be boring.

[00:00:38] **Carrie Poppy:** Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. I just wanted to give you credit.

[00:00:38] **Ross Blocher:** Oh, (*laughing*) for my jackoff motion that no one would ever know about because this is a podcast?

(*Carrie confirms cheerfully.*)

Well, thank you. Thanks for bringing that out into the light.

[00:00:47] **Carrie Poppy:** Yeah! (*Laughs.*) Absolutely. That's what she said.

[00:00:49] **Ross Blocher:** It's a running gag that Carrie and I will like kind of shake our heads while the other person says, “We don't just report on fringe science and spirituality.”

[00:00:55] **Carrie Poppy:** Like, as if we're speaking back to something with disdain.

[00:00:59] **Ross Blocher:** (*Chuckling.*) Yeah, exactly. So, yeah, the other person gets a sour lemon look on their face. Ugh! Ugh! Just reporting?! The worst.

[00:01:05] **Carrie Poppy:** We would never. Yuck! Yucky, yucky, yucky! (*Chuckles.*) Anyway, we have a good time over here. We have our own second little show. So, anyway, what are we talking about today?

[00:01:17] **Ross Blocher:** Exposure therapy. Right off the bat, I should say that every time I go to say it, I first want to say aversion therapy. But that's something different, right? Or is that just a different version?

[00:01:30] **Carrie Poppy:** (*Chuckles.*) That would be different. So, aversion therapy would be attaching something negative to something you don't want to do anymore.

[00:01:37] **Ross Blocher:** Oh, okay. Like you're trying to stop biting your thumb, so you put quinine on them.

(*Carrie confirms.*)

That's aversion therapy. Okay, but we're talking about a phobia or an intense response that you're trying to get rid of or master or move away from.

[00:01:55] **Carrie Poppy:** Yeah. In my case, we were looking at specific phobia. So, specific phobia is the term for having a phobic, panic-like response to a really specific scenario or object like spiders, snakes, heights.

[00:02:08] **Ross Blocher:** There's all these fun names for all these phobias.

[00:02:12] **Carrie Poppy:** Yeah, you got a fave?

[00:02:13] **Ross Blocher:** Balanphobia is the fear of sharp objects, I think.

[00:02:16] **Carrie Poppy:** Okay. Sometimes you're like, yeah, go ahead and fear sharp objects. Seems like a good call to me.

[00:02:22] **Ross Blocher:** Some of them you'll hear, and you'll be like is that a real thing or did someone just enjoy coming up with this word? For example, you've probably heard of the fear of long words, Hippopotomonstrosesquippedaliophobia.

(*They chuckle pointedly.*)

Pretty good. It's an example of itself.

[00:02:39] **Carrie Poppy:** It's funny. Yeah, because the person who feels that way wouldn't want to describe it, so you're torturing them. Is that fun?

[00:02:44] **Ross Blocher:** (*Chuckles.*) "What are you struggling with?" (*Makes a strangled noise in response.*)

(*They laugh.*)

[00:02:49] **Carrie Poppy:** Yeah, I mean—well, okay, let's get into it. Phobias, they exist at the corner of society and the individual. You know what I mean? Like, I'm afraid of snakes, right? That's what we're working on too. I classically have been afraid of snakes. Now, I was a city kid. To my social network, no one gives a shit. No one cares that I'm afraid of snakes. This plays no role in my life, right? Because we're just never around snakes.

[00:03:18] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah, at the ARC, there was a snake that told us that if we could believe that Noah's Arc wasn't real, that we could believe that heaven wasn't real. I'm just trying to think of like snakes that we've encountered in the course of our investigations. But yeah, you and I are not normally surrounded by snakes.

[00:03:37] **Carrie Poppy:** Yeah, snakes are a real rarity in my life. I see them, you know, if I'm at like a wild animal exhibit or something like that. I don't generally go to the zoo. Every once in a while I'll, you know, run into a friend who's got a snake. But no one in my life right now has a snake. So, like this is not a normal thing in my life.

But last year, I was taking psychopathology at Harvard Extension School with Shelley Carson, and she was talking about specific phobias, and she started describing snake phobia. And I was like, well, yeah, but we're all like afraid of snakes! You know, they're just scary. And like, most of the other people were like, “No. We aren't afraid of snakes.”

[00:04:19] **Ross Blocher:** Hm! I thought that was a very common one. You got numbers on this?

[00:04:23] **Carrie Poppy:** Let's see! Got—

[00:04:24] **Ross Blocher:** Ophidiophobia. Oh, wow! Carrie's got her book of *Abnormal Psychology*.

[00:04:28] **Carrie Poppy:** Okay, let's see. How common, how common? “Prevalence—specific phobias are common, occurring in about 12% of people at some point in their lifetime.”

[00:04:39] **Ross Blocher:** At least a quick internet search result I got says, “Around 1 in 3 adult humans have an intense fear of snakes, making it the second most commonly reported fear in the world, the most common being arachnophobia.”

[00:04:52] **Carrie Poppy:** Okay, so they're putting that at 30-something% for—

[00:04:56] **Ross Blocher:** That's a lot. That's a lot of people.

[00:04:57] **Carrie Poppy:** Yeah, whereas this said 12% of all people will have any phobia in their whole life.

[00:05:03] **Ross Blocher:** Okay, so that's a disparity there.

[00:05:04] **Carrie Poppy:** Yeah, I think probably we're talking about a difference between like do you find it scary and how scary, which is always—you're drawing a random line in the sand at some point.

[00:05:14] **Ross Blocher:** Interesting. Looking at another result here, “1 in 10 American adults and 1 in 5 teenagers will deal with a specific phobia disorder at some point in their lives.”

So, yeah, that's more in line with what you were saying.

[00:05:26] **Carrie Poppy:** Yeah. So, the second part of the question is whether you not just experience the fear, but are you experiencing it in a disordered way where it interferes with your life? And that's not—for me, the answer is no. So, let me just cop to that.

[00:05:40] **Ross Blocher:** I feel like that's kind of related to definitions of addiction, that they prevent you from doing other things in your life, that they get in the way, that it becomes a problem because of a behavioral reason that you can point to.

*(Carrie agrees.)*

I want to correct from earlier, I think I was remembering the fear of sharp objects from—I don't know—the side of a takeout container or something like that. Belonophobia is the fear of needles. That's the one I was kind of half remembering. And then, yeah, fear of snakes seems to go by ophidiophobia or ophiophobia or the broader reptile herpetophobia. Alright. I'm not going to obsess over these phobia names, but they're fun, and there's many of them.

[00:06:23] **Carrie Poppy:** Well, I just felt like it would be cool to extinguish this fear in myself.

[00:06:28] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah, you thought let's deal with this one.

[00:06:30] **Carrie Poppy:** Yeah, why not? Like, I thought it would be a cool thing to prove to myself. When I was reading my textbook, it was talking about extinguishing these kinds of phobias and basically that anybody can do it. You don't even need to be doing it with a professional most of the time. And I realized like we're just talking about a principle. Like, it's an exposure principle. I don't even know if therapy's even the right word. It's like the principle is, “Carrie, if you stand near a snake long enough, you will run out of panic. And then you will stop associating panic with this animal. Just stand next to a snake as much as you freaking can.” And I just took in that principle.

[00:07:10] **Ross Blocher:** That's interesting! Yeah, earlier when we were talking, you referred to “panic juice”. Like, you just kind of run out of it after a while. That's interesting. I never thought of it as sort of a finite resource that you could sort of just run out.

[00:07:22] **Carrie Poppy:** Well, Shelley Carson, my professor, she said that it was like 27 minutes at the high end was how long some people can panic. And those are the people who are amazing at panic.

[00:07:32] **Ross Blocher:** Oh, okay. Top rate panickers.

[00:07:34] **Carrie Poppy:** (*Laughs.*) Yeah, if you can sustain it for an entire sitcom, you are—

(*They chuckle.*)

But we're talking about like true panic, like you're not thinking about anything else. You want out of here. You're looking at the exit the entire time. Yeah, your body just can't do that forever.

[00:07:50] **Ross Blocher:** My mom always had an extreme fear of almost anything that wasn't human that would get anywhere near the house, especially something small enough to be sneaky—rats, snakes, opossums.

[00:08:04] **Carrie Poppy:** (*Sadly.*) Oh, little, tiny opossums? Oh, but they're so cuuute.

[00:08:06] **Ross Blocher:** Oh, she hated opossums so much, it was just the worst thing in the world for her. So, whenever there was a snake nearby, I had no option but to be—you know, I was the only other person in the house for many years. So, you know, I had to go deal with it. Thankfully, it was never really an issue.

[00:08:20] **Carrie Poppy:** Oh, do you mean you had to go kill them?

[00:08:21] **Ross Blocher:** No, like just go like handle it, grab it, take it somewhere else, put it in a field.

[00:08:26] **Carrie Poppy:** Get it somewhere else. Oh, and did you get scared?

[00:08:28] **Ross Blocher:** No. Though I'll say, whenever people would ask me my phobia when I was younger, I would always say moths. Because I remember one time I was really freaked out by moths. We were staying at my step grandfather's unfinished house in Montana. And there were just many places that were open and unfinished in the building. So, at night, just this endless swarm of moths would come in. And I would sleep in this upstairs bedroom, and there was a plastic sheet on the cover of the bed, and it would already have like moths on it. There would be like five dozen of them swirling around the light.

And I had to turn off the light, run into the bed, get under the covers, pull them over my head. And I would hear the moths going flit-flit-flit-flit, flit-flit-flit-flit against the light fixture as it dimmed. And then I'd wake up with a bunch of dead moths all over the bed cover that I was sleeping under.

(*Carrie "wow"s.*)

Yeah, I was scared of moths for a long time.

[00:09:21] **Carrie Poppy:** Yeah! Wow! That's like a detail in a haunted house story.

[00:09:27] **Ross Blocher:** It's almost like—yeah, like a Batman origin story or something.

If one had bitten me, I'd be Mothman.

[00:09:30] **Carrie Poppy:** Yeeeah! You'd be Mothman!

[00:09:32] **Ross Blocher:** Thankfully that's not already taken. (*Chuckles.*)

[00:09:34] **Carrie Poppy:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. I've never heard of anything like that. Wow. Okay. Now, do you encounter moths now in your everyday life, and do you have any reaction to them?

[00:09:42] **Ross Blocher:** A very muted reaction. Like, I want them to go away. I don't want them flitting close to me or anything. But I don't get anything like the kind of panicked response I've seen in some of these videos of people reacting to snakes. I would say I have that response when it comes to cockroaches, especially large ones, especially ones that are flying. Then I go into like—I call it like *Braveheart* mode.

(*Carrie chuckles.*)

You know, where like I want to declare war until this thing is dead.

[00:10:07] **Carrie Poppy:** Okay, okay. Oh, oh! So, it's an approach response, though. Not a flee response.

[00:10:11] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah—well, flee, but then come back with a shoe or something.

(*They laugh and Carrie affirms.*)

Cara has seen me freak out. We had a giant flying cockroach get in our apartment once. And, oh, I was not cool with it.

[00:10:26] **Carrie Poppy:** How big?

[00:10:27] **Ross Blocher:** She was both horrified and kind of entertained. Oh, it was this big. And fat.

[00:10:32] **Carrie Poppy:** (*With genuine shock.*) WOAHH! That's like six inches!

[00:10:34] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah. Like five inches long and fat. Oh, it was—ugh, so awful. It was terrible.

[00:10:40] **Carrie Poppy:** That could be someone's dick. That's a lot. That's a big bug. Okay.

[00:10:44] **Ross Blocher:** I was not cool.

[00:10:45] **Carrie Poppy:** Well, I don't know what to call that. Fury—Bug Fury. Yeah.

*(They laugh.)*

[00:10:50] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah. Yeah. Bugzerker. I went into berserker mode. But snakes don't bother me. I will tell everyone; I was voting for us having a live snake here while we recorded the episode.

[00:11:04] **Carrie Poppy:** Yeah, it didn't happen. It didn't happen. But I have now held a snake. So, it was my 2023 goal to hold a snake, prove to myself that I could do it. I really wanted to do it alone. I really wanted to like do my exposures leading up to holding this snake. I wanted to do them alone. I don't know; I just liked the idea of like doing this all by myself and just proving like this is just a principle. You can be near things, and you can defang them just by being near them!

[00:11:30] **Ross Blocher:** And you'd heard from the professor. You'd read the literature, and you'd felt confident this is doable. Let's test this.

[00:11:36] **Carrie Poppy:** Yeah. I looked into some of the literature, and right now there's a bunch of cool like computer programs people are using to test out exposure therapy. So, like if a kid is afraid of snakes, but they only go to grandma's house in Florida once a year, so they don't get a lot of chances to have that be a regular part of their life. So, they can do these like computer exposures.

[00:11:55] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah. I was seeing a lot of experimenting being done with virtual reality, where you can wear a headset, and you can perceive, you know—with real depth and believable scale—a simulated situation. And I saw one in particular that was used for snake phobias, and I looked to see if it was like commercially available where I could like buy and put it on a headset for you. And it didn't look like it was. I guess it was just for like a research thing. Though, I did unintentionally do that to you recently. Carrie's looking around. “You did?” Because I had you try the ayahuasca experience.

[00:12:29] **Carrie Poppy:** Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah! That was cool.

[00:12:30] **Ross Blocher:** And you know, I kind of remembered that there were snakes, but they didn't really—they didn't make such an impression on me that I thought to even mention it to you. And then I felt bad, because you put on the headset. And sure enough, it's this application. I think it was on the Steam store, and it was quite impressive. Like, they did a really good job, I think, of capturing the ayahuasca experience. You know, minus the rerouting of neurotransmitters through your brain. But visually, you know, they captured it pretty well. And I forgot just how many snakes were involved until I was watching it through the kind of preview monitor. But you handled it! You were fine.

[00:13:07] **Carrie Poppy:** Oh! Yeah, yeah. It was okay. I noticed it and then was like, “Oh, well, you know, there you go! There you go. Snakes in your everyday life. You got to wade through it!”

[00:13:13] **Ross Blocher:** They're a big part of ayahuasca. There we go. That's another investigation connection to snakes.

[00:13:18] **Carrie Poppy:** Yeah, yeah. They're a popular thing that people see under ayahuasca. Probably reflects how common it is to be afraid of them, because people see them kind of during the creepy part of the ayahuasca experience.

[00:13:29] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah! And also in Christianity, the image of the snake goes back to the garden! She just wanted to learn! And the snake was all involved in this process.

[00:13:38] **Carrie Poppy:** So, this is what I assumed it was when I was a kid. I just thought like, well, we're all afraid of snakes, because of course we're afraid of snakes! God made sure of it!

[00:13:46] **Ross Blocher:** Right! That was the curse of the snake! It lost its legs, and eventually like it will bruise our heel, and we will crush it under our feet. It had this kind of cosmic significance.

[00:13:57] **Carrie Poppy:** Yeah. Well, I decided I was going to overcome. So, I figured that the first thing to do was to just watch like cartoons of snakes or something that would be really friendly but like still give me a little bit of the shivers. So, I watched *Rikki-Tikki-Tavi*. Which I hadn't—

[00:14:17] **Ross Blocher:** Oh yeah! That's the name of the mongoose, right?

[00:14:19] **Carrie Poppy:** Yes, yeah, but it's the Orson Welles cartoon about the mongoose. So, I watched it a lot as a kid, and I really loved *Rikki-Tikki-Tavi*. But I remembered there being this really scary part with a big cobra. So, I was like, okay, I'm gonna watch all of *Rikki-Tikki-Tavi*. So, I watched that and felt like a little bit of the like shivers in my body or whatever.

There was this second thing going on in my head that I'll try to invite you and the listener in on, which is like, “Oh, now I'm going to be telling this story and other people are going to be listening. And now I don't want to oversell it and make it over-entertaining. I don't want to focus in too much on my own fear.” So, then I've got this other monitor going on like, “Don't perform. Don't perform your fear. You're not that scared.”

(*Ross chuckles.*)

So, that was also happening in my head. I was watching *Rikki-Tikki-Tavi*, and I think my fear got to like, you know, a two or something. I was just like, “Oh, my body responds very barely to the shape of a snake. Okay. I think this is fine. I think I can move past this right away.”



[00:15:20] **Ross Blocher:** I like this idea of just putting numbers on your fears. Feels like a very “our investigation” kind of thing to do. “Eh, a two. I’ll give it a two.”

[00:15:27] **Carrie Poppy:** Oh, yeah! Okay, good! Yeah. So, then I pushed past that, and then I started watching snake videos.

[00:15:32] **Ross Blocher:** Now all your YouTube searches are messed up. All the recommendations are like—

[00:15:35] **Carrie Poppy:** (*Chuckling.*) I mean, they were already pretty messed up!

(*They laugh and Ross agrees.*)

But yeah, now there's a lot of snake stuff too. Yeah, so I just watched videos of like the scariest snakes are the ones that bite, and the ones that constrict, and the ones who have killed small animals. And okay, what are they up to? What are they actually like? What are their lives really like? And I had never really thought about it! I didn't really know what exactly I'm even afraid of here.

[00:15:59] **Ross Blocher:** You’d never even walked a mile in the shoes of a snake.

[00:16:02] **Carrie Poppy:** Exactly, people! Exactly! Just because they don't have feet doesn't mean you can't walk in their shoes.

[00:16:09] **Ross Blocher:** You know who else—a famous fictional character who shares a fear of snakes?

[00:16:14] **Carrie Poppy:** Indiana Jones!

(*Ross confirms excitedly.*)

Yeah! I told you I like *Indiana Jones*! It's a C+ franchise!

[00:16:20] **Ross Blocher:** And his famous line is...?

[00:16:21] **Carrie Poppy:** I hate snakes?

[00:16:22] **Ross Blocher:** “Snakes. Why did it have to be snakes?”

[00:16:25] **Carrie Poppy:** Oh, okay. Close enough. “I hate snakes.” Same thing. (*Giggles.*)

[00:16:29] **Ross Blocher:** That's the intent, but yeah, maybe not as memorable.

[00:16:34] **Carrie Poppy:** So, then I started watching videos. And I had to watch a lot of poisonous snake videos. I discovered this was where the real fear was.

[00:16:45] **Ross Blocher:** Or venomous snakes. 'Cause they puncture you.

[00:16:48] **Carrie Poppy:** Yes. Is that different?

[00:16:50] **Ross Blocher:** Poisonous is—yeah—something you ingest, and venomous is something that injects.

[00:16:54] **Carrie Poppy:** Mm! Ingests into you! Okay. Okay. Okay, got it. Venomous snakes. And I discovered that this was pretty much where a bunch of the nervousness lay is I can't tell a non-venomous snake from a venomous snake! I'm from LA!

[00:17:11] **Ross Blocher:** Oh, right! People generally say watch out for bright colors. That you—

[00:17:15] **Carrie Poppy:** No, I've never even heard that. I've never even heard that. That's how much I grew up in LA.

[00:17:18] **Ross Blocher:** But I don't think there are any hard or fast rules. I think we all know to listen for a rattlesnake, which I ran into on a hike once! And it unfurled in front of me and my friend.

*(Carrie “oh my god”s.)*

At first, I thought it was just like a boulder or rock that had kind of fallen into the path, but then it uncoiled.

*(Carrie “oh my god”s.)*

And that ch-ch-ch-chchchch is crazy loud! Like, that was my main takeaway is, wow, that was super loud! So, we had to back up, find another path to get back.

[00:17:49] **Carrie Poppy:** Okay. So, okay, here's my question. How close was it to you?

[00:17:52] **Ross Blocher:** Oh, at its closest, maybe three feet. We quickly backed up. It didn't spring at us, but it was—

[00:17:59] **Carrie Poppy:** Okay, so the backing up didn't trigger anything.

[00:18:01] **Ross Blocher:** It was super effective. When that thing goes off, just your body is consumed with “I must get away from this thing now!” Mission accomplished.

[00:18:08] **Carrie Poppy:** Wow! Okay. Okay. Cool. *(Nervously.)* Cool, cool, cool.

[00:18:10] **Ross Blocher:** *(Laughs.)* But to the point of recognizing snakes, you know that even for any general rules, like not all of them are going to make loud noises.

*(Carrie sighs and confirms.)*

Not all of them are going to have patterns you recognize. There are going to be some that are borderline. But you would say, if someone told you, “Hey, this is a garter snake. Totally fine. It's not going to harm you. It can't bite you. It's not venomous,” that would be a different experience for you, even as a video watching.

[00:18:36] **Carrie Poppy:** Yes. Well, okay, I guess there's two questions there. Knowing that it is nonvenomous is what I'm going for and what will bring down my fear. The second question: can I trust the handler or trust the speaker? That's another question that brings my Stockton Rush fear into play.

[00:18:54] **Ross Blocher:** Because there could be the role of deception as well!

[00:18:56] **Carrie Poppy:** *(Real anxiety in her voice.)* Deception or just Stockton Rush behavior, the guy with the submarine.

[00:19:00] **Ross Blocher:** Okay. One of your other crippling fears.

*(Carrie laughs.)*

The, okay—the Titan Submersible that has kept you up at night.

*(Carrie confirms bashfully.)*

Okay. And that was the guy who—was he in it or he was just the one who—

[00:19:13] **Carrie Poppy:** *(Strained.)* Yeah, he was in it. He was also in it.

[00:19:15] **Ross Blocher:** And Carrie's face is going numb. Is that what's happening right now?

*(Carrie bursts into laughter.)*

Carrie's running her hand over half of her face and smushing it.

[00:19:21] **Carrie Poppy:** I hate this submersible. I hate it so much! But yeah, so this question of can you trust the handler, that's become a whole second question for me. I don't know the answer, but what I do know is if I can memorize enough rules—if I can get enough rules going in my head, then it'll be okay around the snakes. *(Jokingly panicking.)* I just need to know “red next to yellow, don't touch the fellow; red next to black—*(babbling)* then congratulations, uh, Jack!”

[00:19:47] **Ross Blocher:** Oh, there's rhymes for this!

[00:19:48] **Carrie Poppy:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. Oh, you haven't heard these?

[00:19:51] **Ross Blocher:** No, it sounds like I before E, except after C.

[00:19:54] **Carrie Poppy:** Well, they're terrible though!

[00:19:56] **Ross Blocher:** Or sounding as A. And by that point, you don't have enough time, because the snake's there.

[00:20:00] **Carrie Poppy:** (*Laughing.*) Yes! Yes, thank you! I keep telling people this! So, okay, there's this one kind of like—

[00:20:04] **Ross Blocher:** (*Desperately.*) “It’s 30 months, half November, April, um, uh—!”

[00:20:06] **Carrie Poppy:** Yes, exactly! Thank you!

(*They laugh.*)

Oh my god! So, there's this one snake that if it's red next to yellow, I believe that's the order in which it can fucking kill you. But if it's red next to black, it's fine!

(*Ross cackles.*)

And so, the rhyme is, “red next to yellow, kill a fellow; red next to black, you're in the clear, Jack!”

[00:20:29] **Ross Blocher:** Oh, that's terrible.

[00:20:30] **Carrie Poppy:** That doesn't help me at all! ‘Cause it can be “red next to yellow—uh, good job, fellow!” Like, it's not—it doesn't tell me anything! It doesn't help me!

[00:20:38] **Ross Blocher:** I feel this way every year, because at summer camp, we do actually have bears in the area. And I'm pretty sure they're brown bears. Actually, now I'm doubting that! Well, see, and then the problem is one of the bear types—brown vs. black—one of them, you're supposed to like stand like a tree and assert yourself. And the other one, you're supposed to like not make eye contact and play dead. You know. And those are very different tactics, but every time I like start to think about it, I'm like, “Oh, was that brown or was it black? Oh, I don't know!” Now, I'll never know, because—

[00:21:08] **Carrie Poppy:** I took a bear identification class online, and I—also, this is the one thing I should have left with is what to do with the brown vs. black bear, and I don't remember.

[00:21:17] **Ross Blocher:** Then I think I read like an article about that area, and they'd released black bears there. So, it wasn't brown like I was expecting. Anyways, I wouldn't know what to do!

[00:21:26] **Carrie Poppy:** Thank you! Thank you! (*Laughs.*)

[00:21:28] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah, no, I can validate this piece of this.

[00:21:30] **Carrie Poppy:** Thank you. So. Huh. So, what I finally decided was, okay, here's the kind of snake I feel comfortable holding in 2023: a constrictor. This interests a lot of people. A lot of people think that sounds scarier.

[00:21:44] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah! Well, the word constrictor is right there. And you think of it wrapped around your head and cutting off your jugular.

[00:21:50] **Carrie Poppy:** Well, that's the one way it can happen. Yeah. So, the ones that people actually have as pets in the US just don't grow big enough to choke a person. They just don't. But it happened exactly one time. Because—

[00:22:05] **Ross Blocher:** Oh no, and now that's in Carrie's head.

[00:22:08] **Carrie Poppy:** (*Laughs.*) No, no, no, it was a great—I was like, “Oh, good, I can absolutely avoid that!” (*Increasing in intensity.*) Unlike the submarine where I don't know if I can avoid it!

[00:22:14] **Ross Blocher:** Got it. The statistics were on your side, and there was a way to prevent this.

[00:22:17] **Carrie Poppy:** Yes, so here's what he did. This guy had a pet boa constrictor. He was proving to his friend that boa constrictors are safe. He wrapped his boa constrictor around his neck and began to dance.

(*They laugh.*)

[00:22:33] **Ross Blocher:** Oh no! Ugh. I hate to laugh at somebody's untimely demise, but...

[00:22:38] **Carrie Poppy:** Sure, sure. But I was like, “Okay, I cannot do that.”

[00:22:41] **Ross Blocher:** This will not happen, this series of events. I'll be okay.

[00:22:45] **Carrie Poppy:** “I can stop this one from happening.” So, I was like, okay. I want a constrictor. So—

[00:22:52] **Ross Blocher:** Constrict her? I hardly know her.

[00:22:54] **Carrie Poppy:** (*Makes buzzer noises.*) So, I went to a place called the Wildlife Learning Center in Sylmar with my friend, Caroline Anderson. You've met Caroline. Our friend!

[00:23:04] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah. She went with us on an investigation where we were in a crystal circle contacting aliens.

[00:23:10] **Carrie Poppy:** Yes! Aliens. Cat aliens, maybe.

*(Ross confirms.)*

Yes, yes, yes. So, Caroline and I went to the Wildlife Learning Center, and I go in there. And they're immediately like, "Can you sign this form?"

[00:23:24] **Ross Blocher:** It's a waiver, and you are wavering.

[00:23:26] **Carrie Poppy:** Yeah, it was a waiver, and I was like, *(hesitantly)* "Yes." And then I looked at it and I thought of Stockton Rush. Because—

[00:23:34] **Ross Blocher:** So, this plays into—okay, alright.

[00:23:37] **Carrie Poppy:** Because I've recently read the waiver of the Titan Submersible. And everybody kept saying, "Well, there was death all over the waiver. Why did people get in there when there was death all over the waiver?" And I was like you guys got to read your waivers. Death is always in the waiver.

[00:23:55] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah, and I assume it was in the waiver that you were signing.

[00:23:59] **Carrie Poppy:** *(Crescendoing.)* Death was in the waiver, Ross!

*(Ross "oh no"s.)*

So, then I was like, well, how many times is it in the waiver? Everyone said, *(mockingly)* "Oh, it's so many times in the submersible waiver." No, it's comparable! Anyway. *(Laughs.)* I decided—

[00:24:13] **Ross Blocher:** Whew, this is a tough way to live, tough way to live.

*(Carrie wheezes with laughter.)*

But we're walking through it with you, Carrie. *(Laughs.)*

[00:24:21] **Carrie Poppy:** So, I decided—I stood there, and I thought about it. And I was like, okay, here's what we know. *(Laughs.)* We know it's very hard for this snake to kill me. It's just going to be so hard. Even if somehow this place fucks up so bad, I now know what a boa constrictor looks like. I didn't have to memorize a rhyme. I've seen the pics.

*(They laugh.)*

And I know that they'd have to wrap around my fucking neck, and I'd have to do the tango, and I won't do that! Okay. I'm willing to sign this thing that says, "Go ahead and kill me with your snake," because I don't think you can do it!

*(They laugh.)*

So, I signed that. I bought Caroline a ticket. Of course, Caroline, meanwhile, is just like, *(cheerfully)* "Oh! What kind of snake are we gonna see? Oh, okay! Very good!" *(Sighs.)*

[00:25:10] **Ross Blocher:** You've gotten me thinking now of like a book series called *The Waiver Murders*, where, you know, like somebody gets people to sign a waiver.

[00:25:17] **Carrie Poppy:** *(Cackling in disbelief.)* Just makes you sign a waiver!

[00:25:20] **Ross Blocher:** And they're like, "Well, they agreed to it!" And then they manipulate the odds. *(Mischievously.)* "Just do a little dance with the boa constrictor! Just do a little dance!"

*(Carrie laughs and "oh my god"s.)*

They're just goosing the probabilities, but it results in a lot of deaths. *(Ominously.)* *The Waiver Murders.*

[00:25:37] **Carrie Poppy:** Or you don't even have to goose the probability. You could just be like, "Will you sign this?" And then you take it back and it's like, "I can kill you!" Yeah. Okay. So, Caroline was feeling good about it. So, we go in there and I'm a professional podcaster, Ross. So, I was like, "We gotta run audio, so I'm—"

*(Ross agrees excitedly.)*

Yes! So, I get out my pocket recorder, and I press record. And ooh, I say some funny stuff. I do some funny stuff. We're doing good stuff. Great audio, Ross. Just so good. And then when we left—

[00:26:13] **Ross Blocher:** The way you're telling me this makes it sound like you didn't actually save this audio.

[00:26:17] **Carrie Poppy:** When we left, I listened to it, and it was like, "I'm at the Wildlife Learning Center with Caroline—" *(Cuts off suddenly.)*

*(Ross "oh no"s.)*

And that's that. But Caroline took some videos.

[00:26:29] **Ross Blocher:** *(Gasps.)* What happened? Okay, What happened? The recorder just turned off at some point?

[00:26:32] **Carrie Poppy:** Yeah, the recorder just failed.

[00:26:34] **Ross Blocher:** Ugh! I had a recording app fail on me recently. I was very upset.

[00:26:38] **Carrie Poppy:** Ugh. Well, anyway, so then the handler came with Zigzag. And Caroline had asked me, “How should I react to the snake? What do you want out of me?”

And I was like, “Just model for me normal behavior around a snake. Show me that it's not scary. Whatever you would normally do around this snake. Don't gloat. Don't be like, (*mockingly*) ‘Look how I'm not afraid.’ But other than that, go ahead.” I'm just kidding. She could have gloated.

(*Ross chuckles.*)

Okay, so, this guy brings Zigzag in, and he was a big, long boa constrictor, and I definitely—

[00:27:14] **Ross Blocher:** Carrie was not looking for extra people there, so I did not accompany. And I think it was a workday too.

[00:27:19] **Carrie Poppy:** Oh! Oh, okay. So, he brought Zigzag in, and my fear jumped a little. It's a weird little shape. It's a little slithery thing.

[00:27:29] **Ross Blocher:** What, your fear?

(*Carrie agrees sarcastically.*)

Or the snake was a weird little shape?

[00:27:33] **Carrie Poppy:** Oh, yeah, sorry. This is what happens when I get afraid of the snake is I'm really fixated on its shape.

[00:27:39] **Ross Blocher:** Oh! Interesting not its length or its girth, but its shape.

[00:27:44] **Carrie Poppy:** Its shape. Yeah. Yeah, because when I imagine it having feet like an iguana, it's fine.

[00:27:51] **Ross Blocher:** Hm. Interesting. Just kind of like rats and squirrels are so similar, but squirrels have this kind of fluffy, cute tail. And I often think, you know, like that's the one differentiator. Like, if it had a long, skinny tail, we'd all be like, “Ugh, get awaaaay!”

[00:28:09] **Carrie Poppy:** And I like a rat; I think they're cute. But I grew up with like them as class pets and stuff.

[00:28:14] **Ross Blocher:** But the lacking of the arms and legs.



[00:28:17] **Carrie Poppy:** Yeah, that's where it gets really creepy for me. Whereas spiders, nothing. Like, I see those eight legs and I'm like, cool, extra legs. Nothing.

[00:28:25] **Ross Blocher:** Oh, interesting. Yeah, my wife, not a fan of spiders.

[00:28:27] **Carrie Poppy:** See?! It's like so weird and inbred. Anyway, so—

[00:28:31] **Ross Blocher:** How long was this guy?

[00:28:32] **Carrie Poppy:** He was wrapped around his friend, but I think he was probably like six feet, if unwound. Pretty long, pretty long. And I said—as the handler came in, I said, “I'm getting over a phobia.”

And he said, “Oh, Zigzag is perfect for that. He's so friendly.”

So, Caroline just goes over there and interacts with Zigzag like, oh, it's no problem. Like, oh, it's not a big boa constrictor who's about to kill her.

[00:28:55] **Ross Blocher:** Gloating, essentially. Caroline.

[00:28:56] **Carrie Poppy:** Gloating! Exactly. Thank you! Ugh, she's so like this. I'm gloating with her behaviors.

So, she was petting him, and I went over after a while, and I was like, “I'm going to touch the snake now.” And I touch the snake. Now, have you touched a snake?

*(Ross confirms.)*

Oh. Well, well, well.

[00:29:17] **Ross Blocher:** Many times, but my friends, Sam and Amers, have two lovely snakes. And yeah, got to hold them.

[00:29:25] **Carrie Poppy:** What kind are they?

[00:29:26] **Ross Blocher:** I'm pretty sure they're both ball pythons.

[00:29:29] **Carrie Poppy:** Oh, okay. That was one of the popular options, and I was happy to pick up a ball python, but one wasn't available.

[00:29:36] **Ross Blocher:** Like, a lot of yellow, I remember. But not next to red.

[00:29:39] **Carrie Poppy:** Yeah, popular pet. Yes! Yellow next to red? Get in bed.

*(They titter.)*

[00:29:47] **Ross Blocher:** Check your head.

[00:29:48] **Carrie Poppy:** Yeah. See, I just hear that, and I'm like just stay away from red and yellow snakes. If you see any of those colors, get away from them. I'm not going to learn a rhyme. Mm-mm. Mm-mm. Mm-mm! I'm just scared of you now.

[00:29:59] **Ross Blocher:** There's no time for mnemonics when you're staring down a primal fear!

[00:30:04] **Carrie Poppy:** Yeah, exactly. (*Sighs heavily.*) Okay, so—

[00:30:07] **Ross Blocher:** And I think the fear of snakes is clear in other animal species, including those related to us. So, I feel like it is one of these deeply ingrained things.

(*Carrie agrees.*)

Evidenced by all the videos of cats reacting to cucumbers. Like, I assume it's for that reason.

[00:30:23] **Carrie Poppy:** Yeah, so it does have a high genetic basis. If one of your parents had a phobia, you're much more likely to have one. There's like some genetic test that claimed to predict how likely you are to have a phobia. So, yeah, it's definitely an evolutionary holdover.

[00:30:38] **Promo:**

**Music:** Fast-paced, futuristic synth.

**Brenda Snell:** Have you ever wanted to know the sad lore behind Chuck E. Cheese's love of birthday parties?

**Austin Taylor:** Or why Saturday mornings are reserved for cartoons?

**Brenda:** Or have you wanted to know how beloved virtual pet site Neopets fell into the hands of Scientologists?

**Austin:** Or how a former Mattel employee managed to grow Sega into a video game powerhouse?

**Brenda:** Join us, hosts Austin and Brenda, and learn all of these things and more at (*echoing*) *Secret Histories of Nerd Mysteries!* Now on Maximum Fun!

(*Music fades out.*)

[00:31:09] **Carrie Poppy:** So, Zigzag. Let me tell you guys, if you've never held a snake. The top, what a revelation! The top is like—all the scales move sort of independently, like

they're little islands on the sea, moving like into each other and out and in and out. I didn't expect that! So, that was cool. And then his underside was like that really soft, what pieces of shit used to make a purse. You know, like snakeskin—

[00:31:39] **Ross Blocher:** Scales.

[00:31:40] **Carrie Poppy:** Well, the snakeskin purses are from that underside, that like really soft underbelly. Yeah. I say pieces of shit, because you don't need to make a purse out of a snake. That's all I'm saying.

*(Ross affirms.)*

So, I touched all of that, and then I was like, “Okay, so listen. My 2023 goal was actually to hold a snake. Can I hold Zigzag?”

And you tell me. I think I held Zigzag, but I was not allowed to hold Zigzag’s head.

[00:32:12] **Ross Blocher:** This is whether what you did counts as holding or not, and you want me to be the judge.

[00:32:16] **Carrie Poppy:** Yeah, you be the final adjudicator.

[00:32:18] **Ross Blocher:** Okay! Oh, yeah, okay. Now, wait, let me see if I can come up with what I would consider holding a snake. Okay, I would say like the majority of its weight depends on your support. Like, if your hands were removed, the snake would fall.

[00:32:35] **Carrie Poppy:** Okay, okay, let's see. Let's see what you think.

[00:32:38] **Ross Blocher:** Okay, so, Carrie's showing me this video.

*(The video plays mutedly in the background.)*

And it is a big snake! It's a serious snake.

[00:32:44] **Clip:**

**Carrie Poppy:** He’s so heavy!

**Caroline:** He’s pure muscle!

**Carrie:** Yeah, I guess that makes sense.

**Handler:** He’s a heavy-bodied snake.

**Carrie:** How much do you think he weighs, total?

[00:32:54] **Ross Blocher:** You're doing it! Yeah! Oh yeah!

[00:32:56] **Carrie Poppy:** Yeah? You'd say that's holding a snake?

[00:32:58] **Ross Blocher:** Oh, you're holding it. Yeah. Like, there's a lot of the snake around him, but you're lifting up a very significant portion of the snake. And you don't look freaked out. Like, if I just saw that I wouldn't think like, "Oh, she's got a real snake phobia."

[00:33:12] **Carrie Poppy:** I gotta say, as soon as I touched him my anxiety went down a lot.

(*Ross "wow"s.*)

It was like the anticipation, not the touching itself.

[00:33:21] **Ross Blocher:** And we're talking about a big, girthy snake. Like, I would guess even longer than six feet and around—I don't know; I'm not too good at measuring this, but I'd say it's like 15/16 inches around.

[00:33:33] **Carrie Poppy:** Mm. Like this, probably.

[00:33:35] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah. Like, Carrie's holding her middle fingers together and her thumbs together and forming a circle. Yep!

[00:33:44] **Carrie Poppy:** Yeah. He was so muscly. He was just ab!

[00:33:49] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah, pure muscle. Yeah! (*Laughs.*) Yeah, snakes are all abs!

[00:33:50] **Carrie Poppy:** It really is! It's just like straight up and down abdominal muscles until the very end of the tail. And so, as you're holding him, it was like a parting and coming back together motion in the muscle. So, it was like undulating in my hands.

[00:34:09] **Ross Blocher:** Kind of a peristalsis sort of thing. Okay.

[00:34:12] **Carrie Poppy:** Yes! Uh-huh! So, that was exciting and straaange!

[00:34:14] **Ross Blocher:** Right. Yeah, I can see how that would stimulate a fear. But for you, that reduced the fear.

[00:34:20] **Carrie Poppy:** Uh, yeah! I guess so. So, the only thing that kept happening is that this curious little snake really wanted to come over and actually meet me. And the handler was pulling his head back, I think on the—I think to protect their liability probably, on the off chance the snake bites me, even though it would. Yeah. That would just be (*inaudible*).

[00:34:37] **Ross Blocher:** And maybe just to forestall a reaction from you, having a head coming at you.

[00:34:44] **Carrie Poppy:** Maybe? Well, yeah, I was like, “Oh, can I interact with his head?”

And he said, “No, a lot of snakes are head shy. You probably shouldn't.” So, I didn't. And *(inaudible)*.

[00:34:51] **Ross Blocher:** Okay! I mean, that's fair. Not every animal wants to be pet.

[00:34:53] **Carrie Poppy:** No, no, for sure. But he was coming over to me, and then he'd take them back. So, anyway, the point is I still felt nervous around his head, which makes sense because it's what I didn't get to interact with very much. But I felt—going into this, I was like, “Do I even need to do this anymore? Of course, I can hold this snake.” And then when I held the snake, I felt like, “Was this boring for Caroline? This was so easy.” *(Laughs.)*

*(Ross “wow”s.)*

Yeah, so I don't know. I only did this over the course of a year. I just watched a bunch of snake videos, and then I went and held a snake. It's not that hard.

[00:35:27] **Ross Blocher:** Did you do an in between process where you were in the room with a snake or near a snake, before attempting to touch one?

[00:35:35] **Carrie Poppy:** Yes. Oh, sorry. Yes. I went to the LA zoo once.

[00:35:38] **Ross Blocher:** Okay. I thought I remembered you telling me about something like that. Okay. LA zoo. They've got snakes.

[00:35:42] **Carrie Poppy:** Yeah. So, I went in and—actually, I've got audio of it. You can hear me heavy breathing for 25 minutes if you want. *(Laughs.)*

[00:35:50] **Ross Blocher:** Wow. Okay. We're just going to play that right now.

[00:35:55] **Carrie Poppy:** *(Beat.)* Just kidding. We're back.

*(They laugh.)*

But yeah, you can hear there, I'm nervous. And I had to wait I think it was 26 or 27 minutes before I was like, “Oh, good, my anxiety is coming down.” ‘Cause what you don't want to do is go in, you get really anxious. You want to leave. You want to leave so bad. You convince yourself like, “No, I think it is a little better. Uhh, you know what, I'm feeling pretty good!” And then you leave, and you're actually reinforcing for yourself to leave at your hottest point. So, you want to wait until you're like kind of bored with it. You know, there's definitely no panic. And in fact, gosh, I think I saw falafel out thereeee. You know, that's kind of where you want to be.

[00:36:35] **Ross Blocher:** Waiting for your thoughts to return to their normal monkey mind distraction.

*(Carrie confirms.)*

Okay. So, if you hadn't had that experience, do you think this would have been more difficult for you to just jump right in and see a real-life snake?

[00:36:51] **Carrie Poppy:** Prooobably? So, the LA Zoo had a bunch of snakes that really were venomous and really, you know, could harm me if this glass in front of me broke.

[00:37:02] **Ross Blocher:** Oh, because these are notable snakes that have come from far and wide.

[00:37:06] **Carrie Poppy:** That would have signs on them that said like, “This one will kill your family and all of your children's children! Anyway, don't worry, this glass is here!”

[00:37:17] **Ross Blocher:** That's how they write zoo signs. Like, “It would be a real shame if this snake were able to get through the glass.”

[00:37:24] **Carrie Poppy:** The LA Zoo fucking blows, you guys.

*(They laugh.)*

[00:37:27] **Ross Blocher:** Now, do you think it made much of a difference that this was such a big snake? Because intuitively that would be harder to acclimate to than a smaller snake. But do you think that the process that you had with that very large snake would apply to a smaller one?

[00:37:43] **Carrie Poppy:** For me, it really seems to be about whether they're venomous. I'm just no longer afraid of the constrictors. I'm sure I would be if I went to like—there are some countries where they actually have these enormous constrictors that can kill a person, but they're like mostly in like Taiwan, where also the average body weight is much smaller, and so people are easier for snakes to kill there. So, I think it would be hard to get me too afraid of a constrictor in the normal scenario in which I'd meet one. But those little, tiny snakes that might have weird colors and rattles and all these like weird rhymes attached to them and—

[00:38:23] **Ross Blocher:** Still freak you out. If you saw a snake in the wild and you didn't know for sure what kind of snake it was—

[00:38:27] **Carrie Poppy:** That would freak me out.

[00:38:28] **Ross Blocher:** Okay, and what does your freakout look like? Do you freeze up or do you flee?

[00:38:33] **Carrie Poppy:** Freeze up, usually. Yeah, I saw one in our backyard, and—this was a few months ago. I did freeze, and then during the freeze process I just like watched what was happening in my head. And I was like, “Oh, look at that. You're scared of the snake. You don't have anything to offer the snake. The snake doesn't want anything from you. Okay, this is fine.”

[00:38:57] **Ross Blocher:** Good. You were able to talk yourself off the ledge, so to speak. Okay.

[00:39:01] **Carrie Poppy:** Yeah. And I have on my wall lists of characteristics of a friendly snake and lists of characteristics of a venomous snake.

[00:39:14] **Ross Blocher:** Let's hear them. Oh, Carrie does not have to run to her office! She's got a good enough handle now.

[00:39:19] **Carrie Poppy:** (*Laughs.*) The venomous snake is more likely to have slitty cat eyes. Whereas the friendly snake is more likely to have round pupils. The venomous snake is more likely to have a thick body, and the nonvenomous is more likely to have a thin body. That rule doesn't hold very well though, I gotta tell you.

[00:39:42] **Ross Blocher:** Mm. Lots of counterexamples to that. Okay.

[00:39:44] **Carrie Poppy:** Lots of counterexamples. And the biggest giveaway is whether they have these jaw sacks that could hold enough venom to hurt you, right?

[00:39:54] **Ross Blocher:** Oh, so if they have like substantial jaw shapes that sort of extend from their body.

[00:39:59] **Carrie Poppy:** Yeah, you've got it right. But if they have that, you're still just in the territory of “slightly more likely” to have poison, because now these other nonvenomous species have adapted these false jowls to scare off their predators.

[00:40:16] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah, to our earlier point, this doesn't help at all. Because when you're in the middle of an encounter, you have no time.

[00:40:19] **Carrie Poppy:** Thank you! That's what I'm saying! (*Laughs.*)

[00:40:21] **Ross Blocher:** Okay, but what else is on the poster?

[00:40:24] **Carrie Poppy:** Okay, what else, what else, what else? Triangle head? I guess that's kind of the same as the jowls thing.

[00:40:33] **Ross Blocher:** That sounds like a school yard taunt. “Alright, Trianglehead, what you got?”

[00:40:39] **Carrie Poppy:** “I have more likelihood to have venom.” And okay—and then there's the steps to a snake encounter. And the steps to a snake encounter are very funny. Here, let me grab them.

[00:40:47] **Ross Blocher:** Alright. Oh, Carrie has these written out on index cards.

[00:40:50] **Carrie Poppy:** Yeah, I had these taped to the side of our (*laughs*) bed. Okay, “Venomous snake: really pointy triangle head, cat pupils, thick ass bodies.”

[00:41:00] **Ross Blocher:** How well do you think Drew has learned all these lessons now?

[00:41:02] **Carrie Poppy:** Oh, he's learned them very well. We talk about them a lot.

[00:41:06] **Ross Blocher:** Thick ass bodies! Alright!

*(They chuckle.)*

[00:41:08] **Carrie Poppy:** “Friendly snake: round pupils, skinny.” And then this note, “Any color.” Wow, thank you.

*(They laugh.)*

Here's a little math I did on this card. 16% of LA snake species are venomous.

[00:41:26] **Ross Blocher:** 16%?

[00:41:27] **Carrie Poppy:** Now I don't know what the percentage is of the population, so that only gives me a little bit of information!

[00:41:34] **Ross Blocher:** Now, like a crazy person, you've written numbers, and then like added them up and circled them.

*(Carrie laughs and confirms.)*

One is category “no”, one is category “yes”. What does this mean?

*(Carrie laughs.)*

You've counted up individual species and then done the math to get 16%?

*(Carrie confirms.)*

Alright!



[00:41:50] **Carrie Poppy:** I wanted to see how likely it was if I ran into a snake in Los Angeles, how likely is it that it's venomous? If I can tell myself that it's very unlikely, that's gonna be useful!

[00:42:01] **Ross Blocher:** Assuming equal representation of every species.

[00:42:03] **Carrie Poppy:** That's why I say I don't know the population!

*(Ross laughs.)*

I tried to find the population on all the species, Ross, but I couldn't! *(Laughs.)*

[00:42:10] **Ross Blocher:** Oh no! Oh, to be in your head. Okay, one more index card.

[00:42:16] **Carrie Poppy:** “Steps to a snake encounter.”

[00:42:18] **Ross Blocher:** By the way, if you saw the colors of these index cards on a snake, you would want to stay far away.

[00:42:23] **Carrie Poppy:** Oh, absolutely. Pink next to green? That guy's mean!

[00:42:30] **Ross Blocher:** Dayglow—*(laughs)*. Alright, what's the last one?

[00:42:31] **Carrie Poppy:** Okay, “Steps to a snake encounter.” I took some of these steps from the internet and some of these steps from people on Twitter who had snakes and had advice for me.

[00:42:43] **Ross Blocher:** Sounds highly reliable.

[00:42:45] **Carrie Poppy:** So, “Number one: stay calm, no sudden movements.” And then someone gave me this little mantra. “I don't have anything a snake wants.”

[00:42:54] **Ross Blocher:** Oh! Like, if it were a mugger coming for you, it's not like you've got a mouse.

[00:42:59] **Carrie Poppy:** Right. A snake wants a little morsel. I'm a big morsel!

[00:43:05] **Ross Blocher:** It probably wants you to be gone.

[00:43:08] **Carrie Poppy:** Right, exactly. Usually, afraid.

[00:43:09] **Ross Blocher:** I've got nothing a snake wants. I like that!

[00:43:10] **Carrie Poppy:** Yeah. “Number two, give them the right of way.”

[00:43:15] **Ross Blocher:** Okay. So, pretend that you've arrived at the intersection at the same time, but they're on the left. It's their right of way.

[00:43:25] **Carrie Poppy:** Yes. Exactly. Or they're on the right.

[00:43:27] **Ross Blocher:** If you both come to the intersection like this, this person gets to go, because they're to the left.

*(They laugh.)*

[00:43:32] **Carrie Poppy:** Oh, I've always thought it was the person to the right!  
*(Chuckling.)* I think I've been screwing up this interaction forever.

[00:43:36] **Ross Blocher:** You're right. It's the person on the right that gets the right of way. Yeah. I've been doing it wrong.

[00:43:43] **Carrie Poppy:** Oh no! Okay. "Number three, walk the other way."

[00:43:47] **Ross Blocher:** Walk the other way. Okay. Yeah. This all seems like good advice.

[00:43:50] **Carrie Poppy:** Yeah. Uh, yeah. Stay with me. "Number four, to clear a path for a snake far away, create sounds and vibrations." And the example Drew, and I always give is, *(whisper-shouting)* "Hey, you fucking piece of shit snake! You get the fuck outta here! I hate you soooo much! Get the fuuuck away!" And if you scream like that, then that'll create reverberations on the ground. And they may actually leave.

[00:44:18] **Ross Blocher:** Not because of your particular imprecations, but just because of the sound.

[00:44:24] **Carrie Poppy:** The sound. You could sing Queen at them, and that would also work. So, what I love about this list is it is essentially "don't do anything".

[00:44:34] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah, which I would say is more helpful than the analyzing their bodily features or colors or shapes or what have you.

*(Carrie agrees.)*

Or jowl protuberances. But rather just like, yeah, let's back off.

[00:44:47] **Carrie Poppy:** Yeah, yeah, but I have not gotten clear instruction on do I walk away slowly, or do I walk away fast? I've gotten differing opinions on that.

[00:44:57] **Ross Blocher:** Oh, okay. And it may differ from snake to snake depending on whether it's like a leaper or not.

(Carrie agrees with a shiver.)

But now that we're talking, it's reminding me just how many ways of existing in the world snakes have evolved. Because you've got like your adders that create these like these cool paths on the ground. Like, some of them will do this kind of weird walk thing where they sort of like corkscrew their bodies.

[00:45:22] **Carrie Poppy:** Oh, yeah. I've seen that. It makes a cool pattern.

[00:45:24] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah. It leaves like a cool print, you know. It doesn't look like any kind of footprint 'cause it's not, but then you've got like the rattlesnake, and it's made a noise kind of defense warning system. And you've got these various venomous snakes. You've got like cobras with these hoods, and I don't know. Snakes are getting cooler the more I think of them.

[00:45:42] **Carrie Poppy:** (Flatly.) Oh, okay. Cool. Yeah.

(They laugh.)

They're not for me!

[00:45:46] **Ross Blocher:** Carrie has this look of like, "That's not what I was trying to get across here."

[00:45:48] **Carrie Poppy:** No, no, no. I'm just thinking like so many people think they're cute. So many people really are endeared to them. And I mean, I'm now a little less scared of them, but it's hard for me to imagine leaping to like, "What a cute little snake." Except I do like the snake in *Robin Hood*.

[00:46:05] **Ross Blocher:** Oh yeah! Let's see. Well, not Kaa. That's from *The Jungle Book*. Sir Hiss! That's the one you like.

(Carrie confirms.)

Oh, it's funny. Recently online, someone had made a little meme with a picture of Sir Hiss. And I'll show it to you. The caption says, "There's animation, there's great animation, and then there's the bit in Disney's *Robin Hood* where a snake crosses his arms." And you've got Sir Hiss in a basket, and he's coiled himself such that his body is forming crisscrossed arms, and he looks very nonplussed.

[00:46:39] **Carrie Poppy:** That's very cute.

[00:46:41] **Ross Blocher:** Oh, now I need to figure out which artist that was.

[00:46:42] **Carrie Poppy:** I played a snake in a children's play once.

[00:46:45] **Ross Blocher:** Really?! Now this is interesting. Okay, do tell.

[00:46:50] **Carrie Poppy:** I think it was *The Frog Prince*? I think that's right.

[00:46:55] **Ross Blocher:** I'm reading that Ollie Johnston, one of the famed nine old men, he was the animator for Sir Hiss. Though, of course, sometimes other people work on shots, but I'm gonna credit him.

[00:47:05] **Carrie Poppy:** Ollie, call into the pod.

[00:47:06] **Ross Blocher:** Oh, he's great. I met him! One of two of the nine old men that I met. I had lunch with him, and then I was super embarrassed later, because he asked me what Disney film inspired me to get into the business, and I told him *The Lion King*. Which is true. And I'm telling myself he was probably at least happy to hear that the new generation is inspiring people to get into animation. But almost equally beloved to me is *Pinocchio*. I love *Pinocchio*. Why didn't I say that to him? To Ollie Johnston! Ugh. Oh, I still kick myself over that.

[00:47:40] **Carrie Poppy:** Come on! Well, we all have our waver moments.

[00:47:43] **Ross Blocher:** Indeed. Okay. You were saying. So, you played a snake.

[00:47:46] **Carrie Poppy:** I did play a snake. When I was in college and undergrad, we would put on like a winter play for kids, and I think it was *The Frog Prince*? And I got cast as like the pet snake to the Queen? Something like that. I just remember that they had to build me this platform that rolled, so it looked like I was just poking out of like, you know, a pet's bed, but really my whole body was under it and moving this thing around. Yeah. Very popular with the kids.

[00:48:17] **Ross Blocher:** And do you think at that point you already had a fear of snakes, or has it changed over time?

[00:48:20] **Carrie Poppy:** I did. But you know, I was like a costume character. I wasn't thinking about actual snakes.

[00:48:26] **Ross Blocher:** Sure, sure. Okay. You also sent me a video that was demonstrating this technique of exposure therapy.

*(Carrie confirms.)*

This was by a guy who could get results in three hours.

[00:48:40] **Carrie Poppy:** Yeah, yeah, he's like the world expert at this point, I think. Dr. Öst, O-S-T.

[00:48:45] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah, with an umlaut over the O.

[00:48:47] **Carrie Poppy:** Yeah. Yeah, at least according to my professor, he made the technique that's used in a lot of the research right now around phobia. And in that video, he's helping a woman overcome her phobia in three hours by just basically sitting next to the snake. I mean, I do think probably you don't need the other person, but if you need the other person in order to stay, then go for it.

[00:49:16] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah, or maybe just someone to be that voice of your conscience or talking you through it, just calling you back every now and then if your mind starts to get a little distracted. Seems like he was helpful, and she seemed like a good sport, the woman in the video that you were showing me.

[00:49:29] **Carrie Poppy:** Oh yeah, she's a research assistant. So.

[00:49:31] **Ross Blocher:** Oh, okay, 'cause she—you could see the visible fear that she had of the snake going in, and then over time, she would even offer like, "Okay, I'm gonna try touching him" Whereas there was another video that I had found after watching that one that I showed you that was totally different, of this pushy guy who like kept forcing these two ladies to, "Touch the snake for one second. Touch it for five seconds. Now, you're gonna hold it." And then berating them. "I can't hear you! What's your goal? What are you trying to do? I can't hear you!"

[00:50:00] **Carrie Poppy:** Yeah, just adding all this sort of like Tony Robbins-ism and over complicating it.

[00:50:05] **Ross Blocher:** (*Chuckling.*) And Carrie's like, "He's not adding anything to this!"

[00:50:09] **Carrie Poppy:** Yeah! I mean, lord, you don't need someone doing that! I can see the argument for I'm afraid I'm gonna run out if someone doesn't stop and remind me that I really need to stay. I can see why you would want someone for that. Or just reassurance.

[00:50:24] **Ross Blocher:** Like, I can imagine for someone where like experience or expertise is really important to them, having someone in the room who says like, "Hey, you know, this is my job. I deal with this. I've seen this a million times."

I remember one of my sisters was expressing a fear about flying. And I said what usually just kind of crosses through my mind when I kind of casually don't think too much about flying, I just think, "Well, the pilot knows a lot more than I do about this, and they want to live!"

[00:50:55] **Carrie Poppy:** Until it's Stockton Rush!

[00:50:58] **Ross Blocher:** (*Laughs.*) And I feel I can offset my fear on him or her, you know, whoever's flying the plane. I can just be like, okay. Well, they know enough. They're getting up there. And of course, you know, we've all heard of the cases—which are thankfully rare—of planes crashing. So, of course, it does happen. But that did seem to help her. At least from her responses, but she may write me back later and be like, "Actually, no."

[00:51:21] **Carrie Poppy:** (*Laughs.*) Regulation helps me. Thinking about regulation. Yeah. But see, you don't have that with Stockton Rush.

[00:51:27] **Ross Blocher:** (*Chuckles.*) The fact that there are bodies who will get you in trouble if you are not regularly servicing your plane parts and crews of people who analyze crashes afterwards and figure out what lessons can be taken from them. I know one such person. And knowing that those kinds of people are very aware of the fail points—yeah, that is reassuring. There's something to be said for regulation.

[00:51:53] **Carrie Poppy:** Oh yeah. A lot! A lot!

[00:51:55] **Ross Blocher:** A lot to be said for regulation.

[00:51:57] **Carrie Poppy:** Yeah. So that's it, I guess!

[00:51:59] **Ross Blocher:** Okay, wait, so would you say now—? Where are you at in your level of freedom from fear of snakes?

[00:52:06] **Carrie Poppy:** Well, like I said, there's the problem of already having felt free. It didn't interfere with my life. But I would say that my fear of constrictor snakes is from maybe an eight to a zero.

[00:52:21] **Ross Blocher:** Specifically, those snakes?

(*Carrie confirms.*)

Oh wow, okay, eight to a zero!

[00:52:24] **Carrie Poppy:** And my fear of a snake whose venom status I can't identify is at like a six or a five? That's still where all the question marks are.

[00:52:38] **Ross Blocher:** Seems like it has to be a ssssix or a sssseven.

[00:52:42] **Carrie Poppy:** (*Titters.*) That's where my brain is still having the trouble is like trying to do this like risk analysis piece of it.

[00:52:49] **Ross Blocher:** And you had given yourself a goal for this year, this calendar year, to—I was going to say confront a snake, you know. Befriend a snake. I don't know. Be in the presence of a snake and touch it. You did it. Do you feel like you want to continue to desensitize yourself to snakes?

[00:53:07] **Carrie Poppy:** I'm not sure. So, (*sighs*) my friend, C.A. Meyersburg, she always says, pick your phobias. She's afraid of—I think it's mice or something. And she's just like, “But they're not in my life, so I don't care.” (*Laughs.*)

So, I don't know. I don't know if I care that I'm still afraid of ambiguously venomous snakes. Does that matter to me? And I'm not sure. If I found that in our backyard there were a lot of snakes and this started to come up like, "Oh, I really want to start identifying snakes well," then I think I would pick up the mantle again. But I think it just depends on how much it actually factors into my life.

[00:53:45] **Ross Blocher:** Okay, and for any of our listeners who have specific phobias, maybe of cockroaches or spiders or snakes or snakes on a plane, what would you recommend to them? Just to do the same kind of process of first habituating yourself to maybe images and then videos and then maybe sort of getting in the same room but where you're protected by plate glass or what have you?

[00:54:10] **Carrie Poppy:** Well, I say that I internalized a principle partly because any steps I could give wouldn't be validated steps, right? I don't—I haven't tested any protocol. But if you were to follow what I did—and I take no responsibility if you do. Then I paid attention to what kind of media bothered me. So, okay, I don't like it when snakes are on TV. I don't like seeing their fangs. Oh, okay. Maybe it's biting that I'm afraid of. Like, really sort of interrogate that kind of stuff.

[00:54:43] **Ross Blocher:** Pick it apart and identify the pieces.

[00:54:45] **Carrie Poppy:** Yeah, and then try to watch stuff that really fits into those pieces. So, if it's really about poison, find out what do you need to know about poison? What's the gap in information that's happening for you? And then once you notice that you can watch the same video with lower and lower anxiety, you can sort of check that one off and go to your next more extreme exposure, which might be going to where snakes are in real life.

*(Ross affirms.)*

Or maybe you'll die! Maybe you'll have a heart attack. I don't know.

*(They chuckle.)*

Probably not. It's really hard to do. Yeah, probably not.

[00:55:21] **Ross Blocher:** We hope not. Okay. Take it easy out there.

[00:55:23] **Carrie Poppy:** *(Laughs.)* I take no responsibility, but the principle I think is sound.

*(Ross agrees.)*

I really think, yeah, you know, exposure is often the way to handle those things.

[00:55:35] **Ross Blocher:** Excellent. Well, thank you for sharing that journey with us!

[00:55:38] **Carrie Poppy:** My pleasure. And Zigzag, if you're listening, if you want to be on the show, as always, anyone that we discuss on the show is welcome.

[00:55:45] **Ross Blocher:** What would you have done if I'd had a snake like in my backpack this whole time?

[00:55:49] **Carrie Poppy:** (*Chuckles.*) I'd be like, "You shouldn't keep him in that tiny environment!"

[00:55:52] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah, that would've been—I guess that's it for our show!

[00:55:56] **Carrie Poppy:** Our theme music is by Brian Keith Dalton.

[00:55:58] **Ross Blocher:** Our administrative manager is (*sing-song*) Ian Kremer!

[00:56:01] **Carrie Poppy:** This episode was edited by Victor Figueroa.

[00:56:03] **Ross Blocher:** You can support this podcast at [MaximumFun.org/join](https://MaximumFun.org/join).

[00:56:09] **Carrie Poppy:** Is that it?

[00:56:10] **Ross Blocher:** That's correct, yeah. You could also tell other people about it. You know, all of the usual ways you support us. You leave reviews. You write us a letter to let us know that the podcast has made long car rides with your mom so much more enjoyable.

[00:56:25] **Carrie Poppy:** You can tell the barista at your local coffee shop that your name is Onrac, then you can take a picture of the sleeve, then you can put the picture on social media, and you could feel like you're advertising even though nothing is really happeninggg!

[00:56:40] **Ross Blocher:** Until people ask why, and you tell them the story, and then they're like, "Okay, maybe I'll check out the podcaaaast."

[00:56:44] **Carrie Poppy:** And then you're like, "It's like this. It's like what's happening between me and you right now. It never ends. They just keep talking."

[00:56:53] **Ross Blocher:** (*Laughs.*) Well, I like these concrete steps. And it's amazing. There's always a few listeners out there who actually do the thing.

[00:56:59] **Carrie Poppy:** Totally! The people who put the banana on the stick. (*Giggles.*)

[00:57:01] **Ross Blocher:** And then Carrie has long forgotten that she ever mentioned anything like that. But I've edited it. So, I remember, and I tell Carrie, "Oh, yeah, you told people to do that."

She's like, "I did?!"



[00:57:12] **Carrie Poppy:** I did?! It seems like it's a lot of steps to get that done! Wow!

[00:57:15] **Ross Blocher:** “And they have a tattoo now? Okay!”

[00:57:19] **Carrie Poppy:** Wow. Huh! I guess I'm really powerful. Welp!

[00:57:22] **Ross Blocher:** Well, we wish you all the best with any phobias you have. It's part of what makes us interesting as humans.

[00:57:28] **Carrie Poppy:** Yeah. It's up to you. You keep them, you dunk them. It's up to you, dude.

[00:57:32] **Ross Blocher:** And remember...

[00:57:33] **Clip:**

**Carrie Poppy:** It's February 1st, 2023. I'm at the LA Zoo trying to find the reptile habitat. I don't even know where this thing is yet, and I'm already getting nervous, but I'm passing beautiful flamingos. Oh, wow. I feel very ambivalent about being here. And it's also causing these questions about like, well, do you even need to be exposed to snakes? It's like they're not in your life.

Okay. Ooh. Okay, I see it's called The Lair: Living Amphibians, Invertebrates and Reptiles. I feel my heart rate going up. There's all these kids, all these families. Like, I don't want them to see me be nervous. There's a child over there just playing on a big snake statue. Clearly doesn't care! Clearly didn't get this weird thing.

Okay, here we go. Walking in. All these children. No problem! Okay, here we go. 12:51. I'm going to try to stay in here for 20 minutes. A python! Great. Okay. Okay. Looking away from me. Long thing.

I had to get away from the python, because (*inaudible*) to see it, but okay. Now we've got rough scaled python. Just discovered in 1981. Rarest python on Earth. Okay. Hi, buddy. Hi, buddy. (*Whispering.*) Hi! You're scared. That's normal. “Green tree python. Everything about this snake makes it perfectly suited for life in the trees. The snake wraps its prehensile tail around a branch, securing itself, and then strikes out to catch its prey.” Can't even see your face. Oh, there you are. Aww. You're kinda cute.

Someone—a kid just said, “Snakes are my favorite dangerous thing.” Okay, “Temple Viper. Not dangerous to humans, but its bite can be painful.” Okay. “Good luck, Kept in temples and trees near homes.”

[01:00:03] **Music:** “Oh No, Ross and Carrie! Theme Song” by Brian Keith Dalton. A jaunty, upbeat instrumental.

[01:00:15] **Promo:**

**Music:** Fast-paced synth.

**Yucky Jessica:** (*Rachel McElroy doing a rasping, whiny voice.*) I am Yucky Jessica.

**Chuck Crudsworth:** (*Griffin McElroy doing a gravelly, nasal voice.*) I'm Chuck Crudsworth.

**Yucky Jessica:** And this is—

**Jessica & Chuck:** *Terrible!*

**Chuck Crudsworth:** A podcast where we talk about things we hate that are awful!

**Yucky Jessica:** Today, we're discussing *Wonderful!*, a podcast on the Maximum Fun network?

**Chuck Crudsworth:** Hosts Rachel and Griffin McElroy, a real-life married couple—

**Yucky Jessica:** Yuuuck!

**Chuck Crudsworth:** —discuss a wide range of topics: music, video games, poetry, snacks!

**Yucky Jessica:** But I hate all that stuff!

**Chuck Crudsworth:** I know you do, Yucky Jessica!

**Yucky Jessica:** It comes out every Wednesday, the worst day of the week, wherever you download your podcasts.

**Chuck Crudsworth:** For our next topic, we're talking Fiona, the baby hippo from the Cincinnati Zoo.

*(Music ends.)*

**Yucky Jessica:** I hate this little hippo!

[01:00:58] **Sound Effect:** Cheerful ukulele chord.

[01:00:59] **Speaker 1:** Maximum Fun.

[01:01:00] **Speaker 2:** A worker-owned network.

[01:01:02] **Speaker 3:** Of artist owned shows.

[01:01:03] **Speaker 4:** Supported—

[01:01:04] **Speaker 5:** —directly—

[01:01:05] **Speaker 6:** —by you!