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**John Moe:** Hi, everyone. Happy New Year from *Depresh Mode*. We're taking a very short break, so we're bringing you one of our favorite episodes from 2023. It's with the hilarious writer Samantha Irby, wonderful storyteller. We think you'll love this episode just like we did.

And may I suggest a New Year's resolution for you? Support *Depresh Mode*. Recognize that it costs money to make the show that you're listening to, hopefully the show that you love, and then give. We exist because of financial contributions from listeners just like you. We depend on it. So, if you could, please support *Depresh Mode*. It's easy to do. Just go to [MaximumFun.org/join](https://MaximumFun.org/join). [MaximumFun.org/join](https://MaximumFun.org/join). Find a level that works for you. Whatever that is, you make that call and then select *Depresh Mode* from the list of shows. You'll listen differently. You'll have already accomplished a New Year's resolution just moments, just hours into the new year. Think how wonderful that would be. [MaximumFun.org/join](https://MaximumFun.org/join). Enjoy the show.

Getting a new mental health diagnosis is kind of like a twist in an M. Night Shyamalan movie. You quickly go to a montage of your life up to that point and things that were mysterious before start to make sense. Except that whole process takes longer than it does in a movie. And like Mark Wahlberg probably doesn't show up in your life reckoning. Maybe he does. Who am I to say? I shouldn't judge. It's *Depresh Mode*. I'm John Moe. I'm glad you're here.

**Transition:** Spirited acoustic guitar.

**John Moe:** My guest this week is Samantha Irby. And Samantha Irby is pretty hilarious. She's the author of several bestselling books of essays, including *We Are Never Meeting in Real Life*, *Meaty*, *Wow No Thank You*, and a new collection, *Quietly Hostile*, which comes out on May 16th. Samantha Irby writes the blog "Bitches Gotta Eat", and has written for *Sex and the City*, and *Tuca & Bertie*, and other TV shows. Her writing is funny and irreverent. It tackles topics like her experiences with Crohn's disease, degenerative arthritis, depression, and anxiety. Her future writing might include her experiences with a new diagnosis that she hasn't talked about until this interview. Samantha Irby joined us from her home in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

**Transition:** Spirited acoustic guitar.

**John Moe:** Sam Irby, welcome to *Depresh Mode*.

**Samantha Irby:** Thank you. I am thrilled to be here despite my depression.

*(They chuckle.)*

**John Moe:** Okay, well, and your anxiety. You have Hall and Oates, right? You've got the depression and the anxiety?

**Samantha Irby:** Yes! But you know, it's been almost a year, I started seeing a psychiatrist, who—I was just kind of like, describing all of my stuff to her. And like, at the end, she's like, “You have OCD.” And I was like whaaaat? And so, I've been doing therapy with her and also taking lots of Zoloft. (*Laughs.*)

So, yeah, I have all—I'm batting a thousand over here with the mental illnesses.

**John Moe:** Pokémon, gotta catch ‘em all. Was it a surprise to you that you had OCD? Like, how did she come to that conclusion?

**Samantha Irby:** Yeah, I was—okay. I was shocked, and I'm going to say the thing that probably everyone is thinking. I was like, oh, I don't wash my hands a lot. Like, I don't check doorknobs all the time. And she's like, “(*Chuckles knowingly.*) Okay, dummy, but that's not all OCD is.” So, what I was telling her about was like over—I noticed like deep into the pandemic, the pandemic during which I like really used—I don't want to say used it as an excuse to become a recluse, but it was very easy for me to fall into the like, oh, we don't leave our houses and we don't talk to people? Perfect.

**John Moe:** I've been training for this my whole life.

**Samantha Irby:** (*Laughs.*) Yes! I am the pandemic princess. Like, this is no sweat for me. And then after a year, when we start like coming out of the house, I found that I was hyper vigilant. Like, I was always—I almost felt like feral, where I'd be out in the world like feeling like, “What—?! I don't know what I'm doing here, and I'm upset about it.” Right? And I was like—I'd be in the car. This is like my big example.

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I'd be in the car, and it wouldn't just feel like I was driving. It felt like, oh, all of these people are going to hit me with their cars. Right? It felt like I had to like get away from them or they were going to hurt me. I went to a concert. I was sitting like in the back, and there was this drunk guy in the aisle. And Angel Olsen was on stage, and she looked like really hot. And dude starts like screaming out, you know, like drunk, you know, “Show us your tits,” kind of stuff. And in that moment, I wasn't like mad at him or like scared for anyone else, but I was like, oh, that man is going to notice I'm sitting here and like come hit me.

So, I'm telling the psychiatrist about all these feelings, and she was like, “Yeah, that's OCD.” And then we got into like the ruminations. Which, I mean, you give me an embarrassing moment, I'll give you three months of, you know, stomach churning, anxiety as I roll it over and over in my head.

**John Moe:** Staring at the ceiling, not sleeping. Yep.

**Samantha Irby:** Yes! (*laughs.*) Yeah. And it like unlocked something in me, you know, where I was like, “This is the answer!” (*Coughs.*) Sorry. I sound like I'm crying, but it was just a cough. But it felt like—as I was reading about it, I was like, oh yeah, this—I can't

believe like I'm, you know, 43 years old and it's the first time I feel like I know how my brain works. So, it was an incredible like revelation to me.

**John Moe:** Yeah. Yeah, did you chalk it up to something else before? Did you think it was part of depression or anxiety or just life the way it's supposed to be?

**Samantha Irby:** Yeah, I—so, a lot of like my OCD stuff feels like anxiety. I think that's why like therapists in the past and my GP were like, “You're just anxious.” Because a lot of the stress of like feeling like you're trapped in a cage where people are just like poking you inside it—right?—that feels like anxiety. Like, to me, if I was describing that, I'd be like, oh, that's anxiety, right? And maybe it still is. I'm not the OCD expert, but through my psychiatrist lens, she's like, “Okay, let's take that moment that you thought was anxiety and talk about how that's your OCD and how we can like break up that feeling for you or like give you some tools to help deal with those feelings.”

You know, the worst thing about having OCD is the best. Therapy is exposure therapy. Which, uh, I am doing. And (*laughs*) I hate it so much! I hate it. I'm like (*laughing*) I would rather be sick than like, you know, deal with—like, I'm a very good catastrophizer, if that's a word. It's a word for today.

**John Moe:** Yeah, it's a word around here.

**Samantha Irby:** And like exposure therapy encourages you to like really get into what scares you and, you know, like think about, “And what if this happens?! And then what if this happens after that happens?” And like, it stresses me out just thinking about it, but I'm doing it. (*Chuckles.*)

**John Moe:** That does sound—I mean, I guess the whole point of it is discomfort. But boy, to take you out of that comfortable spot at home and put you on the front lines. What kind of things have you been exposing yourself to?

**Samantha Irby:** Okay, so the big—(*chuckles*) okay, I feel like these—like giving examples is going to like make you not like me. Again, because I'm mentally ill. But! (*Laughs.*) So—

**John Moe:** I liked you before we even met. So, don't worry about that.

**Samantha Irby:** Thank you! So, before, like one of my big things was like being in the world and being in the car. And I was doing this thing that I didn't even realize where like let's say I have a task to do today, right? I have to go to the store or take the dog to daycare. Before I left the house, I'd be thinking—I'd just get obsessed with like who might see me and what they might think of what I'm wearing or doing, which is another big thing. Like, I am so self-conscious that like it causes me physical pain.

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So, I was also doing this thing where in my mind I would like plot my route. I'd be like, I'm going to turn left here, right here. You know, like essentially it was creating like safety for

me. You know? If I know I'm going to make these turns and then come right back, I'll be fine. And one of my first exposure assignments was to just get in the car without thinking about where I was going or how I was going to get there or who I might see. And it—I still haven't mastered the like—you know how like people will just like get out of bed and like walk out of their house? And like, they don't care who sees them. They don't care. You know? That is not me, but I am trying—*(laughing)* I am trying to do that.

And it feels like—it's so strange. Because I always tell my psychiatrist, there's like a rational part of my brain—right?—that knows no one's going to drive their car into you intentionally. That person is just behind you; they're not chasing you. No one cares that your pedicure is messed up. Like, they get so big in my mind that it's like, oh, I may as well just like not leave. Because I can't—I'm not going to be able to function out in the world while thinking about all these things. And my exposure therapy, a lot of it is you have to go out into the world ill-prepared without having thought about it and like figure it out.

Which... is helping. Like, it took—I mean, I've been at it for almost a year, right? So, in the beginning, I would just be like—*(laughs)*.

**John Moe:** Yeah, what was that first day doing that like?

**Samantha Irby:** Oh my god. Okay. Let me—okay. So, my very first assignment, before she made me leave the House, was I had to write a detailed description of the worst possible thing I could think of happening to me if I left the house, right? And she was like—

**John Moe:** This is your next book, right? That essay. *(Chuckles.)*

**Samantha Irby:** No, I wrote them down! I'm going to put them in the next book, like to scare the shit out of people.

*(They laugh.)*

Or for people to be like, “Oh, you're scared of making a left turn?” *(Laughs.)* Either way. Either people are going to be like aww or they're going to be like ugh. We'll see. So—and she's like, “You're a writer; be creative.”

So, I wrote this whole thing about like someone was chasing me, because they were mad that I was going two miles under the speed limit. And they like ran me off the road and pulled me from the car and like beat me to death. And you have to like read that. She had me reading it like six times a day, and I had to like record it and listen to it back. And she's like, “I promise the more you read it, the more you hear yourself saying it, the more—” She didn't say ridiculous, but she meant ridiculous. The more ridiculous it'll sound, and you'll like get over it. And like, that was terrible. And then the first time applying it in the real world, it took a while before I felt like I could just like not overthink my clothes. And I still do.

You can't even—you can't see what I'm wearing, but I really was like, “Oh, should I wear these tie-dyed pajama bottoms? They're so unprofessional.” It's just like things like that; it's a hard thing to break, right? And so, the first few times of doing it, I really hated it. And I really

was mad that there was no like instant cure. I was like, “I did all the work! I wrote this terrible fantasy of myself getting pulled from the wreckage of my car by someone who was mad that I was going 28 in a 30. Like, why isn't this like instantly better?” But it has taken—I mean, I still don't think like the car stuff is fixed. And then there's like all the other stuff, but I'm committed to doing it, whatever that means.

**John Moe:** It seems like the guy who drove you off the road would just keep driving, because clearly he wants to get somewhere quicker. Why go to all the trouble of both running you off the road and taking you out of the car and beating you to death?

**Samantha Irby:** (*Chuckles.*) Well, because in my brain, it's all about like someone being mad at me for being—essentially, for like being me. Right?

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Because it's not a terrible thing to maybe not be going as fast or maybe be going too fast or whatever. A lot of my issues involve people not liking me or being mad. Like, that I think for me is my biggest fear, is that someone's like, “You've made me mad. I don't like you.” And it plays out in different ways, right? It's like, oh, this dude at the concert—like, what if he thinks I look annoying, and he attacks me? Or what if this person on the road who does not know me, does not care about me, gets mad that I didn't use my turn signal? And then it becomes like a huge thing that's like, oh, not only are they mad, but also they want to hurt me, they want to follow me home, so they know where I live. (*Chuckles.*)

You know, it's like—it's totally irrational, but in the moment it feels so real to me, and I feel like I have to be on guard for whatever it is that's going to happen. And those are the feelings I am trying to reduce. (*Laughs.*) I don't know if they're fixable, but I'm just trying to feel them less.

**John Moe:** Yeah. Yeah. You're trying to make progress. So, how much progress have you made?

**Samantha Irby:** Well, I—(*laughs.*)

**Transition:** Relaxed acoustic guitar.

**John Moe:** Always a good sign when you ask how much progress has been made and the guest just laughs. We'll get an answer after the break.

**Promo:**

**Music:** Sophisticated electronic harpsichord music.

**Travis McElroy:** Hi, I'm Travis McElroy.

**Teresa McElroy:** And I'm Teresa McElroy.

**Travis McElroy:** And we're the hosts of *Shmanners*!

**Teresa McElroy:** We don't believe that etiquette should be used to judge other people.

**Travis McElroy:** No. On *Shmanners*, we see etiquette as a way to navigate social situations with confidence.

**Teresa McElroy:** So, if that sounds like something you're into—

**Travis McElroy:** Join us every Friday, on Maximum Fun or wherever you get your podcasts.

*(Music fades out.)*

**Transition:** Spirited acoustic guitar.

**John Moe:** Back with writer Samantha Irby. I asked her how the progress was going on her treatments for OCD.

**Samantha Irby:** I do leave the house.

**John Moe:** Congratulations.

**Samantha Irby:** And I've gotten much better about—thank you! It was so—I mean, it was—*(chuckling)* I get it. You know how like you hear about people who can't leave their house, and you're like, *(patronizingly)* “Oh, mm-hm, okay.” Now, I get it. *(Laughs.)* It's like safe in here; no one can bother me. I'll never make fun of an agoraphobe ever again. I don't know that I've done a lot of it in the past but never, never again.

I feel better, but also I take a lot of meds to adjust my brain chemicals. So, I don't know how much of it is like meds vs. the work I've been doing, but I do feel a little better. *(Laughs.)* A little better.

**John Moe:** Okay. And you've been at it for about a year, you said?

**Samantha Irby:** Yeah, yeah. I just like had to do something for my prescription, and I had to go back and see when I first started it, and it's been almost a year. Which it also feels like just yesterday, right? Like, it feels—because I don't feel like a new person. I'm like, oh, I couldn't have been at this for that long. I'd be fixed by now! But you know, *(chuckling)* baby steps, baby steps.

**John Moe:** When I finally got diagnosed with depression, I was in my 30s. And I had like a real M. Night Shyamalan kind of moment of like, “What a twist!” But it explains so many things that had happened, you know, from the time I was 12 years old. And like, you know, I kind of sat there and reran everything through this lens.

Have you done something like that with OCD? Where you look back and you're like, "Oh, that was OCD happening; I just didn't know it."

**Samantha Irby:** Yes. Now that I know all of the ways—(*chuckles*) I shouldn't say I know all of the ways. Now that I know like which of my behaviors or thought patterns have been OCD, looking back—it's so funny, because like part of me—this is the hard thing about kind of like chronicling my life as I live it, is I think about my old books. And I'm like how much of that—how much of this stuff I wrote about was like fueled by undiagnosed OCD rather than whatever I thought was going on? Or didn't think about at all?

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Like, how much of that stuff would I have a different perspective on if I understood my brain now? But also, it is like kind of a relief to think about, you know, the things that keep you up, that torment you—to think about how some of those things were probably OCD that I didn't know I was dealing with. And that's—it's a wild thing to like (*searching for the words*) have a new lens as like a full adult, right? Like, not at 21. Like, we've lived some life over here, and like I had no idea that I had this big thing just kind of like, you know, crawling around my brain and didn't really know it was there.

So, I sort of wish I had like a time machine where I could go back and, you know, be like, "Don't freak out about that. It's just your OCD being weird!" Or like one big thing about OCD is intrusive thoughts. And like, I've had them forever, but I just thought like it was just like my weird brain. Not like, oh, this is a tenant of this disease that you have. I feel like I maybe would have been a little easier on myself if I had known in the past. You know? Like, if I had known what was going on or if there was a name for the feelings that I was feeling and the behaviors that I was doing.

And I still—I currently am like—the compulsion for me has like manifested itself in many ways. But lately it's been (*chuckles*) what I was calling during lockdown Pandemic Presents, right? Where I just order a little thing so that it shows up and I'm like, oh, yes, a thing from the outside world. What a treat! But—

**John Moe:** It's your love language to yourself.

**Samantha Irby:** (*laughing.*) Yes! But really, it's—you know, my psychiatrist is like, "Oh, that's you getting like the dopamine rush from ordering." Because I would like order things and just—you know, the thrill is gone once it arrives. It's like you have the anticipation, you have the excitement, and then it arrives. And it's like I don't need this. I'll just leave it in the box.

**John Moe:** What do you think it's going to be when you order it? Like, when you order that thing, do you think it's going to change your life or make you better in some way?

**Samantha Irby:** Yes. Yes. This is—so, this is a huuuge thing for me. And honestly, if I could fix this part of myself, I'd shut the fuck up about all the other parts. It's the like—(*laughs*) it's the "this one thing will solve my life". Usually—and like in the past, it's been—it

mostly is like cosmetics or clothing items, right? Like, I get myself—I whip myself into a delusional frenzy. I'm like, oh, there's a new skin serum. And you know, these beautiful people on Instagram are using it?! That is what I need. If I get that, then my skin will be great, which will then fix my whole life. And like, I know, rationally—like, the good part of my brain is like, (*gently*) “N-no, you're not gonna—” You know what I mean? (*Laughs.*)

**John Moe:** It's just some cream.

**Samantha Irby:** You're still gonna—yes! Yes! But then the other part is like so convinced that once I have this thing, it'll make everything better. Like, I'll feel secure, and I'll feel like confident or whatever. It could be truly anything I will like project this fantasy onto. And then when it doesn't fix anything, because like nail polish is not gonna fix my life, then it's like, “Oh, no, I'm an idiot, because I put all my hope into this one thing. And now I'm depressed that I've wasted the money.” You know, it's just a—that is the big thing I'm trying to break is the dopamine rush of putting something in the cart and then clicking “send to my house”, and then like it arrives, and I'm like, oh right, this is just an object. (*Chuckling.*) It doesn't—it's not like a—it's not magic.

So, that it's learning about all this stuff—because like, before it was like, oh, this is just like my trauma, right? Like, I grew up poor.

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I didn't have anything. I didn't have the nice things that my friends had. Like, this is my trauma response, and now I'm filling my house with shit I can't use and don't need, because I couldn't have things as a child. And that explanation was like good for a while, right? Anything to let myself off the hook is good. And so, I told my psychiatrist that theory. And she was like, “No, uh, I'm a scientist. The way your brain works is you really want the rush of the thing, and then it immediately goes away. So, let's work on not needing the rush.” And I was like I'm glad I—I'm glad I got a psychiatrist. (*Laughs.*)

**John Moe:** Are you somebody who's done that with other things in your life? Like, if I could just, you know, get a date with this person, if I could just get a book deal, if I could just get published here—surely, nobody who has those things could be messed up in their mental health.

**Samantha Irby:** Yes. I'm always like pinning my hopes on one thing that like truly doesn't matter and can't fix anything. Like, that is my superpower, like thinking—you know—talking to a person is going to fix all of my problems. I don't do it so much now, because—I mean, one of the things is like, I've had some success in my career, and I'm still fucked up. And it's like, oh, no, I do know that you can have like career success, and you can like sell things to people and they want to buy it and still like be jacked up in the head. So, the fantasy of like something career-wise fixing things, that went away early. ‘Cause I was like, oh, I can sell books and still like be out of my mind? Yeah. Okay.

So, luckily, I don't think of any—like, no career thing, no like—you know, person coming into my life. Like, I'm over that and fully onto the like “if I get this lip balm, it will make my life better”. (*Chuckles.*)



**John Moe:** Okay. So, it's evolved, but it's still there in some form.

*(Samantha confirms through laughter.)*

Well, how are you doing now? I mean, we're speaking as your book, *Quietly Hostile*, is about to come out. How are you doing now with that expectation of like, oh, what if somebody hates me? And what if—you know, what if somebody reads the book and then runs me off the road and beats me to death on the side of the road? Like, is—?

**Samantha Irby:** *(Cackles.)* That is—oh my god! Okay, see?

**John Moe:** I gave you a new one there, didn't I? *(Chuckles.)*

**Samantha Irby:** You've obviously been—*(laughs)* you've obviously been in my brain, because I have been lately—so, I didn't want to tour, but they want me to do a little tour, so I'm doing a little tour. And like, in thinking about it—mostly, I start off thinking like what am I going to wear that will not completely humiliate me when hundreds of people see it, right? Like, that's the first thing is like how do I not look like a garbage man and also like not sweat through my clothes and also like look good photographed from below? Like, none of these things are possible, so the fixation starts there. Then when that gets uncomfortable, because it's like, well, I can't control if someone takes the ugliest picture of me of all time, it moves on to what if someone gets mad at something I've written, and they bum rush the stage?

It's never happened. I don't even think I write the—I mean, like unless somebody's like really pissed off about my like personal incontinence, *(laughing)* I don't know what they'd even want to attack me for, but then that's where my brain goes. So, I'm currently like half worried about it everything you wear looks stupid and everyone's going to be like eww. And the other half is what if somebody who hates you spent money on a ticket to sit through a show where you're going to be and decides to run up on stage and call you a dumb bitch? And it's like it's not going to happen. But my brain, like the sick part of it? It really enjoys getting down in there and like imagining all that.

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I just recorded the audio book, and that to me is the hardest thing. Like, I'm fine in the booth. It's not like physically hard, but it is the first and last time that I read my book all the way through, cover to cover. And I—*(sighs)* everything that jumps out at me is like, “That's a mistake you can't fix. That's a clunky sentence that—” You know, ‘cause like the book is officially official when you read the audio book; there's no changes.

**John Moe:** It's been printed.

**Samantha Irby:** So, I'm just like, “Ugh! Oh, this is going to go out like that? How many oat milk latte jokes did I make?” You know what I mean? Like, I'm recording the thing and I'm like melting down inside and then—and again, no one—at least, like I shield myself from like negative reviews and stuff. No one is harder on me than I am on myself. But still, I'm like, oh, this is chum in the waters! I can't believe like that I made like three versions of this same

joke. It's like—ugh, it's really terrible. So, I'm in that like purgatory between the book is done, I can't change a goddamn thing. (*Laughs.*) And like, (*stammering*) what the—now people are just—I've given—this isn't great. And then there's the like but no one's read it yet. So, I don't get any validation from people being like, “I read it and I think it's just fine!”

(*They laugh.*)

A weird space where I'm like, it's terrible, and also no one knows it's terrible yet, but they will soon. So.

**John Moe:** I love that your daydream about a rave review is somebody saying, “It's just fine.”

(*They laugh.*)

**Transition:** Spirited acoustic guitar.

**John Moe:** More with Samantha Irby in a moment.

**Promo:**

**Music:** Intense rock music.

**Biz Ellis:** Parenting. It's hard. But don't worry! You're not alone. Belly up to the low bar with *One Bad Mother* and let us remind you that fine is good enough.

**Speaker 1:** They wanna climb on different things. And how am I supposed to keep them both from dying? (*Laughs.*)

**Speaker 2:** There is a right way to do this. And if I can figure out that right way, I'm gonna be a good parent. So, that is not a thing.

**Biz:** So, join us each week and let us tell you that you are doing a good job. You can listen to *One Bad Mother* on Maximum Fun or wherever you get your podcasts.

**Transition:** Spirited acoustic guitar.

**John Moe:** Back with author Samantha Irby. We were talking about how her daydream of a rave review is someone saying her book is just fine.

**Samantha Irby:** It's true. I don't need—okay, here's one piece of like freedom in my life for my poor, beleaguered brain is like I know what I am and what I do. And also, like I have like low self-esteem. (*Laughs.*) But I don't think I'm reinventing the wheel. I know I'm not reinventing the wheel over here. And like, I don't—you know like when the lists come out of like Booker Prize or—you know, whatever kind of book prizes there are. I don't even know the names of them. 'Cause I know I will never be nominated for one. I don't even check. I'm like, oh, mm-mm. (*Laughs.*) I am not on that fancy list. So, I do have like the freedom of

knowing exactly like that I write toilet jokes and fart jokes and dick jokes. And I'm never going to get, you know, a fancy award. But—so, like that doesn't bother me. But the like will—you know, will somebody return it to a library in Kansas and complain? Because that's happened before! (*Laughs.*)

**John Moe:** I had the experience—well, I've had the experience before of seeing my book at a Half Price Books. And then I'm like, well, yeah, but there's a lot of really wonderful books here at the Half Price Books.

(*Samantha giggles.*)

But then I had the experience of finding a signed copy of my book at a Half Price Books.

**Samantha Irby:** (*Gasps.*) Oh no, uh-uh. No!

[00:35:00]

Oh, that really stings!

(*They laugh.*)

**John Moe:** It was rough. I think there was a big giveaway that I did where I signed a ton of books. So, if it's a big giveaway, somebody's going to get one that they're not, you know, all that excited about. But it was a long personal conversation that went on for quite a while.

**Samantha Irby:** (*Laughs.*) Yeah. How did you—I mean, do you still think about that? 'Cause like that's the problem with my brain is years on I would still think about it.

**John Moe:** Yeah. No, I buffet it with other things. Well, I buffet it with, “Well, it's a thing that happens in the world. Lots of things happen in the world.” And then I sometimes will pull out, “Yeah, but remember what this other person said. Or yeah, I remember, you know, you were on *Fresh Air* and got to talk about this.” And you know, and then I'm like, “Well, if you—you can't really enjoy the good ones unless you take full stock of the bad ones.” And then that's when I start to really go insane. (*Chuckles.*)

**Samantha Irby:** Yeah. I recognize and relate. (*Laughs.*) Yeah, I think I always start with like a reasonable like, “You know, it's okay. There's—like, look at your sales. You've sold a lot of books. It's fine if one person didn't like it.” But that is never enough. There's like that greedy part of my brain that's like, “Oh my god, I can't wait to jump head-first into all the ways I can use this to prove that you are terrible and unworthy of love and kindness.”

**John Moe:** So, when you go through something like that in your head, in your very busy head, are you saying now, “Oh, that's OCD or that's depression, that's anxiety”? Do you kind of parse it out? Or do you just take it as a whole thing?

**Samantha Irby:** I just take it as a whole thing. Only because I'm not always sure if it's an anxious thing or an OCD thing. Like, my anxiety and the OCD, like they're so similar, right? Like, feeling hypervigilant—which is a thing I struggle with, right? Like, feeling like I need to be on alert in case something terrible happens. I have to have like my wits about me. But like the terrible thing that I'm trying to prevent from happening isn't like, you know, a shooting. It's like I'm trying to prevent someone from like, you know, yelling at me because I bumped into them with my grocery cart, right? It's like—and it's like is that the anxiety of human interaction or being scolded or looking foolish? Or is that my like OCD hypervigilance?

Unfortunately for me, in the moment I don't know it quick enough, whether—(*stammering*) like what's going—which mental illness it is. But then like later I can sort of like figure it out. Or sometimes I'll just like write it down and be like, “Dr. Phan, um, what—why did I do this?” You know, like if it's a thing that—if it's too hard to distinguish between like an anxious feeling and like a hypervigilant response, I just dump it in the doctor's lap. And I'm like, “You tell me. What's my problem? What's my problem? How can I prevent it from happening again?” And she's like—and she, every time, is like, “This doesn't work like that.” (*Laughs.*)

I'm like, oh, okay, girl. Okay.

**John Moe:** I'm sure the doctor's last name is actually Phan, but I like to think that you've created an image of a doctor who's really supportive of you. And so, you call her Dr. Fan.

**Samantha Irby:** (*Cackles.*) If—I mean, yes. Yes. Let's say that.

**John Moe:** And she's like, “No, my last name is Johnson. What are you talking about?”

**Samantha Irby:** Here's the kind of fucking sicko I am is that if somebody was like, “I love your work. Also, I'm an XYZ—therapist, provider, mental health, health person—and I've studied your work, and I would love to like tell you how to fix yourself.”

I would—I'd be like, “Yeah, how soon can we get on the phone?”

(*They laugh.*)

**John Moe:** From my house that I'd rather not leave.

**Samantha Irby:** “For free?! Oh, oh, 100%.” I'm like, “If you've read the books, you know I'm not like coming to your office.”

[00:40:00]

(*Laughs.*) “How soon can we FaceTime?”

**John Moe:** Do you think about your future in terms of “I’m going to put all these mental health issues behind me and just not”—you know, and be cured? Or is it more “I need to be on top of these things that I’m going to manage, that I’m going to, you know, know their moves and anticipate it and work around them”?

**Samantha Irby:** Ooh! This is a good question. I have never—well, I don’t do a lot of thinking about the future. That’s probably my depression talking. But—okay, now see here’s some more sick shit. I’m just telling you all my sicko stuff. Part of me is like let’s figure this out so I can harness it and put it in the work, right? Like, I don’t even know if it’s possible to be fixed. I think my goal in—because I do therapy with my psychiatrist now too. Like—I mean, I’ve told you that, but my goal in our like therapy sessions is really I am just trying to get to a place where it impacts my actual life less. I don’t need it to be fixed, because I don’t know if that’s real. And also, I fear that if it does get all the way fixed, like I won’t be able to write anymore or it will impact my writing in some way.

So, I’m like, I don’t want to get too well. (*Chuckling.*) I just want to like get well enough to keep making myself mentally ill by writing about myself and putting it out into the world. (*Laughs.*) So, I do—one thing that I have found myself saying to the psychiatrist a lot is “I just want the voices to be a little quieter”. And I don’t mean like I’m hearing voices, but like my negative self-talk, the like constant thrum of disapproving thoughts or scared thoughts or, you know, anxiety-inducing thoughts. Like, I need the volume on those turned down a little bit. And I think that, ultimately, is my goal is like how can I coexist or how can I manage this brain that is an unrelenting saboteur?

(*They chuckle.*)

**John Moe:** I mean, I’m really honored that we got to talk about OCD, because I didn’t know that that was part of your whole mental health makeup. I feel like I got a scoop here today.

**Samantha Irby:** Yeah, you’re the first real person, other than like my wife and my doctor that I’ve talked to about this. We are really—we’re having a moment.

**John Moe:** We’re having a moment here.

**Samantha Irby:** But you know, I mean, speaking of sick shit, I was just like, oh, it’s too bad I didn’t like get a handle on this in time enough to write about it for this book. But! That is not a healthy way to think about your brain. (*Laughing.*) So, I’m gonna write about it in the next book. But yeah, it’s—I mean, it’s so—it is very strange to have a new—like, to find a new thing out about yourself, right? I imagine maybe this is what it feels like when people do like Ancestry.com and they’re like, “My grandmother was an Irish queen!” You know, or whatever, where you’re like, “Oh, I’m going to look at my whole life differently!”

That—it’s that feeling but kind of bad. (*Laughs.*)

**John Moe:** You’ve got an OCD ancestor.

**Samantha Irby:** Yes! Yeah, yeah. I found out my ancestor couldn't stop negative self-talking.

**John Moe:** Just standing at Ellis Island thinking, “I should have walked off the boat a lot better than that.”

**Samantha Irby:** Yeah! Yeah. “Uh, is there still time for me to jump before I'm sworn in as a citizen or what?”

**John Moe:** “I really blew this.”

So, I mean, if you look at the OCD now—look at the D part, the disorder—has it interfered with your life? Like, would your life be smoother and easier to manage without it?

[00:45:00]

**Samantha Irby:** Yes! Yes. Yes. Yes. I—oh my god. Just in thinking about—okay, let's go back to the hand washing, like what people think OCD is. Or at least what I thought. I won't speak for people; I'll speak for myself. I thought it was just like obsessive like washing or whatever. So, that kind of thing is like called like a contamination fear or something like that. And I have several of those. I do not like to touch money—right?—or loose change. I can't do it. And I have a few things that are like that. And it's like if I—just that little piece, if I could like touch money like a normal person. (*Laughs.*) You know?

Okay. Here's an example of—I mean, I know that I like to hear people's like specific like what do you do that is crazy as hell? So, here's one for everyone. (*Laughs.*) I was driving on the tollway. I live in Michigan. I'm from Chicago, drive back and forth a lot. The tolls did not—now they have the thing where you can tap your card to it, which is like incredible. Like, you don't have to touch shit, which is like my dream. But so, I'm on the tollway, my friend Emily and I are going to Chicago. It wouldn't—the machine wouldn't take cards. The only cash I had was a 20. So, I put the 20 in. I don't even think I knew what the toll was. (*Chuckles.*) And then like \$17 worth of quarters comes crashing out of this machine.

**John Moe:** Oh no!

**Samantha Irby:** First of all, I don't want to touch road quarters, right? Like, there's that. And then there's just like the sheer volume of it all. I was driving a rental car that was like a—you know how like you get an SUV that's like—it's not an enormous one, but it's just like a little too high for an ATM or a toll machine?

(*John affirms.*)

So, like I'm in this car. Emily's crying laughing. She's like, “Should I get out and collect it?”

And I'm like, “No! We only have a few seconds until the arm comes crashing down.”

**John Moe:** It's exposure therapy.

**Samantha Irby:** Long story long—long story long, I drove away from my \$17 in quarters. *(Laughs.)* This is what I'm talking about.

**John Moe:** You were willing to pay \$17 to not touch coins. It was worth \$17.

**Samantha Irby:** Yeah. Yeah, yeah. Well, it was the coin touching, and the like is the person behind me going to get mad 'cause I'm taking so long at this machine? Like, you know, the 20 took forever to like get in, 'cause it wasn't smooth enough. So, you know, my invisible clock, my invisible internal clock is like, "Uh-oh, two more seconds and that person is going to ram you from behind, and then you're going to have a problem." Like—

**John Moe:** They're ramming you from behind again! This is the whole thing!

**Samantha Irby:** Or the horn. Maybe like what we're really discovering is I just don't like to be snuck up on from the back.

*(They laugh.)*

But like—but it also would be devastating to me if someone like laid on the horn and like everyone in the toll plazas like, "Look at this fucking dumbass!" So, I just drove away. I paid a \$20 toll. The state of Indiana, you're welcome for my contribution.

**John Moe:** Well, if those quarters were still in the machine, then the guy behind you could get \$17 worth of quarters and like put them in a sock and then run you off the road and beat you to death with those quarters.

**Samantha Irby:** *(Cackles.)* But he'd have to slow down. He'd have to stop long enough to get all the quarters into his car. And in that time, I could drive away.

**John Moe:** You'd make the escape.

**Samantha Irby:** See! That is why I spent all this time thinking this psychotic bullshit, so that then I have like—you know, I have a fantasy scenario of getting like, you know, curb stomped, but I also have the like this is how I would get away.

**John Moe:** Oh, right, right. Yeah. Because if the imagination is already pumping, you can harness it to do something else.

**Samantha Irby:** Yes. Yeah.

[00:50:00]

I can like divert it down this other path of like figuring out what we're going to do when that person jumps out of their BMW to stab me on the shoulder.

**John Moe:** Was this around Elkhart, Indiana or closer to Gary?

**Samantha Irby:** Not as close to Gary. It's like the—it was the first—coming from Michigan, the first big toll. So, it's like after Lake Station, Indiana. I think it's like right around there. And yeah, yeah, the state of Indiana is welcome for my stunning contribution.

**John Moe:** No wonder those roads are so smooth.

**Samantha Irby:** Or whoever got laundry money for the week, that person is welcome from me.

**John Moe:** “I’m going to the video arcade!” Yeah.

*(They laugh.)*

The book is *Quietly Hostile*. The author is Samantha Irby. It's a wonderful book, very funny and an emotional ride with lots of jokes. Sam Irby, thank you so much for being with us.

**Samantha Irby:** Thank you for having me. This was great. This was a great therapy session. Please send me your bill.

**John Moe:** Please don't pay it in quarters when I do.

**Samantha Irby:** *(Cackling.)* What? I mean, okay. What if I like sent you a box of quarters? I'll do anything for a bit. So, be careful. Be careful.

**Music:** “Building Wings” by Rhett Miller, an up-tempo acoustic guitar song. The music continues quietly under the dialogue.

**John Moe:** Samantha Irby. Her new book, *Quietly Hostile*, comes out next week.

Next time on *Depresh Mode*, author Cheryl Strayed is with us, and so are a couple of her voices.

**Cheryl Strayed:** The anxiety voice is my inner terrible someone who says, “You're stupid, you're bad, you said the wrong thing.” So, I know, okay, that voice is there, but it's not the voice I should trust or listen to. The other voice in opposition to my ITS is that wise inner sage. Trust the body. When the body feels like things are bad or wrong or scary, that's the wonderful way to say like, “Okay, maybe don't listen to that voice. The voice of the truth makes you feel strong and courageous even when you're afraid.”

**John Moe:** If people donate to our show, we can continue to have a show. If they don't donate, the whole show ends. We want the show to continue. We think that we're doing good work. We think that it's making a difference in the world. If you agree, if you want this program to continue, we would love to hear from you in the form of a donation. Just go to [MaximumFun.org/join](http://MaximumFun.org/join). Find a level that works for you and select *Depresh Mode* from the list



of programs. Be sure to hit subscribe, give us five stars, write rave reviews, all of that helps get the show out into the world where it can help people.

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Hi, credits listeners! Sometimes when my dog, Sally, goes out in the backyard, she does this one long sustained bark. Like, awooooough! I've looked, and she's never barking at anything in particular. She just likes to shout once in a while. Good girl, Sally.

*Depresh Mode* is made possible by your contributions. The show is produced by Gabe Mara. Our senior producer is Kevin Ferguson, and we got booking help from Mara Davis. Rhett Miller wrote and performed our theme song, “Building Wings”.

**Music:** “Building Wings” by Rhett Miller.

*I'm always falling off of cliffs, now*

*Building wings on the way down*

*I am figuring things out*

*Building wings, building wings, building wings*

*No one knows the reason*

*Maybe there's no reason*

*I just keep believing*

*No one knows the answer*

*Maybe there's no answer*

*I just keep on dancing*

**Cory Funk:** My name is Cory Funk from St. Paul, Minnesota, and you are worthwhile.

**John Moe:** *Depresh Mode* is a production of Maximum Fun and Poputchik. I'm John Moe. Bye now!

[00:55:00]

*(Music fades out.)*

**Transition:** Cheerful ukulele chord.

**Speaker 1:** [MaximumFun.org](https://MaximumFun.org).

**Speaker 2:** Comedy and culture.

**Speaker 3:** Artist owned—

**Speaker 4:** —audience supported.