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**John Moe:** It's *Depresh Mode*. I'm John Moe. I'm glad you're here.

**Transition:** Spirited acoustic guitar.

**John Moe:** We had Paul Gilmartin on the show a few weeks ago—TV and podcast host, comedian. And he talked among other things about how important his human connections were to his recovery, how important it is on an ongoing basis to check in with his people and just, you know, sometimes talk about how everybody's doing in a deep philosophical, emotional, mental health-ical kind of way. And other times, just to talk sports or books or movies or whatever it is—just to kind of check in with your folks.

And I think, you know, I was thinking we should do that more. Let's check in with our friends. And we have more of our friends with us today. Jenny Lawson is the author of several bestselling books, *Furiously Happy*, *Let's Pretend This Never Happened*, *Broken*, and *You Are Here*.

Jenny Lawson, welcome back to *Depresh Mode*.

**Jenny Lawson:** Yay! I'm so glad to be here.

**Transition:** Spirited acoustic guitar.

**John Moe:** I should say you're also, according to Amazon.com, the author of *A+ Certificate in Computer Maintenance and Installation*, *OCR National Level 2 in IT*, and *A2 Level GCE Applied ICT for Edexcel*. But I think those might be by a different Jenny Lawson.

**Jenny Lawson:** Yeah, I think so. It also says under Goodreads that I am the author of *Sesame Chicken*, and it's not a book called *Sesame Chicken*. It is literally a picture of sesame chicken! And then there's—

**John Moe:** Wow, I didn't know you're responsible for that. I love sesame chicken.

**Jenny Lawson:** I have no idea. Yeah. I don't even know how my oven works. But apparently I'm the author of sesame chicken and also some adult toys as well. So, that was a surprise. Who knew?

**John Moe:** (*Chuckles.*) Your portfolio just keeps expanding. In the spirit of checking in and, you know, as near as you can describe it to us, how are you doing today?

**Jenny Lawson:** I am—on a scale from one to ten, probably a six and a half? Seven? I'm in a little bit of a valley right now. A little depression valley. I have been for probably about four days. So, not long enough to worry that it's, you know—that it's going to stick around forever, but long enough to feel like it's been forever. 'Cause you know, whenever you're in a depression, it always feels like it's always been this way, and it will always be this way.

**John Moe:** Yes. what does that look like for you when you're in—you know, it doesn't sound like all that deep of a valley, but a valley—how does that present?

**Jenny Lawson:** It looks like me being very, very unfocused, very little energy. It's a lot of paralysis and then frustration at the paralysis. For me, my depression doesn't look like sadness. It just looks like numbness and just sort of—it's just like I'm not entirely here. And so, I'm not—I mean, I'm fine, and I know it'll pass, but it is so frustrating when you're in those days and you're thinking, “I really—like, I have so much to do! And I have these deadlines, and I have things I need to write. And I have, you know, all of these things that I want to accomplish.” But I just have such a hard time starting them when I'm in the middle of a depression.

And then it gets kind of worse, because then I'm like, “Oh my gosh, I'm even further behind.” And then I get even more panicked, and then my anxiety kicks in, and then it becomes this cyclical sort of thing. And I have to remind myself that usually what happens is this will happen for, you know, a week or so. And then all of a sudden it'll lift, and I'll write, and I will think, “Oh my gosh, this is what it was like to be alive. I'm back.” And then I would look at all the things that I panicked about and go, “That was not that big of a deal.” Like, it's okay. It is okay if I'm not going at 100%. Like, if all I have to offer is 70% and I gave 70%, I gave a 100%.

**John Moe:** Yeah. You gave all that you were capable of giving. You mentioned paralysis. Is that paralysis in terms of like accomplishing tasks?

**Jenny Lawson:** Yes. Yeah, it's paralysis in all of the things that I want to do.

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So, instead I end up laying on the couch and either sleeping—I sleep a lot when I'm depressed. And it's not good sleep. It's not the sleep of like, “Oh, what a great nap that was!” It's the sleep of maybe if I close my eyes and don't exist for a little bit, when I come back, it'll be better. And then I come back, and I'm like, “This feels worse! Now I have a headache, and I'm dehydrated, and I'm more tired!”

And my husband is looking at me and going, “Don't you have work to do? Don't you have contracts? What's going on?”

And I think some of that also is because I have ADHD. I think some of that—you know, it's hard to tell. Because when you have that—you know, the depression and anxiety and, you know, ADHD and the—and they can—in some ways they can work together in such an amazing way. Because you can see things in such a different way with new eyes. It gives you so much more, I think, compassion and empathy. And there are so many advantages to having like a touched mind is what I always like to call it.

**John Moe:** Oh, I like that.

**Jenny Lawson:** But when you're in that, it's so hard not to listen to those lies. The depression says, you know, "This is the way it's always going to be." And yeah, it's just—it's hard to get out of it.

**John Moe:** And I know you deal with depression, anxiety, ADHD, and OCD as well. Is depression kind of the captain of that wrecking crew?

**Jenny Lawson:** It is in that it is the thing that can stop me more than anything else. Depression is like the worst flu. You know, when it comes to anxiety, it's like having a terrible cold where, you know, I just think, "This sucks. This is—I want to go hide." But I can make myself sort of push through it most of the time. But when it comes to depression, it sort of feels like—you know, when you get that level of sick where you're just like, "I can't even think about how sick I am. I'm just sick."

*(John affirms.)*

So, it does feel like it's sort of in control. Although I will say, ADHD is probably my most common foe, because it never goes away. Whereas with depression, you know, I'll have—it'll go away, and I'll be like, "Oh my gosh, I'm doing great! This is fantastic. Depression, what?" But ADHD is always there. But you know, I started doing ketamine treatments for my depression. And it has really helped! This like weeklong depression has been a little unusual for me.

**John Moe:** When did you do the ketamine treatments? When did that start?

**Jenny Lawson:** So, I've done them before. I did one set—I want to say it's probably been maybe a year ago. And they're for treatment-resistant depression, which is what I have. So, if you've gone through a ton of different medications and treatments, it's—you know, it was something that my psychiatrist was like, "Alright, well, next step, why don't you try this?" And I thought might as well! Because I've heard really good things about, you know, psilocybin and this and that. And that's not available, but you can get, you know, licensed, clinical, ketamine treatments here in Texas.

And so, I did them, and I found it was—I did not enjoy them, but I did find it was really helpful. And it lasted for about nine months and then, I did another session, and now I'm doing just like boosters so that maybe it won't go away. So, now every six weeks, I go in, and get a whole bunch of shots and fall into a K hole. And you know, I have so many friends who are like, "That's amazing! My goodness! Remember, you know, the special K that you'd take at raves?"

And I'm like, yeah, it's not that, number one. *(Chuckling.)* And, and number two, it's really scary! And I think there's a lot of people who take it and really enjoy it or who find it very relaxing. It is sort of a—what is it called? It's an anesthetic, right? So, I could understand that, but I think because my anxiety is so high, I always go to a place where I'm like, okay, the world just exploded.

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The outside world doesn't exist anymore. We've all become chemicals. I have destroyed the world by coming into this plane of existence. It's funny, because when you—I think there's probably different ways that people do. There's different types, and there's some where you get the treatment, and as you're doing it, they kind of walk you through like, you know, what are you seeing? What are you feeling? You can get the—there's therapeutic.

And that's really helpful I think for PTSD. A lot of veterans take it a lot. Like, that can be really helpful. But for me, because mine is just chemical and not based on situation, mine is just—they're like, okay, we're going to give you some shots. Sit here in this room. Hang out and—you know, they'll check on you every once in a while.

But I see people who are leaving. And some people who are leaving they just—they walk out. They're there for, you know, an hour, and they walk out, and they're like, “Oh, everything's, great. See you tomorrow or whatever.” And then there are people like me, who—I'm literally—it looks like a Conga line, because I'm holding on to the nurse in front of me to her shoulders. And there's a nurse behind me, and she's holding onto my waist. And I'm just like walking soooo slowly out to my car. Where my husband is driving, by the way; I'm not driving myself.

**John Moe:** Good, I was gonna ask.

**Jenny Lawson:** And I was the other day when I was there, I was like, “This is so embarrassing, because I see other people leave and they seem fine.”

And she said, “Well, what really happens is you want to leave as soon as it wears off. So, 45 minutes in, you're like let's go. But some people are like what if I just sit here for a couple of hours?”

So, that made me feel better. I was like, “Okay. Okay, good.”

**John Moe:** And what happens in those 45 minutes after you get the injection? Like, what's going on in your mind?

**Jenny Lawson:** So, first they come in, and they give you the first injection. And then they typically give you a lot of medication that keeps you from being sick, because there's this nausea that's associated with it. So, you get that, and then about 15 minutes later—and during those first 15 minutes, I sort of... the world gets a little fuzzy, and I sort of—everything kind of moves into double vision to the point where I can't really see, but I still kind of know what's going on. I'm still sort of there. Then they come in, and they give you the second shot.

And the second shot, I always, I'm like—and they have like all of your medical equipment on, so they're, you know, making sure your heart rate's good, making sure, you know, all your stuff. And I always try to be like, you know, I'm completely sober and not high at all! And they're not believing it. And when they give me my second one, for me, it literally—I lose all sight whatsoever. And it is a... it is this sort of dark place that I go to where it's just—I lose track of who I am as a person. And it feels like my mind has exploded and then comes back together. Which is interesting, because technically that's what it's doing. It's rebuilding neural

pathways. And I think for a lot of people, they would really enjoy that and be like, “This is so fascinating! Where am I going to go today?” But I think because my anxiety is so high, my immediate thing is: I'll never come back. You know, this is it. This is the new reality. And this is where I live now. Even though when it happens, I tell myself, “Wait, I thought that last time, and I came out.” But then ketamine me says, “No, no, no. That other place was an illusion. You've always lived here. You've always lived in this microscopic—you're an atom out in space, alone.

**Transition:** Spirited acoustic guitar.

**John Moe:** Back with more of Jenny Lawson and her mental health and ketamine journeys in just a moment.

**Transition:** Gentle acoustic guitar.

**John Moe:** That's Jenny Lawson, and man, Jenny Lawson just has such a way of putting things that is insightful and entertaining and often hilarious and very moving. And you turn to *Depresh Mode* to hear these stories that are insightful about mental health but also personal and relatable. It's what we do here on *Depresh Mode*. I'm here with *Depresh Mode* Senior Producer, Kevin Ferguson. And Kevin, we're in the 2024 MaxFunDrive. What's it been like for you working on the show?

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**Kevin Ferguson:** I gotta say that I am very proud to be working on a show like *Depresh Mode*. I'm proud of all of our shows, but like I am in particular proud of *Depresh Mode*, because I really like what I hear every week. I hear like what you mentioned, John—like, a compassionate but also informed conversation about mental health. I like the fact that, you know, there's a lot of podcasts—and god bless these celebrities. I love these celebrities. There's a lot of podcasts about these celebrities where they just talk about self-care in the most abstract and like, frankly, empty sense of the word.

And that's not because these celebrities are empty people most of the time. It's just that it's a very surface level grazing of the topic. But on *Depresh Mode*, we talk about it in a way that is meaningful to people's lives. And I really like that. And I really like that it's done with authority and with kindness. Yeah, I could go on, but I'm very sincerely a fan.

**John Moe:** I do like the MaxFunDrive, because it is kind of a celebration of the community that we've built together. With us, the people making the show, with the people listening to the show, with the guests that we've had on, we're all pitching in to make something good.

**Kevin Ferguson:** More than 70% of our revenue comes from the support of listeners. And most of that money goes directly to—we get a little bit of that money, but most of that money goes directly to the people making the show. That is John Moe, the host, Raghu Manavalan and Gabe Marra, who produce the show. And you can be one of those people supporting the show. You just need to go to [MaximumFun.org/join](https://MaximumFun.org/join).

**John Moe:** Please go there right now. Don't put that off. Do it right now. Again, [MaximumFun.org/join](https://MaximumFun.org/join). And “join” is for joining Maximum Fun and *Depresh Mode* and supporting our shows and our efforts. And it's important to know, because yes, we've worked—Kevin and I have both worked in large public radio organizations, big media—I don't want to say conglomerates, but very large organizations. And it's not like that here.

**Kevin Ferguson:** Yeah. Organizations that have a receptionist (*chuckling*) or like staff engineers or something like that. That's not Maximum Fun.

**John Moe:** That's not who we are. And unlike a lot of big media organizations, we don't get mandates on what to put in the show from some executive in a tower somewhere who tells us what we need to do to maximize profitability. We make shows that will matter to you. It's much simpler—that will help you on your journey. We make stuff that makes you better informed about mental health, better understood, and less alone. We think that is worth supporting.

**Kevin Ferguson:** I wouldn't say no to a tower. But in the meantime, (*chuckles*) seriously, you can join for as little as \$5 a month. You can join for \$20 a month, \$10 a month. You determine how much you give. The important thing is that you join! At \$5 a month, you'll get access to the entire Maximum Fun bonus content library. 600 hours of shows available only to MaxFun members. This year, we did on *Depresh Mode* an Ask Me Anything, where our listeners asked Jon questions, and he has to answer them.

**John Moe:** Yes. It's a really interesting talk about mental health, about the show, about me. We get behind the scenes. And again, you get all the bonus content from all the MaxFun shows, not just *Depresh Mode*! You know, *Judge John Hodgman*, *Bullseye* and any—pick a show. You've got sometimes years and years' worth of bonus content available. But only if you're a member, only if you join.

You know, I started this show about three years ago. And I was fortunate at the time to have a choice of partners to make a mental health podcast with, and I chose MaxFun, because they give their artists freedom to make what we want. I wanted to listen to the audience, and I wanted to listen to the guests and make something good. And I didn't want to listen to the accountants, and I didn't want to listen to—you know, to people who weren't directly involved in making shows. I knew that it's a membership-driven model, powered mostly by listeners. That's you. That's how this whole thing gets done. And so, now is the time that we need to hear from you.

**Kevin Ferguson:** If you join at the \$10 level, or if you upgrade to \$20 a month from the existing \$10 membership, not only do you get the bonus content, you get the brand-new *Depresh Mode* enamel pin. It's bright orange. It says, “I'm glad you're here,” just like John says at the top of every episode.

**John Moe:** Yep, that little phrase has come to mean a lot to people. And now you can display it to the world to support the show and to put some positivity out into the places that you go walk around wearing the pin.

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Imagine someone seeing that pin on you that says, “I’m glad you’re here.” Guess what? You just made someone’s day. If you’re already a member, thank you. If that’s the case, you can go to [MaximumFun.org/join](https://MaximumFun.org/join), upgrade your membership to a new level, and get some new thank you gifts that you’ve maybe never seen before, or just boost your membership by a few extra dollars a month. You could do it all at [MaximumFun.org/join](https://MaximumFun.org/join).

**Kevin Ferguson:** I’m really glad you mentioned boosting, John. Because you know, you’re a listener to *Depresh Mode*—you, listener. Maybe this year you added one or two or three more Maximum Fun shows to your listening queue. If you did, we are so grateful you did that. Show us your support by boosting your membership a little bit more to make sure that those artists can all enjoy in the wealth. We’re going to be getting back into the show, but as you listen right now, don’t wait. Go to [MaximumFun.org/join](https://MaximumFun.org/join). Find a level that works for you. We have more gifts—gifts that we didn’t mention, amazing ones at all sorts of levels. It’s fun to just shop around. Just take a look. [MaximumFun.org/join](https://MaximumFun.org/join). And thanks.

**John Moe:** More now with the author Jenny Lawson. When last we left her, she was describing being in a clinical ketamine treatment, feeling like an atom drifting in space alone and wondering if this condition would be permanent.

**Jenny Lawson:** I actually—I recently talked to my therapist about it, and she was like, “Why don’t you take a little bit of Xanax with it?” And some studies have shown that Xanax can hinder how that works.

And so I was like, “Well, I’m not—I’m trying to do it exactly the way it is.”

And she was like, “Yeah, but it’s not helpful to you if you are terrified every time that you go in.”

And so, I talked to the clinicians there and the doctors, and they were like, “Oh no, she’s totally right. Absolutely. You can take a little Xanax to take the edge off. That’s okay.” Which just reminds me it’s okay to like talk to your doctor and say—it’s not admitting something bad if you say, “This is scary, or, you know, I’m not having the same experience that other people are having who are really loving it.” Like, it’s okay to talk. You actually should talk to your doctor! Right? (*Chuckles.*)

**John Moe:** Yeah, they want to know that. So, then you get in the car with your husband, and you go home, and does the world feel the same then as when you came in? Or is it a different place from then on?

**Jenny Lawson:** It is a very different place. When I get into the car, typically I’m still very out of it. Not like wisdom teeth removed out of it, but just very quiet. I usually—I can’t eat until after I’ve had the ketamine, because I’ve had reactions before where I got sick, and there is nothing worse than throwing up while you’re incredibly high. So, now I’m like, okay. I don’t eat at all that day. So, whenever we leave, I’m always staaarving. So, we immediately go and pick up something. And I come back, and I eat something. And he carries me over to the couch, and I just lay down and typically go to sleep until the next day. It just really knocks me out.

There are some people—I've heard of some people who like go back to work and are able to, you know, get things done. But for me, I'm like, “Okay, well, that's my whole day.” If I had ketamine, I'm like nothing's happening today. Nothing. It's only good stuff. And then what I have noticed is the next day, I typically will feel more like fuzzy but clear in that some of the depression is cleared away. And typically, that's the best time that I can restart all of the things that I should have been doing anyway that I stopped doing, because depression sort of said, “You don't have the energy to take walks. You don't have the energy to—maybe you should eat healthy instead of just eating fried shit constantly. Maybe less cheese and wine.”

It always feels like it's a new, fresh start to do the things that are probably helpful but are really hard to do when you're in the middle of a depression.

**John Moe:** Yeah. What takeout do you get on your way home?

**Jenny Lawson:** I usually get Wendy's. No, is it called Wendy's?

**John Moe:** Wendy's is a place.

**Jenny Lawson:** Yes. Is Wendy's the one that has the whole potatoes?

**John Moe:** I think so. Yeah.

**Jenny Lawson:** Yeah, that's it. I only get it when—that's the reason why I don't know what it is, because I only get it when I'm high, because it's right next to it.

*(John chuckles.)*

And because I can't—I have a really hard time—

**John Moe:** Or did you just imagine those potatoes, and they're not real at all? *(Chuckles.)*

**Jenny Lawson:** Oh my god, yeah. I'm like, “I just need—”

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And also, you get like a whole just baked potato. And it's so nice, because I can like hold it in my hands, and it's a little hand warmer, and I forget that it's there. And then I'm like, “*(Gasps.)* It's also something I can eat! Oh, this is so nice.”

**John Moe:** That's nice. So, you go home, you—and I've been wanting to have this discussion about ketamine for a while with someone who's been going through it. So, you know, I apologize for fixating on it, but I'm really fascinated. Do you wake up the next day feeling anything, or are you back to a square one, or where are you?

**Jenny Lawson:** Yeah, the next day there's a little bit of fuzziness. I would say similar to if you have like a low hangover, just a little bit of like, mm, I'm not maybe 100% myself, but



yeah, I'm coming back out of it. It doesn't really last very long. Usually, as a matter of fact, if I—I tend to take it later in the evening, because that's when my husband can get off work and take me. But I think if I was—a lot of people take it in the morning, and then by the evening they're fine. But because I take mine so late, that might sort of affect the way that it works.

But one of the things that I found is really helpful is—so, I read before. Because you know, if you have anxiety, one of the things that you fixate on is if I know all the details beforehand, I'm less anxious. So, I did so much research and so much of like what kind of music should I listen to? What should I do with this? What should I—? And there was great information out there. However, it was not the right information for me. And I think that is so important is recognizing that it's okay if things that worked for other people don't work for you. So, for example, they say don't listen to music that has lyrics. Because it—you know, instead you want to listen to, you know, calming, sort of hypnotic music.

**John Moe:** Classical or—yeah.

**Jenny Lawson:** Exactly. So, what I have found is because I always felt like the world does not exist, if I instead listen to Taylor Swift or Beyonce, I can still hear music. And so, I'm like, okay, well, the world can't have completely gone away, because Beyonce just told me, “This ain't Texas, ain't no hold ‘em.” And so, obviously the world still exists. And then the other thing was you're supposed to do it in a very dark area. And again, for me, that really put me into like a dark sort of place where I would imagine that I was in this cave or I was in, you know, trapped, like literally inside my mind. And so now when I go in, I'm like, “Can we open all the windows?”

And they're like, “Oh, you're that person. Yes, we can.” And so, they'll open them all up. And it doesn't make a lot of sense, because I lose my vision. But just knowing that there is sunlight makes a difference. So, you know, it's just all these little things that you find. I mean, it's just like, you know, if you live with depression long enough, you find these hacks and these lessons and these tips and tools. And that's sort of what I'm finding for myself with ketamine of, you know, how does it actually work, and how long will it work? Because, you know, sometimes it'll work for a long time for some people, and then stop. Just like, you know, with antidepressants or with any other kind of treatment. So, I'm always like looking out and going, okay, what's around the corner? What kind of research is being done? Because it's important.

**John Moe:** And I know a few years ago you went through TMS treatment, transcranial magnetic stimulation. As Neal Brennan calls it, the shitty woodpecker that knocks on your head for a while.

**Jenny Lawson:** Exactly.

**John Moe:** How has ketamine held up as a long-term solution compared to your experience with TMS?

**Jenny Lawson:** It is almost exactly the same. For both of them, they both pull me about 75% out of a deep depression. They both tend to last about nine months. They both require a lot of follow up. And I am a very big fan of TMS. But I'm leaning more toward ketamine now,

because it's faster, and it's a little less expensive. Neither one of them are covered by insurance. And so, it can add up, but ketamine is—

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I mean, I think it's like \$300 a session. And so if I'm just doing one every six weeks, it's not that bad. And it's also, you know—with TMS, you're going in every day for an hour, for 30/35 days straight. Whereas with ketamine, when you have like a full session, you're basically doing about six hour-long sessions over a two-week period of time. So, it is a little bit faster. I enjoyed TMS better, because I could just sit there and embroider and, you know, listen to music over the sound of the terrible woodpecker. And you know, you very quickly get used to it, to the point where I would almost—it was so sort of hypnotic that I would almost start to fall asleep, and they'd have to wake me up.

There's a nurse in the room while you're having your TMS, and she would always be like, “Do not fall asleep! If you fall asleep, your brain works differently, and it's not gonna—”

And I'm like, okay, yeah, nope. Still awake, still awake!

**John Moe:** (*Chuckles.*) You could sleep through that loud magnetic pecking, huh?

**Jenny Lawson:** You know, it's very weird. You wouldn't think so, but eventually I think, I almost think it's like an escape, you know? Where it's just like, okay, well, this is really annoying. Maybe I'll just close my eyes for a little bit. And because it's so rhythmic—

Do you know—? Maybe this is just me, but like when I was a kid, I used to hit my head against the wall like just on a very rhythmic sort of—this sounds crazy now that I say it out loud! I think I was giving myself a concussion! But when I would get really anxious, I would sit on my bed, and I would just kind of hit my forehead against the wall, and it felt very comforting for some reason? And so, maybe there's some of that. I should probably talk to my therapist about that! I was literally beating my head against the wall.

**John Moe:** Against the wall. How long—how old were you when you did that, and how long did it last?

**Jenny Lawson:** Oh my gosh. I mean, I would say at least from age five to ten?

**John Moe:** Okay. Huh. I wonder what you were trying to get to or trying to make happen or go away.

**Jenny Lawson:** I mean, to me, it was just very meditative. There was—you know, it was this constant pattern. And as I was doing it, I could get away from my brain and instead just focus on the sound. And I mean, I guess in a way that's probably what meditation is like, but because I have ADHD, I can't concentrate on nothingness. And so, maybe that was my version of meditation? Because I was like, hey, focus! Hit your head against the wall. Alright. Yeah. We're back here again. Okay. Alright.

**John Moe:** Were you already experiencing depression at that age?

**Jenny Lawson:** No, but a lot of anxiety. Yeah. The depression didn't start until I was—I mean, my teens. And wasn't recognized until, oh gosh, probably late 20s?

**John Moe:** Okay. Yeah. Because you just thought that's the way the world was?

**Jenny Lawson:** Yeah. Yeah, I did. I did. And the same with anxiety. I mean, it wasn't until—I didn't get treatment for my anxiety until I was in my 30s. When I—after I had my kiddo, Haley, I had such a hard time enjoying being a mom, even though that's so what I wanted. I mean, that was—like, I worked so hard to get pregnant and stay pregnant. And I had, you know, this disease that I had to take 700 shots in the stomach to stay pregnant. Like, I really wanted to be a mom. And then when I was, I found I wasn't able to appreciate all the things that were happening. Because I was so afraid that something terrible was going to happen. And I had this dread and this inability to appreciate life.

And so, that's when I was like, okay, you know what? I don't think this is just affecting me anymore. I think this is affecting my ability to be a mom. And so, that's what made me go, “Maybe I actually do need some help?” And I was right! (*Chuckles.*)

**John Moe:** Turns out. Yeah. Yeah. Well, maybe if you couldn't value yourself to get that help earlier, you could value it for your kid.

**Jenny Lawson:** That is exactly right. That's why I always say they saved me, because there's so many times when I've thought—you know, especially with depression, because it sort of tells you that you're worthless, you're not worth getting help, that it's a waste of money, or it's a waste of time, or—you know.

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You should just be able to do this by yourself, because you have a happy life! And why are you being so awful and not appreciating it? And then, for me becoming a mom, I was able to see that, first off, I'm responsible for somebody else. But secondly, that this is in my family, and it goes way back. And chances are that, you know, my kid was going to deal with this. So, it was better that I went out there into the wilds and figured out, well, what works and what doesn't work? Because I knew I was going to have to help them.

**Transition:** Spirited acoustic guitar.

**John Moe:** More with Jenny Lawson in just a moment.

**Transition:** Gentle acoustic guitar.

**John Moe:** I honestly could talk to Jenny Lawson about mental health all day long. She's so funny and genuine, and I love what she has to say about why she learns as much about her mental health as she does. It's because she wants to help other people. And that's what we're

about here too, on *Depresh Mode*. Mental health matters. Knowing about it and knowing about yourself matters. It's crucial to making your way in the world. That's why we make the show. And it's not just me. You usually only hear from me, but there are several people involved with getting the show out into the world. I'm here with one of them—Senior Producer, Kevin Ferguson. Hey, Kevin.

**Kevin Ferguson:** I'm here to share a website URL. Maybe you've heard this before. It is the Maximum Fun Drive, of course. [MaximumFun.org/join](https://MaximumFun.org/join). You can support *Depresh Mode*. You can support Maximum Fun, the worker-owned independent podcast company that distributes and produces *Depresh Mode*. You can go there to join Maximum Fun for as little as \$5 a month. That's one latte a month, as they say in public radio and public media. That is maybe a little bit less for a latte. I like a Cortado, so those are still running around five. Drip coffee's maybe around 4.50 in LA these days. That's not why we're here. We're here to talk about the Maximum Fun Drive.

At \$5 a month, you get access to an enormous vault of Maximum Fun bonus content—over 600 hours of it across all of our shows, including *Depresh Mode*, including the *Depresh Mode* “Ask John Anything” episode, which we made fresh this year.

**John Moe:** Yeah, this was a lot of fun. This was me answering questions instead of asking them. And the people asking them were our listeners. So, we got interviewers right there on the line asking me questions. Tough questions, some of them. I love the idea of this bonus episode, because I'm literally answering to the listeners! As I do, in a sense, all the time on this show. Those of us who make the show answer to you, because you are sponsoring the show. You are helping produce this program. You make the show happen with your ears and your contributions. And that episode is available only to MaxFun members, oonly MaxFun members get to hear it. And you can be one of them for just five bucks a month.

**Kevin Ferguson:** For \$10 a month, that'll get you the bonus content that we just talked about and a brand-new enamel pin that says, “I'm glad you're here.” I just want to talk about this pin for a second, because there is nothing like finding someone else in the world that cares as deeply about a piece of pop culture as you care about it. And these pins are a great way to do it, and I really like the idea of one that says, “I'm glad you're here”, because that makes me feel so welcome when I'm listening to *Depresh Mode*. If you're already an existing \$10 a month member, it's yours when you upgrade to \$20.

You can see the pin and learn more about the bonus content and all of our other thank you gifts at [MaximumFun.org/join](https://MaximumFun.org/join).

**John Moe:** And there's a lot of reasons that you can give to *Depresh Mode*. You can give because maybe *Depresh Mode* has made a difference in your life. We hear that from a lot of people very often. You can give because it's absolutely made a difference in other people's lives. You can give because you want to live in a society where people are more educated and more kind when it comes to mental health.

**Kevin Ferguson:** When you give to Maximum Fun, the majority of your money—and by the majority, I don't mean 51%, I mean the vast majority of your money goes directly to the artist making the show or shows that you choose to support. Sometimes it goes to Maximum Fun

itself, so they can make the network run, run the podcast operations, the business expenses, the charitable gifts. And I should also point out you're supporting an employee-owned company in Maximum Fun. We are the first podcast network I'm aware of to go employee-owned.

[00:40:00]

That means there is no giant mega-corporation calling the shots, no venture capital money that we're going to have to, you know, turn around and figure out how we're going to pay back. We are owned by the people who make these podcasts you enjoy. I think that's a model worth supporting. I hope you'll agree too.

**John Moe:** I wanna read what someone on our Facebook group said. I reached out to our Preshies group on Facebook, because I said, “You know, I've been pitching hard. I've been doing this for a lot of years. I need some fresh ideas. I need some fresh takes on this.”

And somebody wrote in and said, “I get enjoyment, great comfort, and better understanding from your and many of the shows on MaxFun. And I'm happy to support the network and the content creators, just like I'm happy to support my local bookstore or favorite restaurants. If I want nice things in life, I have to support them with my money directly if I can, or my vocal support if I can. Five bucks is a pretty small ask in my life. My parents and grandparents raised me with *Mr. Rogers* and *Sesame Street* and supported the public media that brought those things to us. My podcasts that I listen to are no less important to me.”

**Kevin Ferguson:** Yeah. Please don't think that someone else will support *Depresh Mode*, so you don't have to. We need to hear from you. Yes, you, the listener listening to this right now during the break. It is extremely easy to give. You don't have to spend more than you want. And it means that you are keeping the good work and means that you are sustaining the good work that we're doing in the world.

**John Moe:** *Depresh Mode* is about promoting open, honest conversations about mental health so that people can be better informed and feel less alone. It's time for stigma around mental health to end, and we need your help to do that.

**Kevin Ferguson:** Go to [MaximumFun.org](https://MaximumFun.org). At \$20 bucks a month, we have a very cool combination game board and bandana. I have this bandana at my home. It is beautiful. I put it on my cat. He was okay with it.

(They chuckle.)

**John Moe:** Perfect, and while you're there, I have to mention the Maximum Bag. It's one of my favorites. It's at the \$35 a month level, and it is the biggest goddamn bag you've ever seen. You could take all the tote bags from public radio and put them all in the Maximum Bag and have a bag full of bags if you want. This thing is the size of a small car. It's amazingly big.

**Kevin Ferguson:** Several Maximum Fun employees fit in this bag.

*(John chuckles.)*

We have the photos to prove it. It is really incredible. And yeah, I just want you to take a look at these gifts. Take a look around, browse. It is fun. It is very easy to do. Go to [MaximumFun.org/join](https://MaximumFun.org/join), and thank you so much. Let's get back into the show.

**John Moe:** We're back with Jenny Lawson. We've been talking about her learning more about her mental health, so she could help her child if they inherited mental health issues.

Yeah, five generations, I read, it goes back in your family.

*(Jenny confirms.)*

That's a lot. I don't even think I could trace five generations of my family existing. That's great knowledge that you have that.

**Jenny Lawson:** You know what? I bet I could do it for you. And that goes back to OCD.

*(John laughs.)*

Because I—that is my thing, is these puzzles. The puzzle of genealogy is so fascinating to me, of like—oh, okay, and then I found this person, and then I found this person, and then you go to this library, and then you go to this thing, and then you find this family tree, and then you—! And it's so fascinating.

And so, my husband comes from like a really nice background. Like, his family came over on the Mayflower. And so, his is really easy. And my family, they're all like criminals and drifters. And it's not as easy to find. It's fascinating when you do find it. But it's not easy to find it. But when I do, I'm like, oh, this is it! Okay. I found this little hint, and this hint's going to take me here, and this hint's going to take me here. And you find all these stories that your past ancestors have thought, “No one will ever figure this out!” And then you figure it out.

**John Moe:** Right. I was in Norway several years ago, where both my parents are from. They immigrated from Norway. And we went to this village where my paternal grandfather was born and grew up. And he was one of four boys—it was four kids in the family, all boys. And three of them formed a musical comedy like cabaret act that they would travel around the Norwegian countryside performing. That was three of them. The fourth one was my grandfather who moved to Oslo and became an accountant.

[00:45:00]

*(Laughs.)* And was very dour and smoked a lot and drank. And I'm like, oh man, why couldn't I have gotten one of the musical comedy uncles, you know, to be my grandfather? I was so disappointed.

*(They laugh.)*

**Jenny Lawson:** Did he just not have like a musical ability? Or was he just like, “I don't like music. Music is for bad people.”

**John Moe:** I think he just didn't get the joke. I think he just wasn't any fun!

*(They laugh.)*

Just was attracted to accountancy instead, and cigarettes. I don't know. They had pictures of the other three up all over this town performance hall from back in the, you know, 1920s and '30s from when they would perform. It was amazing.

I wanted to ask about your bookstore also. When last we spoke, you had just opened Nowhere Bookshop, and we were still in the pandemic. I think we were still pretty thickly in the pandemic. It was like the spring of '21. And your store is still around!

**Jenny Lawson:** It is. Yeah, we've been around for—oh gosh, four years? More than that now. Which is a long time for an independent bookshop, especially in Texas!

**John Moe:** I know, it's wonderful!

**Jenny Lawson:** So, yeah, no, it's doing really well. Whenever I go in, there's all these people there, and the bar is open now. So, you see people in there drinking and eating vegan food. For some reason we have like really great vegan food? Which I didn't think I would like, but every time I try it, I'm like, “This isn't vegan!”

They're like, “No, it really is.”

It's delicious. And yeah, it's doing really good.

**John Moe:** And I wonder too—I know you're a voracious reader and that you also—and I also know, of course, that you deal with depression and ADHD. And for a lot of people who deal with those things, depression and ADHD, getting through a book can be very difficult. It can be really frustrating, because you want to read the book, but you're not able to read the book. How do you thread that needle?

**Jenny Lawson:** So, what I do is I remove myself from everything that's distracting. So, personally I will—I take a book. I go outside. I have—there's a tree that has a little sort of hammock-y chair that I bought online for \$20. And I curl up in that, usually with holding a giant cup of ice, because it's Texas, and so it's really hot. And so, I can eat ice at the same time and, you know, stay cooled down. But if I'm outside, I don't hear like the electrical lights, and I don't hear my computer, and I'm not distracted by anything. And so, I can read a whole book in a day.

The other thing that's really helpful for me is that I have tееeerrrible insomnia. And so, I take advantage of that insomnia. If I'm like—if I'm going to be worried about something, I might as well be worried about the people in these books. And so, I read a lot at night. I also—so, I probably should be reading really happy books and really funny books. And I write really funny books. And so, people assume that's what I read, and I do. but my favorite books are horror, which is probably not what I should be reading at all with a terrible anxiety disorder.

**John Moe:** With insomnia in the middle of the night?

**Jenny Lawson:** Exactly. And that's what I do! I pull up—I pick up a book, and I'm like, “Oh, Chuck Tingle's got a new book. I need to read that.” And I think what's interesting is—so, I have a couple of book clubs that are through the bookshop. And one of them that I started is called Nightmares From Nowhere. And I thought I'm just going to do this horror book club, and if people want to join, then that'll be awesome. And maybe three or four people will join. And like hundreds of people joined, and so many of them also have anxiety. And we're like, you know, there's something about working out your anxiety with a book that you can close, you can walk away from. And especially because—in particular like the horror that I read is like zombies and ghosts, and it's not—I'm not looking at a lot of like, oh, there's a home invasion, or oh, the Republicans won again.

**John Moe:** You're not doing the true crime route, so much.

**Jenny Lawson:** Yeah. I'm like no, I want stuff where I'm like, “This is not really gonna happen. This is—give me this.” And so, I find that just a great escape. I actually just read—I have it right next to me—the *Angel of Indian Lake* by Stephen Graham Jones. And it's so good! It's a trilogy. It's the final in the trilogy. The first one was *My Heart is a Chainsaw*.

[00:50:00]

Oh, it's—I so recommend it. And I was so scared, because the second one came out. And you know, sophomore book, you're like, eeeh, maybe. And then the last one came, and I just was like, oh, please let it be good! And thank god it was.

**John Moe:** (*Laughs.*) That's amazing. You could get through a book a day. That's—so, the ADHD is dependent somewhat, or at least is exacerbated by, these other stimulations that are within the house?

**Jenny Lawson:** They are. I also, if I have like a hyper fixation, then I tend to overly focus on that. And sometimes I will get a hyper fixation on finishing books, to the point where it's actually like probably not healthy. But it will go in time periods of like I'm going to read three books a day. And that's all I can do is read and get into whatever this is. And then I'll have a week where I cannot concentrate at all. And I also struggle, because I have a truly awful memory. If I read—say, if I read a half of the book, and I put it down, and the next day I pick it up again, I have to start from scratch. I have no memory. And even with books that I've read that I'm like, “Oh my gosh, I love that book,” all I remember are the vibes. (*Chuckles.*) Or I'm just like, mm, this book felt good at the time.



And so, we just did—Fantastic Strangelings Book Club, we just read. *The Warm Hands of Ghosts*, and it was so good, but I immediately forgot it. It's like I read it, and I was like, “This is it. This is the book we're sending out this month. I picked it. This is great.” And then before it actually came out, which was months after I had read it, I was like, “I got to read it again because I don't remember.” And then today I opened up the discussion for it on our Facebook page, and I was like, “Nope, no idea! So, I had to read it all again.”

**John Moe:** Third time!

**Jenny Lawson:** And so, now I take notes as I'm doing it. I'm like, “This happened, and then this happened, and then this happened,” so that I don't have to read it four or five times. (*Chuckles.*)

**John Moe:** Do you finish books that you hate?

**Jenny Lawson:** (*Beat.*) Almost always. There are a few that I will walk away from. But I have that sunken cost fallacy where I'm like, ooh, I've already spent this time. I am a speed reader. That's helpful. So, I can read very, very, quickly. But yeah, there are a lot of times when I'll get mad at a book, like physically angry. And I always want to—you know, I go on Goodreads, and for some reason I'm one of the top 100—I think it's called critics, but I don't criticize. Because if I don't like a book, I just don't say anything about it at all. But every once in a while, I just want to be like, “Can someone else read this book? Because this made no sense to me! What does this mean? Why did this happen?! Why did this character do—?”

And almost always, whatever that book is that made me so frustrated, it's gonna win an award. And I'm gonna be like, “What? Why am I not getting this? Why do I not understand? But why was it so sad? Why did everything have to be so sad?” (*Chuckles.*)

**John Moe:** Why did they have to kill that character? Yeah.

**Jenny Lawson:** Right?! Oh my gosh, so many dead children. I'm like come on!

**John Moe:** (*Chuckles.*) I think I started writing books in part because I was interviewing so many authors about books, and I would get so frustrated with their books that I just wanted to say, “Just step aside here! Let me just write something else! You know, it might not be great, but at least it might make more sense than what you just did.” But that was my internal monologue. I would never say that to them.

**Jenny Lawson:** Yeah. Oh, exactly. There's so many times when I'm like, this book needed a second editor. Like, I don't know what this looked like the first time, but this book could have been half of what it was, and I would have enjoyed it. But why is it so long?!

**John Moe:** Sooo much of it!

**Jenny Lawson:** Yeah! And like, if it's beautiful prose, I will sit through it. You can write beautiful prose, and I'm like, alright, nothing is happening in this book. I wish that there was

a sticker that would go on those books that just says, “slice of life”, where it's just going to be like, you're going to meet this person. The end! That's it. You're just going to—you're going to hear about him for 400 pages, and then it's just going to end.

**John Moe:** Yep. Here's someone you could follow around for a while. Enjoy. Yep.

**Jenny Lawson:** Right? I keep waiting. I'm like when do the witches show up? And they're like, “There's no witches. Just a slice of life.”

I'm like (*disappointedly*) oh, okay.

**John Moe:** Oh, okay.

[00:55:00]

Well, so I admire the ways that you seek treatment, that you've kind of handled some of these things and the unique solutions that you've found. Are you looking for a future where your buddies—depression, anxiety, ADHD, and OCD—are just traveling with you in the car and you've got to get them to behave themselves? Or are you hoping to drop them off and kick them out of your car at some point?

**Jenny Lawson:** I don't think that I could exist without them. I think that the person who I am is part of that. It is so deeply ingrained in me. And so, in a way that can be very freeing, because I don't feel like I will ever escape from those parts. So, instead I have to learn how to be friends with those parts. That we have to be—we're on this road trip together, and it may really suck sometimes. But we're still together, so we have to find a way to keep working.

**John Moe:** Yeah, well, I'm glad you're doing that work, and you're an inspiration for how you're handling it, I think. What's a book you can recommend to our listeners?

**Jenny Lawson:** Oh, let's see. So, Allie Brosh has written a couple of great books that deal with, you know, depression and anxiety. And not only are they funny and heartfelt and very like you feel seen, but also they're cartoon graphic novels. So, they're easy, and they're accessible. And especially when you're feeling like really down, or you're really dealing with—you know, you can't focus. I think Allie Brosh is such a really accessible author. *Hyperbole and a Half* was one and I think *Solutions and Other Problems* was her second one. Highly, highly recommend.

**John Moe:** That's wonderful. Well, the Nowhere Bookshop is at [NowhereBookshop.com](http://NowhereBookshop.com). And be sure everybody to pick up Jenny's books, *Furiously Happy*, *Let's Pretend This Never Happened*, *Broken*, and *You Are Here*. Jenny Lawson, thanks as always.

**Jenny Lawson:** Thank you!

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

**John Moe:** Before we go, I want to remind you once again to be part of *Depresh Mode*, part of getting the show out into the world where it can help people. If you've never been a MaxFun member, try it out at just \$5 a month and enjoy the 600 plus hours of bonus content from all the shows from all of Maximum Fun, including *Depresh Mode*. Yeah, you don't have to listen to all 600 hours, but it's there if you want to. If you're already a member of *Depresh Mode*, and you'd like to support a little bit more—ooh, we would love that. We would certainly appreciate you upgrading your membership or even just boosting it by a few more dollars per month. Do it now so you won't forget by going to [MaximumFun.org/join](https://MaximumFun.org/join).

Go there before I'm done talking. Once you're there, you can browse around at the wonderful thank you gifts we have to offer, including the enamel pin that says, “I'm glad you're here”. Doesn't even have the name of the show on it, just “I'm glad you're here”. You'll know what show it's for. And everyone who sees it will have a better day because they saw it. That is a cool thing to have happen in the world. There are all sorts of gifts. Check out the new Maximum Bag. That's at the \$35 level. It's just this enormous tote bag. It's the biggest tote bag I've ever seen. (*Chuckles.*) And it says “Maximum Bag” on it. Go look around. Join, upgrade, or boost while you're there. [MaximumFun.org/join](https://MaximumFun.org/join). Be sure to hit subscribe, give us five stars, write rave reviews, that helps us as well.

The 988 suicide and crisis lifeline can be reached in the US and Canada by calling or texting 988. It's free. It's available 24/7.

Our Instagram and Twitter are both [@DepreshPod](https://twitter.com/DepreshPod). Our *Depresh Mode* newsletter is on Substack. You can search that up. I'm on Twitter, [@JohnMoe](https://twitter.com/JohnMoe), and Instagram, [@JohnMoe](https://www.instagram.com/JohnMoe), as well. Our Preshies group is on Facebook and a lot of good discussion happening over there. Join up. Just search for Preshies on Facebook. Our electric mail address is [DepreshMode@MaximumFun.org](mailto:DepreshMode@MaximumFun.org).

Hi, credits listeners. [MaximumFun.org/join](https://MaximumFun.org/join). *Depresh Mode* is made possible by your contributions. Our team includes Raghu Manavalan, Kevin Ferguson, and me. We get booking help from Mara Davis. Rhett Miller wrote and performed our theme song, “Building Wings”.

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

**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*

[01:00:00]

*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*

**Aaron:** I'm Aaron Suttell from Maryville, Tennessee. And you may not know it, but you are amazing, and you've got this.

*(Music fades out.)*

**Transition:** Cheerful ukulele chord.

**Speaker 1:** Maximum Fun.

**Speaker 2:** A worker-owned network.

**Speaker 3:** Of artist owned shows.

**Speaker 4:** Supported—

**Speaker 5:** —directly—

**Speaker 6:** —by you!