

## E82 TRANSCRIPT: Dr. Nicole Thaxton on Identifying High Achieving Anxiety, Building Self Awareness, and Finding Peace in the Midst of the Hustle

**Intro Clip, Dr. Nicole Thaxton:** For high achievers anxiety typically looks like doing more and more and more and more and more, to quiet the anxiety out. If I do more, if I do more, if I do more, then I don't have to feel the feelings. I don't have to pause and actually feel that I'm incredibly overwhelmed and terribly burnt out. I'm performing for all the wrong reasons. And a lot of the time, this is why this is kind of a niche that I'm in because anxiety in high achievers looks very, very different than it does in other people.

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**Shannan Monson:** Welcome to today's show, I'm so excited to introduce you to Dr. Nicole Thaxton. She is a professional counselor therapist. And today we're gonna be talking all about what it's like being an ambitious woman what made us this way, and how we can really find peace and rest in the midst of hustles and being high achieving ambitious women. So if you feel like you're constantly going, going going and tie your productivity to your worth, I'm really excited for you to listen to this episode. So Dr. Thaxton, let's dive in. Tell me how did you get into this line of work in the first place?

**Dr. Nicole Thaxton:** Oh, my goodness. So I have been racking my brain thinking about this. Because you're absolutely right. I'm a professional counselor, I'm a therapist. I've been working in private practice for five years. And I'm sure we'll get into the entrepreneur business stuff, but started my own practice last year in the midst of COVID. And I've been doing so much reflecting just preparing to meet with you, Shannon because it's like, Wow, I've gotten here but to think back on how I started. And one thing you have to know about me. So I'm a therapist, I'm always going way back. So my story really starts and I'm obviously going to tell you the super short version. But my story starts with, I truly believe my family, how I grew up, where I came from all of that which really led me to wanting to be a therapist and a counselor. So just to give you kind of a brief background, my family line, just generations and generations of mental health issues of addiction of trauma, I mean, going really, really far back and I was actually thinking about it, like one of the things that I do in my practice is talk a lot about generational patterns, and how that kind of gets us to where we are. So that's something I talk about all the time. And as well as like high achievement and performance.

**Shannan Monson:** But for people listening that don't know what a generational pattern is, can you break down for us? Like what are some examples of generational patterns? So you know that listeners can start to think of what this might look like in their lives?

**Dr. Nicole Thaxton:** Sure thing, I'm happy, like, let me I think it might be easy if I share it in light of my story, because it's generational patterns are the fact that we are not just solo individual people, right. And so when we're counseling when I'm working in therapy with clients, it's like, we have to look at your system, your family system, the society and culture that you're living in, we have to look at generational patterns and things that the people whose shoulders you stand on, right, and so you're not coming into the world, just Hey, I'm me. It's like, we have all of these patterns that we bring with us. And so for me, it's like thinking about my great, great grandfather was a PhD in psychology. My great, great grandfather, I mean, I didn't know who he was, but I know he was this and I knew mental health was important to him. Right. And then, you know, I think about my grandparents and my parents. I mean, just some themes of my family is like, huge amounts of scarcity. Okay, scarcity leads to anxiety. So we'll talk about anxiety, I'm sure. Um, but scarcity, poverty, addiction, mental health, you know, and this has always been a part of my family lines. So here's Nicole. She's born into this family and to these generational patterns, and it's like, I'm not just a silo. We're not just silos. Okay, so I'm eight years old. And I think I mentioned this to you, I wrote this. I'm eight years old and I'm right on my wall. Let no one outwork you today. And I'm eight. And I have this on my wall. Until I graduate high school, my mom actually still has it at her house, I write this huge Let no one outwork you today. And I guess what you have to understand is kind of how I got to where I am today, how I got into counseling, how I got into therapy, I shared this amount of history, because it's like, I truly believe that this work with anxiety with mental health is like, in my blood, sweat, tears and jeans. It's in my DNA. I mean, it's just like not going anywhere.

**Shannan Monson:** And so and you know, going back generations of it is like the culture in your family to work really, really hard to achieve more and more and more education is the most important thing. And that's really instilled in you. So kind of the difference between nature versus nurture, you're not raised, you know, eight year old kid who's just whatever's coming at you, from the time that you're born, you feel like you have to produce achieve, you know, have accolades to have worth.

**Dr. Nicole Thaxton:** Yes, yes. And so that's why I bring this up, because I'm like, okay, for anybody listening, it's like, think about your family patterns. Think about the things that you come from, I mean, it gives so much light to our current behaviors and patterns. So for me, I come from a family line of people with anxiety, people who experienced trauma, I mean generations, and people who worked their asses off. I mean, my grandmother's both worked their entire lives, built their entire lives that my parents came from nothing incredibly successful in their careers in their fields, most of my family's in the medical field, and it was just expected from a really, really young age. I mean, the earliest memories that I have is of my family saying, you know, let no one outwork you today, you have to work hard, you have to achieve, you have to be the best and so, fast forward, I want to fast forward for a minute, because, you know, of course, I'm in high school. I'm a credibly elite athlete, top of the top academics, president of

everything. Okay, this is me painting you that this picture. And I'm 18 I'm at my first job. And they do are you familiar with the strengthsfinder?

**Shannan Monson:** Yeah. I know mine

**Dr. Nicole Thaxton:** Yeah. So yeah, you're like, I know mine. So I take the strengthsfinder. My top three, I'm glad you're familiar with it. My top three are harmony, achiever, and disciplined, okay, top three, this is I'm 18 years old. And I just think this is such a huge picture of why I do what I do today. And kind of where I came from, because harmony, basically growing up, my entire identity was wrapped in, be nice, be good. Don't rock the boat, be a pleaser, you know, perform for everybody smile, don't let anybody see you down. Meanwhile, you know, I'm just wracked with anxiety, wracked with difficult situations happening at home in my family life. Number two, strength achiever. And number three, disciplined, which I feel like I am a pretty disciplined person in light of my family, they make me look lazy. But it's like, these are the values that I'm growing up with being told, this is what makes you worthy. This is what makes you successful. This is what is going to get you places in the world and the harmony and the achiever. We're constantly battling one another because I'm like, I want to do everything. I want to be the best. But don't be too great. You have to make sure everybody else is okay. You have to make sure you're, you know, keeping everybody around you comfortable. And so this stirred up so much anxiety in me of just who I felt like I wanted to be who these messages were. And that's not really answering your question. Oh, I feel like

**Shannan Monson:** Oh, I feel like yeah, I feel like this is really relatable. You know, no matter what your strengthsfinders are, or most of the women listening to this are high achieving ambitious women. And you know, depending on what your personal family situations were like, this might look different, but as a society, it's very ingrained in women to be peacemakers to be quiet, sit still. Don't rock the boat. Don't speak up, you know, don't ask too much. Right? You know, this whole idea that we're beautiful when we're not talking and we don't have opinions and all of a sudden were too, too opinionated, too, to this too. too fat too skinny, right. And I do think that as a woman, it's a lot we're trying to fit into this societal mold of who we're supposed to be while also having big dreams and ambitions. And it's really interesting to think about, okay, what was the environment that I grew up at? And how did that nurture me into who I am today? And I think what I want to ask for you next is for all of them and listening that do you have this? You know, connecting your worth so closely to letters after your name to accolades to achievement? What advice do you get? How do we start to unlearn that and just find worth and peace and just being human?

**Dr. Nicole Thaxton:** That's such a great question. I feel I feel like this is what I'm doing every single day in therapy with, you know, I counsel high achievers, that's kind of my niche area I specialize in, in diagnosing and treating anxiety disorders, specifically in PTSD. But I think to answer your question, it's like, I have been there, you know, I, I think there were multiple times, even working on my PhD I, I went to, I went to UGA, I went to University of Georgia for my undergrad, I graduated in three years, I went to master's program, got my master's program

went on to the Ph. D. program. You know, I'm working on a PhD program, I had a goal to do it all debt free. So I've basically not taken out any student debt, I'm, you know,

**Shannan Monson:** I'm sure like the very, very top of the class and you do that thing. So I would love to hear for this woman who's struggling with you know, your worth being so tied to letters after your name, accolades, achievements, how do we start to unlearn and unravel that, like, what can I do to start taking those steps towards just finding that inner peace it for just, you know, being human?

**Dr. Nicole Thaxton:** Yeah, that's such a great question. Because honestly, I feel like that's what I'm doing every single day when I'm working in therapy with women with high achievers, with anxiety, maybe it's other things that they're struggling with. But I think the first thing is just to bring awareness to what am i placing my identity in. And for me, that's kind of just a lot of work. I'll be honest, I've been in therapy for years. And I think it was just breaking down those barriers and those walls of, I've built my identity on this for 28 years, you know, and this is what I came out of the womb, and grew up hearing messages of what brought me worth and I was only only good, good to certain people. And I felt this way at certain jobs, I'm sure, ladies or guys who are listening, you know, you've been at that job where you feel like, that's just your worth is to produce and to achieve. And so, for me, it was like a lot of this work actually took place in the middle of my PhD program, which sounds crazy, because Shannon, I love that you say, you know, you've got your letters after your name. And it's all about achievement, like, especially in this world we live in. And yeah, I'm in the middle of my PhD program, almost having an identity crisis. Because I'm like, why am I doing this? Like, why am I doing this? You know, I'm paying for the program as I go. And I'm like, Am I doing this out of this need and this desire and this worth statement in me that I have to do this in order to be worthy, I'm not good enough with just what I have. And I'm having an identity crisis in the middle of the program. My husband's like, well, what are you going to do drop out? I'm like, No, I'm not a quitter.

**Shannan Monson:** I finish things I start, right. That's like, that's all tied in that identity to I feel that deeply. And I think, you know, if you're an entrepreneur and you're so used to being successful, you succeeded everything you're I was senior class Vice President, like that resonates. I'm sure a lot of people listening, right, that they did all the things and have all the important positions to fail or to not want to finish something like that is part of who you are, too. Right. Like, I'm not a quitter. I don't give up you know, I actually left my I started a graduate program, and I left after I had my son, I just realized this wasn't the path that I wanted to go on. And it took a lot to realize that that wasn't failure. Right, quitting, and actually realigning your priorities and saying that this no longer serves me isn't necessarily a failure, but that can be really intertwined into your identity too. And like things your parents said to growing up. Right.

**Dr. Nicole Thaxton:** Right. And so I would say like another kind of actionable step about that is kind of related to what you're saying. It's really examining where your identities being placed, what your identity and worth is being placed in? Not what you would say your worth is, but what are your actions showing? Where are you spending the most time doing when do you feel the best about yourself? Is that when others are renewing your team?

**Shannan Monson:** Oh, that's powerful. Okay, so how do we how do we do this? Is it you know, as simple as looking at like a time audit journaling or there How do I figure out I'm because I'm thinking about this? I don't know. Actually, I don't know the answer to this. How do you figure that out?

**Dr. Nicole Thaxton:** Well, I think a big part of it. I mean, how does anybody build self awareness, right? I mean, I think it's some of the basic stuff of like, journaling about these things about your identity talking with friends, or maybe it is a therapist that you're kind of doing some of this identity work with. For me that achiever identity really, really started to shatter when I my anxiety was at a all time high. And it just drove me into therapy. And I had a lot of processing to do and walls to break down in therapy, of how this identity was not serving me anymore, it was actually creating so much anxiety in my life and taking away from my piece. And so I think a big part is just building awareness and whatever that looks like for you, whether that's journaling, whether that is with kind of a trusted someone that you're processing this with. But the second part to that is realizing that, and this is super practical isn't what I like, actually have my clients do who are just really high achievers really high anxiety. I make them quit three things.

**Shannan Monson:** Oh, tell us more. Yeah. I love quitting things so hard.

**Dr. Nicole Thaxton:** I want to do all of the things. So I have clients. And this may be something that you want to do, pause the podcast, whatever. But take a time right now, it's similar to a time audit, right? But write down every single kind of commitment that you have in your life as far as like achievement goes, Okay. Everything that you're working on, if you want to take it a step further, I'd even love for you to journal out what that how that's fueling this, like, really negative identity thing going on in you. So it's like I do this, I do this, I do this. And I do this for this praise that I get when I do this for this like internal. Oh my gosh, I'm just so great. You know, we all want to feel great.

**Shannan Monson:** Yeah. Can you give us an example?

**Dr. Nicole Thaxton:** Sure thing. I had a girl, I'll just share kind of like a client scenario. Yeah. Okay. So I had a girl that I was working with super high achiever. And you know, obviously, with confidentiality, I'm not going to give any identifying info. But she was just running herself to the point where her anxiety. So I want to back up for just a second because there's a difference between high performance High Achiever anxiety, and general anxiety that we talked about, okay. And so, for high achievers, anxiety typically looks like doing more and more and more and more and more, to quiet the anxiety out, if I do more, if I do more, if I do more, then I don't have to feel the feelings. I don't have to pause and actually feel that I'm incredibly overwhelmed. I'm terribly burnout, I'm performing for all the wrong reasons. And a lot of the time, this is why this is kind of a niche that I'm in because anxiety in high achievers looks very, very different than it does in other people.

**Shannan Monson:** This makes so much sense. You're listening to this, I'm saying yes. You know, if you're doing filling your time and bucket with more things so that you don't have to feel the feelings I resonate.

**Dr. Nicole Thaxton:** Yes, me too. As far as the exercise goes of quitting things, it's like getting someone to almost do an audit of all the responsibilities that they have. And getting them to, you know, if you're someone who's doing this right now, or you're thinking about maybe doing this after listening to the podcast, picking three things that you're just gonna quit. You're just gonna drop those balls, you're not gonna let those hang in the air anymore. And here's the real kicker to you. I want you to actually have someone in your life who loves you. Look at this list too. And make sure that you're not just like quitting things that are easy quits. Does that make sense?

**Shannan Monson:** Yes, it does. I want to say like, No, tell me more. But I get it. I think we all know like, these are the cop outs I get by check those off my plate. Look at me. Look at me. Good job. Pat. on my back. I did my exercise for my therapist. And the stuff that is because I imagine is like really rooted to your identity to you're going to give us an example of a woman that you've worked with, like what this could look like.

**Dr. Nicole Thaxton:** Yes. So with her I mean, let's just say I mean, a lot of the teenagers that I work with, or even young adult women that I work with, who are high achievers, they have so much on their plate probably like, like everybody here listening, right? We're high achievers, business women, and they will have a job, they will have a side hustle, they will have an exercise. They will have a sport, they will have family stuff. They will have their second job that they do for tutoring on the side for side money. I mean, this was me in college. This was me a few years ago. I mean, and so I get them it's it's fascinating to just see when they write every single thing down that is on their plate. Second step, what is all this filling for you? I mean what what is this? It's driving this identity, right? And getting them to say, I'm going to quit this side job. I know I'm doing it because I'm really hopeful, I'm gonna get a scholarship from it and blah, blah, blah, and it's helping me pay for this. But I'm gonna quit this thing, or I'm gonna quit. I mean, what's really hard is to kind of quit and recognize the toxic things that we might be doing in our life. So we all want to think that we don't have toxic things that we do. But I mean, we do. And so they're those things that take up our time that a lot of the time for me, it's just out of the people pleasing. I don't want to say no to certain things. So I say yes, and yes, out. And it's like, when you do this audit of all the responsibilities you have, you realize, wow, that one drains me like, that's one, that I could really knock off this list and bring so much more peace into my life

**Shannan Monson:** It really resonates and thinking about, he talks about young girls, I'm kind of going back in my timeline, I used to have an exercise addiction, I would work out like four to five hours a day, and it took years to break that habit. And it really did come from it wasn't from you know, these were social exercise. It was you know, it was very much like trying to fit a mold that I felt like I had to be to be perfect and accepted and loved. And I can definitely think of times my life that I've said yes to volunteer positions or even at work. There's a lot of times I'll say, Yep, I can do that. And then I sit back and I say why did I say Yeah, why did I say yes to that? Because we want to make the other people on the other end happy or we want to make life

easier for someone else. I think that really resonates. Okay, so I love this exercise to do this at home, write down everything that you're doing, you know, really align with what is the identity or the thing that you're getting out of each of these and find three things to quit. Quit, I love it. I love it. Okay, I want to talk more about the like anxiety side of things, because I don't know that much about high achieving anxiety. And I know that I'm listening to you. I think we probably everyone listening to this probably experiences this on some level. What does this look like? How do we identify this in our lives?

**Dr. Nicole Thaxton:** Absolutely. Well, and I have to share a little tidbit about anxiety because you know, I'm a licensed professional, I diagnose all of the different anxiety disorders. We've got generalized anxiety, OCD, agoraphobia, we have panic disorder, there's so many different types of anxiety. But here's the kicker, this is what I think is super fascinating. To get a diagnosis of anxiety, you basically the number one thing is that you it's impairing your functioning. So the anxiety is to a clinically significant level, where you're no longer functioning this these are kids who and I work with a lot of these kids because I do work mostly with teenagers and they aren't able to go to school, they aren't able to function. When we have high achievers, they have very criteria for anxiety, but they are so high functioning, it's almost like this opposite. And so I'm going to share these are just some terms that I use, but they come out of the inia gram. So these aren't like clinical words, but I call it phobic versus counter phobic anxiety. So let me explain phobic anxiety is when you feel really really anxious, really overwhelmed. physical sensations, you know, anxieties, very physical. So difficulty breathing, chest pain, stomach aches, and phobic phobic anxiety is when you retreat. It's just like you shut down. You just feel like you can't get out of bed. And this is very, very real for for a lot of people counter phobic anxiety. Now this is actually the type of anxiety that I associate with too. It's like you just are going to punch through a wall to get through the anxiety, you're going to do more, you're gonna feel the fear and show up anyway. And it's like, equally detrimental to your well being. But I think we over glorify This time, I was gonna say glamorized,

**Shannan Monson:** Absolutely, like this is toxic hustle culture, right? Like, and I'm probably guilty of saying these things is I'm going to like feel the fear and do it anyway. Just don't stop until you, you know, are successful. Keep going, keep going. And at some point, you have to actually check in and ask yourself, why am I still going and am I getting to where I want to go? So, okay, that's helpful. How do we how do we work through this? Like, what are some practical tools? If we are constantly going, going going and pushing through instead of feeling those? How do we slow down?

**Dr. Nicole Thaxton:** I think a big one is scheduling, rest. scheduling, time to slow down is so most of the high achievers that I know our time blockers I'm sure yeah, talk about a time block. We love our schedules. Don't worry. I'm a huge time block fanatic. And a lot of us we just think we can go go go go go 24 hours a day. I mean, my husband makes fun of me all the time because I just, I tell him, I work for fun. Like, he's like, you need to be resting. I'm like, I'm working for fun right now. Like, this is fun. It's getting me life, you know.

**Shannan Monson:** And that's actually really relatable though. And I joke about that we're like, there's real work. And then there's fun work, like we're working all weekend, because this is fun. We're excited about it. And I think it's normal to in, you know, in this world that we're in, or if you're listening, and you resonate with a lot of our other messages, it's normal, to be excited by new projects and new things, and to be willing to put your head down and go all in for four days without looking up when you're excited about something. I don't know, I think that's fun. But there is definitely a downside.

**Dr. Nicole Thaxton:** Yeah. And I think practically speaking, it's like, making sure that you're scheduling and downtime and rest time. And it's so funny, some of the clients that I meet with, when I tell them that they need to schedule fun, I have this activity that I do with them called the balance wheel. And I hate the word balance, okay, I don't think anything in life is balanced. But it's the balance wheel. And it's like, Okay, you've got time for your academic pursuits and your work and you have time for your family and time for your exercise and health. And you have time for fun. And they're like a, that's zero, like I don't ever schedule time for just fun. And I think that we think oftentimes when we get wrapped up in that identity piece that we have to be productive all the time. And so I actually work with a lot of people who feel very guilty, when they're unproductive, they feel lazy. And this goes back to those core messages that we get when we're little. I remember being little, and I love my parents, they're amazing. But I remember being little and you know, rest time wasn't really a thing. Like we, if we had rest time, we had to pick up another sport, you know, yeah. And there was not much downtime. And so when I have downtime, and I would argue most anxious achievers feel this way, I feel very dysregulated I feel dysregulated. When I'm resting, I feel like I have to be moving, I have to be doing something. And so training the body and the mind to slow down and calm down and scheduling this in our routine is incredibly important and very practical thing to start doing. I think another thing would be to intentionally I make this a non negotiable for any of my anxious folks out there. I think that meditation and breath work and yoga, I think that connecting with your body in those ways, you know, slowing yourself down, bringing your mind back to the present moment. My mind is always about two to five years out

**Shannan Monson:** 100% Yeah,

**Dr. Nicole Thaxton:** You get it. I'm talking to my people, like,

**Shannan Monson:** I imagine everyone is nodding their head. And when you were talking about this, I was thinking, you know, it is it is hard for me to slow it down, as I imagine is for a lot of people listening. But it's easy to schedule a yoga class, and go and like, you know, quietly be led through my body's moving and doing something. And I do think that that's something that we can nurture and schedule into our day. And I always feel this, maybe this is wrong. We're not supposed to feel this way. But I always feel like I accomplished something, you know, like check, that's another bucket that I checked off of taking care of myself or doing something fun. And we actually in our CEO, school planners, we have a three bucket principle that we live by. And one of my buckets is always self. It's like fun things. For me. It's rest, it's self care. And I try and make sure that that's 30% of my stuff, you know. But I do think it's easy to to fill that up with like,



Oh, actually, I'm taking a writing class. And that's fun and self care. Right. And so I definitely think it's easy to kind of slip into those habits, something that came up while you're talking. I'm curious your take on this. Something that I've really struggled with, I think this is probably a relatable feeling is like a post achievement let down. So Oh, yeah, work really hard to hit a goal hit a you know, number in your business host a live event. And then it's done. And it's over, and you have a new goal you're working towards. And I'm Google that I don't know, if it's the real thing, it's my chance to ask a therapist, post achievement depression. Yeah. Tell us about that and how how we can deal with that. It's just like, go hand in hand with this anxiety or no,

**Dr. Nicole Thaxton:** I'm going to confirm that. That's a real thing. And here's why. Here's why. So our bodies and our minds are very regulatory. Okay, so we work on a very structured kind of regulatory system. What this means is our moods fluctuate, they go up and down. Anxiety is very normal to feel. And at times, we're going to feel more anxiety at times we're going to feel more depressed at times we're going to feel sad. And what happens is, when we have these big achievements that we're looking towards, a lot of anxiety goes into preparing for Those doing those and I'm talking about the positive kind of positive values you

**Shannan Monson:** Yeah, like makes you hit deadlines, that sort of anxiety.

**Dr. Nicole Thaxton:** Yes, we all need a healthy level of anxiety otherwise we'd be completely unmotivated. Okay, so the goal is not zero anxiety ever. But interesting. Yeah, yeah, it's funny, I meet with clients and parents all the time, and they're like, get rid of my anxiety, get rid of my anxiety and like, um, you definitely wouldn't want that. And that's not possible. So the goal is to be able to regulate emotion. And I feel like I could talk about this for hours. But in a short snippet, what you're talking about and referring to with this kind of let down is our body regulating. So we've been feeling so anxious, so anxious, so ready, good kind of anxiety, we get ready for our event, we're on this total high emotionally, and we're excited, we've accomplished something. And then when it's over our is our body's way of regulating. So our body is going to dip down, our body is going to dip down into this this way that eventually we'll even back out. But that's kind of what the point of therapy is to is, it's helping people helping you understand how to kind of regulate these emotions. We're not trying to get rid of them. Yeah. To make them work for us rather than against us.

**Shannan Monson:** Yeah, that makes a ton of sense. Okay. I have a question for you. Should every entrepreneur go to therapy?

**Dr. Nicole Thaxton:** Hell, yeah.

**Shannan Monson:** Tell us about why. Yeah, I agree completely.

**Dr. Nicole Thaxton:** I mean, I actually had somebody asked me the other day, they were like, I'm thinking about becoming a life coach, like what do you as a licensed professional, think about life coaches, blah, blah, blah. And I think there's an amazing place for everybody, I think everybody should get a seat at the table. And the thing about working with a licensed

professional therapist, a psychologist, a counselor, is that we have a ton of education and training a ton of supervised hours, and working with mental health disorders and working with relational things, anxiety. I mean, I think that you're just working with a professional who can be there for you. That's what therapy is all about. It is your time, it is your time. And it's nobody else's time. But yours. Yeah,

**Shannan Monson:** I often say that sometimes my most like problematic characteristics are rewarded in entrepreneurship, right? It's like my ability to go heads down for 48 hours hardly sleep, like my husband says he's never seen anybody focus the way that I can focus. Like when I get be lined on something like nothing is coming in my way. And so I always joke that some of these things that are most detrimental to my mental health are also what is so rewarded in entrepreneurship. And I think as a general rule, entrepreneurship is a roller coaster. I mean, it doesn't matter how steady and consistent your businesses, there's just massive ups and downs emotionally, and having a place to having someone help you find a way to work through those. I mean, I think therapy has been probably one of the best investments I've made in my business, because as the CEO, my mental health is directly correlated to the health of my business and any toxic characteristics, I have trickled down, you know, we've seen this happen firsthand with Uber and all of these companies where there was really toxic culture in leadership positions. And I would beg to argue that that started with personal issues that people didn't deal with, you know, and they created cultures in their company that were detrimental. And so I really think that it's probably not the most common first investment in your business. But on chip, it's just such a journey of self awareness. And if you can have that support along the way, I think it's so powerful. So I would love to hear your kind of take as a therapist and a new entrepreneur, like what is your first year in business been like and what are some of the tools that are really, you've had in your back pocket that have supported you the most through that?

**Dr. Nicole Thaxton:** Absolutely. Yeah, I was really excited to come on the podcast actually, because I'm like, I listened to every single episode. Okay. And if you know Shannon's not asking me to promote this, but I am a part of CEOs school. I'm it's literally giving me so much life and helping me so much. Oh, that's what I meant the club

**Shannan Monson:** Yeah, I mean, we have multiple programs at CEO school. Everyone's like, I'm in CEO school. But yes, you are. You're part of The Club at CEO school. It's amazing.

**Dr. Nicole Thaxton:** Yeah. So I think I want to go back for a second about what you said about investing in your therapy. Because when I say things about life coaches, or when I say things about therapists, I invest in it all. I mean, I think that you could benefit from a business coach, a life coach, a therapist, for me, I needed something to invest in my leadership, and I needed something to invest in becoming the CEO that I want to become so I was excited about coming on the podcast. I feel like I'm Such a baby entrepreneur and I listened to these amazing women that you have on the podcast. And I'm like, Wow, that is so cool. But about a year ago or kind of story, my husband is also a therapist, we met actually in our master's program. And we decided we've been in practice for four years. And we wanted to start our own practice, middle of COVID. And what prompted It is really, he starts looking for commercial property, which that's a

whole nother animal to his commercial property. And he just like finds this building that I'm sitting in right now, as we're speaking. And we ended up putting in an offer that day first building we looked at, and we're like, I guess we're business owners now. I mean, that was really like the story it was. So what's crazy about our story is we closed on our building on a Friday. We moved in and had all of our furniture delivered on Saturday, and we had a full book of clients on Monday in the office.

**Shannan Monson:** Talk about starting with a bang.

**Dr. Nicole Thaxton:** I mean, that's the high achiever in me, right? You just go

**Shannan Monson:** Just go hard. Go bigger, go home. That's what my dad always said. That's my ingrained lessons.

**Dr. Nicole Thaxton:** Yep, go big or go home. But it's like we have hired I think maybe like, 11 I can't even keep up. We've hired three people this month. And we have seven clinical staff. We have a massage therapist, a chiropractor. just hired a digital marketing director. Yeah, it's crazy. So I'm like, I feel like the business is just growing faster than I can even keep up and grow myself. And that's why the club has been so helpful just to give me so many tools I didn't even know I needed to start up. I mean, we truly are a startup even though we're we're wildly, like blown away by how amazing, done incredibly well

**Shannan Monson:** It's so exciting. I'm so proud of you guys. I don't know your husband personally. And I'm still like you did it. Congrats. And during a pandemic no less. Yes.

**Dr. Nicole Thaxton:** Yeah. A little bit of a weird time to start a business, right?

**Shannan Monson:** Yep. But you're not alone. Talking to a lot of people that did it didn't really successfully. And for me, it's just such a reminder that there's never a perfect time. There's never a perfect time and you're never ready. And it's just a constant journey of like you said, self awareness and a personal growth. And the sooner you start, the farther along you are in your journey. So thank you so much for coming on the podcast. Any last words of wisdom you want to leave with us, I'd love to hear, you know, maybe your top three pieces of advice you'd give to high ambitious women or new entrepreneurs starting on this journey.

**Dr. Nicole Thaxton:** I think my first piece of advice is just it's just a reminder, it's just an affirmation, but it's like your worth is not in what you produce and achieve. And I think for me, it's been a very, it's been a windy journey, I still don't live that affirmation out every day, I easily go back to my worth being placed in what I achieve what I do. But I think just reminding, if the only thing that you get out of listening today is that your worth is not in what you achieve, you are so much more worthy than that. I'm a second thing would just be to kind of maybe do the work. This is just an encouragement to really dig into your identity, dig into maybe some anxiety that you might be having dig into your schedule, and are you feeling too overscheduled to burn out? And if so, I mean, dig into that dig into those generational patterns and messages that you

maybe are just unconsciously continuing to live out. And maybe I guess the third thing would be try to find a therapist, a coach, someone who can kind of guide you through that process of just switching up those core beliefs and switching up and kind of rattling around what that identity is and what you're working toward. Because genuinely I mean building big businesses and and being really productive is great, but you are you and you are worthy without all those things too. So that would be really my big reminders and takeaways to anyone listening.

**Shannan Monson:** I love those I feel so poured into today. I hope it for everybody listening that you're able to walk away with just really comfort in where you're at and some tips and tools for the journey. Thank you so much for coming on the show. Where can people find you Instagram? Where can they work with you if they're local or virtual? What does that look like?

**Dr. Nicole Thaxton:** Yeah, so our practice is ATL, well collective and you can find us online. Where ATL well.com it's held well.com Yep. And we offer telehealth and in person services throughout Georgia. You can find me on Instagram I'm @cocoathax so my family calls mean coco and then that's it originally was so that clients would not find me but like somehow they do anyway. So I'm at cocofax at Instagram and I love just encouraging other high achievers. They share a lot about entrepreneurship being a new entrepreneur, and just about mental health as well.

**Shannan Monson:** Well, thank you so much for all of our Atlanta listeners, definitely check out @atlwellco and @cocoathax on Instagram. Thanks so much for coming on the show.

**Dr. Nicole Thaxton:** This was so fun. Thanks, Shannan

**Suneera Madhani:** Thank you so much for listening. We hope you enjoy the show. Follow us at CEO school on Instagram for show notes, inspiration and exclusive behind the scenes that you won't find anywhere else. We also have an absolutely incredible resource for you. It's the seven lessons we learned building million dollar businesses. These are complete game changers and we want to give it to you absolutely free. All you have to do is leave a review of the podcast, why you love the show, screenshot the review and email it to Hello@ceoschoolpodcast.com and we'll send it your way.