

Cultivating Audacity Taking Bold Risks in a Competitive World with Anne Marie Anderson

Announcer: You're listening to the HR Mixtape Your podcast with the perfect mix of practical advice, thought-provoking interviews, and stories that just hit different so that work doesn't have to feel, well, like work. Now, your host, Shari Simpson.

Shari Simpson: Joining me today is Anne Marie Anderson a three-time Emmy award-winning broadcaster, keynote speaker, and author. With over three decades in sports television, she's covered iconic events like the Olympics, the Super Bowl, and heavyweight title fights. Her book, *Cultivating Audacity, How to Dismantle Doubt and Take Bold Risks*, empowers readers to challenge their fears and pursue the lives they truly want.

Shari Simpson: Anne-Marie, thank you so much for sitting down on the podcast with me today.

Anne Marie Anderson: It's fun to be here. I'm ready to go.

Shari Simpson: So as I was preparing for you to get here, I did a quick peek on LinkedIn just to see what some of your most recent posts are. And your book, *Cultivating Audacity*, is doing fantastic. Number one in your release right now.

Anne Marie Anderson: Yeah, number one in new releases for business diversity and inclusion, which is so great for this conference.

Shari Simpson: Oh, it's fantastic.

Anne Marie Anderson: Yeah, I was surprised. It was just set open for pre-order and people have resonated with it. I mean, that's what you want as an author, right?

Shari Simpson: Yeah, I mean, so it's all about cultivating audacity. What kind of made you develop this concept of audacity and why it's so important today?

Anne Marie Anderson: Yeah, I work in a very male-dominated business. I've been working for ESPN for 35 years, as well as a number of other networks and sports broadcasting. And when I started, there just weren't many females around. That's part one. But part two, working in television, period, is incredibly competitive. And so you need to find a way to take some risks. And once I looked up the definition of audacity, the willingness to take bold, sometimes surprising risks, I was like, yeah, that's what I've been doing in my career. And then I just developed it from there in terms of to your life. I mean, if you want to have a great life, not just a job, you need to take some risks, the ones that are worth it, not reckless.

Shari Simpson: Yeah. What are the obstacles that you saw or maybe some common obstacles that people put in their own way to be more authentic in that space?

Anne Marie Anderson: Such a great question, because as I was researching the book and then writing and interviewing people for it, I always came across the same four common barriers. It's either fear, time, money, or you're an inner critic. Every time it fits into one of those buckets.

Shari Simpson: Wow. So how do we start addressing all of those

buckets? Because they're pretty unique, each one of them. I'm sure there's different tactics that you saw through your research. Yeah. Anne Marie Anderson: Well, there's different components to each one for each person, right? So fear could be fear of failure, embarrassment, judgment, being exposed, rejection. I mean, there's tons of things to be afraid of. For me, I was afraid when I first moved from producing to being on camera. and I was afraid of all those things, right? And it's kind of a counterintuitive approach, but I say make friends with fear, because what do we do, Shari? We try to push it away, right? Shove it down, and then it's just gonna surface anyway at your most vulnerable moments. But when you literally make friends with fear, bring it in and start examining it, get comfortable with it, then it holds no power. There were times in my career where I actively sought out failure, like literally applying for jobs that there was no chance I was going to get. But I wanted to apply. I wanted to get that no. So I was desensitized to it. And to my surprise, one of the people said yes with Fox Network. And I was like, OK, then here we go. So that's the way for fear. Time, I think we have it all wrong. There is something called the urgency fallacy. We need to find time to prioritize what's important over urgent. We can spend our lives on that hamster wheel. Money is a whole other can of worms. Some people don't even want to talk about money. I talk about money and your money story, but also kind of investigating what do you need more of? Maybe money can help you get more. For me, it was energy. I needed more energy, so I had to hire somebody to do the things that I'm going to do. And then your inner critic. We've all got an inner critic.

Shari Simpson: Yeah, oh my goodness. Inner Critic is one of those things that's just, it's wild. You wish you could just, you know, go into a movie like Inside Out and train the inner critic to do something differently.

Anne Marie Anderson: You can. That's right. It's so crazy, but you can. You have to separate it from yourself. Yes. First of all. Right? So I have a 12 year old daughter and she came home one day and she's like, I can't do math. I'm stupid. And Oh, by the way, I'm fat too. And it was like, wow, like where did that come from? My, my like super happy girl. And so I just looked at her and I said, do you think I'm fat? Because we never use that word in my house. She's never heard me say a negative thing about my body. So it was so shocking for me to hear her say it. And she goes, well, no, I would never say that. And I said, then why would you say it to yourself? I don't think that's you talking. And she was like, what? And I said, that's your inner critic. That's somebody else who's saying those things. Because I know you and you wouldn't call anybody stupid or fat or any of those things. So let's give it a name. So she picked the name Jerry. And I said, well, what would you want to say to Jerry if he called you those things? And she said, thought about for a second, she goes, I want to say, shut up, Jerry. And so I said, all right, then that's what we'll do. And when I hear her, even if I'm in another room in the house and she says, oh, I can't do this. I'll say, shut up, Jerry. And she's like,

oh, I know. I know, but when you separate it from yourself, you can get curious about it. And then absolutely, you can turn your inner critic into your inner coach. It's possible.

Shari Simpson: That's wild. And you're not the first person I've heard about naming your inner critic that concept. So I think that's super valuable to be able to separate it like you shared. How did leaders start to teach this concept so that they're building confidence in their employees? Women and men, because I think sometimes women get singled out, quote unquote, as like, you need to be more confident. There's a plethora of self-help books for women on confidence. And, you know, I've been disappointed in so many of them over the years because it usually reads like, be a man. That's how you be more confident. So in general.

Anne Marie Anderson: And it takes that experience away from men. Like if a man doesn't feel confident, he's like, what's wrong with me? I'm supposed to be confident. Yeah. No, it's first of all, confidence comes from optimism. There's three components to being audacious, right? There's the mindset and the mindset is just plain optimism. You know, why do you keep playing a game when you're down by six of the half? You think maybe if you get yourselves together and start running the offense, maybe you can win, right? So that's just optimism. Then there's the behavior. You can sit on your mother's couch all day being optimistic nothing's going to happen until you get up and take an action. any action. And I tell people practice with the most simple of actions. Just say no to something. I love saying no to things. I mean, especially because I don't have FOMO, I have JOMO, the joy of missing out. So I'll say things like, yeah, can't go to that party. Have fun. And I'm thinking, yeah, I'm gonna lay on the floor with my dogs. It's not like there's something else happening. So when you have the optimism and the action, and you repeatedly go and do things, then you start to develop the identity. And that's when you go from, what is Shari doing? To, oh, that's Shari. She swings for the fences. That's how it goes, you know? And that's when you practice it more and more, then you get there. And then your inner critic, which is not you, it's Jerry, can be silenced because you can tell Jerry, hey, I'm doing things over here. You don't get to drive. You don't get to make decisions.

Shari Simpson: Well, and your example was so good in saying no to the party is you, you didn't do the thing that so many people do. I can't come dot, dot, dot, dot, dot, dot, dot. Right.

Anne Marie Anderson: You don't need to say anything. It can literally just be no. People's reaction to no can be kind of fun. You know, I don't know if you have kids, but I have three kids and when the school calls and says, Hey, or when they put up the email and says, you know, Hey, can you come and staple the things or be on the yearbook committee? I write back no. Yeah. Period. Two letters and a punctuation mark. Three characters. Yeah. Yeah. I do it. And I mean, I, I kind of go off the rails because the school will call me about the kids, but never their father. Right. And so I actually lost it the other day and I wrote back, uh, Lena's father is still alive and he's

copied on this email. And Matt called me and he's like, really? And I said, well, I assume they thought you weren't around anymore. Yeah. So yeah.

Shari Simpson: I mean, but that's such a good example of, you know, how society thinks about things and where you can show up and say no and take some of those risks. And there's no consequences necessarily for that.

Anne Marie Anderson: Not for that one. Yeah. Right. And that's the thing. You have to think about the consequences. Worth it versus reckless. Yeah. Those are big. You have to assess risk. I'm not saying go out there and go crazy. You know, moving cross country with no job when you have a family, that's reckless. But when you have a plan that is worth it with a year's worth of savings and you have some context you want to work for, well then that might be worth it.

Shari Simpson: How have you seen this idea of confidence and audacity impacting the workplace and workplace cultures?

Anne Marie Anderson: Well, the thing that I wanted to really be here about was about creating a culture where it's okay to fail, where it's okay to take a risk, where it's okay to suggest a risk, because then it can be built upon. And the confidence comes from your team around you, your supervisor. your HR department telling you, we want you to be audacious. We want you to come up with some surprising, maybe bold risks. We can help you evaluate whether it's worth it or not because the confidence comes from doing it time and time and time again. If you're in a workplace culture that won't let you feel safe to make mistakes, then you're in a world of hurt because you can't be audacious. You're trying to hang on and then you have to ask yourself, like, is that where you want to be?

Shari Simpson: Yeah, oh my goodness. I have so many stories of my own career where I've made mistakes and taken risks and those are always the moments where I've grown the most, I've learned the most, I've been able to impact the most. And you're right, you get this muscle for it. I've heard somebody talk about taking risk in something as simple as like, let's say you always order the same thing. When you go to your favorite restaurant, order something different this time and sit in that moment where you feel a little weird and don't know what to do with it. Because you're right, it's a muscle. You'll be able to grow it.

Anne Marie Anderson: Yes, and I think I learned, I was so surprised that people are afraid of the word risk itself. I had to change the subtitle of the book because it was how to dismantle doubt and take bold risks. People were like, well, what's the risk when we tested it? But when you said let yourself win, because that's what happens when you take a risk, then they were more comfortable. So I was talking to a young woman today, came up after my session, and she was asking me some questions. And it really turned out she's very unhappy where she is. She doesn't feel supported. And I said, well, what do you want to do? And she mentioned some things. And I said, why have you applied yet? And she said, no. And I said, why not? go take the risk." And she's like, well, and I said, don't tell me you're waiting. Yeah.

Cause that's what a lot of us do. It's not, it's not a glass ceiling by the way. And this is true for men too. It's a sticky floor. We want to wait until we have everything we need and waiting doesn't work. And so I told her, I looked her straight in the face. She's 26 and I said, go out and fail a little bit. She was like, what? And I said, apply for a ton of jobs, get the rejections, survive that. you'll be fine. And then you'll find the job that's right for you. They can't fire you. They didn't hire you yet.

Shari Simpson: Yeah. Right. I tell people all the time, I'm a really curious person. Great. And people will ask me what, like, why do you, why do you feel like you can ask those questions to those people? And I was like, the answer is already no. Like it's, I'm already not doing the thing or not in the room that I'd like to be in. And it's like, why not just ask, you know, the worst thing you're going to get is a no.

Anne Marie Anderson: Yes, the thing. That's what audacity is for me in this book. What's the thing that you've always wanted to do that you haven't done yet? Yeah. And then why haven't you done it? What's in the way? Fear, time, money, your inner critic. Yeah, the thing.

Shari Simpson: So as you went through the journey of defining your own thing and you've shown up in a lot of different spaces, a lot, like you said at the very beginning, a lot of male dominated spaces. What is one moment that you can share with us where maybe you took a risk and failed? and you learned from it or maybe you took a risk and like you said they hired you and you're like oh oh no now I have to yeah I have to do this other thing.

Anne Marie Anderson: Yeah well they're combined in one really. I was a producer at ESPN for 10 years, produced SportsCenter coverage for six Olympic Games, heavyweight title fights, Super Bowl, NBA, MLB playoffs, like everything. I always had a really sweet life. I always say it was like Forrest Gump. Wherever the best story was that's where I was. Incredible job. But I kind of wanted to be on air in front of the camera. I waited 10 years at ESPN before I even said the words to anyone. Fear was such a power. I gave fear such a powerful seat at my personal table. So when I finally did, I found a branch of ESPN that did some regional football games, right? Sideline Reporter, College Football Sideline Reporter, and I got a spot in the Mountain West, like small, regional, that's what I was gonna do. But before I ever went on the air there, one of my colleagues who I had produced for, who did the Super Bowl and big ESPN games and all that, called me and she said, listen, I got five games I gotta get back, so you need to call them in five minutes and just say, if anything else becomes available, let me know. And so I did what she told me. I called and said, I'm really looking forward to working with you this season. And if anything else becomes available, you know, please think of me. And he said, well, actually, and assigned me her five games. Wow. So now instead of starting on regional television and a little safe space, my first game was on big ESPN in 70 million homes. My first time ever on live television. I think I had been around so long that they didn't realize I'd never been on live television. And I was absolutely

terrified, sobbing outside the stadium. And, you know, one of the things I tell people is catastrophize it if you need to, like, what's going to happen? I was literally like, forget makeup. I'm crying outside the stadium minutes before going on air to my husband. And he said that question. I always hate people say, well, what's the worst that can happen? And I was like, oh, really? Let me tell you, babe. Let me tell you what the worst that can happen is. I could be so bad on air, so bad, that not only will I not get hired to be on air again, but I'll never be hired to produce again because the people I produce for will see how bad I am at their job. And so I could lose my entire television career over this. Yeah. And let me tell you something, mister. If I lose my career, I am going to be a miserable person to live with. You honestly will have no choice but to leave me. Because I won't be able to be a good mother to our children who aren't even born yet. And without a career or a family, I'm probably going to die destitute and alone. Yeah. And he was like, wow. He's like, you've really thought about this. He's like, you went there. And I'm like, oh yeah, I went there. And I went on and I had all those fears that we talk about. Yeah. Every one of them came true. Right? Not the catastrophe, but the, yes, I was bad. Yes, I was embarrassed. Yes, I was judged, but I did it. I faced the fear. The only thing was better about the second time was that it wasn't the first time. Yeah. I was bad the second, the 15th, the 30th, but kept doing it over and over again from that one risk. through, I think it's been 25 years of being on camera and being one of the most accomplished female play-by-play answers in the country. It's just crazy when you face that. It feels like a failure at the beginning, but then when you get comfortable with that and you keep swinging, all of a sudden it becomes a success. Shari Simpson: What was your motivation to take that second swing and go to the next event? I mean, granted, you had signed up for five, so there's some contractual stuff there, I'm sure, but you had that first experience and you said all my fears were realized, even though I did it, my fears were realized. through the next one, even though it wasn't just like, was there a takeaway that you learned or was there somebody in your corner was like, listen, you already did it once, you can do it again. Like, how do we get to that point where we are taking that second swing? Cause you know, I've, I've coached a lot of, you know, leaders over the years about public speaking, you know, and they're like, Oh, it's really scary. And I was like, do a baby step, like just, you know, volunteer to facilitate a meeting, like do some of these things. But, but often I feel like they need kind of somebody in their corner to help them. Did you have somebody in your corner? Was it more internal for you?

Anne Marie Anderson: I have. I had a lot of friends. Obviously I produced for a lot of people. So they were like, look at you go. And then they see me on there and they're like, don't worry, we can fix it. We can fix it. But I think it's so important to have that advocate. And it's really interesting to me and being here at Sherman because your HR can be your advocate and say, okay, so you brought that idea. It didn't work out, but we like your thinking. and let's

come up with something else. Because for me, I'm competitive, first of all, with myself. So I was like, well, I'm not going to let that be the last thing. But you're right. If I didn't have a contract, I ended up doing 13 games that season. If I didn't have a contract, I probably wouldn't have done the second one unless my friends pushed me out there. And let me tell you, Shari, that's a really important concept in the book and in life, your front row. You need to carefully curate a front row of people who are going to push you. You tell them your dreams. You tell them what you want to do. You tell them the thing, and then they will push you. And I'll tell you who's not in your front row, your mom and your best friend. Because they want you to stay safe. So staying safe isn't going to get it done. You get those friends in the front row who are like, how's that going? Yeah, that didn't feel good. So what are we going to do now? What's the next thing? When you have a carefully curated of front row people who will push you on, that's all you need.

Shari Simpson: That's fantastic. I love that analogy too, that you're front row. When you think about this inside of organizations, you're increasing confidence, you're increasing risk, you're increasing innovation, because we know that that comes from those types of things. How do you protect against creating a high pressure environment that feels too competitive?

Anne Marie Anderson: With people's ideas you're talking about? Yeah. I don't know. Will it be high pressure? I mean, it all comes from your leader accepting it and the willingness, and again, comes through there, to expand upon it. So you come up with an idea. right? And I come up with an idea and maybe neither of them are perfect, but it becomes a yes and the old improv, right? So let's say we're somewhere and they say, Hey, Shari wants to do this. And you're like, yes, and we could do this or yes. And this, but that has to be cultivated within your organization that it's corroborating because people feel invested, right? When, when you've got invested teammates, you turn your disengaged workers into invested teammates, you've got a lot going on because then you're all winning together. So it's a matter of not butting people against each other. I like that. I like that one too. Let's see, is there commonalities there? Can we make this work? But if you are trying to breed, and I think a lot of people do this within organizations, competitiveness, hyper competitiveness, then you're really not going to be building at all. You're going to be tearing down.

Shari Simpson: You know, I think that concept of competition and teamwork is amazing in the context of the yes and, because I think so many times we talk about teamwork and we have these very formal or HR ways of describing teamwork, but we could teach our leaders something as simple as that concept of yes and. Yes.

Anne Marie Anderson: Easy, build upon it. Think of it like Legos if you need to, building upon it to get the best result.

Shari Simpson: Yeah, I love that. You know, as we wrap up our conversation, I have two more questions for you. And the first one is, what are some immediate steps, the first steps listeners can take

right now to begin building that personal authenticity and audacity and confidence in themselves?

Anne Marie Anderson: Say no. Start acting in any way that's different than you have acted before. If that is saying no to things, if that is trying something new, if that is meeting new people, whatever it is, the action of doing something different will start you on your way.

Shari Simpson: I love that. Okay, so this is a more personal question. With all of the people that you've met over your career, is there one that sticks out, that kind of exemplifies this audacity that you've seen that you're like, man, this person, every time I see them on the field or doing their work, like this is the thing I'm talking about.

Anne Marie Anderson: Okay. The answer to that question is this. In 1996, I was Los Angeles bureau producer for ESPN. The Lakers got a high school signee to be part of the Lakers. I was there along with the media for his first practice. His name was Kobe Bryant. Kobe walks in, and we're like, here's this teenager. Do anything. What's he going to be like? I'm sure he's going to be a little shy or kiss the ring or whatever. And he wasn't. He walked in so confidently that as the media, we loved it. But some of the players, it rubbed the wrong way. Oh, yeah. but Kobe was so sure of himself. And here's the thing, that when I was little, my father called me cocky. One time, when I was 11, he was my biggest shooter, and I hang on to that for 40 years, right? So I finally look up cocky, and it says, so sure of one's abilities that it annoys other people. And I was like, wait a second, so sure of one's abilities, yes, that it annoys other people? Well, as my kids would say, that's OPP, that's other people's problems. And Kobe Bryant was exactly that. He walked in, he knew that he belonged and why he was there, and everybody else had to get over it. And you know what? They did.

Shari Simpson: Yeah. Kobe Bryant was audacious. Such a great conversation and what a great story to end on and just an encouragement for our audience to bring that audacity. Go get your book. I think it's fantastic and hopefully our community can help support you in that as well.

Anne Marie Anderson: Thank you very much. The book's called Cultivating Audacity, Dismantle Doubt, and Let Yourself Win. It's available on Amazon and wherever you buy your books. Love it. Thanks again.

Shari Simpson: Thank you.

Announcer: I hope you enjoyed today's episode. You can find show notes and links at TheHRMixtape.com Come back often and please subscribe, rate, and review.