



Anoushé Husain Finding Our Way podcast - full transcript

Mary-Ann Hello, I'm Mary-Ann Ochota and welcome to Finding Our Way, the podcast from the British Mountaineering Council, a.k.a. the BMC. It's all about diversifying the voices we normally hear talking about the outdoors. So in each episode we talked to folk who are usually busy climbing, mountaineering or walking. We find out what they've learnt from their adventures and explore what the rest of us can learn from them too. So good chat, memorable stories and hopefully some insight and inspiration from people who are making real change happen.

Joining us today is someone who has been described as a force of nature. By day, a civil servant working on diversity and inclusion, and by night, a kick-ass climber. She also happens to be a Guinness World Record holder, international paraclimber and the co-founder of Paraclimbing London, a group designed to create safe space, develop peer support and help remove barriers that disabled people might have in accessing climbing in London. She also is in her free time, obviously is an ambassador for Ehlers-Danlos Support, UK Ambassador for Limb Power UK who work with amputees and people with limb difference. And she's a celebrated public speaker. I am very, very pleased to welcome from London Anoushé Husain. Hello, Anoushé!

Anoushé Hi!

Mary-Ann Did I say Ehlers-Danlos correctly?

Anoushé I think you did!

Mary-Ann Oh phew! Thank you. You told me how to say it. And then I was like, 'I cannot remember!'

Anoushé it was a good job.

Mary-Ann Thank you. Thank you. Okay. So you do a lot of stuff. Let's be honest. How do you see yourself? What is the world of Anoushé like? Tell me. Introduce yourself.

Anoushé So the world of Anoushé is probably a huge juggling act on a tightrope, with fireballs being juggled at the same time. And I think because I'm a really passionate person - I got described by somebody this week as a Type A - so I'm very driven, which can obviously lead to stress and other stuff. But so yeah, basically I'm driven and I'm passionate and when I feel passionate about something, I'm going to throw myself in 100%. The problem is I'm passionate about a lot of things, so effectively I'm throwing myself at 100% in a lot of places, which means I might be doing a bit too much?! But then, you know, that's what gives me purpose and that gives me joy. So why not, right? So, yeah, busy. Got a day job, you know, 9 to 5 hours. Normal day job.

But it's about changing a workplace. And that for me is great. I used to work in energy and non-

carbon fuels before in the Civil Service. I've really had a very interesting journey there.

Out of my day job, I'm training in the evenings. And I've also actually don't work on Tuesday afternoon so I can train some more when the walls are out of peak times and I can just have a bit more luxury of choosing my routes a bit more and experimenting a bit more on the climbing walls. And then when I'm not doing all of that, yeah. It's the public speaking, it's the blogging, it's the going out and trying to create change. And for me, I have a real bugbear about where people are treated less fairly, not because of who they choose to be, but because of who they are.

So I'm talking colour of skin, sexual orientation, gender, sex, disability, visible or invisible, health condition, neurodiversity and social mobility, socio-economic background. You don't choose who you are born to, where you were born, or what background you're born into. Yet so many people are judged on that - accents and whatever. So all of that. Stuff you cannot choose.

Essentially, I have a real issue when people in any of those groups are stigmatised or judged or not given the same opportunity for potential. So that's why the passion. It's fundamentally wrong.

Mary-Ann You've brought that passion for awareness of difference and equity of access and opportunity, to your climbing journey as well. Tell me about how those two strands of your life fit together.

Anoushé When I start climbing in London, in Castle Climbing Centre in Finsbury Park, I didn't know any other paraclimbers. And in fact, I only met my first paraclimbers at my first competition nine months after I started with my coach.

And it was a hugely overwhelming experience to suddenly see so many disabled people who were climbing really cool things in the same space. It was great because I got to learn loads, but it was also really overwhelming because that made me realise how much of a community I was missing. I had to train for a whole year with other people who, you know, I'm happy to train with, but it's just not quite the same thing when you don't have other disabled people to train with and to learn from. It doesn't even have to be the same disability. It's just a real respect for one's journey that we are having to all adapt a bit differently than a short person or a really tall person who has to go in a small space. You know what I mean? It's just it's a bit different to have somebody just a bit more from your own community in that sense.

And that kind of put the seed of creating Paraclimbing London into my head. And then late 2017, I started effectively bouncing the idea around, and said, 'Look, if I created a group, what would people do?' And people seemed like, 'Yeh, seems interesting'. So I thought, okay, well I'll create a private Facebook group and collect paraclimbers and see what will happen. And we grew from 0 to 50 in the space of three weeks.

Mary-Ann Wow.

Anoushé And then I just went, 'Oh, crud, this is big'. And then one of my best friends, Anna Knight, said, 'You need help. I'll jump on board'. And so we went from an idea that I had, to Anna joining on, and then we co-founded and launched it formally and it's now 200 plus members. We've run out of multiple walls. We run the biggest competition, paraclimbing competition in British history, that we know of. We have 55 competitors in one day come to us from all over the country. We had people from Guernsey coming to our climbing session last month, you know? Yeah.

Mary-Ann Yeah, that's huge, as a part time job!

Anoushé And something I do entirely as a volunteer. Yeah.

Mary-Ann So that's interesting what you were saying about you hadn't realised that you were missing community until you started climbing with other paraclimbers and going, 'Oh hang on a minute, we share something. Even though we might not have the same disability or have to adapt moves in the same ways or in different ways'. What is it that sort of creates that affinity group that

means you have more in common than, say, with someone who's able-bodied?

Anoushé Yeah, I think so. I mean - the word 'disability' is a huge umbrella word as it is, it encompasses so many disabilities. But you know what, in the UK they're saying one in four people are now officially like declaring themselves as disabled. And that's probably, you know, an understatement in terms of the number. Because a lot of people won't be saying that. And yet you don't see portrayal in the media. You don't see portrayal in books as much. There's an othering that takes place with disabled people.

Anoushé More with visible conditions because you can see the person. Therefore, there's an othering in that sense. But even harder for invisible conditions who inevitably get Gaslit, told that their experience isn't valid and things like that. So we all share that. All of us. Inevitably. I don't know of a single disabled person who hasn't had some sort of negative societal experience or barrier given to them because they're disabled.

Mary-Ann Right. Someone who's listening to that saying, 'I don't know if I'm part of that problem, but I don't want to be'. What do they do? A climber who's at a climbing wall, regularly goes down, might see you on the other side of the wall, doing your thing. As an individual, rather than the kind of systemic stuff that we can definitely get to, as an individual, what is it that they should be doing, or be mindful of, or not be doing?

Anoushé So I think the climbing community is actually pretty inclusive from what I've seen and read. That's part of the reason I love being a climber is because the community's so bloody awesome. But at the same time, yeah, there are things you can do. So, say, I don't know. If you see somebody sight-guiding somebody. First of all, great. Go ahead and look, because you might be curious and stuff like that but don't overlook either. It's just one of those things like, go have a look, go be curious, absolutely. But, you know, staring to the point where it's rude - I don't think anybody enjoys that.

Mary-Ann Right.

Anoushé And also, you know, if you're seeing somebody who looks able bodied but is really struggling, potentially with an easy move, right? Don't assume, don't make an assumption that they're not trying hard enough, don't say something like that. Don't spray beta at somebody. You know, we say this about, you know, generally in Bouldering areas, don't spray beta because it's just not a welcome thing unless somebody asks for it. Well, it's even less welcome in the disability community because inevitably the beta is probably going to be wrong.

Mary-Ann Now I came across this term in another interview for Finding Our Way. I was like, 'I'm not a climber, what is this 'spraying beta'?'

Anoushe So you're telling people how to make the move. So say, for instance, I'm on a climb and there's a really big left handed move that I have to do and I'm just not managing for some odd reason. And instead of letting me work it out and maybe spend 20 attempts working out because I really like those types of problems where I can, you know, spend twenty attempts before finally working out I needed to move my toe by a millimetre to get it, you know? That sort of stuff. I really enjoy that. What I don't like, if I haven't asked for the advice, is for somebody to randomly at the bottom and go, 'Well, go that way little bit more, go that way'. No, I don't enjoy that. It's not letting me be in my own head, be actively mindful and present in the moment, letting me work out what I need.

My partner will tell me if they're tired of belaying me and you know, 'I'll come down if I'm struggling and I'll often go, 'Hey, do you mind if I just go tackle this problem for a while, until I tire out?' And they'll be, 'Yeah, sure. You're clearly in the mood. Go for it'. And that's fine. But what I don't like is people randomly telling me, especially because sometimes I've had this case where people don't know I don't have a right arm. Because it's maybe in front of me on a climbing wall. So they haven't quite twigged that there is half an arm missing and they're going, 'Well, why don't you just reach out with your right hand?' And I'm going, 'Hmm, not really an option!' waving my right arm out in the air.

It's one of those things where, why don't we just watch, observe, maybe be patient and wait for the

person to come down and ask if they would mind getting some advice or ask what they find the problem is.

And then have an educated conversation around that and judge from the tone. Ask permission as to whether the person wants advice or not.

Mary-Ann Yeah, okay.

Anoushé Rather than just spraying it, spitting it at them. That's the concept of spraying beta. Just doing it in a way that's non-consensual.

Mary-Ann Because I guess inherent in that is a notion of superiority. 'I know the answers and you, Little Lady...' Or I don't know, I mean, that gets us to an intersectional point. Is it because you're a woman? Is it because you're disabled? Is it because you're not white? I don't know.

Anoushé I found that I get a lot less 'sprayed at' than most people, but I have a very visible disability. So people will go, 'Hey, she might be struggling because she actually has one and a half arms'. I have found - this is all extremely anecdotal and I would love to do an academic study on this - but I found the people who look less disabled, visibly less disabled, or aren't disabled or don't identify as disabled, and especially if they look female, identify as female or are female, then they are the ones who generally I find they're the ones who get it. And this includes visually impaired folks who don't look disabled but clearly have their own issues when it comes to climbing, who absolutely need to be told where to go. And really bad comments are given to them until such time as somebody points out, 'They're actually blind'. And like, well, inappropriate.

Just yeah, take some time to get to know who you're talking to and what their problem is and why they might be moving in a certain way. And that could apply to anybody from, say, for instance, somebody who's very overweight and therefore can't do the same angles as somebody else because of the nature of how their body moves. That doesn't mean they want advice on the wall while they're trying really hard. It just means... They might be happy to have a conversation on the ground. They might not be. And you have to take that on the chin if that's the case. But they might be, you know. Ask.

Mary-Ann Yeah. And kind of don't, I guess, mistake being friendly for demonstrating your superior or perceived superiority.

Anoushé Exactly. Exactly. Like, you know, ask if somebody wants advice on their technique before saying, 'Hey, you're double tapping'. So basically tapping your foot twice on a hold or something like that. You know, that's just a bit of poor technique when you land your foot and you've landed it wrong. So you've got to correct your foot on the thing. Okay. Before telling somebody that they're doing that a lot, you know, I - you know, I tell people - but I often ask, 'Are you okay with me helping with some coaching tips and techniques to make your climbing more efficient?' And they'll go, 'No, not in the mood today because I've had a really bad day at work', or something or 'Yeah, no, totally. What am I doing wrong? What can I do to gain some energy?'

Mary-Ann Right.

Anoushé And I'll go, 'Yeah, well, this is this is something I've seen. If you can work on this today, I think it will help your climbing a lot'.

Mary-Ann Got you. The last time I was at a climbing wall, someone said, 'Can I suggest you don't use your knees?' And I was like, 'Cool'.

Anoushé God, I use my knees all the time!

Mary-Ann All the time. They end up quite bruised.

Anoushé I've ended up using my nose.

Mary-Ann Wow. Yeah, that's special skills.

Anoushé I know, right? Use what you got! [laughs]

Mary-Ann Okay, so let's talk a little bit about your climbing. That you're an international paraclimber. You talk a lot on Instagram about managing your chronic conditions and the challenges of climbing. I mean, climbing, I'm assuming, is quite an unforgiving sport. For your body. Tell us a little bit about - for our listeners who might not be so familiar with you as a force of nature - tell us a little bit about your climbing and how you make that work for you.

Anoushé Yeah. So, I mean, I got into climbing quite late in the game and it was quite by fluke after I had cancer ten years ago. And one of the problems with the treatment was my left arm got impacted by it. And so I really struggle raising my left arm above my shoulder without weight bearing. So I'm talking things like hair drying my hair, shampooing my hair, putting my socks on. So real problems of personal independence were starting to appear. And one of my best friends said, come to the climbing wall. And long story - I've talked about this a lot - and then I moved to London a couple of years later, start training. And that's when I started entering competitions. And yeah, it was pretty hard in the first year, partly because I do have Ehlers-Danlos syndrome (EDS). And with that it means that your joints can - in my case, the type of EDS I have, because there's 14 types - the type I have is the hyper-mobile type. In essence, anybody who has EDS, the collagen that they produce in their body is wrong. So the blueprint we have to produce collagen is wrong. And as a consequence, anything with collagen in the body can be badly constructed.

Mary-Ann Okay.

Anoushé Collagen happens to be in most connective tissue around the body. So if you think of your connective tissue, in my case, it's loose and stretchy because collagen is loose and stretchy. It means joints can spontaneously dislocate because the connective tissue isn't really doing what it's supposed to do anymore.

Mary-Ann Okay. At the point you're saying that I'm like, 'Is climbing a good idea?'

Anoushé It is.

Mary-Ann okay.

Anoushé So funnily enough, we didn't know it was at the time. But one of the issues with people with EDS is we have problems with our spatial awareness because essentially because everything internally is loose and stretchy, things go beyond their range of movement far more than we realise. We just don't know. Because we're so used to it. And climbing is a points of contact sport. You're constantly in contact with things. Your hands, feet, sometimes your knees, sometimes various other bits of your body are in contact with the wall on a regular basis. You can't really go beyond the hold because you're meant to go to the hold. Right?

Mary-Ann Right.

Anoushé As a consequence, you don't go out of range that frequently. And when you do, your climbing partner can probably tell you because. Well, besides the fact that it might be quite painful, your partner is going to go, 'That doesn't look normal! Stop doing that!'

So it's a great way to move. For instance, in swimming, one of the problems I have is I still fall fully out of range because the water is there but it's not enough to stop me. It's not enough to tell me where my end of range is. I'm not getting feedback.

Mary-Ann Whereas when you're climbing because it's such a visceral sense-based activity, you're getting loads of that neurological feedback of where your body is in, in space?

Anoushé Yeah. And I'm getting a load of, I'm getting a load of feedback and then also inevitably it's ended up being my rehab. when I walk, my joints come out of place a lot more frequently than I'd like, which has made walking a lot more challenging over the last couple of years. But climbing will put those joints back in place. So I you know, I've routinely come to the wall with a hip out place and cracked it back in in the process of the climb. Painful as heck, but it works.

Mary-Ann How do you manage the pain burden? Does climbing play a role in that as well?

Anoushé Yeah, climbing. Climbing and movement for me. Generally, the endorphins from movement can really, really help. I've been told I'm a rare one in the sense that I'm still managing my life without painkillers as a daily thing. And so I manage my pain. So you get various levels of pain, so you get the chronic pain that's always there and I've just learnt to live with it. And then for the loud pain, it depends on how loud it is. Then there might be a medication that helps. But I find painkillers, they don't kill the pain, they just numb it for a little bit and they don't actually get rid of the root cause of the problem, which inevitably for me is probably going to be something that's gone wrong in my body. So I'd rather try and fix out the problem. And for me, pain tells me something is wrong.

So I use pain as a tool and to find out where, where things are going. And there'll be times in the year. Like, right now it's the change of season from summer to autumn. My pain levels tend to go through the roof with the season change. The pressure of the weather really impacts me so I can tell when it's going to rain because I know my pain levels are just dialled up. It's like a radio when you're turning the dial on the radio, the volume goes, the volume just goes up. The pain doesn't change, the volume of it just goes up. My pain is a sensation and a perception, so my perception of that pain goes up massively.

Mary-Ann Okay.

Anoushé My joints might be looser. I normally call the three weeks - the last week of September, two weeks in October - that's kind of injury season because it doesn't matter what I do, I'm going to pick up an injury because of the season change. It's just my body just goes through this transition every year, which is just really frustrating because you're always trying to work out what is going to go wrong. I found out yesterday I've managed to inflame the tissue between my ribs so it hurts to breathe. But other than that I'm okay. So I'm like, 'okay, at least it's done now I've just got a week of this to deal with. And then I'll be fine.' Give it a couple of weeks and there's as if nothing has happened.

Mary-Ann Wow.

Anoushé It's crazy. So yeah, I think the great thing about climbing is there's so many different climbs that are available. So you've got your slab, your vertical, your overhang, you've then got the grades, you've got everything from a three plus ad infinitum, especially once you start going outside and then you've got the choice to go Boulder, Top Rope, Lead or Second, if you're not comfortable leading, you can top rope on a lead and second it up. So you've got all of those options, which means it doesn't matter how you're feeling on a given day. There's probably going to be something for you. And even if you don't want to go climb, just going out and meeting other people at the climbing wall and just sitting and watching is still good for you mentally and socially and psychologically. So the climbing wall for me has become my respite from my health life.

Mary-Ann But you've also got climbing at home because you're married to Ken Ellacott.

Anoushé Yes.

Mary-Ann Tell me about him! Another international paraclimber.

Anoushé Yeah! He happened to be sitting right next to a climbing wall. So and he and I met in December 2017 at a paraclimbing competition in Newcastle. I was at the time collecting paraclimbers for Paraclimbing London, but again hadn't quite launched. And he was a new Paraclimber, he had just discovered climbing, was bouldering only because he didn't have any climbing partners. And he

basically started asking people, and they were like, 'oh, Anoushe's the London one collecting paraclimbers. Because he lived not far from me. And so he comes and introduces himself. At the time, I was really injured. So sitting on the floor in massive amounts of pain, just watching the others boulder. I'd just gone to get points of the competition. I wasn't going to, you know, just to finish it off round of the year. I'd really injured myself quite badly.

And so yeah, I was like, 'Yeah, I'm collecting paraclimbers, come along'. We climbed a bit in groups. I noticed he was already very naturally athletic and you could see that if he could get around some of the stuff that was disabling him in terms of his issues. So he had a traumatic brain injury from a hurdling accident in his second week of uni and had a brain stem stroke. Broke his skull, broke his neck.

Mary-Ann Hurdling as in track and field athletics?!

Anoushé Yeah, yeah, yeah. He was he was training and he tripped, the hurdle hit his back of his skull and broke everything. And so he had to relearn everything, walking, talking, eating, everything. And he was in a coma for several days and stuff, and they didn't know if he was going to make it. So he's had his own quite particular journey in terms of learning to accept that he is disabled in some ways. And yeah, climbing for him was about teaching him. I could see he was good because he's naturally athletic. He was naturally very strong. He was already, he had a really good training base at a gym. He just needed to transfer that to climbing. And so, yeah, later that year he joined, we went to national selection. He went separately and I went separately, but the competition overran and I was going to miss my train back to London if I wanted to attend the finals. Because he lives so close to me, I asked if he would mind giving me a lift home. And so he did. And...

Mary-Ann Aww.

Anoushé Three months later he asked me out, on Instagram of all things.

Mary-Ann Wait, publicly or as a DM?

Anoushé No! As a DM. I was travelling, I'd had a family member pass away and I was travelling for the funeral and stuff like that. And on my way back I put up an Insta story, which Marvel film was I going to watch on the plane? And he was like, 'Oh, do you know the new Marvel film is out?' I'm like, 'Ooh, yeah, haven't had a chance to see it yet.' He's like, 'Do you want to go?' I'm like, 'Yeah, sure'. And then I was like, 'Oh, wait, has he just asked me out on a date?'

Mary-Ann Oh, did you have that moment when you were like, 'I'm not sure if this is friends or date?'

Anoushé Yeah, because I hadn't had a date in five years, so I hadn't dated anybody in ages. And you know, Muslim hijabi, there's lots of questions around how one dates when one is a Muslim Hijabi. But anyway, then I was like, wait, is this friends, is this a date? Because, he'd not...you're a nice guy, but you've not shown any intentions of any sort. And he was asking me out on Instagram in my DMs. So that was a bit weird. And then he bought my cinema ticket. I was like, 'Oh crap, this is a date!' So then I was like, 'Mum and Dad, I'm on a date!'

Mary-Ann Your mum and your dad were the first people to tell that you're going on a date? I love that!

Anoushé Yeah, because culturally, I was like, you know what? He's not a Muslim. And you know, my parents were concerned about how I was going to find a partner for myself. So I wanted to tell them, you know, I'm going to go on a date, I will let you know how it goes. And you know, do whatever you need to do. Pray. Cross your fingers. Whatever. That he's a nice guy. Or if he's not, pray, cross your fingers that I dump him really quickly! Whatever. Right? But at least let's hope we have a nice time. And yeah, I mean, it was hilarious.

So we went out to the film and it was good and we went out to have lunch and it was good. And then as the date was ending, the first thing he went is, 'I know you're really busy so let's get our calendars

out right now and book in our next date.' It's like, 'Oh, my God, this guy has understood!'

Mary-Ann Amazing.

Anoushé He's like, understood how hard it is to juggle things. He's just understood it and taken away that emotional labour for me to work it out. I was like, 'Oh, wow, okay, there's something special about him'. And yeah, a year later we were engaged. He proposed at BLOKFest in London. Blokfest is a friendly bouldering competition that takes place over five comps. And he proposed at my climbing wall because they were running it there. And we were meant to get married in the first week of Covid. Obviously the first week of Covid was locked down. That was also meant to be when I was meant to be doing my Guinness World Record attempt, it was the same week. Beginning of the week was meant to be Guinness World Record and end of the week was meant to be the wedding.

Mary-Ann That was going to be a big week!

Anoushé It was a very big week indeed! And yeah, we ended up getting married, well, civil wedding in July and religious wedding in August.

Mary-Ann So you're a practising Muslim. You're, as you say, a hijabi. You wear a headscarf. Ken is not Muslim?

Anoushé He is.

Mary-Ann Tell me about that.

Anoushé So, yeah, he went off and reverted on his own. So there's a concept in Islam - there's no compulsion in Islam. So even if things are mandatory on Muslims, nobody should force you to do them. That's a question between you and God as to whether you do those mandatory things. No other person should force you to do it. Again, I know topically and in the world there's a whole conversation happening around that. But that is the actual rule. And, you know, there's a lot of intersectional issues around that, around the world at the moment. And so Ken brought up religion on our third date and went, 'Well, if I want to marry you, I'm going to have to, you know, convert'. I went, 'This is our third date, what are you talking about?!' Marriage?! We're having pizza just after having seen the London Eye. What are you doing? This has gotten really heavy really quickly.'

Anoushé In Islam we say 'revert'. So there's a concept of everybody is born Muslim, like, inherently born Muslim, but they might not be in a background where they're born into Muslim families or whatever else. So the whole idea is that they don't convert to Islam, they come back to Islam, huh?

Mary-Ann Okay. And folks, if you're also wondering about Islam, because there's a lot of mistruth out there, we will get those recommended websites from Anoushé and put them in the show notes.

Anoushé Yeah.

Mary-Ann Cool. Wow. So you share faith, you share the fact that you're disabled, you share a huge amount of climbing together. How does that pie chart fit in terms of your identity?

Anoushé Um, so we're a couple that didn't become a 'We' when we got married or started going out. We are still very much individual people. He has his own life. I have my own life. Yes, we intersect in so many ways. We have so many things in common, but we actually love the fact that we're also very different. I think that's really healthy in any friendship or relationship. I think that's healthy in any culture, frankly, that there is diversity in that sense and being respectful about it. And actually we have some really fascinating conversations around diversity and inclusion at home because we're both passionate about it, but in very different ways.

Mary-Ann You have had a big year. You are a Guinness World Record holder. Yeah. Tell me about what you get to do to be [sings] 'A record break-errr!'

Anoushé So honestly, if you really want to break a record, go into the Guinness World Records website, search the record and see if it exists. If it doesn't exist, set one, approach them with a business case and sort of go, 'I want to set one.' If it does exist, break it. So that's kind of it in simple terms but in this case Guinness actually approached me and they said, 'Would you like to consider doing this?' And essentially what they were asking me to do is climb one-handed for an hour, [achieving the] longest distance climbed over that time. And then we started getting into the what do you mean by one-handed? So because my right arm is my workhorse on the climbing wall, as I said, I have problems with my left arm. I have weakness issues, I have strength issues, I have grip issues and I have stamina issues. So what does 'one-armed' mean? And they actually went, 'No, one-armed means one-handed. You're not using your right arm. The right arm cannot touch the wall'.

Mary-Ann Oh, right. Okay.

Anoushé As somebody who has trained one and a half armed all of my climbing career, moving to one arm is going to be a very big change. Actually. So, you know, I did the maths, I sat down before I even proposed it to my coaches. I sat down at the mat and said, 'Maybe it's doable'. I went to my coach and said, Do you think it's doable and what do we need to do to train? They went, 'You're nuts, but we'll give it a shot'.

Mary-Ann So you would have to not use your right arm, where you don't have a forearm or hand. But that's your stronger arm?

Anoushé Yes, so I have an elbow, so I have a heck of a lever on my right arm.

Mary-Ann Right.

Anoushé I can hold my body weight on my right arm on its own, on a climbing wall if I'm hanging.

Mary-Ann But your left hand, your left arm and hand...

Anoushé If it's under tension, I can't bend my arm. We tested it last week in the gym. I have 11 kilos of pull on my left arm. That won't do anything on a climbing wall if you're hanging in the air. Just means I can hang. I just can't do anything else. Once I'm hanging, my left arm is no longer usable in that position, if you see what I mean. I have to work out how to get back on the wall while my arm stays completely straight.

Mary-Ann And yet you said to the Guinness World Record guys, 'Okay, let's give that a go!' ?!

Anoushé Well, yeah. Cos the maths was adding up, sort of! I'm one of these people that if I'm going to take on a project like this, I'm going to sit down and rationally look at it. And if rationally, it shows that it's completely impossible, I wouldn't even entertain the idea. But rationally it was like, well, it's going to be bloody hard, but okay, let's give it an attempt. And I had no idea what injuries I was going to get as a consequence, because when you completely shift the way you climb to start with, and the Guinness Record was the longest distance climbed in an hour. So I was going to be climbing the same routes, exactly the same way, repetitively for an hour.

Mary-Ann On an indoor wall? So you climb, abseil down, you climb up the same route and back down. Gosh. Okay.

Anoushé Now, think about it. What climber does that? What climber does repetitive movements like that? Nobody. No climber does that. Even speed climbers don't climb that often. They'll do one attempt, two attempts, three attempts and then have time to rest. That's not how the Guinness attempt was. It was as many runs as I could get in an hour. So you're looking at speed climbing for an hour with precision, with half an arm less than I normally climb.

Mary-Ann And was there a particular grade that they were expecting you to climb at?

Anoushé I made I made my own route up based on the sets I was at that were available to me. I

tried several climbing walls as well just to see whether something else was suiting me better. The great thing is, as I said, the Castle Climbing Centre, I have a great relationship with me. They sponsor me, so they were really supportive of getting me off the ground on this project.

Mary-Ann Literally.

Anoushé Yeah, literally! They reset their top ropes every three months. So I knew every time I was going to make an attempt, I had a three month window. And so what you do is you practise, you practise, you practise, you practise, you make it as efficient as possible. You take videos of yourself. You go, you go, you go. And then you start picking up injuries because you're practising and practising and you're doing the same thing. As I said, climbers are not designed to climb that way. So you are repetitively rubbing the same skin on the same holds, you're repetitively putting the same strain of the same nature with the same pressure on the same joints in the same way, over and over and over again. Eventually something's going to break.

Mary-Ann You're not really selling it to me, to be fair.

Anoushé It was basically working out okay. It was extremely painful to start with because I really had to learn to use my left arm and dominate with that and also learn how to change how I used my core. Because when you're using one arm only, you don't have the other arm to help push you off the wall if you slam into it. I was effectively slipping and sliding all over the place and going sideways. So lots of that. Lots more dynamic movement because one arm means you're inevitably popping for holds. So you're going dynamically. You're not just walking up. You're effectively jumping up in some cases. Again, because you're going quickly. So you need to be gaining as many seconds as you can gain while you're going up.

My first attempt was meant to be in April 2020, but I caught Covid in February 2020 and by mid March 2020 I was struggling to breathe still and I was really unwell. Also, I kind of guessed that we were probably going to be in lockdown by then anyway. So actually the week I would have been doing the attempt was the week we went officially into lockdown. So. Fine. Not a problem. The problem was the first two weeks of lockdown I managed to dislocate my right knee. I got up from the kitchen table after I had finished work and went to go get a glass of water. I turned, my right foot stayed on the ground, and my knee followed me.

Mary-Ann Woah.

Anoushé I didn't realise it was dislocated at the time. I just knew I wasn't able to hold any weight on it. I thought I'd just twisted it or something. Turns out I'd torn two tendons, but because we were in lockdowns and stuff, I couldn't get any medical attention for about ten weeks in terms of the knee. So by the time I got my first scan, it was already restoring itself together, which meant it was a grade three tear in two tendons and that's normally career-ending stuff for a lot of people. So yeah, that was a problem. I got a blood clot in my other leg a week after the knee, probably because of the knee partly. And then when I got the blood clot when I was in hospital getting prescribed the blood thinners, they went, 'Ah, you've had a previous history of cancer, haven't you? I was like, 'yeah, but what does that have to do with the blood clot?'

They're like, 'Well. In younger people who get blood clots spontaneously, who've had a history of cancer, especially with type of cancer you did, and with the clinical history of your dad, because my dad has a lot of blood clots, erm, we need a check for a relapse'. I went, 'Oh, you've got to be kidding me'. So I was in lockdown, living on my own. Ken, at the time, we were still engaged because we couldn't get married. He was living with his parents. He was frontline as well, so he didn't want to come near me because I'd been so unwell already once that I wasn't shielding but my GP basically said 'You're not meeting anybody'. So I was paranoidly not shielding. I had to because I'd been so unwell in the hospital with my dislocated knee because of the blood clot. And then they're like, 'Yeah, we need to check you for a cancer relapse'. And then when they did check me, they found funky things in my lungs, which they were like, that might be a relapse. So they actually found growths in my lungs. And I was like, 'You've got to be kidding me, this is going to be the worst year ever.' Because at the time, the doctor wasn't convinced it wasn't cancer and she wasn't convinced it wasn't

terminal.

Mary-Ann Oh my goodness.

Anoushé I went from, 'Hey, I'm attempting a Guinness World Record' to six weeks later, 'I might be dying of cancer, but we're not quite sure'. And then the serious conversations with Ken was, I know we're planning a wedding. Do we also need to be either backing out of this wedding or potentially planning a funeral at the same time? Because if I have cancer, it's going to go quick. Because it was, it would have been a metastasised cancer in my case. And it's no idea where it had metastasised to. So yeah, not a great six months.

Mary-Ann The Queen of Understatement. Anoushé, how do you maintain that, I guess, kind of like, 'Okay, I'm going to take that on and deal with it'. I mean, you're telling me this with a smile on your face, but..

Anoushé In hindsight, it's hilarious now. Dramatically hilarious.

Mary-Ann There's there's a lot of trauma in this.

Anoushé Yeah. No, it was it was an awful six months. I got the news I wasn't relapsing a week before our religious wedding.

Mary-Ann Wow.

Anoushé So thank God for that. But it was a case of two, three months, several scans, lots of doctors who were specialists for other areas of my body were all calling me up, going, 'Are you okay?' So clearly I'd been put on some sort of red flagged list of everybody has to call me up to check I'm ok.

By the time I got back to the wall, when the climbing walls were open and when Ken came to visit me, when we were allowed to [make a Covid contact group] bubble and all the rest of it, I couldn't walk to my front door. I was so weak. I'd gone from training for Guinness to six weeks later, couldn't physically make it to the front door anymore. He was like, You can't leave home without help. And so that's when I became a wheelchair user because I couldn't leave. And we had a great time exploring outdoor spaces like Kew Gardens and London Zoo and things where I felt safe to go out and then finally went to the climbing wall. I met my coach and he had to hoist me up a three plus, I couldn't even do a three plus. He had to hoist me up multiple three pluses like I was just holding every hold and just trying to do it because I physically couldn't put any weight down on my right leg. So I went from training for Guinness to six months later being hoisted on a climbing wall.

Mary-Ann But here we are in 2022.

Anoushé And Guinness happened. A major surgery and then Guinness happened. Yeah.

Mary-Ann Wow.

Anoushé Yeah, it was. It was insane. Like the training on. I mean, I did the surgery, came back summer last year to training, and I was just doing normal training. Nothing Guinness-y. And then I kind of felt really energetic one day. And I went to my coach, 'do you mind if I just try a couple of runs and see what it feels like?' Ten runs later I was like, Oh, that's ten runs. I wasn't expecting that. And it went smoothly. And I went, Okay, well, that's unexpected. I was like, Well, if it's gone that smoothly, I have no excuse not to try again.

And yeah, in fact, we plans got made. I started training for it again. Was meant to do it in November, I picked up a kidney infection. I couldn't do it then. Was meant to do it in December and taking the day off work, kind of taking the day off work. You know, we were prepared. I'd had my Guinness breakfast because everything was being mapped. I had... Food was being managed.

Mary-Ann What does your Guinness breakfast entail?

Anoushé Brown bread with nut butter, two eggs. And then I was going to have something sweet just before heading to the climbing wall. So like a chocolate chip cookie or something. Because of the way my energy systems were, we had so much time practising that we kind of knew exactly what energy I needed when I'd even like put on a blood sugar monitor to see what my blood sugars were doing. We had heart rate monitors. We really weren't doing this scientifically because my body is so variable and I'm so chronically ill that we really have to put science on our side to to get this done. And, yeah, December was there. We were ready. I was ready. I'd been playing music from some of my favourite films in my, you know, in my earphones for a day straight just to keep the psych up. And then I get the call - the judge for the Guinness World Records has caught Covid.

Mary-Ann Oh, no!

Anoushé My coaches were in the train, on the way to the climbing wall when this all happened. I only live 10 minutes away. So it was one of those things where like we were packed, everything was at the entrance.

Mary-Ann Oh!

Anoushé Yeah, it was such a downer.

Mary-Ann So you had to wait because they have to be there in person to witness, to verify the attempt?

Anoushé Something had happened. So it wasn't just the Guinness judge, it was the camera crew. It was the whole Guinness team caught Covid. 'You've got to be kidding me'. Like, is this fate telling me not to try? Because it's been so many things... I think that's partly why I really wanted to do it at the end, because I was just like, Let's go against all the odds that have come about. I put so much time into this. I've sacrificed some of my competitive career to do this. You know, I've sacrificed some of my health, a lot of my well-being. Because effectively to do the number of runs I ended up doing means you have to practise that number of runs week in and week out. To do that, you have no energy to do anything else. So at one point I felt like a robot. I was just work, climb, work, climb. And that was it. It was it was awful. I mean, it was mentally awful.

Mary-Ann How many did you have to do in the end?

Anoushé So for the record, I got asked to break by Guinness was 200 metres. On the wall I was training on that ended up being 28 climbs in an hour, one-handed. So that worked out to about a climb every 2 minutes. Okay. Obviously I wasn't in it for that. You know, if you're going to do it. If you're going to put yourself through that, do it. Do it properly. Like if you aren't going to do it, do it properly. You know, you're not going to put yourself through that and not do better than that. So 28 was what I was hoping for if I was having a health flare and the Guinness Day just happened to be on the same day. You know, I knew I could do it. I was doing a practise run once and my diaphragm spasmed in the run so I couldn't physically breathe. Like it was completely spasmed. And I was just sat there on a chair, waiting for it to ease off while the hour was going.

Mary-Ann Oh.

Anoushé In fact, that's in the Guinness video on YouTube. The first time I'm doing the practise runs. And that's what happened. It actually happened in when the video crew was with me and I still pushed through and got to 200 metres. But it was excruciating. And I just, you know, I just had I mean, I was crying by the end of it because it was so painful. I was so disappointed with the practise attempt and I was so disappointed with it. But at the same time, I was like, okay, if this is the worst it's going to get in terms of practise attempts, I mean, I've done all the bad things in practise attempts. At least I now know it probably can't get much worse aside from an actual critical injury. So we're fine. And then. Yeah. April came along and nobody had COVID. I got the day off work. I went to the climbing wall. My coaches are like, You look different today. And I'm like, Yeah, we're at the climbing

wall. I know I'm supposed to be excited, but now I know I'm here to do business. There was, like, an energy change.

Mary-Ann Wow.

Anoushé Because we'd gotten there, I'd gotten there. The hardest bit was actually getting to the climbing wall.

Mary-Ann Right.

Anoushé Funnily enough for me, mentally. And then I basically told everybody I was going to be extremely antisocial for an hour because I had Come Alive from The Greatest Showman in my ears. For the hour. Because that was my Guinness song.

Mary-Ann Okay.

Anoushé I only finally saw the film last week. And funny enough. But the lyrics are so good that they were. They were just basically. And that was it. And I crossed 28 runs in about 33 minutes.

Mary-AnnWoah.

Anoushé I hadn't taken a break yet. I was doing a run every 70 seconds.

Mary-Ann Oh, my goodness.

Anoushé No, sorry. I was doing 40 second run, 30 seconds rest, every 70 seconds. It was a new cycle. And I'd worked out mathematically, if I didn't take any breaks, I could get 51 runs done. And in no practise had I ever not taken a break. For at least 5 minutes. 28 runs went. And my coach was like, Do you want a break? I can't breathe by then. Like, I'm literally my heart rate's at 200 because we had like the heart rate was visible to everybody. So everybody could see it was very high. I'm like, 'no break'. She's like, 'You've done it.' No break. And we weren't even speaking. It was just nod, shake. I couldn't do anything else.

33 runs came. That's when I took my break. I took it for a minute and 20 seconds. And then I was back on again. Just enough for the heart rate to slow down. And then run 48, my fingers start bleeding. So if I started ripping skin because it heats. So because you're doing repetitive movements when your hand is getting really hot and sweaty. It doesn't matter how much chalky you use and two the holds themselves are getting hot.

Mary-Ann] Because you're going up and down all the time?

Anoushé Yes. It doesn't matter what you do to your skin, you're going to rip.

Mary-Ann Oh.

Anoushé I'm just thankful it didn't happen until run 48. And run 48 happened. Come down, get taped up, run 49, second finger goes, come down, get taped up, run 50 comes just it was literally just... And at one point I just went to the duty manager, I just went, 'Do you mind me bleeding on your wall? Because I think it's just going to happen'. And he just goes, 'Go ahead and bleed. You just keep going, we'll clean it up afterwards.' Because I'm on blood thinners, so I wasn't just going to bleed. I was going to bleed a lot.

Mary-AnnOh, man.

Anoushé And then, yeah. And I kept because in my head I had them out. So I knew how many runs could get. And they told me, 60 seconds left. And my coach is like, You want to take a rest and go, Yeah. And I was like, No, I'm just going to go straight up. And yeah, I got 51 done in the hour.

Mary-Ann Wow. Congratulations.

Anoushé Yeah, thank you. And then I went out and bought ice cream.

Mary-Ann With your hand hanging off.

Anoushé So my husband came to pick me up, we went down to the high street and went home and I said, I don't want to be home right now. I just want to go out and pick up some ice cream because I'm really hungry. [laughs]

Mary-Ann That's amazing.

Anoushé Really, really hungry.

Mary-Ann That's amazing.

Anoushé And I couldn't tell anybody for six weeks!

Mary-Ann Oh, cruelty.

Anoushé I know it. Right?

Mary-Ann But now we can all celebrate that.

Anoushé And I made the book!

Mary-Ann so if you buy that Guinness World Record album for 2023? So in people's Christmas stockings, all that stuff, birthday presents, you're in it!

Anoushé And not only me, there's another paraclimber - Jesse Dufton is also in it for his Old Man of Hoy. So we're both in it.

Mary-Ann There you go. There you go.

Anoushé How cool is that?

Mary-Ann Was it worth it? The bleeding, the wellbeing, the pain?!

Anoushé Yes and no. Yes, because now that I'm back into competition training. I am mentally much more settled in my competition training than I ever have been before. I'm able to zone out audiences a lot easier and there are things I have learnt through Guinness I don't think I ever would have learnt exclusively through competition training, so I think there are some really good things.

Mary-Ann Is that because of the narrowness of the focus that it demanded from you?

Anoushé Yeah. Because you have to be a machine for an hour in a Guinness run. I couldn't let anything get in the way. Even if I mucked up a route and I fell off. It didn't matter. I had to go back and go quickly because it was down to seconds. And so, yeah, because of that, because of that focus... it [was] so hard to learn. But it's so useful now. So there's that. There's a certainly learning that I am definitely capable of a lot more than I think I am. So that that's been good again in terms of just not just competition training, but life generally. Like if you really do put your mind to it, you might actually get it done.

Guinness did ask me whether I wanted to try for 8 hours and we did do the maths and I realised that if I don't have a sponsor for a glove, there's no chance in heck I'm going to do it because the first thing that's going to go is my skin in eight hours. Let alone who the heck is going to belay me for all of that time? And who's going to belay me for all the practising?! And how am I even going to find the

time to practise? Because to get 8 hours you really want a good practise run of six. That's a lot of climbing!

Mary-Ann There is that thing. As someone who doesn't do anything to that level of intensity where I see people putting themselves through endurance challenges or things that clearly have some degree of physical hardship, shall we say, or, you know, the kind of ultrarunning where people say, you know, 'my body was telling me I was dying, but I carried on anyway'. I do wonder sometimes, what is it that's driving you? What are you trying to prove, or deny, in order to kind of push those limits? Because often we represent that as exclusively a positive thing. 'You don't know your own limits until you push them'. But I do wonder sometimes, have we got that balance right?

Anoushé So for me, it was interesting as the Guinness attempt when they approached, it was really just a 'let's see if this is even possible.'

Mary-Ann Okay.

Anoushé [01:04:06] I was going with it as a playful thing. Obviously with everything that happened in the last two years, for me, part of it was telling myself I could still do things like I've become an ambulant wheelchair user in the last two years. A lot of my physicality has changed the last years. My life has changed and in ways that I don't think any of us could have predicted medically. And there's been a lot of grief and a lot of trauma around the last year as well. And so for me, it was almost an extreme way of finding normality in one aspect of it. But what it ended up becoming and...when you train for something so hard in such a focussed way, like ultramarathoning - I can relate to some of them now because of the way I did my Guinness World Record. Because essentially it is a repetitive thing that you're doing constantly. There's no change. The only change is you. Right? The wall isn't changing, the route that people are running isn't changing. The only change is you. And by that, you get to imagine yourself as an onion. As you get more and more tired and fatigued and mentally drained and less resilient and more emotional, those onion layers start peeling. And you get to find your true essence. You get to find that thing inside you that makes you, you. When you're in that zone. Because you've effectively peeled away all the bull, all the stress. You just get to see yourself as a pure person. And and you get to know yourself on a level that I don't think very many people get to do.

It's like a crucible. You get so affected by doing something so intense because you have to be so focussed. You. You get rid of the impurities of the stress and the anything that's going on. You can't afford to think of those things because you're just like you said, you are basically not far from pushing yourself to the point of serious injury or death in some cases.

So yeah, it's, it's it's a very fine line. And I know I understand to some extent now why some people keep doing it. It's it's why I played around with the idea of trying it for 8 hours because actually that feeling is very attractive, to find that is very cool.

Mary-Ann The word inspiration and inspirational is often used in association with your name Anoushé, and I can entirely see why. Do you find that a wonderful thing, a thing that you feel you own? Is that sometimes I don't know, does it have a downside ever?

Anoushé It's a weird word, isn't it? Inspiration, I think, when I first started getting called inspirational, I really struggled with the word. I didn't own it. I didn't want to own it. And it's a loaded word for disabled people, because often they get called inspired for doing really normal things, like getting out of bed is inspiring. You know, going to work is inspiring. No, it's just normal, you know. And some cases no, actually, it is really inspiring. You know, it can actually be inspiring for somebody who's gone through an extreme amount of hardship for them to get out that and get up and go to work every day. It can be extremely inspiring. Sure.

But for me to get up, not really. So why are people saying it's inspiring? Because it's just it's tokenistic in its nature and almost like diminishing my identity, it's dehumanising. So I really didn't like the word.

And to some extent I really don't. And I like it when I'm inspiring to the point where somebody has done something about it. So a little while ago, somebody came up to me at the climbing centre and said, 'I heard your talk four years ago, and as a consequence of that I decided to take up paddleboarding. And I love it. And I found an amazing community of friends. And it's because of you that I decided to go try something new.' Do you know what? Brilliant. That is inspiring. Because that for me is what I'm seeking to do. I'm seeking to get people to realise when they have self-limiting beliefs, either because of what they have learnt about themselves through others, through society, or they have developed in their own selves. And to come out of that and go, 'I can do things, the world is my oyster.' Or, 'I realise I am being stigmatised by society and I don't believe in myself because of what other people have said to me. I'm going to stop listening to that and I'm going to go out and do things and reach my potential.

Whatever potential that is, because that's the person to decide, needs to decide. That potential is not the same for everybody. It's so relative, right? But for me, potential is going out beyond your comfort zone and trying something. And if you're good at it, honing in on that, if that's something you want to do. And if you're bad at it, enjoying it, if that's something you want to do.

But it's about going out there and doing that. And if, if, if what I do through my talks, if what I read through, what I role model, if, if anything I do can help people to do that, to learn to advocate for themselves, to get a better diagnosis in a doctor's room, if that's something they need to do, whatever it is that they need.

If that is what I'm able to do and if that is what's happening in people's lives as a consequence of maybe hearing one of my talks or reading one of my articles or seeing one of my posts, that is inspiring. Okay, I'll take that part.

Mary-Ann That's so cool. I feel inspired in a in a positive, good, uplifting way. I need to go and do something now to demonstrate that rather than just say it. Like you say, words are easy, action is a little bit harder sometimes, is it not?

Anoushé It is indeed.

Mary-Ann What is next for you Anoushé?

Anoushé In terms of my climbing life, well, I am currently working on all my weaknesses while I'm in down season, so that's great and a bit annoying, but it's International season next year, so I'll be training to go out for my next World Cups. So yeah, exciting times. And in a couple of weeks I'm running a paraclimbing open day in Luxembourg. So I'm a dual national, so I'm British and Luxembourgish and so I've joined the Luxembourg national team actually because they, they, they decided to create a paraclimbing team. And so I'm going out to help grow the movement over there a little bit in a couple of weekends time.

It just gives me a chance to replicate some of the good we've seen through Paraclimbing London and now so many para climbing movements like UK Paraclimbing Collective, United We Climb, Leeds ParaClimb, the Bristol Collective, all of them. There are so many paraclimbing clubs have formed since Paraclimbing London came and opened up the field basically and I'm really pleased with that. I think it's just so needed in the country, but I think it's also So needed in the world. I think that's also really exciting because you won't get good competitions without more and more people climbing around the world and you won't get good grassroots and you won't get good change in society without more and more paraclimbers,.

there's no New Guinness stuff in my sights yet. That being said, despite the hardship and the difficulties, if something came along, I might well train for it.

Mary-Ann You've got the bug now.

Anoushé I that's the problem. I don't think I will ever physically be able to do an ultra marathon considering I can barely walk 100 metres without looking like a drunk person. So the reality - I have

balance problems so I literally, if I turn my head one way, I walk the other way. So I literally do look really odd when I walk now. Thanks Covid.

So Ultramarathons, Ultra-activities... Going outdoors and climbing are all extremely challenging things for me. But indoor climbing is something that's accessible for me. Which means why can't I do my ultras indoors?

Mary-Ann There you go. Watch this space, folks. Watch this space. Anoushe Husain, thank you so much.

Anoushé Thank you.

Mary-Ann We're going to finish off with our quickfire questions. These are ten questions we ask all our guests on Finding Our Way. Oh, she's limbering up. Are you ready?

Anoushé Oh, I am.

Mary-Ann Okay. Describe yourself in three words.

Anoushé Positive. Happy, determined.

Mary-Ann Your favourite climbing snack.

Anoushé Brownies.

Mary-Ann Best climbing memory.

Anoushé My first 6A (graded climb).

Mary-Ann Bucket list destination.

Anoushé Everest.

Mary-Ann How often do you get lost?

Anoushé Uh. Are we talking realistically or figuratively?

Mary-Ann Either?

Anoushé Plenty.

Mary-Ann Your dream climbing partner.

Anoushé Oh, I think I'm already have him!

Mary-Ann Aww. If you were an animal, what animal would you be?

Anoushé Leopard.

Mary-Ann One thing that you always carry to a climbing wall.

Anoushé Green tea.

Mary-Ann Mmm!

Mary-Ann What does climbing mean to you?

Anoushé Life.

Mary-Ann Lastly, Anoushé, we want more of you. Where do we go? Give us your best social media or website.

Anoushé Yeah. So Instagram and Twitter are @AnousheHusain. On Twitter, I tend to be a bit ranty about airports and just, you know, disability rights, and all. And then on LinkedIn as well, I tend to post a bit. So just find Anoushé Husain. and website, Anoushehusain.com

Mary-Ann All those links will be in the show notes

Anoushé, thank you so much. And thank you for listening. If you liked what you heard, subscribe so you don't miss an episode. You should share the podcast with your friends and you should also let us know what you think. Use @TeamBMC on Instagram and Twitter and the hashtag #FindingOurWay. I'll see you on the next one.

Finding Our Way is brought to you by the British Mountaineering Council and is kindly supported by Berghaus. This episode was produced and hosted by me, Mary-Ann Ochota, edited and mixed by Chris Stone, and the show notes and transcript were produced by me and Tom Bennett.