

**EPISODE 1574**

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**FT:** So Money episode 1574, more audio excerpts from *A Healthy State of Panic*.

[INTRO]

[00:00:34]

**FT:** Welcome to So Money, everybody. I'm Farnoosh Torabi. Well, I'm on the other side of launch day. Welcome. It's Wednesday, October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023. *A Healthy State of Panic* was released into the world officially yesterday, and I am still on quite the high. We kicked off the festivities on Monday evening in Williamsburg at the Hoxton Hotel. Many of you showed up to celebrate, and enjoy food and drinks and music and a special conversation with Mrs. Dow Jones, Haley Sacks. All of that I'm going to post on social media soon, although you can see already in my stories many of the pictures and snaps and videos and reels that people took. I have professional photos that I want to share. It was an evening for the books.

See what I did there and then hours later to get ready for The Today Show. I did very happily. I hadn't been on The Today Show in person since before the pandemic, like actually on set since before the pandemic. So it was a real moment for me. Then if you've read the book or you know about the book, you know that I talk about being on The Today Show for the very first time in April of 2008 to talk about my first book. That moment was, for me, not a hot moment. It was not – let's just say I wouldn't have done it the way that I did. I said some things that I wasn't proud. Things worked out. Don't feel bad for me, but it was an example of how I misused my fear of rejection and how it backfired in that moment on live television and what I learned.

Fast-forward to today, 15 years later, this week going back on The Today Show, it was a different Farnoosh. Same Farnoosh but different Farnoosh. Same Farnoosh with her ambitions and all her imperfections, but different in the sense that I had a real positive healthy relationship with fear. I said on air, I said I'm terrified right now, but I'm working through it. The host, Craig Melvin, was like, "You don't look scared." I said, "Well, you know, I'm working through it." In my

mind, I'm thinking, yes, because I learned how fear can be a friend. It's a silent partner in everything that I do, and I appreciate it.

That's why I wanted to write *A Healthy State of Panic*. I wanted to teach everybody how to work with our fears, an emotion that just isn't going to go away because you want it to, or you tell it to, or you yell at it, or you fight it, or you run away from it. I think that fear comes up usually for a reason in our lives, and it's really important to listen to it in the moments when we're about to do something pretty high stakes, pretty high stakes. That happens a lot in our financial lives and in our careers and in our relationships and all the ways.

Can I just read to you a text that I got from one of my very, very good friends? She and I go back many years as friends, so she knew me before I was maybe a little bit more patient with fear. She's known me and my family for years. She said, "Farnoosh." She's a single mom, by the way, so she's got a lot on her plate. But she made time to open my book and start reading it this week. She said, "Farnoosh, you have a hit on your hands, casting for a Netflix series and more. This will seriously chart at the top of bestseller lists. You are one heck of a writer, storyteller, thinker, and guide. So proud of you." Then I said, "Kafi, I'm crying again." I said, "I've been kind of weepy, hearing how people are engaging the material in the book. It was my hope that it would be relatable, funny, and deep but not pretentious. Your review means the world to me."

I would love to know what you think of the book. If your book has arrived, if you were in the Panic Posse, and you received an early PDF of the book, please, this is kind of the most important thing anybody can do for an author, in addition to buying the book, sharing their love for it with friends. It's leaving a review. Because we live in a digital world, most books are purchased online. I mean, whether you're buying a coffee mug, a pair of sock, a car, a book, you will read those reviews. Those reviews will factor into your decision, whether you're going to buy it or not. Sites like Amazon, and Barnes and Nobles, and all these, they incorporate reviews and the quality of your reviews in your rankings. So more reviews equals more visibility equals more sales and allows books to become successful not just on the day they come out but for forevermore, hopefully. You can learn more about the book and where to get it at [ahealthystateofpanic.com](http://ahealthystateofpanic.com).

All right, let's share some more excerpts from the book. The audiobook is professionally done. It is available. I'm not pulling from that in today's episode. I'm just reading the book like as if you were at a book event, and I'm reading from my book. So it's not going to be as polished. It's not going to sound as great perhaps than the audiobook. So you definitely want to get the audiobook if you are an audio learner. If you prefer that, it's available on Amazon, on Audible, on Libro.fm. Check it out.

On Monday, I read the prologue and the introduction to the book. Today, I want to share a little bit of chapter two, which is dedicated to the fear of loneliness. Actually, Katie Couric, Katie Couric Media, she featured this excerpt on her site and in her newsletter today. Just to tee it up, it is a section on how my mom in particular moved through her fear of loneliness and her actual loneliness when she was just a newbie to America, a newbie to motherhood and marriage and all those really challenging things at the ripe age of 19. It describes an all too familiar immigrant story of isolation. But I think a lot of us are grappling with loneliness today, and we can find ourselves, and we can see ourselves in my mom. Here we go.

The fear of loneliness doesn't exclusively mean being in the absence of others. You can be in a marriage, on a team, sitting in a crowded cafe with your baby asleep in her stroller, and all the while feel like you are on your own with no shoulder to cry on or friend to share a laugh with. The feeling shows up when we find ourselves being an only or other. Loneliness expert John Cacioppo, the late director of the University of Chicago Center for Cognitive and Social Neuroscience, said this can be one of the riskiest types of loneliness, the one to really fear. "If you're in a crowd and that crowd is perceived to be antagonistic, then that's more dangerous than being alone," he said.

In other words, in the company of people who seem to lack empathy, who are unkind or untrustworthy is one of the scariest places to hang out. This fear is one to befriend. It may be telling you to take stock, find fruitful connections, and figure out where your resources are and how to use them to build community. Perhaps the people who are most successful at doing this are those who haven't been included in the overarching culture's narrative of who belongs and who doesn't. Sometimes, the crowd around us is so foreign. We don't know if they are antagonistic or friendly or who we can trust.

When my mom got married to my father, she was promised a whole new world. But when she got stateside, it was anything but this land is your land, this land is my land. She was 19, didn't speak the language, couldn't drive, and had no network. Her story may not be unique in a room full of immigrants. But living in an apartment in Worcester with me, her little human appendage, while my father spent his days at the university, all she felt was lonely. She was not only new to the country but also to marriage and motherhood. I didn't exactly cure her loneliness either. For my mom, some of her loneliness may have stemmed from not really wanting to be a mother, at least not so soon. I mean, she didn't even want me to call her mom in those early days, preferring me to use her first name, Sheida, followed by Joon, a common term of affection in Farsi. So for many years, she was not my mom. She was my Sheida Joon.

By the time I was three or four years old, my mother had earned her driver's license. On commutes to the Worcester Center Mall, a friend's house, or the grocery store, I heard stories inspired by her pilgrimage to the United States, a journey filled with equal parts hope and resentment. Just as she was about to turn 17, her parents sat her down and explained that she needed to get married and quick. College was not an option, nor was living with them indefinitely. My mom was the last remaining child in their house. Rather than encourage her to take the necessary time to create a plan and design her own way, as they had with her siblings, my grandparents introduced her to my dad to arrange a union.

These were also very unsettling times in Iran with rumblings of a revolution underway. I have no doubt that the fear of an uncertain future prompted their sense of urgency. So the decision was clear. The first viable suitor who checked enough boxes would earn her hand in marriage. My dad came from a well-to-do family in Shiraz. He was educated and already friends with my mom's brother-in-law. A year later, Mom was on a plane to the United States with her new husband and an oversized Samsonite handed down from her sister.

Mom missed the normal life back home. She missed focusing on her passions. Her life in America left her afraid, distrustful of the world around her. While I didn't always understand her anger and controlling nature or the depths of her sadness, looking back, I see that she was scared of being alone. My mom's loneliness was not a state of mind. You can move to a place with more community, but my mom didn't have the freedom to come and go as she wanted. At first, she couldn't drive. She didn't have the means to call a cab whenever she was bored and

wanted to go somewhere new. She couldn't just walk out of the apartment and try to meet new people. They wouldn't have understood her. She was facing too many barriers to connection, including mobility, language, and the lack of a shared cultural foundation.

Loneliness doesn't play around. In the absence of being able to create human connections, we need to reach for something else safe that makes us feel alive, even happy. Dance was an activity my mom brought with her from her past life in Iran, and it gave her a way to tap into her culture. Weekend mornings, while my dad was still asleep, she'd softly turn on the cassette player in our living room downstairs, close her eyes, and begin moving to and through the sounds of Iranian singers Hayedeh and Moein on classic tracks she had brought over from Shiraz. She did this alone, freely expressing herself without judgment.

As a kid, I studied her from a distance. I often felt a bit in the way, a wedge that stood in between my mom and her freedoms. I got the feeling that she didn't want me around all the time, something I can relate to now as a parent who hides often in the basement bathroom. Even I occasionally need a break from my children, two humans I willed into the world. Persian dance is a delicate art form, a series of small, carefully crafted moves engaging your entire body; toes, hips, shoulders, wrists, and even the eyebrows. Back then, I perched on the stairs, peeking below the handrail. She performed without ever asking for permission. Her passion for movement empowered her. It brought her joy. For a little under 30 minutes every Sunday morning, it made her feel less lonely.

When you anticipate loneliness, when you feel the fear moving in, ask yourself what it is you need to connect with. What are you missing? What can help ease that fear for a stolen moment? You'll learn a lot about my mom in this book. She turns into quite the hero in *A Healthy State of Panic* and I'll tell you what. As I began this journey of writing, my biggest fear was misrepresenting my mother. I think one of the questions that I've been getting on this book tour is what's it like to write about family and close friends and, of course, your own life. How did you create boundaries, and how did you decide what to include and what not to include?

Honestly, that was a real challenge because I think that your audience does expect. If you're going to go there, and you're going to talk about people and real experiences, they're going to expect a level of depth and a level of transparency. All of these stories are true. All of these

stories have been very meaningful in my life. I guess the important thing to remember as a writer, and I would always remind myself of this, is that when you're writing from your own life, you want to also think about the reader. What is your hope for the reader in reading this, right? In learning about your experiences. What is the takeaway for your reader? How can your experiences become lessons for your audience?

So it doesn't just become this sloppy memoir or these overshared stories or TMI. It's something that you really have to be careful about because there is a fine line between sharing enough and sharing too much. I did want to protect my family. But also, I wanted to honor our stories, our life experiences. I hope that that came through in the pages. As I said on this show, I have – my mother has read the book, and she was left in tears and was laughing a lot. For her, she said the book was extremely cathartic to look back on her life and see how it was examined by her daughter. All the while, she probably didn't realize I was paying such close attention.

We didn't really talk about these experiences one-on-one together privately. That was scary for me to include these stories in the book, knowing that maybe she was realizing for the first time how I felt about her and how I interpreted her actions when she was just starting out in her young adult life. I was there witnessing it all.

All right. Now, I want to transition to the fear of money. This is central to the book. It's chapter six. I want to read just the first few pages. Setting up the fear of money in this book was important because many people know me as the money expert, the host of the So Money podcast. Now, to write about fear and to not really get to money until chapter six might feel a little strange. So I had to call that out. I had to address that elephant in the room. So here we go, the fear of money and how it encourages landing on your true money story and pursuing financial independence.

I suspect what you might be thinking. "I thought this book was about money. Why is she only now getting deep into it?" The truth is that the fear of money is super complex and in many instances rooted in the fears we just explored. As I wrote in the introduction, when we're talking about money, we're talking about life. At its core, the fear of money is intimately tied to all of our other dreads. But don't be mistaken. This fear has its own look, feel, and even sound. For me, that sound is either dead silence or fists banging on a laminate kitchen countertop.

Unsurprisingly, the money fears we carry into our adult life emerge from our earliest experiences with it, namely how our parents, caregivers, or loved ones dealt with money when we were growing up. I first learned about money by watching Sheida and Farrokh. Those are my parents. Their challenge is usually orbited around it, Mom lacking it and Dad controlling it, which they seldom addressed without explosive arguments, followed by an awkward silent treatment that stretched for weeks. I remember being home during spring break in college, peeling an orange at our dining table, and watching my mom clean off some dishes when she turned to me in tears, explaining that she was having a hard time with my dad again.

By now, after more than two decades of marriage, there had been some reckoning, mainly driven by my mother's insistence on becoming more financially independent. After completing her college degree and working salary jobs here and there, she had managed to gain some economic power in their relationship. She had her own savings account and a retirement fund. She was contributing to a few household expenses. Most dignifying of all, she didn't have to ask my dad for money to get her roots done.

But my father still managed the bulk of their finances and didn't involve Mom in matters related to their shared investments, the mortgage, or his own expenses. She wanted password access to review their accounts and get a sense of where their finances stood. But he pushed back saying it wasn't necessary. They were doing fine, and that's all she needed to know. He said if she had questions, she could ask him, and he would provide answers. Giving her the logins, to my dad, seemed like an overstep. Was it tied to gender role expectations and protecting his Iranian male ego? One can only guess.

My mother had a scarier sense of what might be going on. She suspected his need to assume more financial power in the relationship meant that he must be hiding something from her. Was he making wild investments? Were we in more debt than she knew? Why else would he be so resistant to showing her the accounts? This tension around their finances left her feeling anxious and afraid of being financially vulnerable, rightfully so. "What if something happened to him," she asked me. "Farnoosh, can you get him to understand?"

Serving as a conduit between my parents over a deeply personal matter was nothing new for me. My mother was smart to assign me as the chief communication officer in the house when she was fearfully at odds with my dad. He had a much harder time saying no to me, especially over a topic like financial independence. To me, my father always stressed the importance of being thoughtful with money. He'd helped me open my first bank account in high school. He insisted I save half of my paycheck when I got my first serving job at 16, and he refused to allow me to take out loans for college for fear that I'd enter adulthood in financial ruin. What a blessing that was. He was the man who taught me about credit scores, 401(k)s, and the importance of asking for a raise. Why then did he act so differently toward his wife?

My fear over their lack of financial transparency and how it might compromise my mother's life sprang me to action. When I spoke to my father later that same afternoon, I laid out his contradictions with how he treated me versus Mom. He stayed mostly silent, nodding once or twice. Was I a little afraid of how my dad would react? Of course. Was my fear initially telling me to dodge my mom and pretend I had to go meet up with a friend, start pleading with her to just leave me out of it? I considered all of those things.

But the image of my mother being left in the dark shook me to the core. The fear of her scrambling to learn about their household finances in a crisis was far more haunting than facing my dad's furrowed brows when asking him why he was acting so strange. The visceral nature of that financial fear compelled me to protect my mom and take a hard but important step right then and there. That night, following dinner, Dad printed out all the passwords to their accounts and handed them to my mom. I'd like to think it was simply because he saw the hypocrisy, but it probably didn't hurt that he was outnumbered by the Iranian women in the house. Either way, this was a real victory for all of us.

The fear of money, my friends, is universal. I have it still, even as I'm in my 40s with running a business, having savings, having investments, feeling very solid and secure in my financial life. There are moments when I freak out. I mean, I don't think that's something that will ever, ever go away, and I'm okay with that. Because every time I've been afraid of, let's say, making more, putting out something new, and will it sell, I get so vigilant about that goal. I do what I can to create some certainty in that situation. There's a lot of uncertainty, and that's a whole chapter in the book. There's a lot of uncertainty in our financial lives.



But when that fear shows up of things maybe not working out, of your financial decisions backfiring, that fear wants you to protect your sense of security. It's not to say that you need to go and try to control things that you can't control because that's an impossible task. It's saying control what is possible. Control what you can do, which in my life has always been my ability to plan, my ability to set goals, my ability to be an advocate for my work. No one's going to do that stuff for me, right? No one's going to go out there and sell as hard and as passionately as I do. If I can control that, if I can assume that responsibility, I will. That's not to say that everything will still work out perfectly, but I want to be on the other side of things, knowing that I did everything I could. To feel that way, it does require embracing some fear.

I hope you'll enjoy my book. I really, really do. This book is not a money book per se. It's a book about how to find yourself over and over and over again using fear. How to find yourself and know yourself and love yourself as you're making big decisions in all realms of life. Again, that was not the audio excerpt from the audiobook. This is me just going through my book and reading it to you aloud. I hope you enjoyed the pages, and I hope you'll enjoy the full book. You can go to [ahealthystateofpanic.com](http://ahealthystateofpanic.com) and grab your copy. I would love to see your review on Amazon and Goodreads. I'll see you back here on Friday where I'll be answering your money questions on Ask Farnoosh. I hope your day is So Money.

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