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**Moderator: Welcome to the WorryTree podcast, episode 1. My name's Mark, I'm going to be the host for today and I'm lucky enough to have the founder of WorryTree with us in the room. So, Louise, good morning.**

Louise: Morning, Mark.

**Moderator: We'll get straight into it because we've got some real tough questions to ask you about WorryTree and why you founded it and things like that and where it came from. So, tell us, tell your listeners, where does WorryTree come from?**

Louise: So, WorryTree is a cognitive behavioural therapy tool, it's in an app format, so you can get it on iPhone and also on Android phones, too, and it's a tool that helps you manage worry. So, it came about because, actually, I have worried all my life and just since I was a child, I can remember worrying a lot as a teenager, right through my twenties, and I never really thought that it was anything different to what anybody else does, I just assumed that everybody worries as much as I was worrying about things, but then I remember a conversation with you a few years ago in the car, and I remember, we were going past Asda and I said to you in the car, and I can't remember why, but I said to you in the car, 'Do you think my worrying has an impact on our relationship?' And you said, 'Oh, God, yes, it has an impact on everything for you, and it holds you back,' and that was a real wake up moment for me where I realised that actually maybe not everybody worries as much as I was worrying about just everything. So, I went to the doctors and said, 'I worry a lot, what do I do?' And the doctor referred me for cognitive behavioural therapy.

**Moderator: Yes, and how did that go, then, that CBT, as you'd know it? Cognitive behaviour therapy.**

Louise: So, I was referred on the NHS but the waiting list at that time was about a year and I was fortunate enough to be able to go private and speed up the process and go for eight cognitive behavioural therapy sessions, and at those sessions, I was diagnosed with generalised anxiety disorder, which is where you're constantly worrying and have a low level anxiety all of the time about everything, it just, sort of, permeates your whole life.

**Moderator: Yes, and what were they teaching you, then, during those sessions? So, they identified the generalised anxiety disorder and they suggested CBT, so what does the journey look like during those CBT sessions, then?**

Louise: So, CBT, if you're not familiar with it, is a form of talking therapy and it's all around how our thoughts, our feelings and our behaviours are interlinked and actually, if you tackle your thoughts and reframe your thoughts, you can actually start to build feeling better and then your actions change as well, so it's a whole circle, and one element of CBT that I learned in particular was a technique called the WorryTree technique.

**Moderator: Yes, and what is the WorryTree technique, then? Because a lot of people will not quite understand that technique that is used quite widely.**

Louise: Sure.

**Moderator: So, what is it? What is the WorryTree?**

Louise: So, the WorryTree technique is a technique that encourages you to catch, challenge, and then change your worries or your thoughts. So, the first step and the biggest step is always around awareness and actually becoming aware of when you're worrying about something and catching yourself worrying about something because often we don't notice. Those of us who worry a lot of the time, you don't notice that you're worrying sometimes until you feel anxious, and you feel that dropping feeling in your stomach and you go, 'Oh, I must have been worrying about something,' and then you back track. So, the first element is to catch yourself worrying in the moment and catch those thoughts, and then the second thing is to ask yourself if there's anything you can do about it. So, you write down or capture your worry, yourself if there's anything you can do about it, if there is something you can do about it, it's an actionable worry, then you go onto decide what you're going to do, make a plan, and put it into action. Then, sometimes we're worrying about something that we really have no control over so that would be what people call a hypothetical worry, often a sort of 'what if' worry, so for me a quite common one is what if the plane crashes? That's something that I worry about if I'm going on holiday. So, with a 'what if' worry, there's really not much you can do about it, it's all about distracting yourself or mindfully refocussing your attention onto something else for just long enough, whether it's a physical activity or reading a book, or making a happy tea, but you distract yourself for just long enough for the worry to abate and for you to move on with your day. So, it's a really simple technique, the WorryTree technique.

**Moderator: Yes, okay, so how did the WorryTree app come about then? Because the WorryTree process is already out there, it's being used by therapists and by sufferers of anxiety, so why did you create WorryTree as an app?**

Louise: So, the WorryTree technique was a real key technique as part of my personal therapy and so I was practicing it a lot between the sessions. Now, you go for CBT, you go once a week or maybe one a fortnight, but the really important thing is that you're doing your practice and doing your homework in between the sessions for it to really embed and for you to start to feel better, that's how it works. So, I was doing my WorryTree technique on the backs of envelopes, literally, in my notes app on my phone, in my notepad, in my journal, just wherever I could find it, I'd catch myself worrying and write it down and then at some stage, I thought to myself, 'There's bound to be an app. There's an app for everything nowadays, there's an app to tell you to drink water, there must be an app that enables you to go through the WorryTree technique.' And, this is a couple of years ago, and when I looked there really wasn't anything, there was nothing on the app store that really did exactly what I wanted it to do and so I thought I'd give it a go and create something because I figured, if I needed it then probably there's somebody else out there who would find it helpful, too.

**Moderator: So, how did it actually start, then? What did you do? Because you don't just create an app, that's for people in San Francisco to do, not in Little Hereford. So, how did the journey begin, then, of creating it?**

Louise: So, I suppose the first thing I did was I mapped out how I wanted it to work. The WorryTree technique is a very linear, it's a decision tree, if you've ever seen a version of it on the website or people share beautiful drawings of it on Instagram, sometimes, it's effectively a decision tree and so it lent itself, naturally, to being mapped out. So, I drew out kind of like a storyboard for how I thought the app should work, I started to learn how to code it.

**Moderator: A storyboard is just like a series of journeys, then.**

Louise: Yes, what each screen would look like and what would happen next, and then it's not something that I'd ever done before but I Googled it and there's something that's called wire framing, so there's lots of information on the internet about how to wire frame. So I just, yes, started to create a structure of how I thought it would look, I did start to try and learn to code it myself but then hit a few hurdles as it got more complex, I just couldn't. The more complex elements of the app were just taking me too long to work out how to do. So, then, we went out on a job site to look for a freelancer who could do a little bit of coding work for us, app development, and created that very first version of the app which we launched on Android, probably a couple of years ago now, actually, and that was just £200 or £300 of development and we put it on Android and waited to see what happened.

**Moderator: What did happen then?**

Louise: A few people downloaded it.

**Moderator: A few people downloaded it, yes.**

Louise: Yes, I mean, it was a pretty clunky looking app and it was bright green with a logo that I'd created on Canva, and it wasn't the most beautiful thing, but it worked, functionally, and people downloaded it and they used it.

**Moderator: Yes, and where did it go? We see a version now, today, that quite a lot of users are out there, so you have quite a following now. How did you get from that clunky version to the version that people see today?**

Louise: So, the version that people see today, we launched just over a year ago, eighteen months ago now, it was about March 2020 and so we had a bit more development work, I did a Kickstarter and we had some support from a company in Cambridge called Ieso Digital Health and that gave us enough funding just to take it to the next stage and recreate it in a better platform that would enable us to create something that was a bit more user friendly and nicer to look at as well, and we were able to then launch that for Apple as well last year.

**Moderator: So, you're on both Android and Apple now.**

Louise: Yes, so we're on Android and Apple, and it's going really well and people are finding it really helpful, we get so much amazing feedback from our community, it's just fantastic.

**Moderator: What sticks out from the rest of the apps, WorryTree, you've got a lot of other apps that are out there like Calm, Clementine, etc., Headspace, what's the difference then with WorryTree?**

Louise: So, WorryTree is a very simple toolkit and it's based specifically around cognitive behavioural therapy and there's the WorryTree toolkit on it and then there's also some other cognitive behavioural therapy tools in there, such as learning to manage uncertainty, we've got a thought challenging technique, we've added a gratitude journal as well. So, there's nothing quite like WorryTree out there and the way I see it is that everybody should have a kind of toolkit, a mental health toolkit on their phone, on different apps that help them in different circumstances. So, we're not competing with the likes of Calm, Calm and Headspace, they do meditation, you know. For me, I have Headspace, I have Clementine, I have WorryTree which I use as well (TC 00:10:00) and it's around having that toolkit of mental health apps that all work in conjunction with each other, I suppose.

**Moderator: What are the users saying, then? I know you're, working closely with you, I know you answer every question that comes in because you have a great feedback format within the app and on your website to allow people to ask you questions or recommends, so how does that work? What's the sort of feedback that's coming in from people that use it?**

Louise: So, feedback from the WorryTree community is really, really important to me and it's how we've got it to where it is now and often we'll go out and ask people what tools they want to find within the app and what people come back with are what we develop. So, that community feedback is really important. Like you say, we have a function within the app that enables people to give us their feedback and I respond to all of those personally, and I also always respond to all of our Google reviews personally. So, we've had some amazing feedback from people who come to us and say, 'This has really transformed the way I think, I use it all the time, it's really helpful,' we know of GPs using it, we know of mental health practitioners sharing it with their patients, so, yes, and you know, it's not for everybody. WorryTree won't work for everybody, it's all about empowering you to challenge your own thoughts and create your own actions. It doesn't tell you what to do and some people would like us to give them more direction but it's really important that WorryTree is around empowering you to create your own action plans rather than giving you all of the answers.

**Moderator: Yes, so if somebody downloaded the app today because they were suffering from worries or anxiety, or just generally weren't feeling great and they found WorryTree on the app store and they decided to download it, how would you describe the best way to use it, then, if you're not under professional care? How would you say to approach it first of all, first time use?**

Louise: So, first time use, and it does, when you go straight into WorryTree, it does explain to you how it all works the first time you go in. I think the critical thing with a technique such as WorryTree is that you're using it regularly, as often as possible, and the more you use it, the better it works. So, if you're expecting to download WorryTree and record a few worries and problem solve them and then leave it and move on, it's probably not going to work for you. The magic happens with the

regular use, and going in at least once a day, recording a worry, working it through, and then doing it the next day, and the next day, and the next day, and over a period of time, you find that you're creating new neural pathways in your brain, because the brain is amazing. It's called neuroplasticity, where our brain can relearn and change and it's an amazing organ, really, and the more you use it, the more you build those pathways, the easier it gets and the less you'll worry.

**Moderator: Sure, so it's all about habit, then, and forming a new habit.**

Louise: Yes.

**Moderator: So, WorryTree allows you to form that new habit to capture your worries, you anxieties earlier and redirect them, but that takes time.**

Louise: Yes.

**Moderator: Yes, and are users who have used it for a while, are they feeding that back to us? What's the sort of benefits that they're getting from it, I suppose? Are they coming back and saying, 'Actually, yes, this has worked for them?'**

Louise: Yes.

**Moderator: Yes.**

Louise: They really are and, you know, I use it myself as well and over time, it really does make a difference but it's putting in that consistent use, and that's why it's such a simple format. The simpler, the easier it is to use, the more likely you're going to use it regularly and it will really make those changes.

**Moderator: Out of the app, then, what's your personal favourite? So, there's lots of functionality within it, now, you know, I've seen the app and helped develop it with you, and so what's your favourite bit?**

Louise: That's a really good question.

**Moderator: What's your key feature?**

Louise: Key feature. My favourite, well, I suppose the feature that I use the most is probably my favourite, so I use the thought challenging tool quite regularly.

**Moderator: And for people out there who don't know thought challenging?**

Louise: So, the thought challenging tool, we developed because sometimes, a negative thought doesn't feel like a worry, which may not make sense, it kind of makes sense in my head, but sometimes you have a thought and you think it doesn't quite fit within a worry format. So, the thought challenging tool is for challenging negative thoughts and it enables you to write down the thought which immediately gets it out of your head, which immediately gives you that space from it and you don't feel quite so strongly about it, and then once you've written it down, it takes you through a series of steps that encourage you to reframe that thought, not necessarily turning it

around and turning it into a massively positive thought, because that might not be realistic for you, but perhaps a more balanced thought, and the process of doing that, what we're seeing is, because at the beginning of the process you rate how strongly you feel about that thought, and then at the end of the process, you rate how strongly you feel about that thought now and what we're seeing is that dropping down, of people feeling much better at the end of the process because they've gone through this journey with the thought. So, my favourite. I use that the most at the moment.

**Moderator: Fantastic, and then what are your future hopes then, for WorryTree? What does it look like now, going forward?**

Louise: I want to, so much, there's so many ideas that we've got with what we could do next and we wanted to move that forward with the community and make sure that we're continuing to develop something that is what people want and need. We would like to add more cognitive behavioural therapy tools within there because there's a whole suite of different CBT tools available and we'd like to, sort of, expand it so there's more within there and we can help more people. We've also just taken on what we're calling a clinical advisory panel, who are providing us with that clinical challenge, so they're therapists and experts in their field who give us that balance of making sure that we're creating tools that are the right tools for people to use and they're still very relevant to what CBT practitioners are doing at the moment. So, yes, lots of ideas for the future, but we want to make sure that we're creating the right things for people, that they need.

**Moderator: Sure. You've mentioned community there, as well, and so initially, it sounds as though it was created just for a tool, as an app, what's the journey been like, then, between starting that app just as an app, and now, as you mentioned, community? What's it look like now from a community point of view and where are you going with that? Is there-, because a lot of people out there are using the app, they can feel quite lonely, that it's only happening to them, what's the community element that you want to bring in for WorryTree?**

Louise: So, we've had quite a few people ask us if we would create a community, a physical-, not a physical, electronic, I can't think of the word, community, within the app where people can kind of support each other, and so that's something that we're looking at, at the moment, as a possible future step for people so that they can support each other and share stories. So, that's one element bit also, I think, WorryTree is more than just the app now, you know, we've got a really thriving website, we've got a busy blog where we're sharing thoughts and ideas outside of the app, so there's a lot of other things going on and we've just started to do a few mindful products which support people as well, so we've got a fidget bangle, that's a WorryTree fidget bangle, we do a notepad for people who don't want to use an app because not everybody has a smart phone or wants to work that way, so we're looking at journals and things like that, too.

**Moderator: So, it's more holistic.**

Louise: Yes.

**Moderator: So, the app is more just the tool and then the community is sounding like it's starting to build up, and you're bringing in products and online abilities where people**

across the world can get in touch and things like that, and support one another, it sounds really important.

Louise: Got lots of exciting plans.

**Moderator: Yes, fantastic. So, any other thoughts around WorryTree, anything you want to share with the listeners around WorryTree?**

Louise: I suppose, just that we're always listening to what people are asking for and what their ideas are, and so I like to think that's something that's different about us than other big app development companies in Silicon Valley, is that we are a tiny team, it's a family business and so get in touch with us, we're there on social media and we've got our email address, too, and you can email us direct if you've got any questions about the app or if you're ever having any problems using it. It is literally me at the end of an email and a couple of other people.

**Moderator: That's fantastic. Thank you, Louise, and before we disappear and wrap this one up, we thought it would be interesting to get to know you a little bit better, because I know you as that person, as, obviously, my wife, to begin with, but, you know, people out there possibly want to engage with you a little bit better. So, we've had a few questions come in that we're going to ask you, so that we can get to know you personally.**

Louise: Okay, I'm nervous.

**Moderator: You should be. You certainly (TC 00:20:00) should be. Your first one is, if you could only listen to one song for the rest of your life, what would it be?**

Louise: Mr Blue Sky.

**Moderator: Why?**

Louise: Because it reminds me of you.

**Moderator: That's sweet.**

Louise: I know.

**Moderator: That is really sweet. So, the next one is, what is your guilty pleasure?**

Louise: Oh, probably, like, interior design programmes on Netflix.

**Moderator: Any particular one?**

Louise: No. That's not really a guilty pleasure, Fixer Upper, is it?

**Moderator: Depends on who your audience is.**

Louise: I'll go with Fixer Upper on HDTV or whatever it is.

**Moderator: Next one is, what is your biggest pet peeve? What annoys you the most?**

Louise: What's my biggest pet peeve? People tidying up after me when I'm a really tidy person, and if I've left something somewhere, then I've left it there for a reason.

**Moderator: That goes one way, though. Then, the next one we had in is, what is your most frequently used emoji?**

Louise: It's the smiley face that looks like a chuckle, so not the one with the tears coming out, but the chuckling face.

**Moderator: And do you use it too much?**

Louise: Yes.

**Moderator: Yes, you need to work on that. Definitely. Okay, and if you could design a billboard, what would be on it and where would it be located?**

Louise: Oh, my goodness, a billboard.

**Moderator: So, billboard of your design, and where would you place it?**

Louise: It would be-, oh, my gosh. Well, it would have to be a WorryTree billboard then, wouldn't it, really? So, it would be sharing WorryTree and I would place it, I don't know, Leicester Square? That's a really hard question.

**Moderator: It is hard, good question.**

Louise: Very good question.

**Moderator: We like that question, yes. Then, the last one, if you could time travel, what year would you go to and why?**

Louise: It would have to be, I think it would be, I don't know the exact year, but it would be the tudor period, around when Henry the Eighth beheads Anne Boleyn.

**Moderator: Nice.**

Louise: Not to see it, but just, I would be really interested in that time and what was happening beforehand and stuff.

**Moderator: Tough times.**

Louise:  
Tough times.

**Moderator: Tough times. Thank you, Louise. That's brilliant, it's really nice to start to share what I know of you to the wider world. We'll be coming back again for another podcast, diving a little bit deeper. We'll start introducing some guests as well, that can share some**



**techniques on CBT and management of anxiety, etc., but like Louise said, where can we find you again and what's your email address for WorryTree?**

Louise: So, our direct email address is [hello@Worry-Tree.com](mailto:hello@Worry-Tree.com), and then the website is Worry-Tree.com, and then you can find us as WorryTree or WorryTree app, Instagram is our main one but also Facebook and Twitter.

**Moderator: Fantastic, Louise, thank you ever so much for spending your time with us today, I know you're very busy, so we will let you get back to work, supporting your community and we will talk again soon.**

Louise: Thank you.

**Moderator: Thanks everybody for listening, bye.**