



Episode 1,715: Libertarians and Social Anxiety

Guest: Antony Sammeroff

WOODS: All right, let's talk about what work you've been doing. So you're a multifaceted guy, and I've had you on to discuss a variety of topics in the past. And these days, you've been working on a project involving Marxism.

SAMMEROFF: Right.

WOODS: And that's all great too, and someday we will talk about that specifically with you. But what I'm impressed by is something that you started doing a long time ago that we never really explored on the show. And I think it's particularly valuable at this moment, maybe for this audience, and that has to do with some of the mental health work you've done, the therapy work you've done.

And there are a couple of different angles on this. I was just seeing today some statistics in the United States about suicidal thoughts on the part of young people. And the figures — I don't have them in front of me and I don't want to misquote them, but they're on my Twitter feed — the figures are astonishingly high for young people in the 18-to-24 age range for *Have you considered suicide in the past 30 days?* It's astonishing. But then you think, okay, but what's the baseline for comparison? Maybe they're always feeling this way. So you look at the past, let's say, ten years. And these rates right now are like eight times higher than normal. And those rates were for *Have you considered suicide in the past 12 months?* This is just 30 days. So it's clearly being caused by the unusual circumstances we're living in, let's just say that.

So this is a time when a lot of people are feeling very out of sorts, so that's one thing that made me think this. But more immediate was somebody posted in the elite group that you belong to at SupportingListeners.com, that they had learned from you, I guess you have an offering related to social anxiety and also just how to handle yourself in social situations. And frankly, I think that's something that libertarians could stand to learn. And I don't —

SAMMEROFF: No, you can't be serious, Tom. I've never heard anyone say that libertarians can be a little bit socially awkward.

WOODS: [laughing] Yeah, no, never. Let me just clarify that, in general, when I've met folks from my audience, they really are some of the ones who kind of have things put together. But all the same, we could all probably stand to learn a bit more. So what exactly is the nature of this? Is this a course you have, or is this a one-on-one thing you're doing? Tell me about it.

SAMMEROFF: Well, yeah, it's a little bit of a combination of both, because I have got exercises for people to do, and they can practice them with other people that I'm working with, because there's a few elements to social anxiety. And before I go into that a little bit, basically the reason why I go into this is my life is like a laboratory. I don't know, for whatever reason, ever since I was young, I was obsessed with personal development and any sort of area of my life that I found difficulty with, I kind of wanted to learn how to improve. And then it's just natural for me to want to share what I've learned.

So I was experiencing social anxiety, but I never knew because I'm an extrovert. And I thought if you've got social anxiety, that means you're shy, whereas what actually was happening was I was speaking really fast and filling in all the spaces, because if there was any space, then I'd feel how anxious I was, so I always had to overdo social situations because my anxiety was on the inside. So since then, I learned a lot about communicating better to people, slowing down my speaking and all sorts of things.

You learn a lot about listening and hearing people from being a therapist, of course, but this is one of the problems we have with the media and communication skills, because a lot of people have this problem. And they'll go on YouTube and say, "How do I get better at small talk?" or "How to overcome social anxiety," and they get bad advice that says, Well, people love talking about themselves, so all you need to do is listen really well and ask questions. And that's compelling, because it's partly true. But if you go into social situations, especially when you first meet new people, and you just ask them questions and expect them to do all the talking, you're actually putting the pressure on them to do all the work. So it's really important for people to get good at just saying a little bit about themselves, to lead by example, to make other people feel comfortable talking by showing that it's okay to just talk.

So that's really one of the elements of social anxiety, which is just not having that facility and being able to talk about anything and make it interesting. But it doesn't even have to be that interesting. That's the big secret, because when you first meet people, they're just trying to find a level to relate to you on.

So we've got exercises; I developed them in workshops, because I wanted someone to practice with myself, because when you go out into the world, you can't like deliberately try to, oh, I'm going to just practice telling stories tonight, or I'm just going to practice this skill or that skill. You can try, but it's too fast-paced, it's too spontaneous. So I thought, well, in a workshop setting, we can practice specific skills. And I saw that that really worked. I maybe ran 50 of these in Glasgow over the course of two years or something like that, and I developed the exercises and they worked. So when the lockdown happened, I decided to start teaching these exercises to people one to one. And yeah, it's been amazing. The testimonials are fantastic.

WOODS: Right, so as I say, I got one of them in my own group, unsolicited, so that's what got me interested. So I'm trying to think about — I don't think I've had this problem, actually, as much as other people have.

SAMMEROFF: Right.

WOODS: I've had other issues that have followed me through my life that I've more or less dealt with, but I think this has been okay for me. But it's like public speaking. A lot of people are terrified of that, and for some reason, that just sort of comes natural to me. And then

other things that come natural to other people, not so much to me, so everybody's different. But I'm trying to think of what would people say is their biggest fear about being in social situations. Like if you're giving a public speech, with public speaking, I get what the fear is. You're afraid you're going to get up there, forget what you're supposed to say or mess up, and look like a fool in front of a big crowd. I completely understand that.

SAMMEROFF: Yeah.

WOODS: But let's say we're dealing with somebody walking into a room full of strangers and they just don't know what to do. What's the fear here, and what's the right approach to take?

SAMMEROFF: Okay, so there's several things that come up, and time and time again, one is running out of things to say, I'm going to run out of things to say. Another one that happens is people get brain freeze. And in my workshops and trainings, I teach people to how to work through it when their mind becomes tight and they can't think of anything, because everyone's always trying to save you, so you never actually learn to overcome that.

Another thing is when people get asked questions, shame is triggered in them. And even if their answer would be interesting to other people, they suddenly feel in the spotlight, and they're worried that they're going to be judged on their answer, whether it's interesting enough, whether it's cool, whether it's funny, or if someone is going to think that they sound conceited because they asked them what they do and actually they've got a really successful career, and they're worried to say what their job is in case everyone thinks that they think they're better than them.

There's so many crazy anxieties that people have, and one of the problems is I think people know at an instinctive level that when you communicate something and you're not confident in yourself, you're actually communicating to the other person to judge you as not confident. And that creates this escalation where they think, oh, I'm not going to sound confident, and that in itself is a self-fulfilling prophecy that's going to make me look uncool. It's quite a Gordian knot of interrelated feelings and self-judgment that people can have going on up there.

WOODS: Well, the thing is with confidence it's something hard to bluff because then you're afraid maybe you might seem overconfident and thereby obnoxious. If you're authentically and genuinely confident, this can actually overcome other disabilities you may have. Let's just say I've spoken to a number of women who will say that a person may be physically not that attractive, but if he is absolutely confident, not in an obnoxious way like a narcissist might be, but just somebody who knows who he is, knows what he believes, that that can overcome the lack of physical attractiveness. That can draw somebody to you. But how do you accumulate confidence, if not through a series of I would guess small victories?

SAMMEROFF: That's exactly it, because if you were to ask me to run a marathon this weekend, I would be completely right to be not confident. If I was to give a lecture on medieval architecture, I don't know anything about it, so I'm not going to be very confident. But if I start training, if you introduce me to the professors that have the knowledge and they tell me what books to read, I can prepare for a lecture on that, and I think I'll do a pretty good job in the end. So there's various micro skills that people can learn through the training I offer.

Or right here, I'll just give you a few things, even for people listening that you could go away and practice right now. A big problem people have is not being able to break out of having this impersonal interview conversation, where both people feel like throwing themselves off a building because we both know we're both being polite, but we can't get out of this sort of impersonal vibe. So to learn to speak, one of the games I use uses a random word generator, and people try and talk about a topic. So on the extreme, supposing Venus came out on the random word generator. One person would be like, "Venus is the second planet from the sun, and it has a mean surface temperature of" — like that's the extreme version. But to learn to say something personal like, "Oh, that makes me think when I was a kid, I was really into space," or, "Oh, I've got a friend that's really into Greek mythology," or, "Oh, the song 'Venus' by Bananarama, that's a really fun, cheesy pop song."

The other thing is too many topics, or people go scatter shot and say the planet, the Greek god, they're trying to do all three. And the other thing is like speaking broadly, like very, very generally. People have a problem with only being able to speak in general terms, so if someone asked them, "Oh, where did you go on holiday?" they feel like they need to give a rough overview. But something that would be really good to practice is just choose one thing that happened on your holiday that was really, really cool, and talk about that and go narrow. These are three things that people can actually practice that will make them more relatable in conversation pretty quickly.

And I learned all of this stuff through the workshops, through actually working with people, through analyzing why when we were playing these games, our stories really worked, and why that sometimes it wasn't working too well and seeing what people's sticking points were.

WOODS: Let's talk about situations in which this kind of problem comes up. Now, I experience people who have difficulty interacting with others a lot of times when people write to me. And they make demands of my time, that if I were to sit them down and explain to them that they wouldn't appreciate having these demands made on their time, they'd probably understand that I can't read their 500-page book manuscript for free. That's just impossible. I have children and responsibilities.

SAMMEROFF: Sure.

WOODS: That's impossible, and the fact that you're asking me shows me something's not fully firing upstairs. But that's another matter, what people say in front of a computer, because everybody seems to be a little bit off his rocker when it comes to writing an email or being on the internet. I don't hold that against people too much. But I'm trying to think of what are the classic scenarios that people have difficulty with? I mean, the first would be that you're at a wedding reception and you don't know anybody.

SAMMEROFF: Yes, perfect.

WOODS: Or the other thing would be, you're at work and there are ten new people, and you're at a birthday party, and you don't know what you're supposed to do. I think a lot of times, generally, it's dealing with strangers, isn't it?

SAMMEROFF: Yes. Well, yes, and that's a big thing about what my training has helped me achieve and helps the people that I work with achieve, because I always felt like there was

this really cool part of me that I left in a box somewhere in my head. And it only came out around people I really clicked with, or people that were already always familiar with me or just random. I was like, why can't I be that cool guy all of the time? Like, why does he hide away like 99% of the time?

WOODS: By the way, that is so crazy. That's exactly how I feel even today.

SAMMEROFF: Wow, amazing.

WOODS: Like there are some people I just click with perfectly, and then other times, it's kind of a struggle and I feel like, well, they're not even really seeing the best me because I can bring out that best me under different circumstances.

SAMMEROFF: Oh, it's good to even hear you say that, because if you feel like that, then a lot of people will feel like that. So what I actually learned from getting better at small talk — which a lot of people think is just shallow and pointless and boring. I certainly did. But I actually realized that a lot is going on beneath the surface. It's not really what you're seeing. It's just an entry point to find connection with people. If you get good at that, you can bring out that part, your favorite self, way, way more often. Like I feel like I'm usually that person around new people now, which is like amazing for me.

So you were talking about wedding receptions and at work, like, yes, exactly. For example, people go to work, and everyday everyone goes and sits at lunch together and they don't talk to anyone. They let everyone else do the talking. Or people have told me, "I've just not gone to parties, because I'm so afraid that I wouldn't have anything to say." And I'm like, wow, you're missing out on life because of this. There was one woman that came to my workshops and she said she never talks about herself. She always puts the spotlight on other people, because she always feels like a deer in the headlights when she has to talk about herself. And she came for about seven weeks, and I adjourned to go to India or whatever. And when I started running them again, I emailed her and she said, "I've got other things on Wednesday nights, but I have to tell you, the workshops completely changed my life. Now when I'm in social situations, I do feel comfortable volunteering some information about myself as well." So I fear I strayed; I can't remember your question, Tom.

WOODS: Well, I was just thinking about the typical scenarios that people find impossible to navigate and terrifying.

SAMMEROFF: Yeah, dating. A lot of —

WOODS: Yeah, okay, now hold on a minute. This one let's really get into, because just the other day, I was looking at a Facebook exchange somebody sent me involving the incel phenomenon, like the involuntarily celibate.

SAMMEROFF: Right. I want to cure those people.

WOODS: Okay, then let's talk about that, because these are men who are resentful toward women for various reasons, and they have various MOs they use, but what it generally boils down to is: I'm a really great guy, but women have terrible taste in men, and I'm this great guy who's going places, and yet they want to go with this guy because he rides a motorcycle.

Or they want to be with that guy because he's a troublemaker, or that guy plays bass guitar in the band. And I'm this really intelligent, educated person, but they don't like me because I'm not handsome enough or whatever it is, I'm not edgy enough for them, and so screw the whole lot of them.

SAMMEROFF: Right.

WOODS: I don't want to caricature them, but I have seen that and I've heard that line of argument. So can you talk about this?

SAMMEROFF: Yeah, and anyone who has lady friends in the libertarian community will tell you that they've experienced too much of this. So, yeah, the thing is, you know this because you're an expert marketer, Tom. You could have the best product in the world, but if you don't know how to show the product in its best light, you need to have a way of communicating the value of the product to the buying public. This might be a little bit of a crude analogy, but it's an analogy that serves a purpose, because the thing is, it doesn't matter if you're an intelligent or not, or you're accomplished or whatever the thing is; you need to actually be able to relate to someone well enough that they want to know more about you and that they can see whatever your virtues are that you can demonstrate them.

So ultimately, I don't want to speak on behalf of women, but a person's going to fall in love with the way that they feel around someone. And if all you've got like is a bunch of resentment towards the opposite sex, that's not really going to go into your favor. I do accept that with dating apps and things like that, it's kind of like an arms race now. It's like it's harder than ever, because people don't have the experience of, say, going up to someone that they don't know in a bar or club or in church or wherever and speaking, learning to start conversation and find their way around and relate to someone. And there's a lot more competition with the dating apps and things, but I guess I think that's why it's more important than ever to learn to represent yourself well.

And I think this is one thing that I've really got from improving my social skills. I'm not really that much a different person, but I represent myself better, and I really feel proud of myself. Even if I go into a social situation and someone doesn't take to me or doesn't like me, I don't feel like it's necessarily all my fault or anything like that, which, when I was a wreck, I might thought it's always my fault if someone doesn't like me. I've spoken to more people, and I understand you're going to really click with maybe 20% of people if you're lucky, 20% of people are not going to like you no matter what, and most people are somewhere in the 60% in the middle.

But if you feel like you've represented yourself well, authentically, and showing yourself in a good light, and someone doesn't get your sense of humor or they just don't click with you, you're not going to take that personally. It's when you feel like you've let yourself down somehow, you've not shown your good sides. Then if someone rejects you, whether they're just not that interested in talking to you or they're or someone of the opposite sex, you're like, *Well, I talked to the girl. I think I was pretty funny. I came across all right, and she obviously wasn't interested. That's fine. There's other fish in the sea.* It's very hard to have the "there's other fish in the sea" mentality when you feel limited in your self-expression and the way that you represent yourself.

WOODS: I think one thing that might be useful for young men to hear, and I hope you won't mind if I take a couple minutes to read something —

SAMMEROFF: Please.

WOODS: — is a post written by our friend Bob Murphy years ago on his blog, because it's not as if the phenomenon I described is just in people's imaginations. There are plenty of women who make decisions about the men they're going to be with that are absolutely baffling. What are you doing, you wonder. And it's very easy to get caught up in the incel mentality. But here's the way Bob looks at it, and I think this can help people understand things better. Now, there's no bad language in here, but if you have a nine-year-old kid, maybe you fast forward over this part. So this is just an excerpt from a post by Bob, and I'll post the whole thing at TomWoods.com/1715. I'll put Bob's post up. Anyway, he says:

"While we're thinking of things from the female perspective, try this train of thought. Suppose you're a young woman who's incredibly attractive, but you're also really insecure. When you go out to the bar or dancing, you get all dolled up because you think you have to, but this just makes you even that much more intimidating and unapproachable.

"Oh, wait, that's not quite right. You are approached, just not by any 'normal guy.' You're only approached by pickup artists or the rare guy who's a decent human being while also being incredibly confident with women. And so you would go for years with nothing but hookups with guys who are complete assholes. And this would just make you more insecure and make you diet even more, becoming even more unapproachable by normal people.

"Now imagine someone like Britney Spears in her prime, how few men would have thought, 'I'm going to sleep with her tonight?' Can you imagine the kind of absolute narcissistic nutjobs who would hit on her either because they thought they deserved her, or because they wanted a story to tell their friends? No wonder that poor girl was so messed up.

"Or consider Pamela Anderson. In her prime, she was arguably one of the most desirable women on the planet. I'm not of course saying your pastor would have endorsed her as a prom date; I'm talking in terms of the secular culture. She literally could have chosen from among billions of men who would have adored her, and yet she ended up marrying a guy who went to jail for six months for beating her up. You think that outcome was good for Ms. Anderson's self-esteem?

"Now of course you can say, 'Well, golly gee, Bob, these really attractive women should just stop dating assholes. They have the power to choose suitors.' And yes, that's true ultimately. But it's also true that a vicious cycle could develop in which they scare off anybody except the diluted narcissists. If some lingerie model who has 'resting bitchface' (that's a slang term, people)" Bob says. "(I don't use that word myself) waits for 30 guys to ask her out, and then chooses the one guy from that group who treated her with the most courtesy and seems to be the sweetest guy, well, he might still be a narcissistic nutjob, because 99.9% of normal guys are not even going to bother asking out a lingerie model. They'd be afraid to ask her what time it is.

"But wait, it gets worse. It's not just a selection bias. Over the years, our hypothetical lingerie model is going to end up having sexual experiences only with narcissistic nutjobs. So purely

for Pavlovian reasons, she will eventually only get aroused when such a man approaches her. She will have trained herself over the years to know what it feels like when she starts interacting with a guy like that, knowing that a make-out session or more is imminent. In contrast, she will literally not even know what it's like to have a conversation with a decent man that eventually leads to something physical. It would be as uncomfortable when a guy like that leans in to kiss her as it would be if her perfectly 'nice guy' accountant tried the same thing when she was picking up her tax return."

What do you think about that?

SAMMEROFF: Yeah, I think there's a lot there. I think, especially with the dating apps and the statistics seem to be that even very, very good looking people don't get much matches on these things, so there's a situation where the guys who do get matches, basically, everyone wants a relationship with them for very superficial reasons. But they're exactly the kind of people who are not going to want to be in a relationship, because they are in this tiny percentage that have ridiculous abundance in women. So that creates resentment amongst women, and it's like, well, where have all the decent guys gone, whereas there's this vast number of guys who — it's a little bit worrying, in a way — a vast number of guys who can't get any matches at all.

That's why I think it's really good to learn to actually be able to speak to people you don't know, because you're going to open so many doors for yourself. And that goes for whether you're a guy or a woman. It's like you've got the possibility of making more friends, you've got the possibility of finding a significant other, but you also meet people who might have hobbies that you share or professional skills and things like that that you can learn from or collaborate with. And if you don't have that ability, that's just a whole bunch of doors that are just not open to you, that only really open to a small percentage of people. So I do despair a little bit about the state of the dating market.

There is a playlist on my YouTube channel, Antony Sammeroff, that's got like a 17 videos called "How To Make Small Talk," and I'm trying to do my little bit to actually help people have the social skills that — like, I love online, but I also think that online's been a mixed blessing, because people — I know some people who've just shied away from it and would learn to anyway, but I think some people who would have been in a position where they're forced to maybe learn some of these things are at an additional disadvantage because everything's online.

WOODS: I like the way you value small talk by referring to it as an entry point for connecting with people, because every once in a while, you come across somebody who says, "Oh, I hate small talk. I just want to get right to the point." And I know some people with whom I can't even have ordinary pleasantries, because they need to tell me about what's going on in Yemen right away. That's not a reference to Scott Horton [laughing]. Scott can have small talk. But so I think that is important, because as you say, that can be a way of connecting. Something you say in small talk and lead to something more significant.

Now what do you think about the phenomenon of speed dating, where a lot of these types of things are held as events where you get matched up with somebody for somewhere between like three and eight minutes, and you just have a conversation, and then you go on talk to somebody else, somebody else, somebody else? And at the end of the night, you have a sense

of somebody you might have clicked with or not. As somebody who talks about human interaction, what do you think about that?

SAMMEROFF: Well, I'd like to go to something like that [laughing]. The thing is the first five minutes of an interaction with someone new are the most difficult for people. And if you can get good at those by that point, you'll be into the kind of conversation that you probably know how to have already, unless your social anxiety's crippling. So actually, it's a really good way to potentially practice that. Whether you'll pick someone up at one of those or not is a different question, but it would be actually a good way to practice.

The only thing I would say is get good at finding something the other person says to disagree with, but in a fun, friendly, cheeky way so that you can make it light and funny, so you're not having this job interview conversation with them, like, "What do you do? How did you get into that? Oh, that's really interesting. I thought of doing that when I was" — like seriously, people are bored of having that conversation, so just hold them off for a while and see if you can connect on something that's a little bit fun and cheeky. It's really good to meet someone on the level of something that's fun, exciting, and emotional, and get that spark in your interaction with someone first. Then when you go to have a serious conversation or a deep philosophical conversation or something like that, you already know that you can have fun together, so you can slip in and out of that.

But if you do it the other way around and try and connect on fact, it's very difficult to then jump in the cold swimming pool to have a joke with them, because it's almost like — I know, most people in America don't drive a stick shift, but it's like trying to change too many gears at once. It can be very jarring for people. So yeah, that sounds like a good training ground, actually. Maybe when the lockdown's over, I should say. See if there's anything like that and if I can learn anything at one of those events.

WOODS: Are you somebody who started off socially awkward and then you kind of figured things out? Or has this always come naturally to you?

SAMMEROFF: Well, most of what I've learned, I've learned in the last four years, I would say. I was always a very sociable and gregarious person, but I felt locked in to certain ways of interacting with people that I couldn't break out of. That thing where I could get into a situation where I could only talk about very intellectual topics, I couldn't switch into the part of my personality that was fun and friendly. But then I'd go to a party and speak to someone in the corner about politics for two hours, then go like, "Why have I done that for the whole party? Am I crazy or something like that?" So for me, it's been a loosening up of my personality and becoming more flexible, so that I can choose which parts of my personality come out, instead of responding to the environment, like, "Oh, that person's like that, so I'll relate to them on this level." I actually choose what level I'm going to try and relate to people, and people adapt to me.

One of the moments that you'll get, if you choose to improve your social skills, this thing will happen and you'll know that something has changed. Because you'll be in a group of people and people speak to each other, and sometimes you say something or someone says something, and then they look at someone. Like I'll say something and then I look at the pretty girl to my right. And what's actually happening there is unconsciously I'm trying to figure out whether what I've said is socially acceptable and okay at this moment. You will get to a point where you notice that people will say things to other people, and then they'll look

turn and look at you to see how you reacted; in other words, does that person think what I just said was cool or acceptable or funny or just interesting? And then you realize, well, more and more, I'm the most confident person in social situations. That's why people are looking to me to see — and that's a nice position to be in, because you can be quite a fatherly figure or a motherly figure when you steer the interaction, and people feel comfortable in your company.

WOODS: I'd had hoped that we would also — I had a feeling this was going to happen, but we would also talk about the more general work you've done with people on a variety of issues facing them in their lives. And your website, by the way, is BeYourselfAndLovelt.com.

SAMMEROFF: Yeah, and I would suggest if you want help with this particular, I'm taking a leaf of the Tom Woods book, you can get a short eBook, BeYourselfAndLovelt.com/smalltalk. That'll sign you up to my mailing list, which I only really use to shoot out when I post a video or a podcast. It's like maybe 8,000 words long, and it's got 12 tips that are really practical that you can actually put into action in day-to-day life. It's not very fluffy. I don't like fluffy stuff.

WOODS: Well, you and I are exactly the same way. I would rather have a 40-page eBook than a 400-page book full of fluff that I have to search through for the 40 pages that I really need. So let's just cut that all out, just get people the information. So I'm going to link to your website and also to that particular page at TomWoods.com/1715 so people can check that out, but I'll say that, also, Antony works with people facing a variety of challenges, and he has excellent testimonials to the point where I'm referring somebody who's very important to me to him, because he was the first person I thought of. So even old Woods here — you know, Woods puts his money where his mouth is. He uses the Away carry-on. He wears that Indochino suit. He shaves with the Harry's razor. I mean, this is real. This is the real Woods here. And he uses Antony Sammeroff when he wants to help somebody.

SAMMEROFF: Well, I'm very touched. I would say if people want to contact me if they think they would like to — like I'm a counselor. When I finished university, I went and did a post-grad in counseling studies at Edinburgh University, but it's just like life for me. I'm so interested in the human condition, and so it bleeds into everything and I'm always trying to learn. If people want to contact me, if either they're looking for counseling or the social anxiety thing or how to make small talk really struck a chord with them, usually the best place to get me is Facebook. If you're not on Facebook, you can just send me a message, Antony@BeYourselfAndLovelt.com, and I'll get that as well.

WOODS: All right, that is how to do it. Well, listen, I appreciate it. I just wanted to have a free-flowing discussion, just see where it went.

SAMMEROFF: That's just great.

WOODS: Because I think it's something people struggle with and they feel like, well, this is something either you know or you don't, or it's just, I've just not good this way. It's like people who say I'm not good with names, like this is just part of who you are and it could never be changed. Be more ambitious, because there are things that can change.

SAMMEROFF: I really appreciate you bringing that up in the end, because I never thought to do it. It's like, yes, this is a problem that I have had. This is a problem that I have significantly improved on. I frequently go out with friends who are impressed at the way that I interact with people that I don't know, and I know that that wouldn't have been the case five years ago. People ask me for advice on how to respond to difficult texts and things like that, and I learned it. This wasn't a God-given gift or anything like that. I'm still learning more all the time. So I hope that people don't think that if this is a problem they have, they're doomed to always suffer. That's not the case. You can actually. And it's a skill. It's just something that you didn't have the opportunity to necessarily learn or weren't encouraged to learn in your environment growing up, so I really appreciate you saying that.

WOODS: Well, it's my pleasure, and again, BeYourselfAndLoveIt.com/smalltalk. Did I get that right?

SAMMEROFF: That's perfect. Thank you so much.