

PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

Ep. 7 Calm in the Storm/ Managing Anxiety through Christian Counseling

Camille McDaniel, LPC (00:02.445)

Welcome back to another episode of Christ in Private Practice podcast. I'm your host, Camille McDaniel, and today we're going to be talking to Morgan Schaefer, Licensed Professional Counselor, and we're going to be talking this episode about addressing anxiety through the lens of Christian counseling.

So let me introduce Morgan to you. I'm really excited for this episode. I know that she's going to have a lot to share with us that is going to be beneficial to so many who are either already in the field of providing Christian counseling or for those who are up and coming and really wanting to dive into having a Christ-centered focus in the counseling services that they provide. So Morgan is a licensed professional counselor, as I said before, and she is in Wisconsin.

She opened up her private practice in 2022 and it's called Morgan Schafer Counseling, where she specializes in Christian counseling and treating anxiety. And she got her practice in the field from a few different schools of thought. Well, actually, let me start by saying she's been in this field for a decade. And where she got her degrees from, she got her bachelor's degree in religious studies from the University of Dubuque.

Morgan Shafer (01:02.104)

Thank

Camille McDaniel, LPC (01:24.001)

I had to make sure I did not mess that name up. So thank you so much, Morgan. And then she earned her Master's of Arts in Professional Counseling from Liberty University. Now, where she was in Liberty University, this is where she really focused on faith and counseling. She's very passionate about Christian counseling. And she believes that Christ is the source of true hope and healing.

Now in Wisconsin where she lives, she lives there with her husband of 16 years and her dog Honey, which I think that is the cutest little name. Her and her husband are both very active in their local congregation and her husband has

served as pastor there for 12 years. So, you know, I ultimately was really excited when I

Morgan Shafer (02:00.056)
No.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (02:17.495)
heard that Morgan was going to be talking to us about how to integrate faith and Christ -centered approach into anxiety. I know that that is a population that we see a lot of. There are many, many individuals struggling with anxiety for a multitude of reasons, and it'd be wonderful just to talk about how we might bring a Christ -centered approach to helping people heal.

And as Morgan had shared, provide hope. So hope and healing is what she's centered on. So thank you again, Morgan, for joining for this podcast episode. Let's just dive right in. just kind of the first thing that if you could share with us, one of the things is

How did you actually get into the field? Like what made you want to come into the field of counseling?

Morgan Shafer (03:18.924)
Yeah, that's a great question. It was on my heart throughout high school that I wanted to do something with my faith. I wanted to help people. I think that's a common thing a lot of people feel called to help in some kind of way. And I was just led into this field because I love talking with people. I love hearing people's stories and understanding. And I feel like I've been given a gift of really being able to make people feel comfortable when they come and talk to me.

And that I have an ear to listen to what's really going on behind the scenes. as I was thinking about what I wanted to do, I took a psychology class in high school and it really fascinated me how the mind works.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (04:04.676)
Yes.

Morgan Shafer (04:04.694)
And that's really what got me interested in counseling. And I felt just very affirmed when I finally was able to get into my master's program. It took a while to get there. At that very first counseling class I had, was like, yes, this is what I meant to do. And I just love getting to talk to people all day. It's wonderful. And it's hard work too. But I really feel blessed to be able to share this with people and to be able to talk about it here today.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (04:20.281)
you

Camille McDaniel, LPC (04:27.929)
Yeah.

Morgan Shafer (04:34.43)
exciting to do this.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (04:36.683)
Well, and I'm glad for you to be here talking to us about this. This is a good one. As it relates to what you specialize in, anxiety, can you jump in and tell us, know, how do you define anxiety in the context of Christian counseling? You know, how might that perspective also differ from a more secular approach?

Morgan Shafer (05:00.044)
Yeah, I love this question because diving into the definition of anxiety.

I feel like how we think about it, both in a secular approach and as Christian counselors, they're complementary. So when we're looking at diagnosing anxiety, we use the DSM -5 and it defines anxiety, but there's a quick version of the definition is excessive worry, uncontrollable worry, fear of the future combined with those physical stress symptoms that we get. And when we turn to the Bible and look at what the Bible has to say about anxiety,

looking in the New Testament specifically, the Greek word used, Merimnao now, for anxiety means to worry anxiously. And I found it really fascinating as I was diving into that word, you know, preparing for this. I don't know Greek just right off the top of my head for everything, but it means divided mind. And I thought that was such a rich image for what we feel when we're feeling anxious. We feel like this pull, I think a lot of us can relate to it.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (05:44.249)
Hmm... Yes.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (05:58.763)
wow.

Absolutely.

Morgan Shafer (06:05.11)

different directions, even thoughts that are helpful to thoughts that are unhelpful, feeling motivated to demotivated. We feel this pull. And I feel like the biblical definition of anxiety really fits with what the DSM -5 says about it as well. So I feel like when we're seeing wisdom in the Bible about how to cope with anxiety, it really compliments one another. So the big difference is...

Camille McDaniel, LPC (06:21.807)

Wow.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (06:28.227)

That's great information.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (06:33.822)

please continue, the big difference.

Morgan Shafer (06:34.566)

I really loved diving into that. Yeah, the big difference is where we find our home.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (06:38.285)

I did not know. I did not know that. Yeah.

Morgan Shafer (06:44.972)

Yeah, so when I think about talking with clients about anxiety, a lot of times the three big things that stand out to me are we look for how to control what's in our control, sorting out what's in our control and what's out of our control.

then we look at, how do we build ourselves up? How do we our own confidence? And then how do we remind ourselves who the people in our lives are that we can rely on? Which is all good, but as Christians, we take it a step further and know that our true source of comfort is from our Lord Jesus Christ, who never fails. And...

is always going to be there for us. As Christians, and non -Christians know this too, that there's not a lot that's in our control sometimes. And as people we, you know, we can build up our own self -confidence, but ultimately sometimes we don't.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (07:31.725)

Yes, absolutely.

Morgan Shafer (07:40.802)

you know, we don't succeed the way we want to. And as much as our friends and family love us, sometimes they don't meet our needs in the way that we

need them to or expecting them to. And that can be really discouraging. So as Christians, we know that no matter what's going on in any circumstance, in any storm, we can turn to Jesus. And we know through the power of the Holy Spirit, we're never alone in this, in this battle we're going through.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (08:06.051)

So then how do you incorporate with that, so having that spiritual understanding, how do you incorporate the physical, the mental, you know, a whole holistic approach when it comes to helping your clients who are struggling with anxiety?

Morgan Shafer (08:26.104)

Yeah, we can incorporate a lot of the spiritual things alongside with those physical and mental skills that we're teaching clients. The first one that I talk to clients about, I sometimes make it a little light and add a little bit of humor in just to kind of lighten the mood, but I talk about how we, when we get anxious, a lot of times we stop breathing.

And so the number one thing to do, like instead of hold our breath, is make sure we're breathing. And I'll kind of make a joke with clients, like, I know you're coming here for advice and you don't want to hear me just say, just breathe. So it's more than just that. But we can talk about breathing exercises and then we can add prayer to that. Even if the beginning of the prayer might just be help, might be a one word prayer in that moment. And we can expand on that.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (08:51.641)

the rest.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (08:57.719)

Right.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (09:07.821)

Yeah.

Morgan Shafer (09:16.664)

So along those lines, you know, adding physical things. A lot of people are exercising, right, as part of what they're doing to improve their mental health. We can add listening to, it could be a Christian podcast like this that people are listening to. It could be worship music.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (09:21.891)

Mm

Camille McDaniel, LPC (09:29.015)
Man.

Morgan Shafer (09:32.502)
incorporating that into those physical things that we're doing as well. it's really whatever skill you're talking with your clients about, could see how can you incorporate scripture into that? How could you incorporate prayer or mindfulness just focusing on God's presence in your life in that moment can be really helpful.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (09:52.963)
lot, I love the answer about like, you know, obviously, we know that there's a mental, a physical and a spiritual aspect to the things that we experience in this world. But I love how for the spiritual winger, like we can incorporate prayer, even if that prayer is just to say help. Because I think that for an at least I'll say for a number of the individuals that I have served, sometimes the the idea the perception that you have to be able to say,

Morgan Shafer (10:11.96)
okay.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (10:22.671)
this really intricate, beautiful, well -written prayer to the Lord when that's not what he requires at all. And if where you're starting is just, Lord help, because that's all I can ask for right now, then that's enough. And you start there and then you go forward. So in your practice and time working with clients,

Morgan Shafer (10:31.214)
Mm.

Morgan Shafer (10:47.918)
Huh.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (10:50.583)
What have you found to be some of the most effective tools? Like, you know, is it like the exercise? Is it the prayer? Is there, is there some combination that you have found to be most effective when trying to help them like reduce the effects of anxiety and, and worry in their life?

Morgan Shafer (10:56.236)
you

Morgan Shafer (11:08.162)

Yeah, that's a great question. I feel like the number one thing that I found to be really helpful is teaching clients about how being intentional about their thoughts.

can really affect how they feel emotionally. So I do use a lot of CBT principles, cognitive behavioral therapy, course, coming from that framework. And I kind of have an eclectic approach combining those principles in. But I love seeing the light bulb moments go off for clients, realizing that they can take back control over their thoughts.

And they don't have to do it alone. Like this is where that Christian component comes in. We know we can ask the Holy Spirit for guidance and help with these thoughts that get so loud in our mind sometimes. But it's so freeing to see that we can be intentional about those thoughts, what we listen to. Yeah, I compare it to...

Camille McDaniel, LPC (11:55.798)
Okay.

Morgan Shafer (12:02.144)
A commercial is an example that I came up with where we might hear commercial on TV. It might be really convincing, but we did not have to buy what that commercial is selling. We can decide if we want to listen to that or not.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (12:08.483)
you

yes!

Camille McDaniel, LPC (12:16.493)
That's awesome. I'm gonna have to think about that one. Yeah, that's absolutely correct. Knowing that the goal of the commercial ultimately is fulfilling something along their needs or their desires, not our own always. Yeah, wow. Okay, we don't have to buy into it. That's a good way of looking at it. So then, you know, could you kind of give an example, an example of like, what might a treatment plan look like or?

What might that approach look like when it comes to, you know, helping our clients from a Christ -centered perspective tackle anxiety?

Morgan Shafer (12:54.958)
Yes, absolutely. So from a Christ -centered perspective, it's really great to incorporate scripture into this to say this is, you know, it's actually pretty

interesting. You can see CBT in the Bible actually. So I want to share a verse with you from Philippians 4, Philippians 4, 6 through 9.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (13:14.177)
Okay.

Morgan Shafer (13:16.332)
And I think this will become clear, especially those therapists who are listening to it, thinking about this in this way. It says,

is lovely, whatever is admirable. If anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things. Whatever you've learned or received or heard from me or seen in me, put into practice and the peace of God will be with you." So I use this beautiful scriptures of framework, right, to say, look, even this wisdom is in the Bible about setting our mind on the things are good and pure and that can be the starting point.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (14:01.95)
wow, yes.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (14:06.979)
Yes.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (14:10.511)
Thank you.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (14:13.933)
Yeah.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (14:17.923)
That's awesome because essentially then the treatment plan goes to restructuring the way we think, the way we act, the models that we choose to go after, like as the Lord is saying, look to me. so it's a whole, actually there's a whole treatment plan in that scripture of where you're going to start.

Morgan Shafer (14:33.474)
Mm -hmm.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (14:43.671)
and what you're going to be turning around both mentally and behaviorally and what models you're going to use in order to make some of those changes occur. Awesome. Thank you for sharing that. That's really beautiful scripture. Yeah, the Bible is awesome. So then, you know, to kind of help those who might be

listening, whether therapists or individuals receiving therapy who have gotten the message that

Anxiety is a sign of weak faith. You know, wouldn't struggle with worry. You wouldn't struggle with stress and anxiety if your faith was stronger. How do you help them? Is that something we reframe or is that something that is true? What do we say when it comes to that?

Morgan Shafer (15:13.134)
you

Morgan Shafer (15:17.285)
Mm -hmm.

Morgan Shafer (15:33.748)
Yeah, I would say we definitely reframe that. Anxiety is a sign you're human. And it's important to have compassion when we're in that moment because anxiety shows we do need God. We can't do it alone. And I think the important piece that people are missing when they just say, it's a sign of weakness is, no, not being anxious, but maybe staying there or feeling helpless. And where we turn when we're anxious is what's important.

So if we're turning to God, that's showing faith, saying I'm anxious, but I'm choosing to believe anyway, and I know I'm not here alone. And it's a process. And each person's situation is unique. Sometimes people are going through really hard time where it would be really hard not to feel anxious during that time, or based on their past experience or trauma they've gone through, genetics and how people are raised plays a factor. And so some people are more prone to being anxious.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (16:13.187)
Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (16:22.083)
you

Morgan Shafer (16:32.59)
because of that, not because of a lack of faith. So it really is, we're human and this is part of it.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (16:37.933)
Yeah. Thank you for clarifying that. Yes, absolutely. So then for you, what are some of the common things that you see Christian clients dealing with as it

relates to anxiety? Like, you know, we've talked about kind of how we help them navigate through and what are some of the things that we might do as far as a treatment plan and where we align that with biblical teaching. But what are some of the things that people are worried about these days?

Morgan Shafer (17:07.367)

Yeah, I think some big ones and they're kind of broad but there's lots that fall underneath but it's wondering what is God's plan for my life? The huge one, like what am I supposed to be doing with my life? And then also why are these bad things happening? Like I feel like I'm living a good, you know, I'm doing good, I'm trying to follow God's plan for my life and now things aren't working out the way that I wanted them to. And so a lot of suffering, you know those classic questions of why is there suffering?

Camille McDaniel, LPC (17:12.462)

Mm -hmm.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (17:16.879)

Yeah.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (17:34.766)

minutes.

Morgan Shafer (17:36.332)

in the world. Those are some of big ones.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (17:38.147)

Those are actually some, hear some of that too. I hear a lot of like, what am I supposed to be doing here? Like just not really sure. What's my purpose? What's the plan? What am I supposed to be doing and how? Yeah, a lot of questions around that. A lot of future concerns, which we know anxiety oftentimes lies in the future. So in future concerns and things unknown. So yeah, that's a.

Morgan Shafer (17:48.046)

Ugh.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (18:06.935)

Hmm, interesting. Okay, it's just always good to hear what what others are seeing in their practices. So then, for you as a as a Christian, you know, as someone who also practices in in providing mental health care support, can you tell me kind of a little bit about how how like witnessing the integration of faith and healing has impacted your own spiritual and professional journey?

Morgan Shafer (18:32.386)

Mmm.

Yeah, absolutely. I feel like it has definitely strengthened my faith and my resolve. It has shown me, know, in hearing people's stories and the questions they ask really helped not only normalize having those questions, but then creating that environment where people can actually speak to them. Cause I think that's one of the first things is just to hear people's stories and to do that. So having that grace with their self too, to say when I have questions, I can talk about them with people or get wise counsel.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (18:57.677)

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Morgan Shafer (19:05.384)

And it's really, I've seen that transformation with the hope in Christ that people get when we're, you know, kind of bound by our ethics in, with non-Christian clients, right? Sometimes I'm like, there's just so much, you're just missing this, you know, you can see that, that difference in the Christian hope that we have is so different than secular hope. And I think one of the things that's been really important for me too is it's emboldened me to be boldly Christian.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (19:18.413)

So yes, warm.

Morgan Shafer (19:35.456)

in a field that sometimes is not very welcoming to Christians. It can be hostile at times because of a misunderstanding and a misapplication of Christian truth. So I feel like it's really helped me be more brave in doing that. I'm kind of explaining that.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (19:35.886)

Hmm.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (19:40.847)

Yeah.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (19:45.113)

Mm -hmm.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (19:51.007)

yes. Thank you for sharing that. I like that distinction that you made toward the end where you're saying it could have been a misunderstanding and a misapplication of biblical truth. That, I think, is so powerful for us to rest on because sometimes the injuries that people have sustained have not been at all what is aligned with the truth that Christ has given us.

Morgan Shafer (20:03.829)
huh. huh.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (20:17.195)
it may have been a misapplication. It also may have been a misunderstanding of the context. And it's kind of, it hurts me to see when people have had such detrimental experiences that then kind of leave them feeling like maybe this is not for them, you know? But I am glad and hopeful to see that in your own practice as you continue to provide this care and support for the people who come your way.

Morgan Shafer (20:36.942)
you

Camille McDaniel, LPC (20:46.211)
that you are also seeing evidence of God's truth, you know, play out in your counseling office and that, just kind of strengthens your own, your own faith in Christ. Yeah, that's awesome. I know that yes, a lot, a lot of amen to that.

Morgan Shafer (20:52.045)
No.

Morgan Shafer (20:59.64)
Yeah, yeah, absolutely. A lot of prayer.

Morgan Shafer (21:06.594)
prayer.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (21:10.561)
So is there anything you'd want to leave us with? Like, you know, if there's any final advice and I want to also say in addition to any final advice for other Christian counselors out there, and also please tell us, tell everyone where they can find you, your website, and if you have any social media that you would like to share, please close us out with that information.

Morgan Shafer (21:30.734)
you

Morgan Shafer (21:37.25)

Yes, absolutely. a final piece of advice for my fellow Christian therapists out there is to know that this is a journey you're walking with clients on and it's a process. So even if we feel like we've got good answers and good solutions, it can take a really long time to see some of these changes. Sometimes it happens really fast, which is amazing. Other times it can be a long journey that we're, you know, a long storm that we're battling alongside our clients. So it's important.

to know that that's okay. It's okay if you're walking that journey and people need that. And that it's also important for you to have support during that time too. So to make sure you're also in prayer, in the Word, in a healthy community of faith, and also seeking wise counsel if you need to as well. Just to support yourself as you're going through these difficult times with clients. Because they affect us too. We care about our clients and we want to see them succeeding and doing

Camille McDaniel, LPC (22:18.863)

Hmm.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (22:34.787)

Yes.

Morgan Shafer (22:37.264)

so it can weigh heavy on us if we're trying to carry that burden alone. We need to know that we're also relying on the Holy Spirit through us to help our clients. And that's huge to know that, you know, again, our Lord Jesus Christ is the true anchor and our true source of calm in the storm. So that is my final advice is to rest in Him. Yeah. Yeah.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (22:59.247)

Thank you. Thank you so much. Where can we find you? Tell us where we can find you and whether it's people may want to refer to you or people may want to connect with you. Where are you?

Morgan Shafer (23:13.324)

Yes, so you can look me up. can Google Morgan Schaeffer Counseling and I pop right up. Otherwise, the link to my website is morgan -schafer .clientssecure .me and you can also find me on Facebook as well. If you're looking to connect, just go Morgan Schaeffer Counseling and I'll pop right up.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (23:31.359)

Awesome. Thank you so much, Morgan, for sharing all of your expertise, you know, for coming and just kind of gracing us with all of that information. It's

much appreciated. And it was really a wonderful time talking with you this episode.

Morgan Shafer (23:47.547)

Thank you so much for having me. I really appreciate it.