

Charlie - Hello and welcome to “15 Minutes with Charlie.” I’m your host, Charlie Mechem. I want to help you communicate more effectively and I think that the use of anecdotes can get you there. Explore this with me as I share anecdotes from my book, *Total Anecdotal*, and ask guests to react in relation to their own experience and careers.

Charlie - In this episode I’m interviewing Annika Sörenstam. Annika’s had over 100 golf victories worldwide, more than any other golfer. She is the first female player to shoot a 59, and she was the first female to play in a men’s PGA tour event since 1945. Her foundation, The ANNIKA Foundation, is thriving because of her commitment and dedication, and I think she is the ultimate definition of giving back. So listen to this special 15 minutes with Annika.

Charlie - I’ve been privileged to be part of Annika's life after golf, as well as during her golfing years and I think as much as anyone I've ever known, she has given back and is continuing to contribute particularly to junior girl's golf. So, Annika, welcome.

Annika - Well, thank you very much and after reading your book, now my head is so big headed after that beautiful introduction.

Charlie - You probably saw some of my thoughts on when you start a speech after a nice introduction, when you say, after that introduction, I can hardly wait to hear what I have to say.

Annika - Exactly.

Charlie - Okay well, here we are. What I'm gonna do is throw out to you several anecdotes that are in the book and simply ask you to tell us how that particular anecdote has been a part of your life, if it has. And, we'll start with the anecdote, which is under the heading in the book of “Dealing with Adversity” and it goes like this: “When dealing with difficult situations, it is critical that you not do things that make the situation even worse than it is, as someone put it, if you find yourself in a hole the first thing to do is to stop digging.” I'd like your reaction to that.

Annika - Yeah, I mean, that's a good way to explain it. You know, throughout my career, you know I've obviously been in different situations and some have

been easy and some have been difficult, I think just, it's a normal part of the journey. But I would say that one journey that comes to my mind, I've, you know I've been a professional for a long time and as you know as a professional in anything, you work very hard, you sacrifice a lot of things and you know I push myself to different, different levels all the time to reach my goals and I worked really hard in the gym and I hit a lot of shots so, of course, maybe it's natural that the body will eventually take its toll. And I will never forget, in 2007, I was, I had some neck pains and stubborn as I am, and I didn't really think that there was anything wrong. I thought maybe I slept on the wrong side or you know all the miles that we take on airplanes, maybe I was sitting a little crooked, and so maybe that's why my neck was hurting.

Annika - And I would hit golf shots and they would not fly as far and I couldn't believe what I was seeing because my swing felt really good. And I'll never forget, I had a player say well, maybe you should have your neck checked, maybe there is something wrong. And I said, there's nothing wrong with my neck. I said okay, I remember driving down to our good friends, Bruce Thomas, who has been a doctor for the LPGA for a long time and he said, well, let's take a little x-ray. Let's do a scan and see what's going on with your neck. And, luckily I did that and the results came back that I had a very badly herniated disk in my neck and my back.

Charlie - Wow.

Annika - And, I said, okay what does that mean? I have a tee time tomorrow at 8:00, how am I gonna get there? And he said, no I don't think you understand, you won't be playing for a long time and if you continue to play you might hurt yourself for the rest of your life. So, you know it was a difficult situation in the sense that, I had to face the reality, it was time to take a break. It was time to start taking care of myself. It was time to start balancing my schedule a bit and not wear myself down too much.

Annika - What was hard about this situation was, that it was in the middle of the season and as you know in the LPGA, that's when the big tournaments come up. This was in May and the tournament was in my home town, Orlando and I really didn't wanna miss it. But I was forced to do it but, again, I took a break, I worked with some trainers and during the six weeks of rehab, I started to think about my next chapter in life. And that's

actually when a lot of my Annika brand of businesses was kind of the birth of those ideas because I was stuck at home with a neck brace and I had nothing else to do than think and analyze what I needed to do. So, something good came out of something bad.

Charlie - Very, very interesting and in other words, when you found yourself in a hole, you quit digging. You came back strong. The next anecdote is under the category of "Environment" and it's a saying that I love which is: "Save the earth, it's the only planet with chocolate." Now, I'm not gonna ask you whether you like chocolate or not, what I quote this anecdote for, I'd like to get your thoughts on environment, the warming of the planet. How important golf can be to that kind of an effort. Any thoughts that you have on the environment and caring for it?

Annika - Yeah no, I think this is a very important topic and obviously, it's a very broad topic and people have a lot of different opinions. You know, as far as, you know, our planet, it's the only planet we have so, I think we need to take care of it. And of course, many different philosophies out there, but I do think that sometimes golf gets a little bit of a bad rap, when it comes to you know just the golf course itself. People look at it more from a negative standpoint, we're using a lot of water, there's a lot of fertilization going on and you know, designing golf courses which I've been lucky to do. I just, actually had the grand opening of my first domestic golf course in Minneapolis and my partner in crime was everybody's friend, Mr. Arnold Palmer.

Annika - So I designed the front 9, he designed the back 9 so, they call it the king and the queen. And, obviously, it was a huge feather in my hat and an honor for me to work with Mr. Palmer but, having said that you know, you just think of golf and what it has to offer. It's interesting to know that many, many new inventions have come from the golf course design business because we have been forced to follow some of the rules and you know just the laws as far as what we can do and not do. And, it's been fascinating like, this time release fertilization actually comes from a golf course.

Charlie - Right.

Annika - Just the landscaping around the world, and that comes from golf. So, again sometimes goes back to your first anecdote, where you talked about difficult situations. Golf has really been instrumental in coming up with new innovations to make sure that we take care of the environment. That we think about golf courses, you know how do we build something that will sustain for a long time? I think we all know that water is gonna be the biggest resource that maybe, in 10 years we will be missing, as a matter of fact they're already seeing it in California and some other areas. And, I think it's just gonna be a matter of time. So, I think golf has been an instrumental part of that, we should give golf a credit because they do come up with new ideas. But, it is interesting with the global warming and so forth, I mean, it's just, we see things in different parts of the world we've never seen before.

Charlie - Right, right, right. That's very insightful and very helpful.

Charlie - The next anecdote is under the category in the book of "Forecasting the Future." It goes like this: "When the Yankees signed Babe Ruth, in 1930 to a two year contract worth \$160,000, general manager then, his name was Ed Barrow, proudly exclaimed, 'No one will ever be paid more.' " And so, I'm glad Mr. Barrow is no longer alive, he'd have some tough questions to answer but, what I wanted to ask you about is not the issue of athletes salaries in general but, are we making progress and will we continue to narrow the gap between men's and women's salary compensation, rewards, whatever you wanna call it. Are we making any progress?

Annika - I think we are. It's a slow progress, if I may say. I feel very lucky to be in a generation where we you know we were fortunate, you know obviously thanks to the founders of the LPGA to have a place to play, a place to fulfill our dreams, you know competing around the world and making a living on that. Not every female athlete is that lucky but, tennis and golf are two of the sports where I would say that the gap is closer towards the men. But it's interesting, and it's a slow process, but I think if you just look at it across the board with women and business. The last few years has been a big push of trying to get women in C-suites and I know several companies on the LPGA are pushing that and studies show that athletes, female athletes, make great employees and also make great leaders because they know what it takes to be successful.

Annika - And of course, you know, young boys do that to. But as far as, you know, not every athlete will become a professional athlete. So, thinking about the future and thinking about the importance of introducing kids to sports, is it's not just to excel in that particular sport, but they can excel in other things like in business. And so, I think that you know moving forward, in the next five years, I think we're gonna see a lot more women in C-suites. I think we're seeing, already a trend of changing that. That it's okay to balance you know family and business and work. I know in the past it's almost like a lot of females are afraid to take on a big job because you know, they feel the guilt of not being home with their family. But now it's more acceptable, I think you know people admire people that say their family, and respect my time, I do the best I can in the office, but you know have that balance. So, I think things are changing and I think as far as sports goes, the more the women can get on TV and the bigger demand.

Annika - But Charlie as you know, I mean, being the commissioner of the LPGA, you've had a lot of interesting meetings with corporate America where the mind set might have been a little bit old fashioned but once they got their foot in the game by playing with Pro Am, they realize how genuine, how nice that these female golfers are, and really how much they give back. So, we just gotta continue to push and we have to believe that one day this gap will be smaller.

Charlie - I really genuinely believe that it will. The next anecdote, certainly is one that I can identify with you, it's under the category of "Hard Work." And certainly, you've been a hard worker at everything you've done but, here's the way the anecdote goes, "A man prayed and asked God to help him win the lottery. Every day he renewed his prayer and finally said, 'God won't you please help me win the lottery.' To his absolute amazement, the skies darkened, lightning flashed and a strong deep voice said, 'Would you at least, buy a ticket.' " The lesson here is obvious, we so often expect good things to happen without effort and they rarely do. Would you comment on the place of hard work in your life?

Annika - Yeah, now that's a good one and I can't think of anything that's worth talking about that's not taking effort from anybody. You know, I have a story that my dad, well, it's a story but it really wasn't. I think it was more of advice from my dad that still sticks to me you know, as far as my life. I was fifteen years old and I was hitting balls in the driving range and it started to

rain and I didn't think it was ... it was not so much fun, I got cold, so I called my dad and said hey, can you please pick me up? And he picked me up and we drove away, and when we drove away we could see some other kids on the driving range hitting balls in the rain. And I'll never forget, my dad turned to me and he said, Annika, I just want you to know that there are no shortcuts to success.

Charlie - Good, good.

Annika - And, I'll never forget that because I felt ... I don't think he meant it but, I felt the guilt. You know, I wanted to be a good player and I wanted to be successful and here, you know I kinda gave up 'cause I was little cold and a little wet. And I realized that if I'm gonna get anywhere, I gotta just play golf through you know, rain or sun or wind or whatever. There's some things you just gotta deal with and it makes you stronger so. And I think another good thing to think about is, you know you can do anything but not everything.

Charlie - Right.

Annika - You just got to go out there and things will not be handed to you, you gotta earn it and when you earn something the feeling is amazing.

Charlie - Well, as the lord said, you gotta buy a ticket. You certainly did that.

Charlie - This next anecdote is, I think is fun, funny about golf. It was a BC comic strip some years ago and I thought every golfer should ponder this message, it went like this: In the first segment, BC was explaining golf to his girlfriend. He said, "The object is to hit the ball as few times as possible." In the second panel, his girlfriend repeats somewhat puzzled, "So the object of the game is to hit the ball as few times as possible?" When BC says "Yes," she then says, "Then why hit it at all?" And walks away. And in the final panel, BC is sitting alone in the dark, staring at the moon, repeating in an almost dazed way, "Then why hit it at all?"

Charlie - I couldn't help but laugh at that, as you know, nobody loves golf and what it stands for more than I but, it was funny and I welcome your reaction.

Annika - I think it's really funny too. I guess people that don't play golf don't realize the beauty and the challenge of golf 'cause, you know, a lot of times people go and the first hole they might have a nine or 10 and then they turn to each other and say, well now you have 17 more of these.

Charlie - That's right well, I think anybody who's ever played golf knows that although the object is to hit the ball as few times as possible, it's not just the score. It's the camaraderie, the environment, the fun. So, there's a lot more to golf than scoring, although, obviously as a professional, scoring was critical.

Annika - I would agree with you there Tom, and also, honesty if you think of it, I mean what other sport that we know of, that you are your own kind of rules official. Your own referee, you're out there on your own, and you know it's just ... we trust each other that you don't fix your lie and that you don't, you know, you report the right score, and all of that. I think that's what makes golf so special. You go on business, and you want to get to know somebody, go and play 18 holes with the person. You get to know them as characters, do they listen to advice?

Charlie - Yeah.

Annika - Do they cheat. There's so many things that you learn about somebody on a golf course so, that fits very well under honesty.

Charlie - The next one is under the category in the book of "Intelligence" and it's a quote about Albert Einstein. In which, he made clear that he didn't have much use for rote learning. Instead, his creative genius stemmed from his ability to imagine concepts. And he summed this up once by saying, "Imagination is more important than knowledge." What I'd be interested in your thoughts there is, I think a number of the great players have come, and they like to imagine a shot. They like to think about where the shot's gonna go and that's an important part of their routine. Now, sadly, in my case, I never wanted to imagine my shot 'cause it made me cry. But, with great players, imagination I think plays a real part. Is that right?

Annika - Absolutely, I think you know, visualization or seeing a shot before you hit it is really important. Then when you see something and again, trying to see a good shot, trying to visualize your best shots, and then you turn that

vision into a feeling and then into a motion. I would say the same thing, I mean, you know I lay in bed, and I think about ... not so much now but when I played, is I'd lay there and I'd visualize a round of golf that I needed to play the next day. I visualized what it's like to walk down the 18th fairway.

Annika - I mean a good example would be the eighth inspiration, which is our first major of the year. We have a beautiful walk of champions up to the 18th green and just living those feelings in my mind before you go there, makes it easier obviously to handle all the pressure but, it just makes you more comfortable. Because I tell people, if you've done it in your mind then, it's gonna feel more natural when you do it.

Annika - I mean, there's a lot of things that I can think of that I've done in my career just to help myself with my goals, with my vision of being the best player in the world. Seeing my self standing on the podium with the bog trophy or, you know, having a gold medal around your neck, or something just to get that positive image and vision going. And I can tell you that in the National Team, the Swedish National Team, we talked about vision 54 meaning you know shooting 18 under par.

Charlie - Right.

Annika - Birding every hole and I know a lot of people thought that well... there's a little giggle to it, that it's impossible it's never been done but, you know I had my best round of golf March 16th, 2001, when I shot 59 and was the first female golfer to break 60. And I honestly believe that in my mind, I have always thought I could and when I got that close, you know I was just gonna keep on going. So, to anybody out there, you know, dream big and if you necessarily don't get to the top at least you will get halfway, and that's a lot further than where you were last time.

Charlie - That's so, so true.

Charlie - The final anecdote is near the end of the book, under "What's Really Important?" in life. It's a quote, I don't know who said it, I wish I did but, goes like this: "In life you will realize, there's a role for everyone you meet. Some will test you, some will use you, some will love you and some will teach you. But the ones that are truly important, are the ones that bring

out the best in you. They are the rare and amazing people who remind you why it's worth it." I'd love your thoughts on that.

Annika - Yeah no, that's a good one, it really is. You know, you never know where life will take you and the journey will take you. I can say that in golf, I always felt like I was in control of my game and my plan and so forth but, it changed quickly when I became a mother. Just because, you can't plan things the way you used to do.

Charlie - Right.

Annika - I had to go with the flow a little bit and especially when our second child was born, Will, our son. He was born at you know, 27 weeks, so 13 weeks prematurely and that was really quite a test for all of us and the uncertainty of life and not knowing what the future would hold so.

Charlie - Yes.

Annika - Yeah, we just gotta appreciate what we have and make the most out of it and... what do they say, they yesterday's history, tomorrow is a mystery. Today is the present so, make it a gift.

Charlie - That's great and heaven knows Will is a buster now. He's the happiest little guy and of course, Ava as well. I just wanted to close this by noting that in the book, I tell the story from my point of view of you and Arnold, talking about your playing in a men's event at The Colonial and his initial... not concern but just, uncertainty as to why you were doing it. And in the anecdote, I point out that I sat down with him after you and he had talked and I thought to myself, maybe I can get to him this way and so I said, Arnold, let's think about it this way. If there was another tour above the PGA tour, wouldn't you wanna play on it, wouldn't you wanna see how good you were in comparison with those people? And he looked at me like I was... of course I would! And I said well, that's really all Annika's doing. She simply wants to test her skill level and give it her best. Any thoughts you might have on that whole business?

Annika - Yeah, I think we interpret the story the same. I was a little puzzled or a little confused why he didn't really embrace you know, the situation. But I certainly understand where he was coming from. I was also very glad that

you kind of explained it from maybe a view that he understood and could see it more clearly.

Charlie - Right.

Annika - And that's just what life is about, for me anyway. Obviously, it's trying to get better once you do, learning from others, but I think the moral of this is kinda follow your passion. Follow what you like and you know, there's different ways to success, different recipes for success and I think, sometimes you just don't know unless you're in that person's shoes. It's very easy to have opinions, unless you really have the whole story. And I think I've learned that lesson many times, you know, when you quickly come to a little conclusion without really knowing the reason why. The reason why I in this particular case, it was just, I wanted to be better. It was in 2003, I had been number one for a few years and I was looking for ways to continue to push myself.

Annika - I felt in the back of my mind, I can get better. But I need something different, something extra to really push it and this was an amazing opportunity at that time, and I worked so hard and I got ready. And you know, I'll never forget. I walked away from that event and I felt like I had matured, I had grown up, I had gotten better. It was one of the biggest lessons but, also one of the best highlights of my career was just getting this opportunity so, don't turn away opportunities. You never know where they will take you.

Charlie - Well, you're so right and you handled yourself superbly in that appearance and I think it came away as a home run. Well, you've been so gracious with your time and we really appreciate it. You've really added a lot of insights to the book. I'm hopeful that people will enjoy the book and that they'll get some tips from it. I frankly wish that when I had been in my 30's, someone had written a book like this. But now I have, and I hope others will enjoy it so, thank you so much.

Annika - Well, thank you very much, and first of all Charlie you're a great speaker, but I think what really makes this book fun is all these different stories and quick little notes from different people, different walks of life. And I think that just adds a lot to it. So, thank you for putting it together and I've

enjoyed reading it and I know I will use it, as a little kinda go to, when I have to give my next speech.

Charlie - Thanks for joining me for today's conversation. If you'd like to listen to more episodes, please visit [totalanecdotal.co](http://totalanecdotal.co) or search for "15 Minutes With Charlie" in your podcasting app. If you are enjoying the show you should check out my book, "*Total Anecdotal: A Fun Guide to Help You Become a Better Speaker and Writer.*" Learn more at [totalanecdotal.co/book](http://totalanecdotal.co/book), that's [totalanecdotal.co/book](http://totalanecdotal.co/book), or it's available through Amazon or Barnes & Noble, and perhaps your local bookstore.