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Annie: Hi friends, welcome to another episode of That Sounds Fun. I'm your host Annie F. Downs. I'm really happy to be here with you today. We have got a great show in store. But before we jump into today's conversation, I want to take a moment to tell you about one of our amazing partners stamps.com. I don't know about you, but I think if I had a little extra time and extra money, and a break in responsibilities and travel restrictions, I'd have the first plane that got to travel somewhere, probably Scotland or Greece, I don't know anywhere.

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And I hope you've made your plans to join us for one of our 12 shows on the That Sounds Fun coast-to-coast tour that kicks off in just a couple of weeks, y'all. I do not have words for how excited I am and you know how rare it is for your girl to

run out of words. If you haven't gotten your tickets yet pop over to anniefdowns.com/events to grab them and all the details are there.

Today on the show is one of my dear friends Danielle Walker. I know many of you already know Danielle from way on back when she was on episode 36. And on the 2018 Christmas party and also when she and I got to join Angie Smith for the Come To the Table Tour in 2019. Danielle is a New York Times bestselling cookbook author, *Against All Grain*, *Meals Made Simple*, *Celebrations*, and *Eat What You Love*.

She's a health advocate, a wellness expert and a self-trained chef. And after being diagnosed with an autoimmune disease at the age of 22 and suffering for many years, Danielle found help through dietary and lifestyle changes. Based on her own health journey, Danielle shares her amazing recipes on her blog as a beacon of hope for others. You guys know that her ranch dressing made me cry, it is that good? Because it's dairy-free and it's amazing.

She shared so much of herself and the story of her own health journey in her new book *Food Saved Me* which is out tomorrow. Yay! I love it when my friends release books, I cannot wait for y'all to hear more of her stories, so here's my conversation with Danielle Walker.

[00:03:25] <Music>

Annie: Danielle Walker, welcome back to That Sounds Fun.

Danielle: Thanks.

Annie: I never use that voice, it just felt right for you.

Danielle: Is it just going to be a lot of this?

Annie: Uh-huh, I think so.

Danielle: Never talking, just lots of laughing, I must thank you.

Annie: First thing, top priority artichokes season, it is artichoke season, am I correct?

Danielle: It is, and it's almost over.

Annie: How's it been? How's it been out there?

Danielle: It's been fantastic, my children have eaten their weight in them. They're great. I need to plant my own plants in my backyard, so that we don't have to keep spending, because they're not cheap.

Annie: Oh, yeah, I know. Even in season, they're expensive.

Danielle: Yes. And there was a point at the very beginning of artichoke season, where to get organic artichokes they weren't by weight they were by actual artichoke. They were \$5 per an artichoke and I was like-

Annie: My gosh!

Danielle: ...my children will go through three of them if I left them, and I'm like we have to ration the artichokes, because I can't, that's like an entire meal's worth of money for just your vegetable.

Annie: Yes.

Danielle: Which is kind of hard to complain about and also kind of hard to tell your kids no to a vegetable, but they love it.

Annie: I need to tell you - can I never eat the leaves of artichokes or can I eat the middle leaves?

Danielle: The middle leaves? Like you mean, so you like take all the ones off from around the outside?

Annie: Mh-hmm. So are you intending to, you know you cut it in half, and you get the hairy stuff out.

Danielle: Yes, right, the chokes, yeah.

Annie: And then you grill, oh, that would be the choke, got it.

Danielle: Yeah.

Annie: Okay, you grill it. There's a restaurant here that does it perfectly, J. Alexander's has grilled artichokes. But the center leaves when you've cleaned out the choke, and all you have left is the heart and the leaves. Mostly for the bigger leaves you

scrape the bottom half-ish the meat off. Those middle leaves are so soft, sometimes I just eat the whole thing?

Danielle: I think you can totally eat the whole thing if it's soft.

Annie: Okay, great. Okay, great.

Danielle: I feel like, so my grandma used to tell me, because that's who I learned how to make them from. That the middle part, the choke the hairy stuff, would actually make you choke. That's what she told us, so that we wouldn't eat it. Which I don't know if that's the truth or not, I mean, you get some of that stuff in there, and that's not pretty.

Annie: It's not great.

Danielle: But the middle leaves if they're not pokey on the outside, and they're like on the top, and they're just full like practically meat, yeah, I don't see why not. You just take that whole thing off and dip it in whatever you are dipping, and eat it.

Annie: That's right. Man, I just don't know a better world than when you make me artichokes with that dip you make, it's in one of your cookbooks, isn't it?

Danielle: I think it's in the first book.

Annie: Yeah.

Danielle: It's in the first book. And there is a better world and that's when I make you artichokes with the dip and crab.

Annie: Oh, that's exactly right, you are actually exactly right. You upgraded my upgrades.

Danielle: And the problem is that those seasons are actually like right on the back. So you only have a very small window to be able to do crab and artichokes at the same time in California, it's like we're talking weeks.

Annie: Oh.

Danielle: So we just need to plan your annual vacation to visit, Annie, during that little bit of time.

Annie: I mean, can we talk that it's insane that I easily got to you in 2020, but I haven't yet in 2021.

Danielle: I know.

Annie: That's ridiculous. Was I there before-

Danielle: You got right before.

Annie: It was right before the pandemic, right?

Danielle: Yeah, it was February, it was like right before life shut down.

Annie: That is wild. I know because I was trying to think back, I was like, "Did I have a mask on when we were there." But no.

Danielle: No.

Annie: We didn't.

Danielle: No, no, no, we were able to just hang out. You've got that picture of Kezia on your shoulders...it was like way before life was complicated.

Annie: Yes.

Danielle: Even though that was complicated for me at that point, because I was recovering from that terrible flare up in 2019.

Annie: Man, flare up is such a nicer word than that actually deserved. I mean, you were in the hospital for how long?

Danielle: Three weeks.

Annie: Yeah, oh my God!

Danielle: And then in bed for probably like four months.

Annie: Is it because we went on tour?

Danielle: You know I ended up adding four chapters, I think maybe five, to *Food Saved Me* to the book after that tour.

Annie: Really?

Danielle: For a lot of different reasons. But no it's not fully because we went on tour but I think that was definitely like what idiom do you want to use? "The straw that broke the camel's back." There's a lot of different ones, but yeah, that I think was the tipping point. It was kind of the final like, my body was not happy with me.

Annie: How, so, Danielle, I wonder, we're just going to jump in on body, food talk.

Danielle: Yeah, yeah, do it.

Annie: Because one of the things I love about Food Save Me is it really is your journey. I mean, all of our friends listening, probably have some of your cookbooks if not all of them, because we all love you. But *Food Saved Me* really is your story of why you even started doing that. How do we know in our own bodies, because you know, I have such weird food stuff in my own body. How do we know in our own bodies, when what we're eating isn't what our body loves?

Danielle: Yeah, that's a good question. I think-

Annie: Thank you.

Danielle: You're welcome. You do well at this job, that you have-

Annie: My dad loves it when people say that, and so it always makes me so happy.

Danielle: That's really what the book is about. Yes, it's my story, but actually more so than my story, it's about trying to empower people to listen to their own bodies.

Annie: Yes.

Danielle: Because your story A, may not be the same as mine, and actually we have over like 400 of other people's stories-

Annie: In the book.

Danielle: ...in the front and back, and throughout the whole book.

Annie: Which I love.

Danielle: That from everything, from multiple sclerosis to PCOS, to infertility, to rheumatoid arthritis. And so while your body, your symptoms, your disease, your ailments may not be the exact same as mine, I think the journey is very similar. And then in that same vein, your food sensitivities, what helps you what makes you worse might be slightly different than mine. And so really sharing like from point A, about 12 years ago when I got diagnosed until now, and that I'm continuing to learn and with every flare up and setback, I learn more pieces of the puzzle.

Sharing all of that, it's my hope and prayer that people read that and realize just how much you have to be an advocate for your own body, and how much you have to listen to it. So that's a long answer, but the short answer is that you really do, you have to listen to your body, you have to listen to the different nuances. And I will say there's so much that we just live with day-to-day, that I don't think God intended for us to be living with. I feel like our bodies are actually supposed to work like that would make sense.

Annie: Yeah.

Danielle: And just the joint pain, and the migraines, and the headaches and all of that, that we just kind of are like, "Oh, it's just what life is." Or "It's just getting older or that kind of thing." And I really feel like you can do so much with foods that can be preventative, but also incredibly healing that you can really start to notice where your body thrives.

So I think that, that's the answer to that is just like listening at what works for you, and whether that's keeping a journal and like seeing and trying to correlate your symptoms to what you ate. And that's kind of what I talked through that process in there of figuring out what worked for mine.

Annie: Yeah, because the problem is for most of our friends listening, we, not everyone, but for most of our friends listening, most of the time, we do not have a food shortage in our personal lives, right?

Danielle: Right.

Annie: Like we are pretty food stable, in general, not everyone, but most people are probably pretty food stable. And the problem becomes like, "I really want to eat this thing, even if it makes me feel bad." And other times it is, "I have no idea what I'm eating that makes me feel bad."

Danielle: Right, right.

Annie: But you mean to tell me I don't have to feel like this?

Danielle: Yeah. Yeah, I mean, I agree. And I think, first of all, I don't feel like people normally point to food first. It's almost like the last place we look, and it happened to me, too. I went through every single thing you could possibly think of before trying food. I mean, so much as like trying nicotine patches because they were supposed to like regulate the immune system. I mean, I did everything and anything under the sun.

Annie: You're like, "I'm going to quit smoking, even though I'm not a smoker."

Danielle: Yeah, never was a smoker, no. But there was all this research that it can actually help, like, modulate the immune system. And I was like, "All right, I'll slap a patch on if that gets me off of some of the medications." This long story short, it made me super sick. Because when you're not a smoker and you're putting nicotine into your body, I was nauseated all the time. But all that to say, I tried-

Annie: I did not know, I've never known that story, Danielle. That is so funny, you are like, "Let me put a little nicotine in my body via my arm."

Danielle: Yeah, listen, the medications that I was on were so debilitating, and they made me so sick, and they weren't working. And so I was just kind of on this path of like, whatever I can do that will work is what I want to do. So I tried anything and everything, but food was one of the last things that I tried.

Annie: Yeah.

Danielle: And I think there's a reason, I mean, there's a few reasons for that. Number one, I don't think people really think of that at first, because to a lot of people food is just sustenance. And it's just what gets you by or there's a lot of really, really deep personal memories and traditions that are tied to it. And so that's kind of like the last thing that you really want to look at. And then I think also, it's just really difficult to figure that out, and medications are definitely easier sometimes. But yeah, I think once you actually try something, and you notice how well you feel and how much your body is thriving. It's a lot easier to kind of stick to that and realize like, "Oh, wow, this actually is worth it." Because I don't really want to ever go back to the way that I was feeling before.

Annie: I mean, that's the problem is I don't know that when we have a good day in our bodies, that we take time to pay attention to. I wonder if it's because I didn't have this yesterday or because I did have this.

Danielle: True.

Annie: Except for like alcohol, I mean, I think when you know why you feel bad the morning after you drink too much alcohol, that's not the same.

Danielle: Yeah.

Annie: Okay, so before we go into specifics, let's talk about food freedom, and what it looks like because we are not a pro-diet group of friends around here. And we're not going to say yes to eating this and no to eating this, because everybody's body is different. But will talk about how you stay healthy in your body, but don't feel tied to diet culture, because diet culture makes me sad.

Danielle: Yeah, me too. Yeah, it's tough. I think for me, first of all, the first thing that I had to realize with this, when I started to see the improvements. And when I'm talking improvements, I mean, you're going to read kind of the long journey. But there was one specific point where I cut and did an elimination diet, and my symptoms decreased by 75%, in 24 hours.

Annie: Oh my gosh!

Danielle: 48 hours maybe like days, like within just a couple of days. So that was for me an eye-opening experience to know that this was not a quick fix diet, this was something that was going to be a lifestyle. And so you'll never actually hear me use the word diet at all. I mean, I'll sometimes say like, "I had to change my diet," in terms of the foods that I was eating. But this isn't a 30-day. This isn't like, a one-time thing but then I get to go back, this is a lifestyle for me. And for me, it was looking at it in the positive light.

I did have an eating disorder in high school and college, and even throughout here and there of my adult life. And so it was really important to me to try to not make it feel restrictive, to try and to not make it feel like I've been deprived or that I was missing out on things because of it. And so instead what I used to do and what I still do is make a list of all the things I can eat and so instead of being like, "I don't eat this, this, this and this." I actually say like, "I get to eat organic and grass-fed proteins, and berries, and nuts, and seeds, and fruits and vegetables." And then because I create the recipes cupcakes, and cookies, and the queso dip.

Annie: Oh, the best.

Danielle: The best. All those things, I try to focus on the positive, because I don't think it's sustainable when you focus on the negative. Now, I will say I did name my first blog and books *Against All Grains*, which feels very negative. But the story of that is in the book. But in general, I think it's just more sustainable and just so much more life-giving, when you focus on all the things that you can still enjoy.

[00:15:41] <Music>

Annie: Hey friends, just interrupting this conversation real quick, to share about one of our incredible partners, Raycon. So as we're safely able to go to the occasional concerts these days, one of my favorite practices is listening to the artist's playlist to prepare for the show. Did you know you could do that? I did that just a couple of weeks ago before the Lady A Show, and man those harmonies sounded good in my Raycon every day earbuds.

Raycon is your source for innovative earbud designs at prices that don't break the bank. Raycon's wireless earbuds come in a range of fun colors. They have carbon black, electric blue, but you know mine are rose gold. And unlike most other wireless options, Raycon earbuds come with a bunch of different size gel tips, so you can choose the ones that are most comfortable for you. Their ear buds are stylish and discreet, no dangling wires or stems.

Raycon earbuds have a 32-hour battery life, y'all, that is so long. It's good amount of listening time. The Bluetooth pairing is super simple and seamless, and the audio quality is excellent with more bass. And they're in a compact little case that's easy to slide into your backpack, your computer bag or your purse, so you always have them handy. And since they're water and sweat resistant, I never worry about wearing them when I'm exercising.

So go to buyraycon.com/thatsoundsfun and get 15% off your order. Again, that's buyraycon.com/thatsoundsfun. Raycon earbuds start at about half the price of other premium wireless earbud brands. They sound just as amazing as other top audio brands. And Raycon's come with a 45-day happiness guarantee, so you really can't lose. Give them a try and you'll see what I mean. And now let's get back to our conversation with Danielle.

[00:17:19] <Music>

Annie: I have never thought about how your name is Against All Grain, like literally Against All Grain.

Danielle: Just very like Doomsday.

Annie: You really started to grain that day. You're like, "Oh, I've got to build an empire being against all of you grains."

Danielle: The story of the inception of that name is in there. But since like in the last few years we've transitioned more, we have a new website called daniellewalker.com. Because it started to feel a little, just a little negative, and a little kind of like-

Annie: Grain was taking it personally.

Danielle: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, and there's a lot of nuances now, over the last 10 years, that have changed a little.

Annie: I mean, that's my story with dairy too, is the first day, I mean, literally 40 hours after I quit dairy, I felt like a different person. I was like, "Oh." So to me, that was the first time I was, I don't know, 30, 35 maybe, 36? Six or seven years ago. And I remember being like, "Oh, this is what it feels like when you're not tired. Oh, this is..." I mean, it was literally like a fog lifted off of me, and I had never known that. It's almost like I didn't know what I didn't know.

Danielle: Totally.

Annie: And I had like no idea how my body did not love dairy until I did that.

Danielle: Right, right. And for a lot of people when you say fog, they are like, that's what a lot of people say when they stop gluten too and grains. And it is, it's kind of like we go through life and almost just make up for those things, so if you're super tired we drink more caffeine. Or if we just have like we're going for a walk and something hurts we take Advil. And so it's like we just kind of keep covering them up with band aids, but when you really do get to see how well you feel, if you have those sensitivities, it's pretty eye opening.

Annie: Yeah. You know how I talk about gluten, I'm always like, "Well, I feel like a tranquilized bear cub when I eat that." So that is a lot to deal with. So if I have nothing the next day, I would very much enjoy some gluten, but I have to be able to be tranquilized for some hours. So it's just weird, but, Danielle, the hard part about talking about food is people so quickly and you've experienced this

profoundly, I'm sure. Maybe it's men and women but I know it's women, people so quickly start talking about bodies when they talk about food.

Danielle: Yeah.

Annie: How do we separate that? How do we have healthy conversations about food and not make it about our bodies?

Danielle: Man, that's another great question, Annie. I really wish that people would stop talking about anybody's body, anybody but their own, like, it's just that, that's an issue that is I feel like separate. And then on top of that, when we talk about the body, I don't understand why it's the outward body that we talk about, and why it can't be the health of the inward body.

Annie: Yeah.

Danielle: And so I'm like, I wish that that's what we focused on. But even for me, I mean, I get comments all the time about stuff like that. When I'm sick or when I'm starting to look better, and I mean, it's just really tough road to navigate. But I feel like what we need to try to focus on is internally. I mean, when you say men and women, it's true, but also 50 million Americans have autoimmune disease. And I think 75% or 80% of those are females, and the number just is continuing to grow, and it seems to be continuing to skew towards women.

So I feel that the body image side of it, is like an extra layer that I do think that the female population that deals with autoimmune disease has to deal with. Because also with autoimmune disease, a lot of times, it's kind of invisible. Like, I mean, I was on tour with you and I was so sick. But to most people just looking at me, you would never have known how sick I was until I kind of go off my cliff, and end up in the hospital, and then I look like death.

But a lot of people walk around just looking somewhat normal, but internally being so sick. So I wish that we could like when we talk about anybody's body, I wish we could ask like, "How you are actually inside?" How your health is and not anything about your physical appearance.

Annie: When you're raising your children, specifically Kezia, your daughter. I mean, what are some ways that we could be helping our daughters grow up in a world where we care about what we eat, but we don't talk about each other's bodies?

Danielle: Oh, gosh!

Annie: How do we do that? I don't know how to do that.

Danielle: I don't know. She's only four, and just in the last like year, she's nowhere near thinking about that stuff yet. But just in the last year, it's been very like heavy on my heart of figuring that out. Because I'm still self-deprecating as an adult, and I want to make sure she never hears any of that. And I do because I don't want her to grow up having some of the same kind of body image issues that I did. So it's a constant thing on my mind.

And I'm just trying to understand what is that healthy balance of wanting to make sure that she does take care of her body, and treat it well, and eat the things that will help make her healthy and also autoimmune disease is hereditary. So we're also very careful with trying to make sure that our kids don't inherit what I have. So yeah, it's a very tight rope to walk and I to be honest with you, I don't know that I have the answers. I feel like we all need to seek our counselors on that one, because I need help too, and I don't know.

I mean, for us the foundation with both my boys and her of the way that we eat, and how we talk to them about that, it's just trying to not villainize any of the foods that we don't eat. But really kind of the same thing like I do with myself, but trying to show them the different health benefits of the foods that we do eat. And also trying to have kind of the recreations of some of the things that they might see their friends eat, and letting them know why we do this. And hopefully building a strong, healthy foundation with food for them that they'll start to make their own decisions as they get older.

Annie: Yeah.

Danielle: And when they don't feel good, like I definitely am the first to point out, I will let them try things. Like they'll go to a birthday party, and they'll be like, "I want to have one of those cupcakes." And I'm like, "Okay." And then if they don't feel good when they get home, I'm like, "So why do you think you're not feeling good?" And then we kind of try to backtrack and look at what they ate that was different. And then the next time, they're like, "I might just take a couple bites." Or "I might just have half." Or like, "I might lick the frosting." That's what my oldest does. And then actually, "I'm going to have your cupcake when we get home, because I know that when I eat your cupcake, it tastes great, but I don't feel like achy afterwards."

Annie: Yeah. I mean, there's just something about the way even you titled your book, *Food Saved Me*, of this idea of like food is not the enemy here. It's not the food that's the enemy. And so often it feels like with diet culture, food is the enemy.

Danielle: Totally, yeah.

Annie: And even in like body positive circles food is considered the hero, right?

Danielle: Right.

Annie: Instead of just, but it feels like too much sometimes to me.

Danielle: Yeah.

Annie: But I love what you teach and what you wrote about it in *Food Saved Me*, of just like, man, this is from God for us. So I mean, has that been hard for you to find that balance? Or was that easier for you than it feels like it is for me?

Danielle: I mean, I feel like I was forced to just to figure it out. So I think there's a difference in when I almost lost my life, and now this is what gave me my life back, and gave me the ability to be a mom and to be present for my kids, and to have an amazing career where I get to help people. And so there's not as much there for me because I see so many positive sides to it and it has brought so much hope to our life. It's really I mean, I say that in there, like the food that I eat and the way that I eat it, is just, I think how God created it. It's like before we went and started industrializing everything and messing it all up.

So to me, that kind of made sense too when I was first trying to figure this all out, and I was looking through all the different ways that people eat. And then I was like, "This one just feels like it's makes the most sense." I'm like, it feels super logical, it feels like it's just real whole foods the way that they were intended. And there weren't any extra things being done, there weren't any bars like that I was having to buy or pack, right? It wasn't like anything being hawked to me. There weren't any extra bottles of pills or shakes, anything like that. It was just like, this is just food that you can actually go and grab from the produce department or the meat counter or your farmers market. So yeah, I think that helped.

Annie: Yeah, I mean, I just think it's a weird spot, Danielle, and you are the one who does it the best, which is why we're doing this conversation. As you can imagine, we get a lot of communication from people who want to talk about this space, and

where faith meets food, and our bodies and all that. And I say no to almost all of them, except you and Jess Connolly.

Because I think what you model for us about food and where it meets God, and where it meets our lives. It just matters a ton to me. How is your faith been affected by all of this? If you want to talk about that.

Danielle: This is the first time I've gotten to write about that in this book. And it was tough for me to write about because it has suffered and struggled along. And it is still on rebuilding path right now. I grew up in a conservative Christian household, and my faith for me was kind of just because it was told for me to believe it.

Annie: Yeah.

Danielle: And it was never really questioned ever until my early 20s. I had a fairly easy upbringing, with a like healthy household two parents who've loved each other and very little loss or death. Like I don't really remember anything like that growing up grandparent wise and stuff. And so when I was diagnosed two months after being married, and laying in a hospital bed in Uganda. That was really like the first moment where I was like, "What is this God? Where is the God? Where is the God that I grew up, just being told essentially, that like, ask for and you shall receive and have enough faith and things will happen the way that you expect them to or what you ask for."

So that was really kind of the first moment of just having to really dig into what I had learned growing up, but also really make it my own faith. And at that point, I really feel like I very relied very heavily on God, and for a while after that. And after we lost our daughter, it was really kind of the first moment where I felt like my faith started to just crumble around me. Because I just didn't know what to do with everything that was happening and how to reconcile believing in a God that I thought was good, and that took care of us, and why he would give me a child that wouldn't make it here on earth.

And so then I really started to, like, try to rebuild after that. And then this 2019 setback where I almost lost my life doing something that I felt like He was telling me to do, and what my calling was, and traveling, and helping people get well, that was another tough time on that.

Annie: Yeah.

Danielle: And so it's still in the process. It's still in the process, it's very different than it used to be. But I actually appreciate that because I feel like when I do go through these periods, I know just from past experiences that I come back out with a different insight and a deeper relationship. And so I'm kind of in the process of just letting it ride right now. Like I'm figuring things out, but I have no timeline on it of when to get out on the other side. Because I know that He doesn't and I know that He'll be there no matter what. And I know that when I do get out that I come out stronger.

Annie: Yeah.

Danielle: So I'm like, "All right, whenever that time is, I'm ready."

Annie: I mean, so many of our friends listening are walking through loss or grief or disappointment with God, while they're trying to raise kids.

Danielle: Right.

Annie: Like it's different for our friends that are listening, that are single or married without kids or are empty nesters. But there's so many friends listening who right in the middle of their dark night of the soul or they're wrestling with God, they also want their kids to know God.

Danielle: Right.

Annie: So how do you do that Danielle? How do you still expose your kids to who God is, while you're struggling with your own dark night seasons?

Danielle: Oh, man, I feel hypocritical some of the time, because they'll ask questions and I'll tell them something that then in my head, I'm kind of like, "Is that is that true?" Or "Do I still believe that?" God and Jesus are still super present in our household, and my kids also go to a Christian School which helps. Sometimes I feel like when I can't do all that I need to do at home, at least they're getting this like foundation somewhere else.

But I'm also just super honest with them. Like, they'll ask questions about Aila, their sister, and why she's in heaven, or why she didn't get to come home and things like that. And I'll be like, "I don't know." Like, "I don't know." Or they'll ask me, like, what she's doing and haven't or if they'll get to see her? And I'm like, "I want to believe that is yes." But I also don't know. And I think kids, I

think that that's better than the way that I was raised where it was kind of just like, "You will believe it, or else."

Annie: Yes.

Danielle: Because I want them to see that there's the realness in that, and that it is meant to be a relationship and that relationships ebb and flow. And relationships sometimes also go quiet for a while, and then sometimes they're super strong. And so, without filling them with all of my occasional doubt, just being honest with them.

And the nice thing too is when you are raising children, if you have a supportive spouse with you, Ryan and I usually are kind of on different times. Like there'll be times when he is just super like, I don't even know what the word is, but just really digging in and really relying on God. And then there'll be times where he starts to kind of dip and usually that's about the time, thankfully, that I'm kind of trying to make my way back up.

So we talk a lot and it's like each other that are kind of trying to help each other figure it out. And so the nice thing is, is if I'm like in a dark season, then hopefully he's not, and he can kind of take that on with the kids until I'm in a little bit better of a spot.

Annie: I think what you're saying is so helpful because putting kids in Christian school or Sunday school or letting them be in some sort of small group. There's all these options of support around what you want to do. And part of it is when you aren't able, there are people who are able, whether it's Ryan or a fifth grade teacher.

Danielle: Great. Yeah, yeah.

Annie: I think that's really helpful.

Danielle: Yeah, and I think, I mean, it does need to be from both sides at the same time. Like if they're in a school, but they're not having that at home at all then that's going to be difficult for them too, but I do I really love that. That especially with everything we've gone through, that they are kind of getting at least the foundation of it at school. But then they can come and talk to us about what the real life looks like with that in those different seasons.

Annie: What do you hope your kids think about *Food Saved Me* whenever they read it? And like, I mean, Asher will probably read it in years, and Kezia has lots of years, you know.

Danielle: You're right.

Annie: But what do you hope, when you think about this book sitting on your kid's bookshelves when they're adults, what do you hope they think when they read *Food Saved Me*?

Danielle: Oh, man, that could make me cry, because I don't always think of them reading it. Since I don't want them to know everything that we've been through, at least not yet, I don't want to scare them. And I also don't want to, there's a story in there about Asher in 2019, and he was very worried I was not going to come from the hospital. I hope that when they read it-

Annie: We all were very worried that you were not going to come home from the hospital, Danielle.

Danielle: So was I. So to have a 10-year-old being or nine, I think at the time actually almost 10, to have him like have that burden was just terrible on my heart. I mean, I hope when they read it, I hope that they see a resilience, and just the determination for me and for Ryan to press on, and find hope, and not let the disease rule our life. I mean, we were newlyweds, so like, we could have kind of just been like, "All right, this is it." No, like, we're not going to really get to have the life that we wanted.

But we were determined to fight for that, to fight for our marriage, to fight for the family that we eventually wanted. To adjust the lifestyle in general to be able to still enjoy life. So I hope that they see that, I hope that they see that when there are circumstances that aren't what you expected, that you still can take that and turn it into something that is hopeful, that does have light, that does impact other people. And that you don't have to let it completely rule your life. And then, the faith piece too I think and obviously taking care of your body as well, that's obviously the biggest part.

But just knowing that things are going to come at them in their life. And they're not going to be everything that they dreamt up or like the perfect life that I had in my head when I was 21 getting married or 22 getting married, but that you can still have a really wonderful life. Like we've gone through a lot in our almost 14 years of marriage, but we've still had an incredible life together.

Annie: Mh-hmm.

Danielle: And our kids, and my business, and our relationship. So it's just trying to find those bright spots amongst the dark kind of deep times.

Annie: I think you'll be able to do this from your point of view of the story. I would like to ask Ryan this, but I'm asking you this.

Danielle: Oh?

Annie: Is he there? Ryan, can we phone a friend?

Danielle: He's on a call, but you know he wrote a chapter in the book?

Annie: Yes, yes, I've read, it's awesome. I love him for you.

Danielle: I'm very happy. He is hilarious, too, because mine is very story-oriented. And his is like, "Here's some bullet points for how to support your loved one that has chronic illness."

Annie: That's right. That's right.

Danielle: He's just very like, "Let me do a presentation for you."

Annie: I loved it.

Danielle: I'm sorry, go ahead, what's the question? I'll see if I can answer it for him.

Annie: I would love for you to talk about each of your kids, and talk about one thing you see in them because of your resilience. How have you seen your resilience impact each of your kids?

Danielle: Yeah, for Asher, and again, it's a little hard to tell because he was four when Aila passed away, so I don't know what his personality would have been like. But I feel like his empathy that he has gained from going through that experience and losing his sister. But then also getting to now live seven plus years after that, and just what life looks like and being really attuned to loss, but also the outlook that he has on what that life is like. And to him it's like his sister is just in heaven with Jesus, and that's just what it is, and he gets sad here and there.

But he's really gotten to like talk to his siblings about it because they weren't born when she passed away, and so he really cares deeply for people, and I just love that. We have a friend actually in the hospital right now that's been there for over a month with a brain injury.

Annie: Oh gosh!

Danielle: And we have these little bracelets that we're wearing. He's worn two of them and he says he's not taking them off until she gets home. And it's just little things like that, like he wore a Crohn's & Colitis Awareness baseball arm sleeve for me when I was in the hospital. Like he figured out what color was the awareness color and wore that. And so he's got this really sensitive kind of feeling side that I love, that I think came out of our loss.

Easton and Kezia, I feel like, I don't know if I can see it yet just because they're five, well, six and four, so I think they're still coming into their personalities. But I can tell you that Easton, and I would say her too, but Easton, he is so joyful and hilarious. And he was given to us by the Lord, no doubt, like I got pregnant with him six months after Aila passed away. So while that may not be something that he has gained from my resilience, I feel like that's who he is in our family and that's what we needed-

Annie: We gained him, yeah, we gained him-

Danielle: We gained him.

Annie: ...from your resilience, that's right.

Danielle: Yep.

Annie: I'm glad I live on a planet with Easton.

Danielle: He's the best.

Annie: He's the best.

Danielle: You know, I know we're not supposed to like enneagram-type our children, but he is a seven.

Annie: I think he might be, he's so fun.

Danielle: When he gets older, I'm like got to place bets.

Annie: Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.

Danielle: And Kezia is kind of the same, it's like her personality is just starting to come out. But she was the reminder for us that it was okay to hope again.

Annie: Wow.

Danielle: And so, while, again, like that's not quite answering your question. But I do feel like all three of my children almost more than anything I'm so lucky to have them because they've helped my resilience, if that makes sense.

Annie: Yes. Yeah, of course.

Danielle: Kind of answering your question in a backwards way.

Annie: No, that's exactly right. I mean, because I think there are times where we don't realize how our resilience affects other people, particularly people we're raising.

Danielle: Yeah, for sure.

Annie: We just think, "Okay, I've just got to get up and do it again."

Danielle: Yeah, yeah.

Annie: And you just don't know that, that is really impacting the people around you.

Danielle: Yeah. Yeah, and that's what we're trying to teach them. I mean, there was a point when I was traveling a lot for book tours, and especially for Asher just because he was older.

Annie: Yeah.

Danielle: He was really hard for me to leave, for him to see me leaving, and there was a moment where I was like, "You know what, I'm actually just going to bring him into this." We're going to sit down and we're going to talk. We're going to look through the pictures of the kids and the letters that people have sent, of how their child has been healed from something or how their mother was in the hospital for months and now is feeling well and is able to do these things with them.

And I'm going let him see those things, so that he knows that the work that I'm going out to do is to help these people. But not only that, but by him being brave and allowing me to go out, he's playing a part in that. He's playing a part in like impacting these people's lives.

Annie: Mh-hmm.

Danielle: And that's something that now we've kind of done going forward. And in the same vein, he's gone through things, and so like his best friend's mom has been in the hospital for over a month. And I'm like, "You are one of the only people who probably know what it's like for your mom to be in the hospital for that long. For you to not know what's going on, how that feels. And so you can use that as his friend, and as somebody who's gone through the experience." So just kind of always trying to show them that we're going to go through crappy things, and it's what we do with them that could have a potential to impact somebody, and help somebody else that is going through it or that might go through it five years down the road.

Annie: Yeah. I had this experience happen one time where I said to my counselor, "That was the most painful gift I've ever been given."

Danielle: For sure.

Annie: Right?

Danielle: Yeah. Yes.

Annie: Like I said to her, I was like, "That was a gift, and it also felt terrible."

Danielle: Yes.

Annie: And so I just wonder how often, unknowingly to you, you've handed your kids gifts that you thought were just going to, being gone for those couple of weeks when you're in the hospital may end up being really important gifts in their lives. I mean, even that story just now of Asher's friend, I mean, no one else knows what that kid is feeling except to Asher.

Danielle: Right, right.

Annie: That's like such a gift you've offered them. That's incredible, Danielle.

Danielle: Thanks. But I agree, there's a lot of those. Angie and I always say we're like the friendship that we've gotten is like the worst best gifts that we could have had out of losing our daughters.

Annie: Yeah.

Danielle: And I say that a lot. I mean, my getting to write cookbooks and getting to do what I do, came from me nearly dying and figuring out food. And I would have never expected that at the beginning, and I don't know if I would have wished for it, but would I change it now? Probably not.

Annie: Yeah.

Danielle: I don't think I would go back. Because I feel so blessed that I get to do what I do, and have a small part in people finding health again. And like getting their lives back, and getting to be involved with their children or get married and have kids and all of that. And so while it's been a tough 14 years, I also don't know that I would change it for the world.

Annie: Yeah.

[00:42:19] <Music>

Annie: Hey friends, just interrupting this conversation real quick, to share about another one of our incredible partners, Chime. I feel very confident that we'll all agree on this, your online checking account should not cost you money, you guys. That's why I'm so glad that Chime exists. Chime is an award-winning app and a debit card that has no overdraft fees, foreign transaction fees, monthly service fees or transfer fees.

They have over 60,000 fee-free in-network ATMs, that's more than the top three national banks combined. And they're located at locations that we visit all the time, like Walgreens or CVS or a 7-Eleven for a Coke Icee, so convenient. You can also send money to anyone even if they aren't on Chime, no fees for you, no cash out fees for them.

It's time to say goodbye to hidden fees, you guys, join the millions of Americans already loving Chime. Sign up takes only two minutes, and it doesn't affect your credit score. So get started today at chime.com/thatsoundsfun. Again, that's chime.com/thatsoundsfun. Banking services are provided by and debit card issued by the Bancorp Bank or Stride Bank, N.A. members FDIC. Out of network ATM

withdrawal fees apply except at MoneyPass ATM and a 7-Eleven location, and any Allpoint or Visa Plus Alliance ATMs. Other fees such as third-party and cash deposit fees may apply. And now back to finish up our conversation with Danielle.

[00:43:43] <Music>

Annie: I think so many, me and a lot of our friends listening, have painful things that we try to figure out, "How in the world could God use this to help other people?"

Danielle: Right.

Annie: "How like is there a world can this matter? Can this count for something? Can you please God make this count for something?" So if someone's sitting right there, Danielle, I mean, we have proof in *Food Saved Me* of how you've taken these really painful things. I mean, it's every chapter has that kind of story of like, "Here's how God was able to use this really hard thing." What encouragement would you give to people who are trying to figure out how to use the hard thing they've gone through to bring God glory, and to make it count?

Danielle: Yeah. It's tough because I don't think, first of all I don't know that you know when that's going to happen, right? It's like that could happen, I don't even know how many years down the road. And then I also think my situation and what I've been able to do is incredible. But I used to say back when I first got sick, there was a woman who like sat down with us that helped us look through some different supplements that helped her daughter with the same disease.

Annie: Yeah.

Danielle: And I remember looking at Ryan and just being like, "If I could help one other person like that then this could be worth it." And it's obviously gotten and become a lot bigger than that. But I think just focusing on those little things like Asher, it's like, he might only once in his lifetime be able to connect with somebody like that, like right now.

Annie: Yeah.

Danielle: And so I think even if it's just one and just trying to see if you can find that, I think that that's the best thing that we can do. We can't make the bad situations go away, but we can try to make them have some sort of value and worth.

Annie: Yeah.

Danielle: It depends what the situation is, but we kind of experienced that with Aila a lot too, just deciding to be really open and honest, and sharing her journey, and our journey with her. And I think probably amongst like the most impactful responses from that were a few that were going through loss that found our story. But then realized that I had an autoimmune disease, and that they had an autoimmune disease, and they came to figure out that food could actually help heal their bodies because of our losses. Like, they may not have ever stumbled upon the cookbooks if we hadn't have shared our story about Aila.

Annie: Yeah.

Danielle: And so, it's just those little things, like just being brave and vulnerable to share and kind of just letting I mean, we didn't share knowing that those things would happen, right?

Annie: Yeah.

Danielle: Like, we just were like, "All right, we're just going to put this out there, because if it helps one person, then that's amazing. And also knowing-

Annie: But do you really mean that Danielle? Is it enough to you if it helps one person, because that-

Danielle: No, no, no, that's not, no, it's not enough and it doesn't make it worth it. I always will say that.

Annie: It's not enough to me, for one. I'm like, "No! It's not enough for one." If my pain was meant to help one person, it'd be someone I can sit across the table from.

Danielle: Right, that's true. No, you're right in that, but I feel like the potential though, for you to help that one person and then for them to see how much you helped them. And for them to go like, I guess, you never know how big it could be.

Annie: Yeah, yeah.

Danielle: I think specifically even with Aila, I know I still hear from women today that because they read our story back seven years ago, and were like, in their minds. they're like, "Oh, I'm never going to have to go through this." It's like that's usually what you see, when you look at somebody's going through something

hard. You're like, "Oh, that's terrible for them, but thankfully, I don't have to go through it."

Annie: Right, right.

Danielle: And then I'll hear, "I read your story seven years ago. I just lost a baby this week, and remembering everything you wrote and going back and reading it has helped me just survive and get through." And so, I mean, one, I don't know if that is ever worth it. It's just that it helps soften the blow a little bit, knowing that somebody could be-

Annie: That's right, like I love hearing those individual stories, like every story matters to me. But there are opportunities sitting across the table from someone, where I'm like, "Well, this thing I'm working through is meant to help that person across the table."

Danielle: True, right.

Annie: But all these things in *Food Saved Me*, Danielle, I mean, there's hundreds of stories in this book, I mean, there's probably 100 for every one of the hundreds that we read.

Danielle: I'm sure, I'm sure.

Annie: That have been changed by your story and your recipes. I mean, your queso dip it is just a blessing straight from the Lord, Danielle. It is actually, it was not worth it for just one person that queso dip, that's worth everybody.

Danielle: Queso is saving the world, I mean that's me.

Annie: Queso Saved Me is my next book. Danielle's queso saved me.

Danielle: Oh man, by the way, because this is a podcast when we say queso, we're saying it in quotes. Quote-unquote "Queso" because there is no cheese in it.

Annie: That's right. It's a cheese free queso, that's why it's saved. And the ranch, you know that's what made me cry, everybody knows that story, that made me cry the first I tried your ranch it made me teary. Because it has been so long since I had anything creamy.

Danielle: I love it. But that's why I wanted to share those stories, because not everybody is going to get a chance to share their story with millions of people, right?

Annie: Right.

Danielle: It might just be one, and for these people who sent in theirs, I might have been the only person that heard that story. And I was like, "What kind of justice am I going to do their story by just me sitting on it?" Yeah, it's great, and it makes me feel good. But like the the point is for me to be able to hopefully share that with so many more people, that they might be able to find hope in their story. And especially because I have something called ulcerative colitis.

Annie: Okay.

Danielle: I had no idea what that was. Most people don't, most people know Crohn's disease, which is kind of similar. And so as I started getting all of these stories, which is so many different diseases and ailments. I was like, I need to share these." Not only so their voices are heard and their stories are heard. But so that somebody who's suffering with something like that, that doesn't know all sort of colitis, and that would have otherwise kind of been like, "Nah, I don't need to read this." Might see their same disease and be like, "Oh, wow, this can actually help me too."

Annie: Yeah. It was really generous of you to add all their stories, because it just makes us all, you do such a great job of making us feel seen anyway. But then to see a PCOS story I go like, "Oh, yeah, like me too." Like that makes so much sense for what you're saying, and so I just think that was a brilliant thing for you to do just to help everybody feel like they're part of it.

Danielle: Yeah, well, I mean, generous, I don't know if that's the right word. I say it's generous of them to share their intimate stories with me. But I mean, you were on tour with me in the beginning of 2019, the first tour, and the stories that were coming out of the audiences, as people were standing up. I just remember being and that's really where that idea for this book in general came from, but also for sharing people's stories, because I just remember standing on stage every night and hearing these miraculous stories.

And I think one of the nights that you were with me was a woman who was in a wheelchair because of MS, and was able to walk unassisted without a walker without a cane. And I remember thinking, it's amazing there's 500 people or 600 people in this room who are hearing the story, but how does the rest of the world

hear it? And it feels selfish for me to sit and just be able to soak it in, and not be able to go out and share it. And so when I was first starting to craft this book I knew that one of the things that I wanted to do, is try to share as many of the stories that I've heard over the last decade that I could in there.

Annie: Yeah. Well, I can't wait for people to get it, Danielle. I mean, this is such a fun one to read because we all have to eat, so all of us know about food. So this like there's not a person hearing this that isn't affected by food. And so I just think it's going to be such a gift, it is such a gift, I loved it.

Danielle: Thank you.

Annie: Is there anything-

Danielle: I'm so nervous about it.

Annie: Are you? Say more.

Danielle: Oh, gosh, I'm so nervous about it, are you kidding? Yes. I mean, first of all, it's my first book, like book, book.

Annie: Right.

Danielle: I always say this to all of you, who are my author friends. That I'm like, "Yeah, I write a 400-page cookbook, but every other page is a photo." So the amount of words in the book is significantly less.

Annie: Yes, yes.

Danielle: So obviously, the writing process was really difficult. But I mean, it's really, as you know, it's really hard to put all of your failures and triumphs, put all my setbacks, everything in there. And I'm just, well, I'm nervous, first of all, of course, that it's not going to get into the hands of people that I'm really praying and hoping that it will. But just also that it does what I hope it does.

Annie: Yeah.

Danielle: And then being in the hospital in 2019, after I had already laid out the whole book and the title mind you, and feeling like I was a complete failure. And that everything I believed in was not true because of where I was, was really difficult to get through and finish that book and add to it. And it kind of changed the

meaning of the title, to me, it added, like I said many chapters. It also forced me to really get to look back on that decade and everything that had happened, and it renewed my faith in the fact that food did heal me, it did save me, and that it's continuing to.

But it's a difficult road, I mean, I talk about going on a medication again, for the first time in a decade, during that hospital stay. And how that made me feel about knowing that food could be so healing but also relying on the medication in tandem with that, and just the failure complex that comes with that.

But then also learning now over the last couple years to be appreciative of that, and know that whatever it takes to keep me healthy and being there for my family. And not being worried about possibly landing in the hospital again, is all that matters. So, there's still a lot in there, it's nerve-racking. Cookbooks are easy, I'm like, "Somebody doesn't like one recipe, fine." There are like about 300, probably-

Annie: Yeah, fine, you don't like my waffles?

Danielle: So it's your life, like it's your life up for interpretation/reviews.

Annie: Yeah.

Danielle: So, but I did it in the hopes that it'll help people, and give them hope, and help them find kind of renewed resolve to take an active role in their healing, especially for believers. Like there's sometimes things that we have to do to walk hand in hand with asking for healing. And so that's another message that's in there.

Annie: Well, I will go ahead and say to you, this book is going to help so many people, Danielle. It's going to help so many people, it is such a gift. And I walked with you in this, you worked so hard on this book, and you overcame a lot of things that the world will never know, to get this book out. And so I just want to affirm you that this thing really matters, it really, really matters.

Danielle: Thank you. Thank you and for your support too and encouragement through the process.

Annie: Of course.

Danielle: Because you were there, you were there through it.

Annie: Luckily, I'm honored.

Danielle: And your name is in the book too-

Annie: Yeah, that's right.

Danielle: ...there's a little story about you in there.

Annie: Yeah, that's right. I don't love this story, I feel sad about this story, but-

Danielle: You don't? Why?

Annie: I feel sad because it's about us praying and the Lord not doing what we asked.

Danielle: Well, that's true.

Annie: Don't say that! I feel sad about that. But it leads to a beautiful part of the book, and so it matters.

Danielle: It does, it does. But that was a hard, that was a hard couple... Yeah. Yeah, but yes. No, but it was good because it taught me, again, to ask for things and that it may not look like you hoped it would.

Annie: Yeah.

Danielle: But really coming out of that, that hospital stay, and looking back on all of that is, I mean, I learned so much just by reading about the things that I had previously learned. We tend to forget the things that learn, you know?

Annie: Yes. Yes.

Danielle: So getting to actually, like, have that gift of looking at all of the different things that I learned, that had helped me over the years and being like, "Oh, that's right." So, while it wasn't exactly what I was hoping for, I think it's a good story that leads to a beautiful part of the book, I agree, I agree.

Annie: Okay, Dan, the last question we always ask because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to you?

Danielle: Oh my gosh, I can't even think about that right now.

Annie: You have to all the time, that's the joy of fun.

Danielle: know. It's honestly just getting to like, go do something fun with my kids. It's been chaotic with three different like drop off and pickup times with school back on campus.

Annie: Yes.

Danielle: So what sounds fun to me right now is just having a weekend with no, not even, well baseball actually I don't mind going to baseball to watch my son.

Annie: Yes, I love going to baseball to watch your son.

Danielle: I love it. I love it. I can't wait for it to start, for fall ball to start like that. And just having like an unplanned just couple of days with them to do whatever they want. Like whether that's watching a movie and just like chilling all day or going to go play mini golf. I don't, I just something, that sounds fun and also coming to Nashville, I'm dying to get back to Nashville to see my friends.

Annie: Yes, ready for you to be here, I know. You know what's funny about your answer, though, is like it is exactly what is always true, is like in 2020 that's what we had every day.

Danielle: I know.

Annie: Was the kids at home with nothing to do, and it just gave so many of us such a new appreciation for the things that we didn't realize were just like, well, we were going to miss someday.

Danielle: Right. Right. And it's funny because, and I told you this when you visited me at the beginning of 2020 it was going to be my down year.

Annie: Yeah.

Danielle: I wasn't going to travel anywhere.

Annie: Guess what, you did it.

Danielle: But we did quarantine holidays.

Annie: Yes.

Danielle: Like during April every week was a different holiday. And we actually celebrated and like made the crafts, made the food, like we made a full Thanksgiving dinner for the Thanksgiving week.

Annie: Put up a Christmas tree?

Danielle: Put up a Christmas tree, watch the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade on YouTube.

Annie: Oh, that's awesome.

Danielle: In the middle of... It was so fun and magical, but now life is kind of back to being busy. And that's what I miss, so that sounds fun right now, I was just like getting to do all of that special time with my kids again.

Annie: Ah, I love you. Thanks for making time for this. I can't wait for people to read this book, Danielle, I'm so proud of you.

Danielle: Thank you for having me.

[00:57:45] <Music>

Annie: Oh, y'all isn't she the best? My gosh, I just love Danielle so, so much. I'm so proud of her for writing this book, y'all, it took so much heart, and time and it's just a beautiful memoir. Make sure you grab a copy of *Food Saved Me* it's out tomorrow. And make sure you're following Danielle, you can tell her thanks so much for being on the show.

If you need anything else from me, you know I'm embarrassingly easy to find Annie F. Downs on [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and in over two weeks out on the road with the That Sounds Fun Tour, all the places you may need made that's how you can find me. And I think that's it from me today, friends go out or stay home and do something that sounds fun to you, and I will do the same. Have a great couple of days. We'll see you back here on Wednesday with my good friend Christie Wright. See y'all then.

[00:58:33] <Music>