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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.

And just a reminder, we're going to spend the entire month of April on the podcast focused on prayer, including another TSF Q&A. And as always, I'm going to bring an expert with me to answer and I think y'all are going to love it. So you have a part to play in this episode. Just visit the link in the show notes to submit your questions about prayer. I cannot wait for us to learn together and grow together in our prayer lives this April.

Before we dive into today's conversation, I want to take a moment to share about one of our incredible partners, [Epic Will](#). You may be thinking, I'm young-ish and healthy-ish, and I don't have any belongings of major value. These are common things I hear when the subject of having a will comes up.

What's really true is that planning to protect our legacy is actually important for all of us. No matter your age. It's why partnering with Epic Will matters so much to me. Epic Will is the easiest and most affordable way I know of to create an estate plan.

The expert team at Epic Will has developed an efficient and user-friendly platform that helps you think through things like who you'd like to be your financial power of attorney and who you would trust to care for your kids. And in a few simple steps it also helps you designate who your belongings go to and create an advanced directive so that no one is left making healthcare decisions on your behalf without knowing your wishes.

Basically, epicwill.com empowers you or you and your spouse to make these important decisions all with the guidance of people who truly know what they're doing. And I love this, but the team at Epic Will has a huge heart for single moms and orphans.

In fact, they provide single moms with kids under the age of 18 with access to a free will, giving them that security that they're covered and have one less thing to worry about. And they are donating 10% of their proceeds to organizations helping orphans find a home. That's the mission you're helping support when you use Epic Will to create your will.

Epic Will has built the most comprehensive self-guided early state plan for you. And as little as five minutes and for less than you'd spend on a trip to Target, you can create an early state plan with Epic Will. Go to [epicwill.com](http://epicwill.com) and use the promo code TSF20 for 20% off. Again that's [epicwill.com](http://epicwill.com) and use the promo code TSF20 for 20% off.

Get the peace of mind that comes with knowing your belongings, your family, and your legacy are protected. And yes, you better believe that in my will it tells people to burn my journals. Y'all know this is true about me but it says it in writing: Burn my journals.

**Intro:** Y'all, today on the show I get to talk with one of the funniest people I know, Anjelah Johnson Reyes. You are probably already a fan, the *Nail Salon* skit, *Bon Qui Qui* and you may remember her from when she stopped by our Christmas party in 2020. But being friends with Anjelah is totally next level.

She's got just a couple of things going on this year with her first book, *Who Do I Think I Am?: Stories of Chola Wishes and Caviar Dreams*, that comes out tomorrow. It's a hilarious and touching memoir full of memorable anecdotes on how a spunky little Latina actress and comedian was able to forge ahead and become so successful.

She is also front and center competing on Fox's dance competition show, *The Real Dirty Dancing*. Y'all it's already come out. You may have watched it on Fox. You can watch it on Hulu. I'm not going to spoil it but it is amazing.

And she'll continue her sold out *Who Do I Think I Am?* comedy tour across the US, stopping in over 60 cities across North America, including at the Ryman Auditorium. I will be there. Y'all, I am excited for her just thinking about it.

I will say that Anjelah and I go all the way in on some content that you may not be interested in little ears around you hearing. So if you've got any of my MiniBFFs around, be advised that this is more of a PG 13 conversation than most of our other episodes. So I wanted to give you a heads up about that. It's not inappropriate conversation. It's just about being a woman and what that means. But PG 13 for sure. So MiniBFF ears, this is not an episode for them. But it is an episode for the rest of us. So here's my conversation with my friend Anjelah Johnson.

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**Annie:** Anj, welcome back to That Sounds Fun.

**Anjelah:** Hey, this sounds totally fun.

**Annie:** Well, I hope so because I'm very prepared. As I told you, I read every page of the first half of your book. I tried really hard to finish it. The other fun thing is in your book, *Who Do I Think I Am?*, I did read up until the part where I entered your life as a friend. So I do feel like-

**Anjelah:** Oh, that's funny. The bloom.

**Annie:** Yeah. The rest of the book I lived portion of it with you, but now I feel like I really know. Okay, before we even get to your new book that comes out tomorrow, here's what we have to talk about, is *The Dirty Dancing Show*.

**Anjelah:** Heyoo, let's do it.

**Annie:** Anj, oh my gosh, that was so cool to watch. Will you kind of explain the reality show to everybody?

**Anjelah:** So there's a show called *The Real Dirty Dancing* on Fox.

**Annie:** That's right.

**Anjelah:** And what they did was they flew out... Hold on, let me do it in the announcer's voice.

**Annie:** Okay.

**Anjelah:** We flew out eight celebrities back to the location where they filmed the original movie *Dirty Dancing*. Okay, that's all. I'll just be regular now.

**Annie:** I did not realize you're at the original camp.

**Anjelah:** Yeah. So they flew us out there. They had us reenact scenes from the movie. They had us reenact dances from the movie. They partnered celebrity with celebrity so it wasn't like I got to dance like a professional dancer. It was like all people who are not professional dancers dancing with each other. Mine is Corbin Bleu, who is a professional at everything.

**Annie:** Right.

**Anjelah:** But it was incredible. When they first asked me if I wanted to do the show, I was like, "Heck yeah, I get to reenact scenes from this iconic movie. Definitely." My first thought in my head was I wanted to do the scene where Baby and Johnny are crawling across the floor to each other, "Baby. How do you call your lover boy?" That one I was like, "Oh my god, I want to do that scene."

Anyway, so we got to do that. It was four weeks, they did eliminations and I made it to the finale. And I won't say what happened in case anybody wants to watch it. It's on Hulu. You can stream it on Hulu. It was on Fox, so you can check it out.

**Annie:** Everyone needs to go watch it because a, you made it to the finale, b, your partner is Tyler Cameron.

**Anjelah:** Tyler Cameron!

**Annie:** Are y'all like best friends now?

**Anjelah:** No. But we did hang out with him the other day. He finally got to meet Manny, which was great. We went out to dinner-

**Annie:** Your husband?

**Anjelah:** Yeah, my husband is Manny. So they got to meet. We went out to dinner and I was like, "Okay, before this night is over, I need a picture of the two of you together because I have to post this."

**Annie:** Because based on what you were saying on Instagram, I was guessing that people were reaching out to you and saying, "What does your husband feel about this?"

**Anjelah:** Oh my gosh, we got so many comments from people like, "What does your husband... I bet he's this and that." Manny is the least jealous person ever, which is kind of annoying because like I kind of want him to be jealous a little bit. You know what I mean? Like fight for me or something? Like give me an attitude at least. Okay, feel threatened, please. Something. But no, nothing, just full-on confidence, and is amazing and supportive in every way. But we got a lot of comments from people that, "Oh, I bet he's jealous."

And oddly enough, I was very grateful. We only got very few negative religious comments, which I'm very grateful for. I thought it was going to get way more than I did. But there was just a few. It was great. Most people got what the show was. And it was incredible. It was so fun.

**Annie:** So y'all lived at the camp? Did y'all even sleep there?

**Anjelah:** Yeah. Well, asleep is a relative term because I got maybe four hours of sleep a night. We had to learn dances.

**Annie:** Because of the filming?

**Anjelah:** Honey, we're dancing all day, doing challenges, reenacting scenes, and then you go rehearse when you get some time off. And then by the time you get ready to go to bed and you have to wake up in the morning, it's hard to go to sleep because your adrenaline is going from all day.

I'm still counting in my head like five, six, seven, eight. It's like you can't because you're learning in 24 hours, you have to perform it the next day. And then like I'm waking up... You know how you do that thing sometimes like when you have an early flight the next day? Like you wake up every two hours, and you're like, "Oh, did I miss my alarm?"

**Annie:** Yes.

**Anjelah:** It was like that. Every single day I would wake up like two hours later and be like, "Is it time?" And it's like, "No, not yet." And then you can't go back to sleep because as soon as I would wake up, I was like, "Five, six, seven, eight, one, two." And I was like, "Brain, please. Stop, brain." So it was intense.

**Annie:** What was your favorite part of getting to do it?

**Anjelah:** Honestly, feeling sexy.

**Annie:** I want you to talk about that. You wrote about that.

**Anjelah:** Yeah.

**Annie:** Talk about how you feel different about your body.

**Anjelah:** I feel like I've been doing a lot of work on myself over the past five years and just deconstructing and reconstructing a lot of things within my life. But I've been doing work to let go of shame when it comes to my body, when it comes to my sexuality, when it comes to all of these things, these women things. Like embracing my

femininity. I've been wearing this title of tomboy for a long time since I was a kid, and I wear it well. Like I put this tomboy-

**Annie:** Even though you were a cheerleader in the NFL? I mean-

**Anjelah:** Yes.

**Annie:** Wow.

**Anjelah:** I was everybody's little sister. I was the non-threatening. I'm always in my jeans and tinnies. So I wear this title of tomboy and I'm comfortable in it. Like I feel powerful in because partly I'm comfortable there but also it's like a fear mechanism. It's something that I hold on to out of insecurity. Because the second I start operating in my feminine, I'm not as confident because I don't have as much practice because I... whatever reason, fill in the blank.

So I've been doing a lot of work on myself for the past five years just learning about my body, my sexuality, my femininity, working with my husband. I've gone to marriage retreats. I was part of a women's circle. Just really learning.

And so by the time I got to that show, I felt like there was this inner woman inside of me that has been dying to come out, and this was the perfect opportunity for it. So that was my favorite part was feeling sexy and not ashamed.

**Annie:** Anj, that's amazing.

**Anjelah:** Thank you.

**Annie:** I mean, that's so interesting coming from a married woman. Because a lot of times the version of that conversation I'm having with friends is with single women, about feeling attractive and feeling like you're putting yourself in the right place at the right time, feeling the right way, quote, quote about your body.

But you saying it from a married point of view when you already have your lifelong partner, when y'all already assumingly are sexually active-

**Anjelah:** Sure.

**Annie:** ...and where you're not doing all this in your mind to get to the goal of having a partner, right?

**Anjelah:** No. This is not just for my partner. This is not just for Manny. It's for me. It's to empower myself. Because when I'm empowered and when I feel sexy, that's a turn-on for my husband. Like my husband appreciates that. My husband appreciates seeing me fully confident, seeing me embracing who I am. That's what he loves to see.

So it's for me, but it's also for him, too. You know what I mean? So there is a different mindset, I guess. Like I want to please my husband, I want to be amazing for him. But also I just want to like own it myself

**Annie:** So our friends listening who are going like, "I want that. I want to be like that. I want to carry myself like that," what's the first move? We aren't all good to go get lifted in the water by Tyler Cameron III? What's the first move? Is it different for married people and single people?

**Anjelah:** You know what? I don't think so. See, that's the tough thing. It really depends on where you're at in your life and what you believe, what you subscribe to. I did a lot of unsubscribing the past five years. So it really depends on where you're at and what you subscribe to.

[00:13:00] <music>

**Sponsor:** Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation real quick to share about another one of our incredible partners, [Brooklinen](#). Y'all, it's spring and it's no secret to any of you how I feel about winter. Needless to say, I am ready for spring.

There's nothing quite like a fresh start for mother nature and what better time to freshen things up inside too? Brooklinen has everything that you need to step up your space and step into the new season. When it comes to sleep, quantity without quality just does not cut it.

Brooklinen sheets were inspired by the dreaminess of hotel bedding to help you get your best rest right at home. I love a hotel bed more than I love a bus bunk. But it's okay. I love a bus bunk too. But there is nothing that's like the feeling of luxury in the comfort of my own bed. My Brooklinen sheets make me feel bougie in the best way.

By working directly with suppliers, Brooklinen cuts out those middleman markups and passes those savings back to their customers like you and me so you get their incredible products at a reasonable cost. Gone are the days of scouring the web to put together your dream space.

Brooklinen started with five-star bedding and now they offer all of the elements to elevate your space. That's right. All the home essentials in one place. It does not get any easier than that. Brooklinen also has bundles to put everything you need for your move or home makeover in one place. Save yourself money, time, and sleepless nights with bedding bundles to simplify settling in.

First time trying Brooklinen? Take it from their number one fan AFD, but their best-selling luck sheets are the perfect place to start. Seriously, y'all, I've never had softer, more comfortable seats. I have the pink ones, I have some striped ones, and I have white ones. I love them. And if you need the extra nudge, check out their five-star reviews. Over 100,000 of them. Yes, you heard that right. 100,000 five-star reviews.

And for a limited time, Brooklinen is offering a free gift with purchase. If you miss out, you can use the promo code THATSOUNDSFUN anytime for \$20 off your purchase \$100 or more at [brooklinen.com](https://brooklinen.com). That's [brooklinen.com](https://brooklinen.com), promo code, THATSOUNDSFUN. Head to [brooklinen.com](https://brooklinen.com) for your free gift with your purchase today.

**Sponsor:** And I got one more amazing partner to tell you about, [Liquid I.V.](#). One of the things we make sure we keep well-stocked on the bus when we head on tour is plenty of Liquid I.V.. We want to stay healthy and hydrated, we want the same for you so that we can have the most fun when we are rolling into those towns.

One stick of Liquid I.V. in my water bottle hydrates faster and more efficiently than water alone. Liquid I.V. has incredible hydration flavors, like watermelon, lemon lime, strawberry, Pina colada, and more. In fact, we shared some Liquid I.V. with all of the VIPs at each tour stop because we love it so much.

So I'm a morning time Liquid I.V. user. Just adding it into my water bottle because it helps me recover from workouts and it just generally helps me feel my best so I can tackle the day ahead with energy and focus. Especially like today when I go for that energy multiplier, that lemon ginger flavor, y'all better watch out, I'm at level 100 today.

It contains five essential vitamins B3, B5, B6, B12, and vitamin C, and three times the electrolytes of traditional sports drinks. It's made with premium ingredients. And it's non-GMO and free from gluten, dairy, and soy. The thing that made Liquid I.V. so effective is the science of cellular transport technology, also called CTT. It's



designed to enhance rapid absorption of water and other key ingredients into the bloodstream. That's pretty fancy.

So grab some Liquid I.V. in bulk nationwide at Costco. Or you can get 25% off when you go to [liquidiv.com](http://liquidiv.com) and use the code THATSOUNDSFUN at checkout. That's 25% off anything you order when you use the promo code THATSOUNDSFUN at [Liquidiv.com](http://Liquidiv.com). Experience better hydration today at [liquidiv.com](http://liquidiv.com), promo code THATSOUNDSFUN.

And now back to our conversation with Anjelah.

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**Anjelah:** For me personally, getting in tune with your body, however that looks like for you. For me, I did a women's course. I learned about energy. I learned about sexuality. These are things that you're not really like, you know, "Tuesday night Bible study we're going to do a sexuality course."

**Annie:** Right, right, right, right. Everybody's not going to watch the *Goop* episode.

**Anjelah:** Right. Like watching *Goop*. You know what I mean?

**Annie:** That's right. Right.

**Anjelah:** Allowing yourself to study and learn about these things. Because for me, I didn't before I was married. And it's not like all of a sudden you say I do and then now you're this sexual prowess that knows how to do all of these things and knows her body even.

My body was so locked up inside because I didn't have any practice of relaxing and letting go. So I had to work through for years this locked up tense body, who felt ashamed, who sex was a bad thing, or it was the thing that you go as close as you can to, but you don't actually go all the way, oh, it's bad. So that's why it feels good because it's bad. And then you get married and it's not bad anymore. Okay, so then what feels good?

**Annie:** Right.

**Anjelah:** It was a lot of learning and unlearning that I had to do.

**Annie:** Subscribing and unsubscribing. I love that, Anjelah.

**Anjelah:** That's where I would start. See what you subscribed to and what you need to unsubscribe to, and then get in tune with your body and figure out how that looks for you. Is that taking a course? Is that reading a book? Is it listening to a podcast? Is it watching *Goop*? I don't know.

**Annie:** If you don't love your body as it is, do you need to change your body to get to this? Or do you need-

**Anjelah:** No. You don't change your body. You change your acceptance of your body.

**Annie:** Wow.

**Anjelah:** You start practicing radical acceptance, which is something that we did in my women's circle is you feel and you accept it. So it's not like, Oh, just love your body, all of a sudden. It's I feel the hurt from my saying mean things about myself because I have these rolls or I have this cottage cheese or whatever it is that you're not proud of. You've been shaming yourself.

Every time you look in the mirror and go, "Oh, I hate this. It's so ugly," you are being so mean to yourself. I can get emotional thinking about it right now. Like just thinking of your like inner child listening to you say those horrible things about yourself and she's like, "I'm just trying to protect you. I'm just trying to help you." And we spend all these years being mean to ourselves about, "Oh my double chin," or "Oh my overbite," or whatever it is that we don't approve of ourselves for whatever reason.

It's taking that time to pause, get in tune with your body, maybe even apologize to yourself. "I'm so sorry. I've treated you this way. I get it. You're trying to protect me." Like extra layers of fat here, "I get it. You're trying to protect me." My insecurities, whatever it is, like, "I thank you. I appreciate you."

And you show that gratitude to your body and you start there like, "I'm so appreciative. You've got me to where I am today. You're still here. I may have let myself go. I may have whatever it was. But we're here, we wake up every day. Thank you knees for still working. Thank you lungs for still breathing." Like all the things. And you start showing your body gratitude. You start showing your body love.

And then in the women's course that we did, we talked about pleasure practice, which is not masturbation. I mean, it can be for somebody, but it's pleasure practice.

It's feeling pleasure in your body. Like even if you just rub your skin, and you're like, "Oh, my skin is soft. And that feels nice."

**Annie:** Right. The idea of talking about pleasure that is not sexual.

**Anjelah:** Yeah. It's just feeling good. Like putting on a warm towel when you get out of the shower. And that warm towel instead of just like a towel that's been hanging there but it's one fresh out of the dryer and you put that warm towel on you, oh, it feels good. And practicing feeling pleasure in your body. Teaching your body what pleasure feels like.

Because we teach our body what pain feels like all the time. We can imagine fights in our head. We can imagine things going wrong. We can get mad at ourselves for the way we look. "I shouldn't have eaten that. I'm so mad at you. Why did you eat that second plate," or whatever it is. And we can be so mean. But we can also teach yourself what it feels like to feel good and feel proud of ourselves.

**Annie:** Yes! I'm interested in this particularly because your job and my job both have a lot of people seeing our bodies a lot. And on stages, or for you on TV, on all the places so... But a lot of our friends listening, like, summer is coming and everybody's going to be at the pool and everyone's going to be taking pictures together at 4th of July, and all these things. So talk to me about doing this work internally when the world is still experiencing you externally.

**Anjelah:** I mean, it's a balance. Life is balance. I remember one of my cousins gave me this prophetic word at my wedding. She came to me and I was sitting there at the table and we're like eating our cake or whatever it was at the wedding. And she came up to me and she was like, "Your word for you, for your life, for your marriage is balance. You're going to learn what balance is like."

And people would tell me all the time, "How do you balance? You're so busy. You're always touring. You're working on this and that and then you're still with your family. I see you with your family." I'm always posting I'm with my niece, my nephew, my sister, with my brothers, and with my husband. How do you balance everything?"

**Annie:** Tia Mary?

**Anjelah:** Yes.

**Annie:** I feel like I know everybody in your family.

**Anjelah:** Exactly. Exactly. "Like you're so good at balancing life. How do you do it?" And then come to find out I was not good at balancing life. I was depleted. I was exhausted. I was not in my strength and in my energy of like, "Yes, I am woman hear me roar." I was in survival mode. I was in all of those things. But I had to learn how to do. And then I went on my sabbatical which everybody ended up going on sabbatical in 2020. But-

**Annie:** But I remember you and I talking about it before you were doing it. Like you had planned.

**Anjelah:** Yeah, I had planned to take a break because I needed to refuel, realign, realign with God, realign with myself, get in tune with myself. And that's when I really started doing a lot of work on myself.

What does it look like doing the internal work while everyone is still experiencing you externally? It's making time for yourself. Making time for yourself, whether it's every morning when you wake up. Setting an intention for the day. Knowing that I have goals, but I radically accept myself the way I am right now.

I radically accept that I have a double chin. I radically accept that my tooth is crooked. I radically accept that I have gray hairs right in the front and everybody can see them now. I radically accept that I'm losing elasticity in my skin and I have wrinkles now. I start radically accepting myself. And the more I radically accept me and who I am, I start operating differently. I hold myself differently.

So then when people start experiencing me externally, they're experiencing the inward work that I've been doing. So even though I still have my gray hairs, I still am not my 25-year-old skin anymore, I am radiant because of the internal work that I'm doing.

**Annie:** So let me tell you a thing that I'm working through. If you and I were just sitting and eating Mexican, what I would be-

**Anjelah:** Which by the way I am.

**Annie:** You are? It's because we are doing it right. That's because that's who we are. Everywhere we go that's what we want to do. One of the things I'm talking to a lot of people about, because of a thing that happened I dyed my hair and all these... The long story short is I dyed my... I didn't do it. But my girl who does my hair, my friend, Allie, dyed my hair. And it just isn't ever turning out the way I thought it

would as we're changing my hair color. But the only reason I'm starting to do it is how much gray hair I feel like I'm having.

And so I'm really starting to have this conversation with myself about what it looks like to age well. And do I want to color my hair? There's not a sin conversation here. There's not a wrong way to do. But I'm sorting through Botox and coloring my hair.

Tell me your thoughts on how do we radically accept ourselves when a lot of people's radical acceptance includes dyeing their hair and includes possibly... And I'm doing Invisalign right now. At the same time, I have a lot of questions about whether I want to keep dyeing my hair or not because it isn't feeling authentic for me?

**Anjelah:** There you go. And that's what it comes down to. What feels authentic for you, what feels okay for you, what feels right in your spirit. And that's going to be different for everyone. I color my hair all the time. I get Botox. I get my Botox very light because I'm an actress and you still need to see my facial expressions. I still have to emote. So I do like a bare minimum of Botox just to help a girl out a little bit.

I feel confident. I can just radically accept where I'm at, even with my minimal Botox. I radically accept that I chose Botox. I radically accept that I chose to put Botox in so that it doesn't look so wrinkly, because I feel better that way. So I radically accept that.

And then somebody else might radically accept that I don't choose Botox and I am going to look at every single one of my wrinkles every single day. And I radically accept that. It's whatever is right for you. And it could change. Like I could be like getting Botox and then be like, "You know, I think this is going to be the last time. I think I'm done with Botox." Whatever it is.

I know there's a trend on Instagram right now. Maybe it's TikTok too. But there's a trend of women letting their gray hair grow out. And it is gorgeous. And I'm like, "Oh my gosh, if all my gray hairs grew in the same place, that would be amazing. But right now they're just like here, here, here, here, here, here, here.

**Annie:** Yeah, right. If I had like a beautiful string versus spotted, like a Dalmatian-

**Anjelah:** You know, like-

**Annie:** That's why I sat with a friend who's doing Botox and we were talking about it. I said, "Tell me why you're doing it." She said, "I love it. I just love the way it makes me feel." And I think we'll leave this in, but I'll tell you as my friend. She said, "Why do you want to do it? And I said, "I feel like I'm supposed to look younger because I'm not married yet." And it is part of still being attractive to get married. And then she's like, "Then you can't do it."

**Anjelah:** No.

**Annie:** "Because your why is off. Your why is off." And so a lot of that, the radical acceptance there, to me is we're talking about thinking about marriage, there's like this deeper level of you got to figure out your why behind why you're radically accepting things the way they are. Because that's the only way we can figure out if we need to change something. Right?

**Anjelah:** Right. So I would say whereas like, you know, well, you can't do it, your "why" is wrong. You can, but it's not going to feel what you thought.

**Annie:** It's not going to actually make it feel the way-

**Anjelah:** It's not going to do what you thought it was going to do. Because nothing will do that for you except you radically accepting yourself just the way you are. So you can radically accept yourself, get to that point where your why is like, "You know what? I think I just want to feel good and be banging." I mean, I'm already married and I still want to do it. You know what I mean?

**Annie:** Right. Right. Right.

**Anjelah:** So you can do it, but it won't fix the internal thing that you think it will.

**Annie:** We're so conditioned, that if we look a certain way that feeling that you're talking about you're having because of the show, and all the things we want will arrive, then it'll be the gold at the end of the rainbow.

**Anjelah:** Listen, there's always going to be somebody hotter than you, somebody younger than you, somebody skinnier than you, somebody more athletic than you. There's going to be a new thing that comes out. Just when you finally settled with doing this one thing, now there's a new thing that everyone's doing. There's always going to be something. We're always evolving and growing. So I think getting a hold of your why for things applies to lots of areas in life. Your WHY.

**Annie:** And you know me well and you know I'm an all-or-nothing girl. My other concern is if I start Botox and I have access to my whole budget and don't have to reconcile that with anybody, I will within three to four years look like a person you've never met before, look like an absolute person that you're like, "Annie, I remember you, but now you've gone and done a thing with every part of your body." That's my fear.

**Anjelah:** We're not even going to call you Annie anymore. It's going to be Annalisa. Welcome to That Sounds Fun with Annalisa. You're going to have a new accent.

**Annie:** That's exactly right. Okay, let's talk for a minute about *Who Do I Think I Am?*. Because there you are on the cover of the book. I mean, your whole body on the cover of the book.

**Anjelah:** Yeah, she's out there.

**Annie:** So there has to be some sort of radical acceptance to everyone gets to see this of me. And you've done that through the whole book, Anj. I mean, the whole thing is, Here's who I really am from start to finish.

**Anjelah:** I definitely had a couple moments where after it was done, where I was like, "Oh, wait a minute, people are going to know a lot about me." I didn't think that all the way through. There was definitely moments as I was writing it, that I was like, "Ooh, do I say this? Do I include this?"

And up until the very end, where they send you like the copyright edit and they're like checking all of your spelling and everything, even as I was going through that, I was like, "Oh, should I take this out? Oh." All the way until the very end. They're like, "Okay, lawyers looked at it. It's approved." I'm like, "Okay, let me look at it one more time. Let me see if I approve it."

**Annie:** "Let me read it once more." Did you like writing it?

**Anjelah:** I did. It was very therapeutic. The work that I've been doing on myself, I feel like I got to do that with some family members, like my mom. I get to interview my mom a lot, because there were things that I would be writing and it would start a question within me. Like I would say something about myself and then I'd be like, "I wonder if that's how my mom experienced it." And then I would call my mom and be like, "Hey, do you remember when this happened? What were you thinking when that was happening?" And hearing her perspective on things.

I wrote a whole chapter on my dad, which I ended up having to take out.

**Annie:** Oh, wow.

**Anjelah:** I had a whole chapter on my dad, a whole chapter on the women in my family. And basically, my editor made me combine them into one chapter. She was like, "These are great stories but we need to keep moving forward and you're already over your limit of words." So I was like, "Okay, great."

So I had to cut a lot from that chapter. But doing the work on that chapter with my dad, let me tell you because I had a conversation with my dad a couple years ago about my childhood trauma, basically. And it started because I was on a podcast interview where we're talking about our relationships with our dad, and I was very honest with mine.

And then I felt guilty after because I was like, "Mhh, I was really honest with you on your podcast, and all your listeners, but I've never actually had this conversation with my dad, and it feels wrong to talk about him without him knowing that I feel these ways."

Long story short, I ended up having a conversation with him. He came to visit. I wrote him a letter and I wrote in my journal, and my therapist helped me walk through all of it. Like, Okay, what are the pros and cons of having this conversation with your dad? What are the possible outcomes? This is the worst possible outcome, medium outcome, best outcome."

Went through all the things, wrote my letter. And I had to call my mom and my sister and ask them and be like, "Hey, did these things really happen? Or am I crazy? Am I just remembering things?" And they were like, "No, that actually happened." And then my sister was like, "And do you remember when this happened?" And she's telling me things that I didn't even remember. And I was like, "Oh, shoot, no, I don't remember that either."

So I sat my dad down, I read him this letter. I was like, "Dad, I'm going to read you this letter. I don't want you to respond. Just let me read it and wait until I'm done before you say anything." So as I'm reading this letter, he's not interrupting me, but he's saying things like, "What? I don't remember that. What?" Stuff like that.

And then by the end of it, he gave me a hug and he apologized. My dad's never apologized to anyone ever in life. Ever. And we had a really good conversation that day of how he was raised and how I was raised. I've done a lot of work in therapy.



My dad was like, "That's just how I was raised." And I was like, "And I know that. I know you are a product of your childhood. So I'm not angry with you. I don't hold it against you. I know that you're just a little kid who grew up and then had kids of your own."

Years later, I wrote a whole chapter with some of the stuff that was in that letter and I sent it to him to read before I published it. I was like, "I need my dad doing this before I publish it. Because if he's full on like, "No way. You can't print this," I'm not going to disrespect my dad like that. It's not that important that people know every single one of these details."

So I sent it to him, and I did the whole therapy sandwich and I was like, "Hey, Dad, love you so much. I'm so glad that you're my dad. There were some hard times in life and I felt like it was really important for me to be honest in this book, but I'm so grateful for you. I hope you get it. Please let me know your thoughts after you read this chapter."

He never got back to me. And I was like, "Huh, okay." So I let a few days go by and I'm talking to my mom. She's like, "Well, give him a couple days." A few days go by, still didn't hear from him. Then all of a sudden, I have a conversation with my aunt, his sister, and she goes... She has no idea I'm writing a book at this point. She doesn't even know.

She goes, "Hey, your dad told me to tell you something about like you got a part wrong in your chapter. He's still good at math." Like he made a joke about it. That's my dad. My dad's the first comedian I've ever met in my life, which I get my personality from my dad. We're joke tellers. We just get to laugh. At every conversation we're in we try to get the laugh.

And so it was like a perfect example of how I was raised like not confronting emotions or feelings or talking about things or anything like that. I was very honest. My dad's not used to honesty like that. I gave him the chapter. He didn't even respond to me. He told my aunt, and she responded to me. And it was just a joke. It was like, "He just wanted to say a joke about it." But he couldn't even say it to me. And he still has never said anything. I've had many conversations with him. I've hung out with him since then and he still has not once brought up my chapter.

**Annie:** Wow. But I'll tell you, you did this path correctly I think. Anne Lamott says: Write like your parents are dead. And I think you can write like that. I don't think you publish like that.

**Anjelah:** Sure.

**Annie:** Right? So write however you want to write, but I just think it's so honoring of you and for our friends listening who want to be writers, I think it's so honoring of you to say, "I'm going to present this to the people involved first." And they're your up-close family. And if it doesn't work for them, they matter more than the book matters.

**Anjelah:** Absolutely. Absolutely.

**Annie:** Right. And now it's coming out and a portion of that chapter is in there.

**Anjelah:** There's definitely some of that chapter is still in there. I'm sure my dad will be happy that it's not the full chapter in there.

**Annie:** Why was this the right time to write your book? I mean, because you really do your whole history from little, little six-year-old Anj to today. Why was this the right time to do a book?

**Anjelah:** So I am a storyteller in standup comedy. I tell my jokes but they're stories. And in stand-up comedy we're taught to cut the fat, which means take out the details, get to the punch line. You want to get as close from your setup to your punch line as quick as possible.

So there are certain stories that I had that I would share that there were too many details for it that it wouldn't work on stage, it wouldn't work in stand up. But I knew the story was good and I knew every detail was very important. It was needed for the story.

So I was like, "You know what? I'm going to write this in a book one day." And I started a document on my computer that would be stories from my book, chapters from my book. And I just started adding... For the past 10 years, I've had this document on my computer. And it's like, one day, I'm going to write a book and I'm going to put this story in. I'm going to put this chapter in. One day, I'll write a book." For 10 years, "One day I'll write a book."

And then 2020 happens and my agent calls me and he was like, "Hey, I think it's time for you to write a book." And you know when you hear someone say something, and it just feels right in your spirit. There's a scripture in the Bible, too. It's like when Jesus had just been crucified and these two dudes, they're walking down the street, and then the other guy walks up, and he's chatting with them,

whatever. And then later they realize it's Jesus. And then when they start thinking about, they're like, "Oh, yeah, my spirit did leap with-

**Annie:** Their heart burning, yes.

**Anjelah:** "There was something happening. Yeah." And he start remembering that. So as my agent is telling me, "I think it's time for you to write a book," he's telling all the things, I can feel my spirit bubbling. And I was like, "Yeah, you're right."

**Annie:** Oh my gosh.

**Anjelah:** "I think you are right. I can feel it. I can feel it. Yes, you're right. Let's go. Let's do this." And that's how it started.

**Annie:** That is unbelievable. One of my favorite stories in the book was about Hume Summer Camp. Do you know I've spoken there?

**Anjelah:** No, you didn't. I love Hume Lake.

**Annie:** I mean, summer camp, I loved you talking about even just the prayers you prayed there and realizing later in your life that the prayers you had prayed there were coming to pass. Will you talk a little bit about that being part of your history?

**Anjelah:** So I went to this church where I was very ethnically diverse: black, white, Asian, Latino, different kinds of Asian, different kinds of Latino. Like everybody was at this church. And I loved this youth group because I wanted to be a chola, which is why the title of my book is *Who Do I Think I Am?: Stories of Chola Wishes and Caviar Dreams*. Like I wanted to be a gang banger real bad. And so I had this, you know, tough like what attitude. And I love that the people in this youth group also had a little bit of an attitude. And I was like, "Oh, I get you and you get me. This is great." So anyways, we go to Hume and everybody has their matching shirts for their church-

**Annie:** Yeah, because that kind of summer camp it's all sorts of different churches who come together for the weak?

**Anjelah:** Yes. So it's a bunch of different churches and it's very vanilla. It's very like a lot of white kids there. And they got their, you know, whatever youth group Holy Spirit t-shirt on in orange, and then this one Bread of Life over here in bright blue, whatever, shirt.

And then we get off of our bus and we all decided to wear camo fatigues with war paint under our eyes because we're going to be doing relay races and activities against the other churches. So we get off the bus full-on ready for war, real ethnic, real... I just got back from Mexico so I had braids in my hair.

**Annie:** Oh my gosh.

**Anjelah:** Let me tell you. We got off the bus and they were like, "What Juvenile center church is this?" It was a life-changing experience. I really encountered God on that trip. And at the time, I was dating this guy who was in a gang. He had a kid, he never graduated high school. Just like a real winner. You know what I mean? And he was my man. He was like, "Let me tell you, that is my backup ladies. He belongs to me." And then all the ladies are like, "You can have him. You're good."

**Annie:** People are like, "Yeah, we aren't in line. We aren't in line."

**Anjelah:** I came home from Hume Lake, and I broke up with my boyfriend. And I was like, "I'm ready to change my life and start living a different way." And that was the beginning of shifting my relationship with God at that point.

**Annie:** One of the things I loved about your book is that you're as funny as you are in spoken. Like you are able to write as well as you're able to do stand up, I think. I mean, I was like this feels and sounds just like you.

**Anjelah:** Yay!

**Annie:** So it made me wonder, when you're writing, did you ever audio record yourself telling stories? Or when you write your stand-up, do you type it up first? It just feels like it was such a natural switch for you to write a book.

**Anjelah:** When I'm writing stand-up, I talk out loud in my shower or when I'm driving. And then when I want to practice it, I will record myself saying the story with the beats, how I've planned them, with the punchlines, how I plan them. And I'll record my audio. And then the only time I write it out is for memory. It's like, "I need to practice each word, so let me write it out." And that will like really staple in the memory. But when it came to writing, no, it was really just like talking and telling my stories.

**Annie:** It's so good. How do you feel about it coming out tomorrow?

**Anjelah:** I'm excited that people are finally going to have it. I'm trying not to think about... Of course, we always want to have a successful outcome of whatever we do.

**Annie:** Sure. Sure.

**Anjelah:** Whether you wrote a book, or you painted a picture, whatever it is, you want it to be successful. You want it to be good. And I guess we have to define success for ourselves.

**Annie:** Yeah, that's right.

**Anjelah:** Like, what does success look like?

**Annie:** That's what I was going to ask you is, what is success going to look like?

**Anjelah:** Does that mean selling 1,000 copies or does that mean selling 10,000 copies? You know, of course, when I'm first writing, I was like, I want to be New York Times bestseller, lah, lah, lah. And then I started hearing about how sometimes what it takes to become a New York Times bestseller, and I was like, "Oh, Actually, I'm not trying to get in politics after all. I don't want to campaign for myself. I just want people to like my book."

**Annie:** Right.

**Anjelah:** So I kind of like took my hands off of that portion of it. And I was like, "God, let the people who need this book get this book."

**Annie:** Wow.

**Anjelah:** I want the people who get the book to love the book. That's what I want. So Success for me is hearing people's reviews of the book that they love it, that they're deeply touched by it, that they feel encouraged by it, that they feel inspired by it, that it rings true in their ear.

**Annie:** Does entertain count? I mean, I felt so happy reading it. I felt like I was watching a show which is like the highest compliment I can give a book because I wasn't bored at all. I just enjoyed it so much. I loved getting to learn what was going on behind the scenes.

**Anjelah:** Thank you. Thank you.

**Annie:** So that's your review in today.

**Anjelah:** Thank you. Success!

**Annie:** It entertained and inspired. It's success. One for one. One for one. There you are. I can't wait. I mean, that tells a lot to our friends listening too. Because that means after they get the book tomorrow, you're specifically saying, success to me is after you read the book, tell me what you thought.

**Anjelah:** Yeah.

**Annie:** And everybody can do that.

**Anjelah:** Unless you hated it. Don't tell me what you thought. Just kidding.

**Annie:** Keep it actually to yourself. Actually, keep it. We're always getting five-star reviews. Give five-star reviews or don't use your time that way. That's my motto. Anj you're going to love this. We have a podcast on the network called The Snack Show and it is 30 minutes about snacks once a week.

**Anjelah:** I'm into it.

**Annie:** It's hysterical. One star review. First sentence: I don't really like snacks. What are you... what are you doing?

**Anjelah:** Why did you spend your time this way?

**Annie:** What were you expecting? Why did you one star the thing that literally the title did not bamboozle you?

**Anjelah:** Right. That's like going to a Mexican restaurant and leaving a Yelp review, "I don't like Mexican food. This place sucks." What?

**Annie:** Exactly. "I was expecting pizza." You're not....no. Unless you're at Taco Bell you're not getting any. So everybody writes reviews but reviews that are five-star.

**Anjelah:** Give me five-star reviews are just take a nap.

**Annie:** Oh my gosh. Can we for a minute talk about when you met Michael Jackson though? Because that part of the book. I mean, he walked right by you. You could have reached out and touched him but you didn't.

**Anjelah:** I didn't actually like meet him, but yes, he did a walk right past me. And I was at his house when he did it.

**Annie:** Yeah

**Anjelah:** Okay, this is a great story. I'm going to try to cut the fat on this one. I don't know how much time we have because this story could go on all day.

**Annie:** I'm not stressed if you're not stressed. Just tell me what you want to.

**Anjelah:** Okay, I'll tell you the story.

[00:46:59] <music>

**Sponsor:** Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation one last time to tell you about one of our incredible partners, [Chime](#). During this Lent season, we think a lot about letting go of things in our lives that may not be serving us. It's true in our spiritual practices, but it's also helpful in the rest of our life too.

So in the spirit of leaving behind things that don't serve you, how about we get rid of overdraft fees? Okay. When your checking account balances running low, it happens, the absolute last thing you need is an overdraft fee. But with Chime, an award-winning app and debit card, you can save those hard-earned dollars without paying overdraft fees.

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And now back to finish up our conversation with Anjelah.

[00:49:26] <music>

**Anjelah:** The beginning of the story is I had just moved to Hollywood from the Bay Area. And one of my friends was in a music video for this music artist. Well, he then invites us to his concert. So me and my friends are there backstage at his concert just being groupies.

Like full-on, I'm fresh off being a cheerleader for the Oakland Raiders. My friends in music video, the other friends that were with us they're all in music videos. Like we're all groupie girls backstage. And I had been warned when I first moved here, "Hey, everybody in Hollywood says they're a producer or a director. Don't believe them. Everybody just says that." Right?

**Annie:** Right.

**Anjelah:** I meet this guy backstage and he's like, "Yeah, what's up? I'm a producer." And I'm like, "Mm, really?"

**Annie:** Right. Everybody is.

**Anjelah:** He's like, "Are you guys dancers?" And I was like, "Yeah, we're dancers." And he's like, "Well, I need some dancers for a party that I'm producing. Give me your



number." And I was like, "Okay, here's my number." Like full on just throw every advice given to me, like, "Don't believe them if they say they're a producer." I was like, "Oh, you're a producer. Sure, here's my number. Have it."

**Annie:** "Here's my actual phone number. You can have it."

**Anjelah:** Anyway, I get a phone call from this guy few days later and he was like, "Hey, I'm producing this party and I need some dancers at the party. Like go-go dancers." And I'm like, "Yeah, we got you. We could do this." And he's like, "Okay, it's next weekend." "Cool. Got you." And he's like, "Oh, by the way, it's at Michael Jackson's house. It's for his birthday." And I was like, "Huh."

Now keep in mind I just moved to Hollywood. So seeing a celebrity from a commercial is big deal for me. Like I'm fresh. You know what I mean?

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Anjelah:** And he said, Michael Jackson, and I was like, "Oh, the celebrity?" Wow, okay.

**Annie:** "Yeah. Yeah, that's true."

**Anjelah:** So I get off the phone with him and I didn't even call like six of my hottest girlfriends. I just called the six of my closest friends and was like, "Yo, you want to be at Michael Jackson house?"

**Annie:** "You're going to learn how to dance today."

**Anjelah:** I called my homeboy, Chuck. my homeboy, Harry. I didn't even pick girls. I was like, "Who are my closest friends?" I was like, "Yo, you want to go to Michael Jackson's house?" I call my friend DJNGV. I called my cousin. My cousin came. And we went to Michael Jackson's house. It was incredible. We couldn't bring cameras of course. And this is before smartphones. It's not like you could have your iPhone. There were no iPhones. So there's like a little train and we got on this... It's on his property. A little train. You get on the train-

**Annie:** This is the Neverland Ranch or is it something else in LA?

**Anjelah:** Yes, the Neverland Ranch. It's in Santa Barbara.

**Annie:** Wow.

**Anjelah:** And so we get in a little train and it takes you all the way to the back of the property where his Neverland Ranch is, his whole theme park. And there's this big huge tent setup where there's a DJ going and music. We walk in and there's already dancers up on the boxes already dancing.

And the producer guy goes, "I guess somebody else hired dancers too." And we're like, "All right, well, what do you want us to do?" And he's like, "Well just enjoy the party, I guess."

**Annie:** What a dream!

**Anjelah:** So we just went to Michael Jackson's birthday party and just hung out at Neverland Ranch. I'm fresh to Hollywood, like three months in and I'm like, "Oh my god, is this my life now? Do I just go to Michael Jackson's house? Am I VIP? What is this?" We had the most incredible time. So then what happens is he's not there. I don't know where Michael Jackson is.

**Annie:** I mean, are y'all just all die and laughing just like, "Look at that celebrity. Look at that celebrity." It's got to be the A-Listers.

**Anjelah:** I'll tell you what I was most excited about was all the free candy. We were like kids in a candy shop literally because he has all the rides and he also has a movie theater. Like a legit movie theater with like the bar where the popcorn, all the candies are, and the soda machine. And it's like a concession stand and anything you wanted, for free. So I remember I had like a big tub of the big popcorn tub just full of candies. Just like y'all get a licorice. Just what am I doing? What am I doing? Like taking home candies from movie theater. Anyway.

So we're in the big tent, everybody is dancing, having a good time. All of a sudden, I see a group of people congregating over by this one area and there's like some big security guards over there. And so I go up to one of the security guards and I was like, "Hey, what's going on over here?" And he was like, "Just stand by me." And I was like, "Oh, okay."

So now I'm just standing by this big, huge security guard. And then I call my friend Angie and I'm like, "Ang, come here." And she's like, "Why?" I'm like, "I don't know, but just stand by me." So now me and my friend Ang are just standing there. And we're like, "We don't know what's happening, but we're waiting for something."

All of a sudden the DJ goes, "Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the birthday boy himself, Michael Jackson." And he comes walking out from this doorway right where we were standing, walks right in front of us. All of a sudden, we become those girls from the Michael Jackson documentaries that are just crying, screaming, and sparkle fingers for no reason.

**Annie:** No, you were? It just happened in your body?

**Anjelah:** We lost all bodily functions. Like all control bodily functions. Like full on. We were crying, screaming, putting our hands up like, Oh my God. We are doing this." And then we're looking at each other, both crying, going, "Why are we crying?" And she's like, "I don't know." We could not even control ourselves. It was unreal.

The party ends, we get on the bus. They drive us back from... It was like one of those charter buses. They drive us back from Santa Barbara. It was just magical. It was unreal.

**Annie:** You're like, "I would never have experience like that one ever again. That is once in a lifetime."

**Anjelah:** Yeah.

**Annie:** That's unreal. Your book, *Who Do I Think I Am?* is full of those kinds of stories, which it just makes it, I mean, so fun. From celebrity stuff to how you grew up to getting married to Manny. I mean, the whole thing is just awesome. Really well done, Anj. It's such a good book.

**Anjelah:** Thank you so much.

**Annie:** I'm glad all the pressure from all of us to your friends who've said, "Write a book for a lot of years," finally came to pass. You finally gave in to peer pressure.

**Anjelah:** I did. That's what you are waiting for when you're like, "What made you write this book?" You're waiting for your shout out in that moment.

**Annie:** That's what I need you to say is everyone I've ever loved told me to write a book for the last 10 years. Is there anything we didn't talk about that you want to make sure we say?

**Anjelah:** No. I mean, it was a great conversation.

**Annie:** I loved it. Well, I just love talking to you. It's very easy.

**Anjelah:** I love you.

**Annie:** I'm very thankful.

**Anjelah:** Thank you. It's so funny because I wrote you a card. It's coming to you in the mail soon. But I said something like, "I don't know how you pump out so many books because this was an undertaking. This was something." And I'm like, "Man, you do it often." Shoot, one thing I didn't do in yours that I should have was just throw a bunch of glitter in there just so you know what it feels like. But I didn't do that to you.

**Annie:** You do that to someone else's house? Do you know the difference between your book and my book is you covered 30 years in your book and I usually cover two?

**Anjelah:** Oh, okay.

**Annie:** So that's the difference is I cover one to two years. I don't do my whole life. Okay, the last question we always ask, because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to you.

**Anjelah:** What sounds fun to me. Well, these days taking a nap sounds amazing. I love sleep. And it's been really busy. But honestly, um, I mean, I guess just taking a nap. I like going on walks. I like going on walks with my husband and holding hands. I usually will go, "You want to go for a walk and hold hands?" And I'm like, "It's part of the deal is holding hands with the walk." But it's nice to get out in fresh air and be in the sun and just go for a walk and then talk and look at life, be in nature. That sounds fun to me.

**Annie:** That's a very good answer. Living in LA, that works. You can go outside anytime you want.

**Anjelah:** Yes.

**Annie:** Are y'all still part-time here?

**Anjelah:** Yeah. So I'll be back in April.

**Annie:** Hey, let's do something fun.

**Anjelah:** And I'll be based out of Nashville for April. Yeah.

**Annie:** Yay. Good. Okay, I'm home all of April too. Very exciting.

**Anjelah:** Finally.

**Annie:** Finally.

**Anjelah:** Finally we-

**Annie:** And you're coming to the Ryman in October.

**Anjelah:** I am. We just announced I'm coming to the Ryman in October. There may be something special added to that show. We're working on it. Not quite sure. But it may be a taping. Not quite sure.

**Annie:** Oh, can't be sure. Can't be sure.

**Anjelah:** We'll see.

**Annie:** Well, I mean, our office was talking about it before we started doing this. We're like, "Oh, did you see the Anjelah is..." So we will all be there. All right. Love you, friend. Proud of you. Thanks for doing this.

**Anjelah:** Love you. Thank you.

[00:58:30] <music>

**Outro:** Oh, you guys, isn't she the best? I mean, wow, that whole radical acceptance thing, I've thought about it every day. I thought about it every day. What a gift! Anj is such a gift. And y'all are going to love her book. So go grab your copy. You can go ahead and order today and get all the pre-order fun things. And the book comes out tomorrow, so you won't wait at all.

But wherever you love to buy books, go pre-order *Who Do I Think I Am?* today. Well, just order it. Just order it. Hit "Buy." And follow Anj on social media so you can tell her thanks for being on the show. And make sure you go out and see her on tour, y'all. She's so good live. She's so good live.

If you need anything else from me, you know I'm embarrassingly easy to find. Annie F Downs on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook. All the places you may need me,

that's how you can find me. And I think that's it for me today, friends. Go out or stay home and do something that sounds fun to you. I will do the same.

Today what sounds fun to me, well, you probably already figured it out by my social media, but I'm on vacation. And that has been very fun. I've been really looking forward to it. So hope y'all have a great weekend.

We'll see you back here Monday with, oh, y'all seriously, one of the most special conversations I've had in all my years as a podcast host. So we'll see you back here Monday with the absolutely lovely Kristen Chenoweth. Y'all, Kristin Chenoweth is here in the studio. You'll get to hear it on Monday. We'll see you guys then. Y'all have a good weekend.