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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've got a great show in store.

If you haven't heard, last week we found out that the That Sounds Fun Podcast is nominated for the first-ever K-Love Fan Award for Podcasts of the Year. So it would mean the world if you would just pop over to klovefanawards.com/vote to vote for our show. Spread the word. The more the merrier. We are so grateful for your support.

A few days ago, I mentioned a transcript in one of our episodes, and several of you were like, "I didn't know we have transcripts. If that's something you'd like to have, be sure you're signed up to receive our AFD Week in Review emails. I'll email you the transcript of today's show on Friday along with a ton of fun links.

You can sign up for the AFD Week in Review in the show notes or on my website Anniefdowns.com or through the link in my Instagram bio. Basically the link is as embarrassingly easy to find as I am. So if you'd like those transcripts, just sign up for that, and we'll email them straight to you.

Sponsor: Before we dive into today's conversation, I want to take a moment to share about one of our incredible partners. This podcast is sponsored by [BetterHelp](https://BetterHelp.com). No doubt that our lives can get a little overwhelming at times. More and more people seem to be dealing with the symptoms of burnout. Things like lack of motivation, feeling helpless or trapped, and major fatigue. It's why I'm reminding y'all to rest and play every weekend. I want each of us to do what we can to care for ourselves well.

Another way we can guard against burnout is with therapy. I'm so, so grateful for how my counselor has helped me over the years. It's honestly something that I want everyone to get to experience.

BetterHelp us customize online therapy that offers video, phone, and even live chat sessions with your therapist. So you don't have to see anyone on camera if you don't want to. It's much more affordable than in-person therapy and you can be matched with a therapist in under 48 hours.

That Sounds Fun friends get 10% off your first month at betterhelp.com/thatsoundsfun. That's betterhelp.com/thatsoundsfun.

Intro: Today on the show I get to share with you a portion of my conversation with Shauna Niequist from our live pop up event a couple of weeks ago. If you were

there, it's a chance to relive the fun. And if you weren't, I just can't wait for you to hear Shauna's warmth and wisdom. She is the friend we all need in our lives.

Shauna has been on the pod twice before if you want to go back and listen. She was with us for [Episode 8](#). Yes, like single-digit eight, way back and [Episode 235](#). Her new book, *I Guess I Haven't Learned That Yet* is an absolute masterpiece, giving us permission, and really an invitation to be new at things and to be gracious with ourselves. It's a must-read.

Shauna is truly a must-have voice in our lives. So I'm excited to share this one with you. So here's my laugh conversation with my dear friend and yours Shauna Niequist.

[00:03:02] <music>

Annie: Hi.

Shauna: Hi.

Annie: Welcome to Nashville.

Shauna: Thank you.

Annie: Welcome to the library.

Shauna: I love it.

Annie: I love that so much.

Shauna: I totally do. It's very pretty.

Annie: I think it's beautiful.

Shauna: I agree.

Annie: What's Nashville been like so far for you?

Shauna: It's been great. I always love coming to Nashville. I like your restaurants very much.

Annie: Yeah, certainly.

Shauna: I have run into so many people that I know. It's been really fun.

- Annie:** That happens to you in New York too, though, right? Is that kind of what happens to you that you see people you know everywhere?
- Shauna:** Well, I make friends everywhere because I'm a curious person and it mortifies my family. I like to talk to people on planes. I'm one of those people.
- Annie:** No!
- Shauna:** But I wait till we're on the ground.
- Annie:** You wait till you're on the ground?
- Shauna:** Yeah. I'm like a cool, normal person who doesn't talk to people-
- Annie:** I have never heard anything like this in my life.
- Shauna:** For two hours, I'm like, "I want to ask about her shoes. I want to ask about her earrings. I have questions about her profession. I want to know where she lives," but I cool it until we're on the ground. And then right as we're about to do plane and I say, "So, you are home now?"
- Annie:** Wow.
- Shauna:** I just see how far that door opens.
- Annie:** That is the most shocking thing you're gonna say tonight. Because you want to talk the whole time, and you don't until you're four minutes out.
- Shauna:** I have made so many friends on airplanes. I one time made the entire wedding DJ playlist for her wedding and offered her my wedding dress-
- Annie:** While taxiing?
- Shauna:** No, that one I started talking early.
- Annie:** Yeah, you'd have to. You'd have to. I was like, "That is some quick work or she was needy."
- Shauna:** No, no. No.
- Annie:** She's like, "Oh, we've just met, please make this list for me." Shauna!

Shauna: I just-

Annie: Did you do it when you landed in Nashville? I can't recall too many friends.

Shauna: Let me think. This is embarrassing. I said it. I said, "So are you home now?" And she either didn't hear me or 100% ignored me. And I just was like...

Annie: If you knew how many times my—I call them my airbuds because 80—airbuds were in my ears and not on and the person's like, "So who's your dearest friend?" And I'm like, "No, don't talk to me. Don't talk to me." Me and my oldest sister, when we would travel together, we would get off the plane... and we would never sit together because she loves talking to people. And I do not. And we get off the plane and she'd be like, "Did you meet anyone?" I'm like, "No, did you?" And she's like, "Oh, Bob is really going through some stuff. I gave him my number." And I was like, "You gave a dad your number?" That's what you do.

Shauna: I went out to dinner last week by myself and the two gentlemen next to me, we struck up a little conversation, and then I ordered their whole dinner for them. And then the people on that side noticed and asked me to come order their dinner.

Annie: You're in heaven.

Shauna: I know. And then the server came out and he was like, "I work here." I was like, "Sorry. Sorry."

Annie: Is it a place you know really well?

Shauna: I've been there a handful of times so I got some opinions.

Annie: Yeah. Yeah.

Shauna: Yeah, yeah, we'll go there.

Annie: When we went to dinner a few weeks ago in New York, I sat down and I was like, "Shauna will tell you," and she was like, "I will," and just went drink to dessert the whole thing. I didn't say a thing.

Shauna: The funny thing about that meal, we were at this super fun Italian restaurant in New York City. And it felt kind of old fashioned. And our friend... I was gonna say our colleague. She's our friend. Our Jonathan. Everything was super sophisticated and lovely except Jonathan ordered a cocktail that arrived and it looked 100% like a shamrock shake. It was a fluorescent green milkshake with tons of whip creams.

- Annie:** When it was coming from the back I we were like, "No, no, no."
- Shauna:** You're like, "Is a four year old having a birthday?" Oh, no.
- Annie:** So you're here for a couple of days.
- Shauna:** Until tomorrow morning.
- Annie:** I mean, you may be on a flight with them. So get ready. If you're flying with Shauna tomorrow, she's not going to talk to you until the very end.
- Shauna:** No, I discipline myself the whole way through. I've so many questions. I don't ask them.
- Annie:** Do you read? What do you do on a plane?
- Shauna:** Yeah, I read, definitely.
- Annie:** I need you to talk to our friends about how you've taught me to always have a book with me because you have it on your Kindle, though, right?
- Shauna:** I read on my phone.
- Annie:** On your phone.
- Shauna:** I have the Kindle app on my phone all the time.
- Annie:** And you keep a nonfiction and fiction going all the time.
- Shauna:** All the time. Yeah.
- Annie:** You tell this story—I feel like it's in here—of being at a family gathering and everyone's playing on their phones and you're reading.
- Shauna:** Oh, maybe Yeah, yeah.
- Annie:** What are you reading right now?
- Shauna:** I just did... Do you know Anne Bogel's podcast *What Should I Read Next??*
- Annie:** Yes. Are y'all listening to her?
- Shauna:** It's amazing.

Annie: It's amazing.

Shauna: And so you go on, and she asks, "What are some books you've loved? What's something you don't like in a book? What are some...?" And then she gives you what you should read next. It's amazing. So she recommended to me four books. I finished one of them and I'm reading at least two of them right now, and I have one waiting for me.

Annie: She recommended to me probably two of my favorite books I've read in years.

Shauna: What are yours?

Annie: One of them y'all may have to yell it out. It's the Librarian of... It's the one about the blue people in Kentucky. Harlow? Say it again. *Give Her the Stars* is one but there's another one.

Shauna: And this is controversial, right?

Annie: It's very controversial. There are two that are-

Annie: Troublesome Creek, yes?

Shauna: Yes.

Woman: *The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek.*

Annie: Thank you. *The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek.*

Shauna: Yes, yes.

Annie: It's very problematic because it's the same story by two authors. And one came out before the other one.

Shauna: One has to.

Annie: Yeah, that's it. Cheers to that not happening to us yet.

Shauna: Right. Right.

Annie: We haven't been on either side of that yet. Thank the good Lord. But I loved it because I love all things Appalachia. Oh, I loved it. Did you know there were really people who were blue?

Audience: Yes.

Annie: Yes, they do. I was asking her but you could say.

Shauna: I paused when you said, "blue people." I thought that's a reference I don't understand. What do you mean?

Annie: It's because of some chemical in their how the... I'm gonna mess it up. I'll send you the book. But in Kentucky and because of some historic inbreeding, not current.

Shauna: Okay.

Annie: Historic... their communities were small. So they had kids and they passed down this gene where people were blue. You can Google it. One of them is still alive in Alaska now or something.

Shauna: He was like, "I'm getting out of here."

Annie: Yeah. He's like, "I'll tell you what's not happening after me. This!" Anne Bogel's ability to know books is extraordinary.

Shauna: It's amazing.

Annie: I love her. So you just listen to her and start reading them?

Shauna: Yeah, definitely.

Annie: Have you read *The Island of Sea Women*?

Shauna: No, but I feel that I am reading *The Island of Misfit Trees*.

Annie: Yes, you're reading that.

Shauna: Okay. So it's a different book.

Annie: Yes. It's different and it's very enjoyable.

Shauna: Yeah. Okay. Just at the beginning.

Annie: Talk to us about why you keep a fiction and nonfiction going on at the same time.

- Shauna:** They're totally different parts of the brain to me. I read them in different ways at different times. The other thing I do is kind of in the weeds, but I keep the Kindle app on the front screen of my phone and I keep social media several screens back.
- Annie:** Oh, like slides, slide, slide?
- Shauna:** Yeah, yeah, yeah
- Annie:** Okay.
- Shauna:** So that when I have 10 minutes, the easiest thing to do is open a book and it's harder to scroll. I want to make it a little harder because it doesn't feel nourishing to me the same way that 10 minutes of reading a book does.
- Annie:** I move slower when I'm reading than I move when I'm scrolling anyway. And anything for our personalities that slows us down is very helpful.
- Shauna:** And connects me to one story. Like if I have five of those little breaks in the day, like waiting for a kid after school or waiting for this or that, at the end of those five little breaks, I've read 50 minutes of one story, as opposed to all these fragmented pieces of other people's lives. It's better for my whole... I think my life and my spirit, you know.
- Annie:** When you're reading nonfiction, are you reading essay-driven nonfiction? Are you reading business? Are you reading spiritual?
- Shauna:** Not business.
- Annie:** 0%. No.
- Shauna:** I read a lot of essay collections and memoirs. And I'm starting to read more and more poetry. And I really love it.
- Annie:** Really?
- Shauna:** Yeah. I used to. I studied poetry. And then for a long time I didn't read it that much. I am in a total poetry phase right now. Maggie Smith and Kate Baer I think were the first two that ushered me back into reading poetry. I love them both.
- Annie:** What is it about poetry?
- Shauna:** It's usually about a feeling more than an answer. There's a spaciousness in it. It's very sense-oriented. I think somebody says there are seasons for prose and seasons

for poetry. And I've very much been in a season for poetry. Not a lot of answers. Not a lot of black and white things lining up perfectly. A lot of like feelings and open ended responses to things. And so poetry really suits that.

Annie: I would like to submit to you that I think you may like that, because that's what your writing does for us.

Shauna: Aw.

Annie: I mean, do you agree? Like when I read you, Shauna, I can feel it in my breathing when I'm reading your stuff.

Shauna: Thank you.

Annie: It's something where I go, like, "I'd never put a sentence together like that." And many people feel that. I mean, are you a poet? Are you writing poetry that we're not seeing?

Shauna: No, definitely not. No. No. No.

Annie: None.

Shauna: Ever.

Annie: I just feel like it's in you.

Shauna: Thank you.

Annie: You're a poetic prose writer.

Shauna: Thank you.

Annie: So you bring us both.

Shauna: Thank you.

[00:12:58] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation real quick to share about one of our incredible partners, [StoryWorth](#). You may remember when I shared in my book *That Sounds Fun* about how I found out my dad loved playing chess and how much fun we had when we played together after my friend Tim taught me how? It got me

wondering though, how many other things I don't know. That's why I got my StoryWorth for my dad, Mr. F. Downs.

StoryWorth is an online service that helps you and your dad or a father figure in your life connect through sharing stories and memories and preserve them for years to come. See, every week StoryWorth emails your dad a thought-provoking question that you get to choose out of a big pool of possible options.

The unique prompts ask questions you've maybe never thought of. Like, what is one of your fondest childhood memories? Or have you ever feared for your life? Or what sounds fun to you? I really look forward to giving this to my dad for Father's Day. Sorry, dad. Spoiler alert. It's coming to you for Father's Day. And I can't wait to read his answers to these questions.

After a year, StoryWorth compiles all those questions and stories, including photos, into a beautiful keepsake book that the whole family can share for generations. I love the idea of flipping through this book with my nephew Sam one day and giggling about all the stories and pictures of his granddaddy. Give all the fathers in your life a meaningful gift you can both cherish for years to come. StoryWorth.

Right now for a limited time you could save \$10 on your first purchase when you go to storyworth.com/thatsoundsfun. That's storyworth.com/thatsoundsfun to save \$10 on your first purchase. [Storyworth.com/thatsoundsfun](https://storyworth.com/thatsoundsfun).

Sponsor: And I want to let you know about another one of our incredible partners, [Nutrafol](#). Do you ever look around the bathroom after drying your hair and feel like it looks like the hair salon floor after a major haircut? All the shedding, you guys. You're not alone. 30 million women are impacted by weakened or thinning hair. It's so many of us. But the good news is there is a solution you can trust to deliver results.

Thousands of women, including me, have taken back control of their hair with Nutrafol. So many of them are saying it helped restore not only their hair's health but also their confidence. I love that. Nutrafol offers targeted formulas for women that are clinically shown to improve hair growth and thickness with less shedding through all stages of life.

Nutrafol supports healthy hair growth from within by targeting all five root causes of thinning: stress, hormones, environment, nutrition, and metabolism. We all deal with this stuff, right? In a clinical study, 86% of women reported improved hair growth after six months. More than 1,500 top doctors recommend Nutrafol as an effective and high-quality solution for healthier hair.

And as the powerful ingredients bring your body back into balance, you can also notice improvements to your overall well-being. Things like restful sleep and less stress and better skin and nails. Yes, please. You can grow thicker, healthier hair and support our show by going to nutrafol.com and entering the promo code TSF to save \$15 off your first month's subscription. This is their best offer anywhere and it's only available to US customers for a limited time. Plus free shipping on every order? Okay. Get \$15 off at nutrafol.com. That's nutrafol.com, promo code TSF.

And now back to our conversation with Shauna.

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Annie: What's it been like with the book out? It's been out two weeks. New York Times bestseller. Well done.

Shauna: Thank you.

Annie: USA Today bestseller, Publishers Weekly bestseller, which y'all should know matters a lot to us as much as New York Times does because that tells different things. So how's it feel?

Shauna: It's amazing. I mean, anybody who's done any kind of big project, whatever it is, you know that the lead up to it is just increasing amounts of terrible. There was a point-

Annie: Literally.

Shauna: ...like a week before the book launch where I told my husband, I was like, "I think my eyeballs are vibrating. My whole body is freaking."

Annie: Everything is awful.

Shauna: And there's nothing to do. I mean, a lot of people compare having a baby and writing a book. And I think there are a lot of differences but one of the-

Annie: I've only done one of the two, and I think they're just alike. So you tell me if they're different.

Shauna: One of the ways in which they're similar is it gets a lot worse before it gets better. Those last couple of days before you have a baby, there's nothing else on your mind. There's only like, "When is this not going to be in my body anymore?" So you get a little bit like that right before a book launch. And you're just like, "I am ready for the next thing. This is nerve racking."

Annie: The book before this, *Bread & Wine*... would that be before this?

Shauna: *Present Over Perfect*.

Annie: *Present Over Perfect*. That's right. So *Present Over Perfect* was '18? '17? What year?

Shauna: '16.

Annie: '16?

Shauna: Yes. I have taken a-

Annie: We've all gasped together.

Shauna: I know. Believe me, it's been a long time.

Annie: Okay. But you wrote so much of this in '20. Were you ruminating on it before that? Or did you just need to let the fields live for a little bit?

Shauna: No, no, no, that would have been a good thing to do. I wrote hundreds of thousands of words that did not end up in this book.

Annie: I'm going to drink for that. This sounds terrible.

Shauna: This was one that I just had to... It's like I had to write about 150,000 words before those words.

Annie: And PS, this is how many?

Shauna: 50. 58. Something like that.

Annie: So she has word 150 that exists somewhere.

Shauna: Yeah, in my laptop. They're garbage. No one needs them.

Annie: Lord, that is awful. That is awful.

Shauna: It's a long process.

Annie: You wrote 150 of just like processing what's in you?

Shauna: Yeah, and I'm trying to figure out what I wanted this book to be and trying a bunch of stuff. And I sent it all to my team. I was like, "I'm really sorry. It's a lot."

Annie: And they said, "Thank you," and just put it over here.

Shauna: Totally. I never heard from them again.

Annie: You're like, "I signed with a new publisher."

Shauna: Totally.

Annie: For the three of us who haven't read this yet, *I Guess I Haven't Learned That Yet*, will you explain why that's the title?

Shauna: So many things have happened in the last six years since the last book. But one of them is our family, Aaron and I and our two boys moved from the suburbs of Chicago to Manhattan, which is different in 1 million different ways. And it's different in enormous ways about how you live and experience the world and it's also different in really functional ways. Like, I don't know how to get my laundry done, I don't know how to get my groceries, I don't know how to get my kids to and from school.

Annie: Yeah, you don't have a car, right? Oh, y'all do but you don't ever use it, right?

Shauna: I don't use it. And we didn't for the first two and a half years that we were there.

Annie: In Chicago y'all probably have two car family with a garage.

Shauna: Yes, all those things.

Annie: And now none.

Shauna: None. Just our arms for groceries. That's all I have. So the learning curve was just so high. And I noticed that my kids especially were starting to get... It started off with questions like you know, "Why is this like this? How do we do this? How do we do this?" But then there were deeper questions like, "Am I falling behind? Have I made too many mistakes? Am I the kind of kid that can't get it right?" And I realized, wait a minute, we have to shift our perspective on what it means to be a beginner. You're not failing, you're learning.

So I said, "Every single one of us, mom and dad too, every day, we're gonna report back to each other at the end of the day and say, at which point during the day did you say I guess I haven't learned that yet?" When did you have an opportunity to

say, "I guess I haven't learned that yet?" We tried to make it something we were celebrating together as opposed to something where we all felt isolated and like we're failing.

Annie: Did it feel like you were failing when you moved there?

Shauna: No. But when everything's new all the time, it doesn't take much for you to be like, "Am I uniquely horrible at this?"

Annie: How's the 22-year-old surviving in Manhattan and I'm not? Yeah. No offense to 22-year-old. You're very capable.

Shauna: Yeah, exactly. But also moving, whether it's moving to another country, or starting a new job, or starting a new business, or anything where your old surroundings are gone, and you're in a new place, you realize there are so many more ways to live than just your way, right?

Annie: Yeah.

Shauna: You're like, Well, this is how my old boss did it or my old neighbors did it or my old team, or my old church or whatever used to be. There's so many other ways. And it brought out in me this curiosity. Wait a minute, there are so many ways to live that I have not yet experienced. There's so many right things to do with your life that are all good options that I haven't experienced yet.

So that idea made me just really curious. Like, I would go out to breakfast with a friend who had been married longer than I have and I'd be like, "What do you know about marriage? Because I need to know some things. What do you know about parenting? What do you know about faith? What do you know about writing?" I just became a person who was like, "I don't have almost any answers right now but I know other people do. And I'm going to be humble enough for us to ask for help from people who have wisdom that I don't have."

Annie: I feel like the older I've gotten, there are some real specific areas where I'm like, "Oh, the thing we realize is we know less."

Shauna: Absolutely.

Annie: Is that true? Faith feels that way to me a lot of times where I'm like, Man... Again, 22. Sorry, 22. Twenty-two-year-old Annie knew it. She knew everything. I would give to know all the things she knew.

Shauna: Oh, yeah.

Annie: But then you live another 20 years, and you go like, "There are other ways. The world has more." So what are some places in your life that you've gone, "Oh, I knew less than I thought I did"?

Shauna: Well, I would say certainly I've learned a lot about friendship. And I wouldn't say that like what I did know... I'm not changing my mind. But there are seasons when you have a really rich, large, lovely, super wonderful, wide net of relationships. I was gonna tell you when we were upstairs, there were more people saying hello to you upstairs than I know that in the entire city of New York.

Annie: That's not true.

Shauna: There were so many people.

Annie: They all work for me. I pay them to say hi to me. We are friends but that is employment. They have to speak to me.

Shauna: Literally, in three and a half years those are... I know almost that many people in this city except the people, I mean, I'm playing.

Annie: Right. Right.

Shauna: But not every season has to be this big net of all these friendships and connections. It's okay to have a season that's really quiet where two or three people are walking with you in a really close way. It's okay for friendships to change over time. It's okay to need different things from different people in different seasons. I think giving myself and my friends permission to do that differently feels like a gift we can give ourselves and each other.

Annie: Talk a little bit about giving friendships permission to change. Because I think one of the problems with social media is I think I should still be in touch with everyone from middle school. And that like to not friend them on a social media platform and to not know what their swimsuit looks like is bad friendship when I don't know their phone number. In 2022, how do we let friendships change when social media tells us every friendship is forever?

Shauna: I will have two different answers. One of them is I am really rethinking my whole approach to social media.

Annie: Tell us.

Shauna: I think there's some real dangerous edges to it. Of course, we think of the obvious dangers of it, but even something like that. It does give us a false sense of familiarity with people that are not a part of our lives. And it scratches that itch of connection, but not really.

Annie: Like how much do we know about Johnny Depp and Amber Heard case right now? And I don't know them. And I know far too much. And we shouldn't. And it's all because of one account that I follow: House in Habit. Y'all do, too. I know. It's all because we're all on the same account that tells us.

And you're right. It gives us a false sense of intimacy with some friends. But other friends, I love it. It makes me so grateful that I can see... I told you today that watching your son throw an ax, I was like, "I like seeing what he's like in movement because I see him in pictures."

Shauna: He's not a criminal.

Annie: He didn't throw it at a person.

Shauna: He didn't throw it in Manhattan.

Annie: Right? Well, I didn't know that part. But okay.

Shauna: My in-laws have recently relocated to Texas where they-

Annie: Where you can throw things.

Shauna: ...do things like that.

Annie: Now I understand.

Shauna: It was at a place where you pay money to do that.

Annie: I think that is a dumb job where you're in charge of people throwing axes. No. No. Why did we start the...

Shauna: No, that's not a good idea.

Annie: Okay. So that's your first thought on social media. So what's the solution then, Shauna? Do we get off? Or do we unfriend people that don't have our phone numbers?

Shauna: I have unfriended not in a mean way, but unfriended. Just whatever that word means.

Annie: It's like we want a nice horn for our car. I was an iii. Yeah, you just did that.

Shauna: If we're not in each other's lives, should I be looking at their lives? I don't know. And if I think about you in the course of the day, wouldn't it serve our friendship better if I sent you a text than if I watched your life that I'm not a part of in those ways? So I keep the text and the Kindle on the front screen. And I keep social several screens back because when I get the impulse to connect, and I pick up my phone, like we all do, I either send a text or I read a story. And I think those are more nourishing ways to connect in with something to get out of myself as opposed to kind of scrolling.

Annie: Either send a text or read a story. That's beautiful.

[00:26:51] <music>

Sponsor: Y'all keep telling me on the internet how much you enjoy talking about entrepreneurship and leadership and being a small business owner. And one of the things that saves my life as a small business owner is Shopify. That's the sound of a sale going through on Shopify, our all-in-one eCommerce platform to start, run, and grow your business.

Shopify gives all of us business owners and entrepreneurs the resources that used to only be available for big businesses. So upstart, startups, and established businesses alike can sell everywhere, synchronize online and in-person sales, and stay up to date on all those numbers. The numbers matter, you guys.

We love coming up with new ways to serve you and produce great content and products that you'll love. And with Shopify, there are just so many amazing possibilities when it comes to scaling your business in ways that they make it easier for any business to succeed.

We've been using Shopify to power shopanniefdowns.com for over three years now as our eCommerce selling platform and we love it. They make it so easy to get those Chaiday Friday mugs into your hands, or to make sure you've got the Gospel Reading plan ready to start with us in June. They've got tools that help with everything from tracking our inventory and sales to adding apps and customizable templates to our store for the best possible customer experience.

You can integrate with all kinds of apps and reach customers online and across social networks including Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Pinterest, and more. They

provide tons of insights and give detailed reporting of conversion rates and profit margins and all the really important data you need to keep making the best decision for your business.

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And now let's finish up our conversation with Shauna Niequist.

[00:30:26] <music>

Shauna: And then the other thing I would say about friendship is I think it really helps us when we talk about it. I think there's all these weird myths about friendship that it

should just be automatic and easy. Like think about the way most of us approach our dating lives. Right? You put effort into it, you care about it-

Annie: I'll just be over here.

Shauna: ...you invest in it. But if you were to say to me, if you were to say-

Annie: And I have. I've said all the dating stories to you, yes.

Shauna: If you were to say, "Hey, I would love to be in a great dating relationship so I'm really putting some energy into that," everybody would be like, "Good, go for it." But very rarely do we say like, "I really want to tend to my friendships, so I want to invest in a couple people, and I want to have open and honest conversations about how I'm doing as a friend, and how it feels to be in connection or partnership with me."

We don't do that very much with our friends, but I think we should. I think to ask questions, Hey, in what ways have I met your expectations for our friendship? And in what ways haven't I? When you can start talking about that kind of stuff, there's a real depth there.

Annie: I spoke about a friendship breakup at a conference a couple of years ago at IF:Gathering, and it was my very best friend. And it is to this day the most painful breakup of my life. And my DMs and email exploded because no one talks about friendship breakups. It's almost like we've underserved the importance of communicating about friendship, and saying like, "Yeah, we can actually talk about what happens when the thing, when the friendship you thought wasn't going to end ends?"

Shauna: Absolutely.

Annie: It's awful.

Shauna: It is. Absolutely.

Annie: It's awful. Speaking of awful, as you're writing through your book, I mean, your life changes in a thousand ways. There are a lot of our friends out here, in fact, we got questions from a lot of people, there are a lot of friends out here who have questions about being a writer. How do you decide what's public and what's private? Did you decide by yourself? Did you decide in community?

Shauna: I would say a couple things. Number one. This is just what I do. Right or wrong. I write everything as it's happening. When I'm in a writing season I write every

single day or I try to write a couple hours every workday, and I write everything, every conversation, every feeling, this is how the sky looked, this is what I made for dinner, this... Every single thing.

Annie: Real names, real location.

Shauna: All of it.

Annie: All of it.

Shauna: Because some of it is it helps you process what's happening in your life. Some of it is good storytelling requires really gritty, sensual details. And you'll never be able to go back and add those in after the fact. When you're telling a good story, you have to spring from the feelings and the sense details as you experience them, so want to get those all out.

And then I always give it time. So I'd say then what you add to it, let's say it's a recipe, you add time and outside perspective. After I would say no sooner than six weeks, but up to six months, you pull that piece back out and now, you know, you have a little perspective that's what this was, that's what this was about, that's what was happening in my life, that's why this is important to me. So you have the lenses of time and perspective. And then you have someone else say, "This could be important to other people," or "Thank you for sharing, no one else needs to be shared with in that way." It's just fine.

Annie: I mean, how many times have you gotten an edit back from my agent or my editor and it's like, "We're going to cut those two paragraphs because nobody needs to know that." I was like, "Well, I just thought it was important." They're like, "No."

Shauna: On one of my projects, my editor at first she was very loving with me and she was like, "Here's a thing to think about. I don't think that every time you eat you have to describe every ingredient of every single thing you've eaten. For example, you could just say I had a salad and you'd even have to tell me what's in the vinaigrette." And then after that, we just had a code word and it was "vinaigrette." And that meant "Take out these seven paragraphs about your eating chicken." Vinaigrette.

Annie: Meanwhile you're like, "Yes, I do need to keep all that in there. It matters."

Shauna: "It does to me."

Annie: Will you talk about y'all's community at the seminary because... Talk about the sheet pan dinners. I love that.

Shauna: Oh, yes!

Annie: I love how you describe that in the book.

Shauna: So we have just happened into the most lovely little group of friends and it's some families, some single people, some people have known each other for a long time, some people who just met in the course of living together in the seminary. We have like 100 kids between us and the oldest... Actually, the oldest is turning 18. So we're having a party for her tomorrow night.

Annie: Oh, wow.

Shauna: And the youngest is three. She just turned three.

Annie: Wow.

Shauna: A whole lot. Neither of those are mine. Those are other people's. And during the pandemic, you know, in New York, especially things were very, very strict. Even people that you knew very well, we were not in each other's homes at all. It must have been spring 2021 when it just started getting warm enough outside. We were so ready to be together again. So we started doing happy hour picnics in our courtyard. And it was very cold and we were all... I don't know if you guys got really weird during the pandemic, but we definitely did.

Annie: So weird.

Shauna: So weird. Our first couple of conversations we were just like sitting there on the picnic blanket, like, no idea how to talk to people.

Annie: Not knowing what the next question is to say. No. No. No.

Shauna: No. And it went from either like, "So you have hair?"

Annie: Or what was the worst part of the whole... yeah.

Shauna: Did you ever do that thing where you're like, Oh my gosh?

Annie: Yes. Yes, Shauna. Yes.

Shauna: But we were drawn to it like starving people. And I remember when we first started doing it, we did it six nights in a row and just kept coming out-

Annie: Send a text or is that always like six o'clock?

Shauna: It's just a text. Just meat on the lawn? Question mark. And then we'll list which weird things we have in our pantries and refrigerators. Jonathan somehow always has a jar of fancy honey-

Annie: Yeah, for sure.

Shauna: ...and half a thing of crackers. And then he makes up a cocktail in summer, winters, in summer. It just gave us a place to be together. And the sheet pan came because I would put together these like, you know, charcuterie boards or snack boards or whatever. And they're flat. They're like slate or you know, what a fancy something. And then I would try to carry them down three flights of stairs, and there's nothing on the edges. So I'm dropping crackers all the way down the step.

Annie: Oh, you've designed this beautiful cheese board and there's...

Shauna: And there's just under slate. And then you'd set it on the ground, right? Of course. It's just like confetti at that point. There's crackers everywhere. Like one of the bread crumbs that Hansel and Gretel like. There's stuff everywhere.

So I was like, "I need a pan that has little sides." So that's a sheet pan. And so I have become extremely committed to the sheet pan happy hour. And we do it two or three times a week. It's never fancy and there's always different people. And you can come and go and it totally counts as dinner, if you want it to.

Annie: Snacks supper, man, you cannot beat them.

Shauna: Absolutely.

Annie: Okay, when you're making a charcuterie board, what do yours have to have?

Shauna: I would like for there to be three cheeses. I would like for one to be soft and then up two hard cheeses. I would like prosciutto, other meats.

Annie: Oh, agreed. We've got a very prosciutto forward audience tonight. Yeah.

Shauna: And then I like for there to be one fruit, one vegetable, something pickled, something dried.

Annie: Hold on. One fruit, one vegetable, something pickled, something dry?

Shauna: Right.

Annie: Something gold, something new, something warm, something-

Shauna: Exactly.

Annie: I get it. Okay.

Shauna: It's a sliced apple, some olives, dates or raisins or apricots, and then sliced cucumbers or something. It's different every time. There's no formula to it. But on Christmas there was... It must have been Christmas 2020, we didn't get to go home to see our families, and my mom and my mother in law without talking to each other both sent me a huge box of all my favorite things which are like mustards, pickles, olives, vinegars, fancy jams. They would joke about it. We do these happy hours all the time. And they're like, "Do you own a weird jam shop in your apartment? When will you exhaust your store of various mustard?"

Annie: Right. Because you live in a small apartment in New York.

Shauna: It's mostly mustard.

Annie: It's all mustard.

Shauna: I just got these two amazing care packages. So I just kept putting out more like funny jams and mustards.

Annie: It feels like there was... correct me on the timeline of this. Maybe a decade ago, charcuterie boards... it was very "has to look like this." And the longer we've done it, the more people have been like, what do my people love? And what matters?

Shauna: You used to have to fold your salami into a river and now it's just like a salami pod.

Annie: It's stagnant now. No movement. No movement. And now that people have read it, the book's been out for a couple of weeks, now that people have read it, what is your vulnerability level feel connected to it? Does it feel like, now they know? Does it feel like I'm glad it's out? Where are you on that scale?

Shauna: One thing about me is I always experience success or opportunity as great pressure and immediate fear of failure.

Annie: Congratulations. Sounds great.

Shauna: I've chosen a great career for it.

Annie: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Shauna: So I was 100% ready for this. I told anyone who would listen, this is my worst book. It's done, which means it is a book, but of all the books, it's the worst one. But all I could do is finish it. That was my one job is just to finish. I couldn't make it the best one, I just had to finish it. And the response has been really different than that.

Annie: It is your best one.

Shauna: I think you were one of the first people that told me that. And I was like, "Oh." I was not emotionally prepared for that. And I think that's what's gonna happen right now. So I'm not saying it's even the best one. I'm saying people's response to it has been really different than I expected, and much more personal.

A lot of people are reaching out to me not to talk to me about my experience, but talk about their experience. And to me that feels like the goal, the jackpot. Like this makes you think about something in your life. This touches on something in your world. That feels tremendously meaningful to me.

Annie: That's a higher compliment.

Shauna: Oh, absolutely.

Annie: Don't talk to me about my writing. When you want to tell me about your life, that means you feel like we're on the same team, I'm on your team. What do you write next? Are you done? Are you taking a break? Did this stoke something in you that you want to keep going?

Shauna: Yes and no. And I'm definitely not allowed to make any big decisions right now.

Annie: Certainly. Yes. I understand that.

Shauna: Again, maybe this is another one... Like, if you have an amazing labor and delivery experience, you're like, "I can do this every year. Let's do it." Or if you didn't, you're like, "Let's close this forever." It's too soon to tell. But one thing we've talked about, I've definitely want to write fiction at some point. And I really want to do a cookbook. That just feels really fun.

Annie: I need you to do a cookbook.

Shauna: Thank you. I will do.

Annie: Do not put measurements.

Shauna: Don't worry.

Annie: We will figure it out.

Shauna: Thank you.

Annie: Will sort it out. This is a question I always asked on the show. Is there anything we didn't say about the book? Is there anything we didn't talk about that you want to make sure we cover?

Shauna: There is one thing.

Annie: Okay.

Shauna: I love the work that you do in the world and I love the voice that you are. Writing this book was really difficult for me, as you know. And so the idea of launching it felt very scary to me. My team knew that and they said, "We really, really, really want you to do one event at a time. We really want you to." And I was like, "I am scared. I don't want to." And they said, "What if you do it with Annie?" And I was like, "Oh, done, done. Absolutely done."

Annie: Thanks, Shauna.

Shauna: But this was a scary season for me. And one of the people that made me feel like I could get through it was you. And so being with you tonight is not just about tonight, it's about the way you have cared for me all the way through the season. You're someone I really trust and I really admire and I'm so grateful for.

Annie: Thank you. Thank you. I feel the same about you. Thank you. That's very kind.

My next question was gonna be for her to compliment me. That was not what I... She skipped the question, if you paid attention. Shauna, the last question we always ask. Thank you for saying that. Because the show is called That Sounds Fun, because tonight is the That Sounds Fun pop-up show, tell me what sounds fun to you?

Shauna: My son Mac, who you know... Some of you probably heard me mention this. So Annie has stayed in our apartment so she knows what I'm talking about. In my bedroom, I write at what is essentially my nightstand because it's so tiny. But we're on the third floor and we looked down on the courtyard on this beautiful green space. And that's where I spend all day long.

And my 10-year-old comes home from school and he comes around the chapel and he walks up to the tree and he waits for me to see him. So I'm looking down three stories. And when he sees that I see him, he starts to do this. And then I do whatever he does back to him.

Annie: Oh, yeah.

Shauna: And then he does one and then I do one and he's go-

Annie: And the whole time he's just walking toward the house.

Shauna: Yeah. And so until he gets to where I can't see him anymore, I dance him home. Probably he won't get to be like 18 years old and still want me to dance him home. But for every day right now, when I think about fun and delight and joy, I think about Mac and I in the courtyard.

Annie: Oh, I can picture. Out their bedroom window is like... y'all know this about me. It's like a cathedral out the window. I was like, "I live here now in your house.. I'm sorry to tell you."

[00:44:50] <music>

Outro: Oh, you guys, don't you love her? Oh, she is amazing. Her New York Times bestselling book, *I Guess I Haven't Learned That Yet* is amazing. So make sure you grab your copy. Follow Shauna on social media, tell her thank you so much for being on the show and tell her thanks for doing the live show with us in Franklin. It was so fun.

And after you've heard this conversation, just think about which one of your friends would love to hear this and share it with them. Just pass along a little fun today in text message or online. But there's one of your friends that needs to hear today's conversation. Go ahead and send this one to them.

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 is 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, we're gonna do some fittings for our K-Love outfit. You guys, it's coming this weekend. So I gotta get right in a jumpsuit. I'm really hoping for a jumpsuit but we will see before the K-Love Awards on Sunday.

TSF Tour LIVE: Shauna Niequist

That Sounds Fun Podcast with Annie F. Downs

Y'all have a great week. We will see you back here on Thursday with my friends from Passion Music. See y'all then.