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Annie: Hi friends! Welcome to another episode of That Sounds Fun. I'm your host Annie F. Downs. I'm so happy to be here with you today.

Before we dive into today's conversation, I want to tell you about one of our incredible partners, [BetterHelp](#). It is the perfect time for us to talk about therapy because today I'm talking with everybody's favorite therapist, Sissy Goff. And as we'll talk about today, sometimes parenting or leading a team or teaching a class starts with making sure you're doing it from a healthy place.

As Sissy reminds us, your worry can be contagious. So that's where therapy is such an important tool. If you've never given it a try, consider BetterHelp where your session can be done right from home. BetterHelp has the simplest way for you to get started. Just fill out a brief questionnaire, we love a quiz, and they match you with a licensed therapist.

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Visit betterhelp.com/thatsoundsfun today, get 10% off your first month. That's betterhelp.com/thatsoundsfun.

Intro: Oh, today on the show we get to talk with my friend and one of your favorites, Sissy Goff. If you don't know Sissy and her work with Daystar Counseling, Episodes 205 and 363 here on That Sounds Fun are a good place to start. Or she and David Thomas have their own podcast on the That Sound Fun Network called Raising Boys and Girls. You are going to love her.

Sissy is not only one of the most trusted voices when it comes to parenting and raising kids here in Nashville. But because of resources like the podcast and her new book that we're going to talk about today, she's become a trusted voice to parents around the country and world as well. Her brand new book, *The Worry-Free Parent: Living in Confidence So Your Kids Can Too*, comes out tomorrow. And y'all, it is incredibly helpful. She is just a gem and a gift to all of us.

So here is my conversation with the incomparable Sissy Goff.

[00:02:25] <Music>

Annie: Sissy Goff, welcome back to That Sounds Fun.

Sissy: Annie, it's so good to be with you every single time.

Annie: What a treat! I'm sorry we already cried.

Sissy: Got me teary. I know. And now my glasses are fogging up because I'm having a hot flash because I got emotional, all the things.

Annie: You've been home from camp for an hour or something. A crazy short amount of time.

Sissy: Yes.

Annie: Sissy, I mean, talk to me, just for a second, give us a bird's eye view of when tragedy happens in community, you're a first responder, and then you also have your clients you see and the book, and Raising Boys and Girls Podcast that is massive and the tour coming up and camp this summer. Like, what do you do? How have you done it?

Sissy: Well, can I just say before you say anything else that it's massive because we pitched our little bitty wagon to you.

Annie: Oh, I don't think so.

Sissy: It has been so amazing.

Annie: Oh, no, no. No, no, no.

Sissy: So grateful. How do I do it? It helps I'm an Enneagram one. So I think that I get a lot done in a day typically, and don't like to not get a lot done in a day. But I am currently tired. This summer has been a lot because of running this sweet little summer retreat program and trying to launch a book. I don't know.

Annie: Are you tired in your body? Are you tired...? I mean, the stories you've heard, especially from the Covenant families in the last six months are just devastating. They're devastating. I'm shocked, Sissy. You know this because you work with kids all the time. But it's like they're these little pieces of the story that have lodged in the kids' bodies and are just now coming out that are deeply traumatic. And things they saw we didn't know they saw, you know?

Sissy: Yeah.

Annie: So you've got all those stories in you too. So is your body tired? Is your brain tired? Both?

Sissy: You know, my body is tired but my brain is less tired than it was in May.

Annie: Oh, does Hopetown help with that for you?

Sissy: Hopetown helps with that. Because I'm sitting in Bible teaching every morning and night. We have worship every night. You know, it feels so much. And it's-

Annie: Shorts and a T-shirt.

Sissy: Yes. Pajamas. A lot of hours of the day. And kids are speaking truth into each other's lives. And getting to witness all those things feels so much like what we were made for. So I think that is replenishing in a different way. Even though I'm collapsing into bed, it's very sweet and life-giving. We had a little girl from Covenant, we had several Covenant kids which have just... even that I was so grateful to have them up there playing on boats and laughing and hearing good truth but-

Annie: Yes, of course.

Sissy: ...those things and this one girl talked about it being a place of hope and healing. I just clung to those two words of-

Annie: Hope and healing.

Sissy: Just what we all need, hope and healing.

Annie: That's right. I mean, before this tragedy in our community, you were already writing *The Worry-Free Parent*. Was probably done, right?

Sissy: It was done. Yes.

Annie: Yeah. I mean, how prophetic of you. I think the world is already full of worrying parents, but our community is now full of parents who worry more than they did March 26th.

- Sissy:** Yes. Well, and I don't have to think I have a thing in the world to do with it. I think God did something. Because you know, *Raising Worry-Free Girls* came out in August and the pandemic hit that February. When do we say it started?
- Annie:** That's right.
- Sissy:** March?
- Annie:** Yeah.
- Sissy:** So literally, it feels like... You know how He works. He just leads us step by step by step. And so yes, I feel grateful to get to put this book in the hands of parents that we both loved dearly.
- Annie:** I was home this weekend and I had it in my bag because I was reading it. And my sister who is a parent was like, "Are you going to leave that with me?" I was like, "You wish I would. I haven't even seen Sissy yet. I did not bring this to you."
- Sissy:** I need to send her one.
- Annie:** Okay, live shows. Are you excited?
- Sissy:** I'm over the moon.
- Annie:** I mean, you are selling so many tickets, Sissy.
- Sissy:** I know.
- Annie:** Everyone is blown. I mean, y'all have sold out... By the time people are hearing this, probably all the shows are sold out.
- Sissy:** Wow. I don't know. But I can't even imagine.
- Annie:** Is that so fun?
- Sissy:** It's so fun.
- Annie:** It's just the best.
- Sissy:** Yes.
- Annie:** I mean, you and I don't parent in a traditional way but we are absolutely mothering, and in some ways, fathering some people. You know, we are parenting. I am

curious, when you think about those rooms of people sitting out there that are probably 90% parents but 10% Annies, 10% aunts and uncles and teachers and who are not birthing children yet or will but are raising kids, how do you talk differently to those of us who don't have them in our house?

Sissy: I mean, I think our voices are profoundly important to parents. And you know it. You know it from all the families that you work closely with. But I think even with this book, the amount of parents that I sit with, who you know, when you sit with someone who's really anxious, it wharfs over. It gets palpable in the room.

Annie: Yeah, that's right.

Sissy: I sit with so many parents like that who try to be super gracious and say, "Tell me about your family history? Do you have any anxiety or depression or anything like that in your family?" They'll say no. And I think sometimes the only person that can speak truth to those parents is someone like you.

Annie: Oh, interesting.

Sissy: ...who walks closely, loves their kids, loves them, supports them, and cheers them on in a million ways and can sometimes say the harder things, like, "Hey, I don't think you're freed up right now to get to be the parent you want to be."

Annie: One of the things, I'm sure you're seeing this too, one of the things we're seeing in the community around us is marriages are just having... they're doing some extra work in their marriages because of the six months of trauma and the intense parenting. And who knows what else. But that's kind of the catalyst. But what I keep saying to people is I feel like one of my jobs is to lasso my friends in their marriage. And just like, I'm holding the rope. I'm just holding the rope. We're all staying together as best we can. I'm holding the ropes. And I'm gonna play with your kids, but we're gonna hold the rope. I mean, it feels like that's what we get to do.

Sissy: Yes, yeah.

Annie: Yes, that's right. And any parent listening would say, I mean, really, it is incalculable... Incalculable? I don't know what the word is, the change you're making in those parents' lives and the kids' lives.

Annie: I mean, it is interesting, when you put out the video, the day of the shooting that said, "Here's what to say and what not to say," I thought, "We all have to watch this." Because I could be walking down the street with one of my Covenant MiniBFFs and they could say something to me. And if I haven't trained or hadn't

any training, then that's on me. They're looking at me like a parent in that moment. So books like *Worry-Free Parent*, I'm like, "Yeah, I'm glad I read it." Because you're identifying and me that there are things in me that are spilling over into the kids in my life because of my worries.

Sissy: And that's the thing. I mean, one of the things I read in the research was anxiety is a result of cumulative stress over time.

Annie: Oh, I wrote it down. Page 46. Cumulative stress over time.

Sissy: I mean, we are all anxious. I mean, technically, it's one in three with women twice as likely. But we are all anxious.

Annie: Yes. It is unbelievable. I'll tell you, I was laughing so hard when you list the different types of parents. Oh, I want to find it. Helicopter. I was like yep, I do. That's why I do that to them. I am the parade parent is what it's called. Yes, I parade-parent all the children. And I'm like, If we were just having fun, you wouldn't feel ever sad.

Sissy: Right.

Annie: It's crazy. The cumulative stress over time, Sissy. Everyone listening is experiencing that.

Sissy: Yeah, whatever city they're at.

Annie: I had a pretty legitimate panic attack last summer, and I have never had one before, because of a shark. I mean, but this was not in an ocean. This was in my life.

Sissy: You have to tell me that story.

Annie: It was really dumb. I just froze up in the ocean because there was a shadow at the bottom and I thought for sure it was a shark. And you know, just stay out of the ocean, Annie. Yesterday at lunch, Craig here said the funniest thing where he said, "A shark out of water is just like a teething meatball. It can't do anything. I was like, "That's exactly right, if I stay out of their home." Anyway, I had to panic attack last summer and I remember thinking, "This feels like it's built up in me." And I didn't know that about anxiety. Is that true in kids and in grownups?

Sissy: Oh, absolutely, it's true in kids and grownups.

Annie: Really?

- Sissy:** Yes. Yeah, that cumulative stress. I think in some ways... No, that's a stretch. But I think kids are under more stress than they've ever been under. I was gonna say maybe they are under more stress than we are as adults. But we do have the coping strategies that a lot of them don't have.
- Annie:** They don't have. Right.
- Sissy:** Yes. The stories that kids tell me today just are staggering-
- Annie:** Of how stressful their lives are?
- Sissy:** Yes. Yes. It breaks my heart.
- Annie:** How come after writing books for kids you decide to write a book for parents that is about the parents' mental health? Because you've written books for parents, but this is about like the parent.
- Sissy:** Right. You know, I typically write as a response to what I'm hearing. And I have been so sad and grieved with parents in the last... Really since the pandemic started. But I think even in the last year, I've never sat with as many parents in tears, feeling as much like failures, experiencing really significant self-hatred, really angry, and losing it with their kids more than ever before. I've just never heard as many parents in those places. And I just felt like, I want to do something that can help these parents because I know the best thing parents can do for their kids is to deal with their own stuff.
- Annie:** Really? That's it.
- Sissy:** Hands down.
- Annie:** Wow.
- Sissy:** Yeah.
- Annie:** The very first line of the book is so smart. You say, "I need you to tell me two things: first, that what I'm feeling is normal, and second, that I'm doing a good job."
- Sissy:** My mom said that to me.
- Annie:** I mean, you kind of go back to that repeatedly in the book of like, this is what parents need to hear right now.
- Sissy:** Yeah.

- Annie:** Yeah. I mean, was that true 40 years ago? Were your parents and my parents needing to be told they were doing a good job?
- Sissy:** No, because I don't think they were worried. I mean, I think they were worried about it kind of. But you know, my mom... I don't know if you're familiar with the book, the parenting book by Dr. Spock. I don't even know what it was called. But I think it was the only parenting book-
- Annie:** Oh wow.
- Sissy:** ...back in the 70s. And the one takeaway my mom got from that book was smile at your kids a lot.
- Annie:** Oh wow.
- Sissy:** And you know from knowing me, I mean, if I get a compliment and if my sister gets a compliment, it's that we smile all the time.
- Annie:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.
- Sissy:** But you know, that's the parenting truth back in the 70s. And now I think that's part of the problem is I think parents are so inundated with information and all the things they're supposed to be doing right in the right stage. We talk about ages and stages, but there's... you know, every time I see one of those things on Instagram about you have, you know, 18 years, however many months, however many seconds with-
- Annie:** The marbles in the jar-
- Sissy:** Stop.
- Annie:** ...for every weekend you have left with your child in the home.
- Sissy:** It's too much for parents, just the pressure.
- Annie:** As I've been listening to my friends, non-Covenant friends and Covenant friends talking about parenting their children. There is so much "what if I screw them up"? There is so much "what if I do this wrong?"
- Sissy:** I'm gonna be the reason they're gonna be in counseling.

Annie: Yeah. And yes, you are. I mean, we're just humans raising humans. If someone is just sobbing in their car because they're going, "Yes, Sissy, I don't think I'm doing a good job," what is the top level, what's their first move to start identifying that anxiety in them?

Sissy: Well, I think if you have that self-critical voice, I would say it's anxiety related. If you're getting really angry with your kids, I believe a hundred percent of parents who are struggling with anger are anxious underneath.

Annie: Oh wow, it's just coming out.

Sissy: Because anger is a secondary emotion. Yes.

Annie: Wow.

Sissy: I mean, I think top level thing I would want those parents to hear me say is the reason that you're anxious, the reason that you're even sitting in your car crying is because you care more than our parents, my parents did. My parents cared again but it's different. You're trying so hard to get it right.

So I think when you can back up and see, the reason I'm so upset and I feel like I'm not doing it right is because it matters enough to me to do it right. That's why I'm upset in the first place, or that I'm screaming at them on the way out the door to school is because I don't want them to get Saturday school and I know they've already gotten three, you know, whatever they're... what's it called? What's the la...? Tardies. I couldn't get the word tardy. You know, all of those things are because parents are doing their very best and trying so hard. And I want you to know those things are because you love your kids deeply, which is already a win.

Annie: You say in the book, "In almost 30 years of counseling, I've never seen parents feel as much pressure and worry or feel like failures as much as they do today." So even in your own practice, not even your own home, in your own practice, parents feel more pressures and more worry right now than they ever have.

Sissy: Yes.

Annie: Since the pandemic, the massive uptick.

Sissy: Yes, since the pandemic.

Annie: Wow. How do you train your therapist to deal with that, when they went to school in 2017 or in 2004? How do you train therapists to do that?

Sissy: The truth of that... I think this could be a whole different conversation.

Annie: Ooh.

Sissy: But I think therapy has... I think we've landed in so many interventions. I think everything we're doing now is, here's what to do when this happens, and here's what to do when this happens, and here's the strategy. I hope the book is loaded with strategies. I think strategies are really important.

But in terms of training therapists, I would say you got all that in school, you got a lot of great tricks in your bag. What parents need is somebody who believes in them and will sit and listen and cheer them on. That's what I want every therapist who's listening to hear is that I believe parents are trying as hard as they possibly can and they need somebody who can say that and can sit with them.

Annie: How often are you sitting with parents versus kids? In my head, the parents are sitting in the waiting room and the kids are rotating in and out.

Sissy: A lot.

Annie: Really?

Sissy: I mean, our practice at Daystar is we meet with parents every third session.

Annie: Oh, okay.

Sissy: So we are tracking regularly so that we can help them have strategies to use with their kids. Because I mean, nothing any of us deal with as an isolated issue. You know, back to that family system series, it's like the wheels, the cogs that are all dependent on each other. So families are the same way. And so we can't isolate a child and only help them. We've gotta help the parents too and their kids.

So they haven't often created all of it on their own. So I want parents to trust me, to feel like I'm not just their kid's person, but I'm their person too. So I can sit and say, "Hey, I think you may be more anxious than you're aware of and I think it's spilling over onto them. So let's talk about some things we can do that would really help you. Because anxiety is the most prevalent disorder among kids and adults today. But it's also the most treatable. So there's great news of things we can do today that can be...

Annie: Oh, that's amazing. I didn't realize that. It's the most treatable.

Sissy: Yes.

Annie: Oh, that's awesome.

Annie: You do tell a lot of really good strategies in the book. Like the breathing. I mean, I was like, Oh yeah, this is what my counselor tells me to do. I think that would be so helpful if... I say to my counselor so often, I wish you could hear my sister tell this story. I wish you could hear the guy I'm dating tell the story. I wish you could hear my friends tell the story because you're only hearing my side. And I feel like I have pulled this cog out of the system and asked you to fix the cog but you don't actually know if the rest of the system would say the cog is the problem.

Sissy: Right. Right. Because it looks different. I mean, it is fascinating how many times I can sit with a parent and child and they will tell the same story and it is totally different from their perspective. So you're right. It's helpful to know.

Annie: So if we're seeing anxiety in the kids in our lives, what I'm taking after reading *The Worry-Free Parent* is that I need to say, What's in me that's spilling over? I think you say it's like seven times more likely.

Sissy: Seven times more likely from a statistical standpoint. But Annie, I would say anecdotally, every time I've sat with an anxious child.

Annie: Wow.

Sissy: Which is, you know, I don't know how many thousands at this point. Every time I've sat with an anxious child they have at least one anxious parent.

Annie: You want kids to hear that because I can think of things that I thought as a kid was my fault. And I would imagine so many kids feel tied up in anxiety and "I wish I wasn't worried. I wish I wasn't..." Not realizing that some of it's a waterfall. That they're just sitting under it because they live in the same house.

Sissy: Yes.

Annie: So even if your parents are married, and even if they have a healthy marriage, and even if y'all go to church on Sundays, that you know, it's not just the kids that you would assume they have a broken home, they have a broken life that are anxious.

Sissy: No.

Annie: It is-

Sissy: Oh.

Annie: There is no guaranteed or not guaranteed people group.

Sissy: No. I think in this day and time, every family has at least one anxious child. If your oldest is a girl, she's gonna be anxious. I mean, 90% of the time, if not more, she's gonna be anxious.

Annie: One of my favorite memes I saw this summer or in June before I was off was: Your oldest daughters are the strongest men I know. Doesn't that feel true though?

Sissy: That's so good.

Annie: That's it. Oldest daughters are the strongest men I know.

Sissy: Oh, that's so good.

Annie: So oldest daughters are gonna have more anxiety.

Sissy: And oldest boys too. I mean, I think just oldest.

Annie: What's going on with them? Why?

Sissy: You know, it's funny, we were talking before we started about my two nephews. And even with them this summer... I get to live with them all summer at camp. And thinking about Henry, I mean this is so simple. He's the oldest. The amount of emphasis we put on him taking his first steps, learning his first words. Witt is 16 months old, I think, and he just learned to walk and no one cared. And that's not even negative pressure. That's excitement of we want these really good things for you.

So I think there are a lot of things we could talk about that also happen with oldest. I think parents are harder often on the oldest child of their same gender. But even if we pull that out, our sinful selves and things that we do, just the good pressure is a lot for oldest kids.

Annie: When you think about worry-free parenting, it's so interesting because that's when you remember that everyone parenting was just a person. They're just like a person who was in college at one point and was an elementary kid at one point.

Sissy: Who was a seventh grader at one point.

Annie: Yeah. And now they're expected to raise other people and they're trying not to worry. But now their worry is making their kids worry, Sissy. I mean, are you ever

afraid? I'm afraid that they're gonna hear this and go, "Oh my gosh, what am I supposed to do? I don't mean to be." I just used to be a seventh grader.

Sissy: I know. I know. You know, you do such a beautiful job of really not only normalizing counseling but honoring counseling. It's a process. But I think we all need somebody we can talk to, that we can say, "Hey, am I maybe responding more than the situation warrants in these things?"

Annie: Yeah.

[00:21:22] <Music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation to share about one of our amazing partners, [Liquid I.V.](#). Okay, you know we don't play around with staying hydrated around here. And our favorite way to do that is Liquid I.V..

Liquid I.V. is the number one powdered hydration brand in America. It's now available in sugar-free. Y'all have you tried the sugar-free? The flavors, the white peach, the green grape, the lemon-lime, they are so good. The green grape, I mean, I kind of can't quit these three, you guys. I love them so much.

Years in the making, hydration multiplier sugar-free uses a proprietary zero sugar hydration solution with no artificial sweeteners. Liquid I.V. has three times the electrolytes of the leading sports drink, plus eight vitamins and nutrients for everyday wellness. And it hydrates two times faster than water alone.

Plus Liquid I.V. believes that equitable access to clean and abundant water is the foundation of a healthier world. Same. Same. So they partner with leading organizations for innovative solutions to help communities protect both their water and their futures. To date, Liquid I.V. has donated over 39 million servings in 50-plus countries around the world. How awesome is that? Real people, real good flavor, real hydration, and now sugar-free.

Grab your Liquid I.V. hydration multiplier, sugar-free in bulk nationwide at Costco or get 20% off when you go to [liquidiv.com](#) and use the code THATSOUNDSFUN at checkout. That's 20% off anything you order when you use the promo code THATSOUNDSFUN at liquid iv.com.

Sponsor: I gotta tell you about our other amazing partner today, [Kitsch](#). Okay, I know you guys love talking about some good hair products. There's one brand that has been taking it to the next level. Kitsch has created game-changing essentials that beauty enthusiasts swear by.

Started in 2010 by, get this, selling hair ties door to door, Kitsch literally started as a hustle in a dream. Kitsch is self-funded, female-founded, and now carried in over 20,000 retail locations. Maybe you've seen their satin pillowcases, their caps, or eye masks, which are all great for your hair and skin while you sleep. Or have you seen their heatless satin curling rollers? I love them.

But the latest Kitsch viral craze, rice water shampoo bars, you guys. They improve your overall hair growth and density. Reviewers say they'll never use bottle shampoo again and that their hair feels and looks a thousand percent better between washes. Plus right now, for a limited time, you can be a Barbie girl too with the Barbie by Kitsch collection featuring Kitsch's bestselling satin pillowcases in that iconic Barbie pink.

Right now Kitsch is offering my friends 30% off your entire order at mykitsch.com/thatsoundsfun. That's right, 30% off anything and everything at mykitsch.com/thatsoundsfun. One more time. It's mykitsch.com/thatsoundsfun for 30% off your order.

Now back to our conversation with Sissy.

[00:24:20] <Music>

- Annie:** So I want to think about, for a second, the parents who are like, Okay, I see anxiety in me, okay, I'll get the book. I'm gonna read it." Is the next stop a therapy session?
- Sissy:** Every one of the books I've written about anxiety, I've written with the hope that a parent could read them and not have to. I mean, obviously, I really believe in counseling, but it's the first three months of counseling-
- Annie:** This is the intervention.
- Sissy:** Yes, I would do with a parent. If you try these things and it's not working, then yes, I would say find a therapist that you trust.
- Annie:** Because sometimes I feel in me that if something happens, if I have a bump or a misstep in my emotional health or decision making, I've gotta see my counselor today. Versus like, actually you have tools. You can mess up and still have the tools. So you're saying that three months with *Worry-Free Parent* is a healthy amount of time to go, "Hey, use the tools you have, take a deep breath, and see what happens."
- Sissy:** Yes. And there's a workbook that goes with it that is literally the questions I would be asking in a lot of general prompts in my office.

Annie: Oh Great. Does it come out the same day?

Sissy: Yes.

Annie: That's tomorrow. Great. That's so helpful. "Okay, now help me, someone who says, my kid got detention for the first time, my kid came home panicked from school and won't go back. I need to see a counselor today." Do they need to see a counselor today? Does the kid need a counselor that day?

Annie: No. No.

Annie: Okay.

Sissy: I mean, that's what I want parents to know. I have a whole chapter where I talk about intuition. I wish-

Annie: Oh, I wrote it down. We're gonna talk about it.

Sissy: Good. I want parents to trust their intuition. And then, you know tools, you know things you can do with kids. And I think part of what's happening culturally is we are diagnosing normal everyday issues all the time. We have become a crisis-oriented society with kids and with parents. So I think kids need to know, of course, everyone feels nervous on the first day of school. Of course. You're fine.

I met with a girl this week who was going on... she is a high schooler and they have a camp for her high school and she's nervous about it. Of course, you feel that way. Friends, girls are mean and you're stuck with them for five days, and that's hard.

Annie: And they're all cheerleaders. That could be a scary and intimidating crowd.

Sissy: Yes. And you know tools. You got this. I feel like that's all I did in 50 minutes. You've got this. Remind me the tools you already know. You can do this.

Annie: Wow. I have to do that with me so much of... And also Sissy, tell me if this is normal. I don't know. Let's just have a counseling session.

Sissy: You're doing a great job and it's normal.

Annie: Tell me if this is normal. I have found that the longer I've been in therapy, the more I have learned to say to myself, "Hey, you actually know how to do this. You don't have to... Because you've gotten the help, you don't have to get the help." It's not that I can just handle my life by myself, it's that I've had years of tools. But there are parents who have a three-year-old and they don't have a lot of years. So help

them. Like they don't have a bunch of... but their kids freaking out. They don't know how to do this, Sissy. It's their first one.

Sissy: I mean, I think with those parents, I would say, I don't care how many years you've been doing it, I think God gives you intuition. That is a superpower for you as a parent. But when we are anxious and we're spinning out with them, we can't hear it.

Annie: Ah, right.

Sissy: You can't access that voice because all you're hearing are your own anxious thoughts.

Annie: Okay.

Sissy: I mean, one of my practical things I want every family to do is to have a code word that when anybody says it, you say it to each other spouse to spouse, you even tell your kids and they can say it to you, you can say it to them. In that moment, we're all gonna pause and we're gonna back up and we're gonna go deep.

Annie: Anybody can say the word at any moment.

Sissy: Yes.

Annie: Okay.

Sissy: And we're all gonna do breathing. We're gonna do some grounding exercises. We're gonna do the things that we know bring us back down out of our amygdala-driven reactivity in that moment.

Annie: Oh man, I love the science you put in the book.

Sissy: As a parent, when you take that minute to think about, who do I want to be in this moment? What do I want my kids to hear from me? And what do I know is really gonna help them. Because me reacting and saying, "Go to your room," that's not gonna help them in any way. So who do I want to be in this moment? And then I'm gonna re-engage when I'm back to that person.

Annie: I mean, that whole section where you talk about trusting your gut, I mean... But then you also tell the story about when Henry was gonna walk out in front of traffic and you grabbed him and then he told you to calm down. Right? So even when we trust our gut, we're gonna miss sometimes.

Sissy: Right. Right. We're gonna react.

Annie: So how do we teach ourselves to trust our guts in parenting, especially with kids of what's going on with them when we aren't gonna get it right every time?

Sissy: Well, I want you to pray like crazy all along the way. I want one of the prayers of every parent to be, God, speak to me. Give me discernment. Because I think the amount of parents that I have sat with who said, "Something felt off to me and I got up and I went to their room and they weren't there," you know, for the 16-year-old. Or whatever. I mean, something that day when they were at school, I knew something was wrong. And I picked them up and here's what happened. I want you to really pray that your gut's in line with the Holy Spirit. That's one of the things I pray the most as a counselor is that my gut would be in line with Holy Spirit and that I would hear his voice.

I think one of the times that we know that worry is taking over is when it starts to repeat itself and gets frantic.

Annie: Like, "Oh, something's wrong again today. I can tell something's wrong today at school. I need to go right now. I need to go right now."

Sissy: Yes, yes. There's urgency. That's a great word too. Any of those things.

Annie: All that is kind of the l... Got it. Got it.

Sissy: It's not His voice anymore.

Annie: Yes. Man, that is hard to know though, Sissy.

Sissy: It is hard to know. And I think intuition leads us to action, whereas worry stops us in our tracks.

Annie: Oh worry freezes us up.

Sissy: Yes.

Annie: I mean, but there's some Enneagram eight mamas out there that are like, Let me tell you what worry doesn't do. Worry gets me to the door of the school in four and a half minutes to make sure there's not something going on there that my gut tells me is going on today. And then suddenly she's driven to school three weeks in a row every day.

Sissy: Right.

Annie: So when it repeats is when you start to go, Okay, maybe this isn't the Holy Spirit.

Sissy: Yes. Absolutely. And part of what's so hard about that, and one of the things that's in the book is about how worry finds context. Worry's always searching for context. It's so much easier if we were talking about kids because we know a fifth grader who can't stop talking about throwing up. We know that's the worry monster. And then a high schooler who feels like they're gonna fail when they've put in a lot of work and they're doing fine in that class. We know that's worry.

But for a parent, you know, all of a sudden the context becomes kids. Because the context is whatever at any age matters the most to you. So when it's-

Annie: Gosh, that's true for us still.

Sissy: Yeah. Again, when you find yourself perseverating and going around and around and around about the same idea, I think that's when it's time to really pay attention and that's when it's time to have a person, an Annie in your life that you can say, "Okay, am I stuck? Help me know if this is bigger than it needs to be."

Annie: "I went up to school every day this week and nothing was wrong. Next week I'm going to text you before I go and you tell me if I should."

Sissy: Good. Yes, exactly.

Annie: That kind of thing?

Sissy: Yes.

Annie: I think, I'm not raising a child, I think it feels scarier than it's ever felt to trust your kid in the world. That's why I am a great helicopter parade parent. Because I'm like, You know I want to be right here and I want it to be so fun. But then what I am saying, even as an Annie that is not raising a kid, is if I'm there, they will be safe. And that isn't true either.

Sissy: Which is what they're hearing is, I'm not okay if Annie's not with me. I can't do it on my own. And that's where my real concern is.

Annie: I'm fine with them thinking that. No, I'm just kidding. They're right.

Sissy: Yes.

Annie: No, you're right. That's so concerning.

- Sissy:** But the amount of kids that I'm seeing today of all ages, even... you know, I'm just finishing a summer with college interns and we have amazing college interns. And I wish they knew sometimes how capable they are.
- Annie:** Wow.
- Sissy:** But I think we robbed them of that sometimes.
- Annie:** I know.
- Sissy:** And we're rescuing. It communicates "I need to be rescued".
- Annie:** It is just awful. I mean, there's this really cute picture of my little nephew, Sam, the Bible study my sister goes to, they did like a performance at the end of the school year and he is standing in the front and his face is like, "Get me out of here." He's not singing a word. He's so funny. You've seen videos. He's so funny. He's so lovely. And I was like, "Get him, Tatum. Why are you sending us a picture?" She was like, "No, this is good. He could sing."
- Sissy:** That's so good.
- Annie:** I was like, "No, he can't. Why are you mean?" I was like, "This is why God doesn't have me have children yet," because I would've pulled him off stage and taken him to ice cream immediately. But we have to let them, right?
- Sissy:** We have to let them.
- Annie:** And that's more about me than him. That's me being uncomfortable.
- Sissy:** Yes. And if we back up and reframe it from a cognitive behavioral therapy standpoint, it's because you love him so much and it's a beautiful thing about who you are. And that's what I want parents to remember. It's a beautiful thing about who you are that you want to step in and rescue, and it's crippling them.
- Annie:** I know.
- Sissy:** That's hard to say.
- Annie:** I work really hard at trusting my gut. I try. I try because I think the Holy Spirit is so reliable.
- Sissy:** Isn't that funny?

Annie: And so, therefore... And I watch my friends do it and see things that I don't see with their kids. And is it true in your experience with parents that the longer you trust your gut, the better you get at trusting your gut?

Sissy: Yes.

Annie: Okay.

Sissy: The more quickly, and I think readily we hear it, we recognize it better.

Annie: It's so scary. Is it possible to be a worry-free parent?

Sissy: I don't really think so. I think it's something we're moving towards. I don't think there's any practice makes perfect on that front at all. But I think we can be freed of it. I think we can be who we want to be with the kids we love and not be weighed down by it to the degree that we're not.

Annie: I mean, in the book you say... I'm just gonna read a paragraph to you of your own writing. "Because you fulfill..." This is you talking to parents. "Because you fulfill so many roles today in the life of your family, it's easy to get those roles mixed up with requirements again. Mostly what God does is love you. He rejoices over you with singing. He takes great delight in you, He quiets you not with His anger or even His wisdom," which that's important to say, "but with His love for you simply because of who you are. So much grace." And then you say, "I want to repeat that last phrase right here. "So much grace." I mean, that's it, right? Is we just need to be more grace-filled with ourselves first.

Sissy: Yes, with ourselves first. Because the way we talk to ourselves will inevitably become the way we talk to the kids we love.

Annie: Oh man. That's what you said. And you say the thing about warmth. Parental warmth.

Sissy: I hate to say it.

Annie: It's brutal.

Sissy: It's brutal.

Annie: But you have to say it.

Sissy: But it's true. And I can say not even as a parent, but as a coworker, as a friend, any of those things, it's true in my life that anxiety... Research says anxiety takes away our warmth. It's connected to a lack of parental warmth.

Annie: Anxiety is linked to a lack of parental warmth. Why? Why does anxiety take warmth from us?

Sissy: Because I think it pulls us out of the moment. We don't even know how to be engaged because anxiety resides in the past, in the future, not the present. And where it falls on me as an Enneagram one is if I worked with you more, I do work with you, but if I worked with you in a different capacity, you're at Daystar with me, there are times with people that I have to tell myself to pause and smile and listen to whatever it is they're saying because I'm so caught up in my own agenda in my head that I can't even engage with them in that moment. So I'm faking some warmth.

But I think for a lot of parents, they're so concerned about all the things their kids are missing, all the things that they want to happen for their kids that they're not even in the moment with them because they're so anxious.

Annie: Wow. It's really interesting. The Lord does this often. And because I get to read everyone's books, I have a front-row seat. But there seems to be themes that come in waves. And right now there is this perseverance, don't give up, you have what it takes, settle into today kind of thing. And you write about it. And a couple of the other books coming up, Bianca Olthoff, Hosanna Wong, they all say what happens in your body matters and how you treat your body is affecting your anxiety and your resilience in general.

You talk about body, mind, and heart. Will you talk a little bit about, to our parents that are listening, like what can we do for our bodies to lower anxiety? What can we do for our minds? What can we do for our hearts? Do we need to think about all three of those separate like that?

Sissy: Well, yes. I think we need to pay attention to all three of them and care for all three of them really. You know, the first thing that came to my mind when you said that about body, you know, one of the things that's best to ward off anxiety?

Annie: Dancing.

Sissy: Guacamole.

Annie: Guacamole.

Sissy: Isn't that crazy? It really changes the chemicals in your brain and helps with anxiety.

Annie: That feels so true for you. You and David and your tacos.

Sissy: I know. I love it.

Annie: That's so good. Everybody get your avocados.

Sissy: Guacamole.

Annie: We're gonna have a run on avocados.

Sissy: Yes.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Sissy: Yes. And it's smiling, which is funny when that helps with anxiety too. I'm thinking about lack of parental warmth. But yes. I mean really from a practical standpoint, you need to be moving every day. You need to be getting good rest. You need to be doing the things that are really hard when you're a parent. Eating right. And I think calming our bodies down regularly.

I have gotten to where in my counseling office, you know, I love that now there are Apple watches and different devices that can help us regulate our breathing and calm our bodies back down when they kick into the sympathetic nervous system. But I really want parents to be doing things daily to calm their bodies down where they're practicing.

Because what happens is when we get really anxious, the amygdala hijacks our brain. And the thing about the amygdala that's the fight or flight region of our brain sometimes freeze, like you and the shark, is the more often it's activated, it actually enlarges and develops. It becomes... They call it a hyperreactive amygdala. And it develops a hair-trigger response. So the more it responds, the more likely it is to respond. So we can retrain our brain, we can retrain our amygdala-

Annie: Yeah. You talk about that, the new pathways we can do.

Sissy: Yeah, Neuroplasticity.

Annie: Neuroplasticity. That's the word.

Sissy: So the more you can slow your body down regularly, and even I talk about breath prayers in there, I love breath prayers, things we're doing where we're also incorporating our faith that can calm us down and anchor us to truth. But we've gotta be calming our bodies down. Let's start there.

I think one of the hard things as a parent, as we're talking about context and anxious thoughts, the sooner we can stop an anxious thought, the better chance we have at fighting it. But again, if it's about throwing up, we can teach a child "That's the worry monster. I want you to stop and here are things you can do to get that thought out of your brain."

With parents, "I haven't heard from my child. I haven't heard from my teenager in 10 minutes. Now I haven't heard in 12 minutes. Oh, now they're in a car accident. Now they..." You know, we go down this road and we don't stop the anxious thoughts because we feel like they're not only legitimate, but they're good parenting.

Annie: And the crazy thing is I remember the first time I drove from my house to my friend Jennifer's house, and then I had to call my parents when I got there. And it was 15 minutes. I don't know if they were worried. They were probably worried to some degree, but also they did not know where I was until I called.

Sissy: Right.

Annie: Right now, I can tell you where my four best friends are because we all have our "find your friends" on and they have Life 360, all this stuff that you can literally see where they are, and yet the parental worry is higher.

Sissy: Right.

Annie: But You can see where they are.

Sissy: But that's part of the problem.

Annie: It's because the access is always. So there's no need to trust. And before our parents had to just trust.

Sissy: We're not learning to trust our kids, we're not learning to trust God in the midst of those things. I was at my sister's store a couple years ago and I run into-

Annie: Say the name of it.

Sissy: K. McCarthy. You're so sweet.

Annie: It's right here in Green Hills. So anytime y'all come to town, you got to go in there. It is so pretty.

Sissy: Thanks, Annie.

Annie: There's not a lot of parking because so many people like to shop there.

Sissy: Yes, you're right.

Annie: So if you find a spot, get in it because the Lord meant it for you.

Sissy: That's so true. So I ran into the head of a local private school and... I can't remember what... I think we were talking about anxious parents and she said... this was five years ago. And she said, "We have not done the online portal for school." She said, "I don't want to do it. It's not good for my parents. I don't want them to be able to check every single day." Because as we're talking about neuroplasticity in brains, the paths that we use more frequently get stronger. It's part of what happens with OCD.

If I am checking my locks every single night, that's becoming more and more entrenched in my brain circuitry. Whereas if I don't let myself... I used to really struggle with fear and anxiety and my mom did this for me when I was little. And then I did this until I think I was 40. Every night, I have a little OCD, and every night I would check under my beds and check in my closets every single night before I went to bed. And I have a friend who said, "Sissy, stop checking."

Annie: Wow.

Sissy: And I did. I moved into a new house. And so it was like a clean break.

Annie: Here we go.

Sissy: And I just stopped. I do not struggle at night with worrying and anxiety anymore.

Annie: Wow.

Sissy: Because I think it's like pruning of our brains. I mean, I cut off those dead branches and I was done and didn't go back. Now, that's not to say I don't worry about other things. But I think it is so important that we don't let ourselves go down those paths of thoughts.

Annie: You've learned that your brain can be retrained.

Sissy: Yes.

Annie: And once you see it one time... My brain has stopped craving things it used to crave. And then you go, "Oh look, everybody's right."

Sissy: We are fearfully and wonderfully made.

Annie: It can rework itself.

Sissy: Isn't that amazing?

Annie: Yeah. That is. Helping parents to think you can rewire your anxiety and that will help your child rewire their anxiety is just so beautiful.

[00:43:11] <Music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation one more time to share about another amazing partner, [FabFitFun](#). Okay, listen, I am a fan of the FabFitFun boxes. This is your free beauty and lifestyle hack for the day. FabFitFun is the best way to save money on beauty and lifestyle products from the brands that you love. And you can discover new brands you'll fall in love with all without overpaying.

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And just remember that link, pretty much every other link you could ever hope for, are in the show notes or we also send them in AFD Week in Review email every Friday. So be sure to check those out.

Sponsor: And one last amazing partner to tell you about, [Thrive Causemetics](https://www.thrivecausemetics.com). Okay, how did you first learn about Thrive Causemetics? Was it me? Was it a friend? Was it social media? It was definitely Instagram for me, but those ads were not wrong. Not only are their beauty products incredible, but they are certified a hundred percent vegan and cruelty-free made with clean skin-loving ingredients. Y'all, I'm such a fan.

I know you've heard me say it, but I can't help but talk about my favorite product, their Liquid Lash Extensions Mascara. Not only does it make my lashes look longer and fuller, but it lasts all day without smudging or flaking. Yes and amen. Considering it has, you know, 25,000 five-star reviews, I know I'm not the only one who loves it. Plus, when it's time to take your makeup off, y'all, it's bizarrely easy. It's so easy. The mascara slides right off with just warm water and a washcloth. No soap required or a flannel, as our UK friends call it.

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Now back to finish up our conversation with Sissy.

[00:46:47] <Music>

Annie: When I was reading the book, I stopped reading and had like a look out the window and think for a moment because I read the body chapter and I was like, got it. Great. Here's how we... the breathing in this... Peloton has stretches on it. So at night, my counselor said, "I need you to start doing stretches at night because

you've got to lower... Everything is living at a very high level and you've got to do the things to lower." Great. I know how to do it in my mind.

And when I got to the heart chapter, the internal dialogue before I even read anything was, you don't ever take care of your heart. Your heart is always forced to catch up with your mind and your body. So I don't honor my heart very well.

Sissy: That makes me so sad when you're doing... I don't know why it makes me want to cry because you made me cry at the beginning. But when you're doing so much for other people's hearts all over the world-

Annie: Oh, wow, thank you.

Sissy: The fact that you're not doing that.

Annie: It's not easy for a seven in general because we don't ever go to that. I jokingly say you have to pack luggage for seven to get anywhere close to feelings. But it also made me think, man, there are parents... there's a world where I end up raising... Someday I get married and have a kid and I end up raising a kid who's all the way in their feelings and my anxiety doesn't ever care for my heart and they're gonna want me to care for their heart.

So what do we do if it's not natural for us to care for our bodies, but we have a really athletic kid? And we could be getting anxiety out that way, but we aren't. How do we do that? How do we bring our full selves to kids who are different than us and help them?

Sissy: I think being a student of your kids is so important. I love that you're even talking about that. And that is where I love the Enneagram. Because I think when we can understand more what they need and be aware of our own... I mean for you to know that as a seven. You know, really interesting parent-child combination. And I probably, because I'm a one, I get this is a one four, a one parent who has a four kid. But I would think a seven parent who has a kid who's a four is gonna be tough.

Annie: Listen, if I don't want to date them, I don't want to raise them. So yes, you are right.

Sissy: Oh, yes. I had one mom who said, "I was trying to really gently talk about fours and say, I think this is probably where your daughter's leaning." And she was like, "Can you not get the four out of her." Which fours that are listening-

Annie: We love you.

Sissy: You are amazing.

Annie: The world would not exist.

Sissy: Oh my gosh, that you bring to the world. And any ones, any of us who are ones that struggle with fours, that's about us. It's not about them.

Annie: It's always about me.

Sissy: Yes, Absolutely.

Annie: That's exactly right. It's not about them.

Sissy: Like I said to one parent, I say... This is what I do in counseling sometimes with a four who wants to... I mean, I had a four who said to me, "I don't want to grow, I just want to be understood."

Annie: Wow.

Sissy: And as a therapist, that is hard for me because that's not what I bring to therapy. And I will literally make myself look at the clock and think, "Give them 10 more minutes just to swim around in those feelings because what you need is not what they need in this moment. So I think whatever that looks like for kids to think about this is who they are, how can I step into that with them?"

Because when we are students of our kids, when we love the things that they love, when we prioritize the things that matter, that's how we love them.

Annie: I think for Enneagram people or non-Enneagram people thinking body, mind, heart, you are not strong in all three. We just aren't. We are not strong in all three. And so if you can identify in you the ranking and then identifying your child their ranking, that seem... That's why I thought-

Sissy: I think that's good.

Annie: I think that would really help me.

Sissy: That's good.

Annie: If I end up with a heart-forward child or a heart-forward husband, then I have to go, Oh man. That is the one that is the hardest for me-

Sissy: Then you have to grow.

Annie: Yeah. So my anxiety about that could spill into someone who that is actually what brings them life and joy.

Sissy: Yes.

Annie: Right.

Sissy: That's a great statement.

Annie: Okay. Let me tell you the other thing that I... Well, I loved every page of the book. But let me tell you the other thing that I've really been thinking about. Let the bottom 20% go. Are we supposed to do that for ourselves and our kids?

Sissy: Ooh, I would love for us to do that for ourselves.

Annie: Will you explain letting the bottom 20% go?

Sissy: Well, it was as much conviction for me as anything. I had a person who worked for me a few years ago at Hopetown at our little summer retreat program that I think she really struggled with me and-

Annie: Oh, wow.

Sissy: Uh-huh.

Annie: If that seems impossible, that was her problem, not yours.

Sissy: No, I think it was my problem because what I learned is, well, two things. One is when I would walk outside in any given morning, I see what's wrong before I see what's right. So I don't see the 30 things everybody did where they were working really hard. I see the person that forgot to deflate the banana or pick up all the cups, of course. You know, such an Enneagram one thing. And I don't see detail.

So everything which I talk to a lot of parents who struggle in the same places, everything has the same importance. So I'm just as concerned about the thing that was left out again as I am someone's character.

Annie: Everything's a glass ball.

Sissy: A what?

Annie: A glass ball or a plastic ball.

Sissy: Ooh.

Annie: Oh, I think you'll like this. If you're juggling, not everything can be a glass ball. Some of the stuff has to be plastic that you can drop.

Sissy: Yes. Yes. And that is a trickle-down. I definitely live that way in my own life. I treat everything like a glass ball. There are no plastic balls. But it trickles over to the people that work for me, the people I'm in relationship with. And I hate it.

Annie: I know.

Sissy: So that was something I started thinking about with parents. You know, I'm really into short things that parents can anchor to. And letting the bottom 20% go. Like, let's prioritize and pick the top 10 things and I want you to let the bottom two go. And do not say a word about them.

Annie: Yeah, let it be. Give examples.

Sissy: Like your room. A kid's room.

Annie: I was gonna say my parents, at some point, they went, "You know what, that ain't worth my time. She's the one who has to sleep on the bed covered in books. That's her life." My whole left side of my bed was covered in books.

Sissy: And parents who are listening, I want you to think about Annie Downs and I want you to think about the fact that she was a little girl whose room was a mess and her bed was covered in books-

Annie: Covered in books.

Sissy: ...and who she is now. And how God is using her.

Annie: Aw, thanks.

Sissy: Because your kids, you know, they're inventing things all the time. So-

Annie: Making messes.

Sissy: ...you have 30 projects everywhere and they're making messes. God is going to use their inventor's heart in a way that He's used you.

Annie: How do you decide what the bottom 20% is?

Sissy: I literally would make a list.

Annie: Okay. "Here are the things that are making me nuts about my kid."

Sissy: There it is.

Annie: "And I'm gonna make a list of 10 things in the bottom two, I'm letting go."

Sissy: Yeah.

Sissy: Okay. I'm gonna stop talking about.

Annie: Oh wow. Okay. And that is just going to lower the anxiety.

Sissy: Yes. For them and for you.

Annie: Okay.

Sissy: Not at first. It's going to probably raise it for you at first but eventually. And it's gonna help you enjoy them.

Annie: Right. I made you start talking about the heart, my heart situation before you got to answer how to help people's hearts.

Sissy: Oh, well, I think a lot of it is what you were alluding to, I think for us to process our emotions. I feel like as a parent in this day and time between school and drop off and pick up and sports and helping them get their project ready for the... I mean, there's not a lot of time to do that. I mean, I have definitely seen in my office that every person who's anxious is really conscientious and they're trying hard and they care so much. It's these beautiful things about who you are. And I think especially for anyone who's like that, you don't often say, "I felt really disappointed" or "This made me really angry. So I think those things and morphing over into anxiety.

Annie: Wow.

Sissy: So when you're laying in bed with this sense of dread or anxiety or you're waking up that way, I really believe if you took it back over the last day, the last couple days, I think there's something that's probably made you sad or that you're struggling with. I'm more controlling when I'm sad than any other time or tired than any other time. So I think when we can go back to those things, it's gonna help our hearts and it's gonna help us value our hearts just like you were talking about.

Annie: I'm thinking about families whose budgets don't allow for counseling, who are like... I mean, we would love to eat healthier, we can't afford that right now. We would love to send our kids to a therapist that is not anywhere. I mean, maybe they see the counselor at school. But there are so many families who want to do more for their kids than they're financially able to do. Particularly with emotional health. They want to do more for themselves. I want to do more for myself than I'm financially able to do. I think everyone wants to do more for themselves to be as healthy as they can be than they can financially do. What do we do?

I'm even thinking about when I taught school and there were kids that I was like, What I would give if your parents had more resources to help themselves to help you. So what do we do for kids in homes that can't afford all the mental health, emotional health resources?

Sissy: Well, I'm gonna say, first, if you are having to choose between your kids and yourself, which I sit with parents all the time, who will say things like... When I say, Do you have anything [inaudible 00:56:04]? And they'll say, "Oh, I think maybe I have anxiety but I would rather spend the money helping my kids than helping myself." I would say, again, back to that idea, the best thing you can do for your kids is help yourself.

Annie: Wow.

Sissy: So if you're trying to decide about those funds, I want you to spend it on yourself first.

Annie: Really?

Sissy: Yes. Because I believe it will be that much of a game changer for your kids. And if the funds aren't there to do any of it, I mean, I would call a local church because they're definitely churches in our...

Annie: Even if you don't go to the church.

Sissy: Even if you don't go to the church. And see what they'll do if they'll offer something. And if that is not an option-

Annie: Even just meet with the kids' pastor.

Sissy: Yes.

Annie: Even if they'll say, can you just sit with my kid and just see, see if there's someone on staff.

- Sissy:** Yes, absolutely. If not that, then I want you to pick a few voices. I don't want you to pick 30. I think that again, creates that problem we were talking about earlier of too much pressure.
- Annie:** Yeah, right.
- Sissy:** But I want you to pick a few voices of folks that you trust emotionally, socially, and spiritually. And listen to those voices, because it-
- Annie:** You mean social media accounts, authors, podcasts?
- Sissy:** Yes. Podcasts. Annie F. Downs.
- Annie:** Well, I was gonna say, y'all are the most trusted source, so...
- Sissy:** Well, that's really kind. But have something like that, and your journal where you can just start to write, you can pray, you can talk. And we know obviously the Holy Spirit's a counselor, and so he's gonna prompt us too. Those are all free options.
- Annie:** Even if you weren't on our network. But you are because this is true. I mean, I have heard so many mom friends of mine say, "I feel like that was a counseling session listening to that in podcast episode." Because it feels like y'all are able to do conversations that lead to healing that people can just listen to for free on their phones.
- Sissy:** I hope so. I hope so.
- Annie:** I don't want mental health to be a thing that only rich people get access to. I don't know what to do about that.
- Sissy:** And there are a lot of counselors who do have a sliding scale. So ask. When you call some place, ask them. Because it may surprise you. I mean, I even remember when I was first going to counseling as an adult and on salary as a counselor, I didn't have enough money to pay for counseling. And I asked just a local counselor if she had a sliding scale and she did. And I don't think had ever advertised it, but it was something she did for people who asked.
- Annie:** That's great.
- Sissy:** So don't be afraid to ask. I mean, people who go into counseling want to help people. So it's not gonna upset them if you ask that. And they would love to if they can.

- Annie:** That's the pool of so much of this wrestle in my mind of like, I want spiritual health, physical health, emotional health, and mental health to all be very accessible. I want people to be as healthy as they can be. And that feels hard sometimes.
- Sissy:** It does.
- Annie:** I mean, y'all do the podcast. And this book. If five moms sat down together and read this book, it could change a school. I mean, if they just got together.
- Sissy:** That's true.
- Annie:** It's true. I can just imagine-
- Sissy:** I hope moms will get together and read it.
- Annie:** I know.
- Sissy:** I would love it if that happened.
- Annie:** Because then at least they tell each other the truth and they've spent \$15.
- Sissy:** And you need to know you're not alone and there are other people walking along the journey with you.
- Annie:** It may cost \$18. But I bet it's on sale on Amazon tomorrow.
- Sissy:** I bet it is too.
- Annie:** Okay. What did we not say about *Worry-Free Parent* that you want to make sure we say? I could ask you 1000 questions, but-
- Sissy:** I don't know. I hope anybody who's listening hear so much grace through this. And that it really is because you're a great parent. And I want-
- Annie:** It's because you want to be good. I don't know. Even when I taught public elementary school and we dealt with some really sad family situations, of my 300 kids, 500 kids that I taught in some form or fashion, I could tell you on one hand parents I thought didn't have their kids' best interest at heart.
- Sissy:** Exactly.

Annie: They just didn't know how to have the resources, either financially or emotionally in themselves to do it. So parents really want, and teachers, and nurses, and coaches. People aren't around kids because they don't want to be good to them most of the time, the vast majority of the time, right? We are so lucky to know kids.

Sissy: That's the truth.

Annie: I just think they are the most fascinating group of friends I have. I mean, I sat with a family that you know and that our listeners know, the Barnes, I sat with the kids yesterday, each of them just telling me something different about some random thing that's going on and looking through a book with one of them. I just thought, "Y'all are the most interesting people." They're just so interesting.

Sissy: They're so interesting.

Annie: I'm so thankful that we get to be on the planet with them. Let me tell you the thing I learned in this book that blew me absolutely away.

Sissy: Okay.

Annie: You sat under the teaching of Madeleine L'Engle?

Sissy: Can you believe that?

Annie: Do you know in 2018 I read every one of her books?

Sissy: Aw.

Annie: That's all I read that year was-

Sissy: I loved her.

Annie: I went through her entire library and it changed my life. She's unbelievable.

Sissy: I mean, in one week, Madeleine L'Engle, Luci Shaw, and Eugene Peterson.

Annie: Good. Great.

Sissy: Can you believe that?

Annie: He wrote a Bible. That's unreal.

Sissy: It was amazing.

Annie: What was she like in real life?

Sissy: Very self-effacing, hilarious.

Annie: She's very small, right?

Sissy: She's tall.

Annie: Oh, she's tall. She was tall. That's not what I pictured.

Sissy: Quirky as the day is long. I think probably was an Enneagram four or five day. See, there you go. You're bringing such beauty into the world.

Annie: The creativity.

Sissy: Oh, yes. I mean, every word out of her mouth was so rich and true. I need to find my notes from that time.

Annie: Oh. I don't know that there's a better writer I've ever read in mass like that. People love Wendell Berry. There's a lot of writers like that that people sit around and I would go. I would put Madeleine L'Engle up against any of them.

Sissy: Have you been to Laity Lodge?

Annie: No.

Sissy: Oh, Annie.

Annie: I know the name, but I don't know what it is.

Sissy: I need to connect you with this place.

Annie: Okay.

Sissy: It is in the hill country of Texas and it is a retreat center.

Annie: Oh, interesting.

Sissy: They had this group that met every year for I don't know how many years called The Chrysostom Society. And it was Madeleine L'Engle, Walt Wangerin Jr., Luci Shaw... I can't remember who else. I mean there were like 12 people that... David and I got to speak at Laity Lodge last spring and I just sat in the library, like, I just

want to soak up the vibes of all these authors. Because they would go and write and talk together.

Annie: That is unbelievable. They all just were friends. They're like the C. S. Lewis group of-

Sissy: Yes, exactly. The Inklings. Yes, yes, yes. Anyway, I love that you love her.

Annie: Oh, when you just casually say, "I sat under the teaching of Madeleine L'Engle and Luci Shaw," I was like, "In person?"

Sissy: I know. It was amazing.

Annie: Oh, it's just... yeah. One of her books that is on marriage I thought was so beautiful.

Sissy: *The Two-Part Invention* or something? Maybe.

Annie: Yes. And it's like a part of a set.

Sissy: Cross external set.

Annie: Yes, yes, Yes. Oh, I just love that.

Sissy: And *Walking on Water*.

Annie: Certainly. For anyone who wants to write anything, *Walking on Water* is-

Sissy: I just love creativity. Have you read her book with Luci Shaw friendship?

Annie: I've read everything. I don't know if I read any co-books, so I don't know that is-

Sissy: It's so sweet. I think it's called *Friends for the Journey*.

Annie: I'll look at that.

Sissy: I'm going to get you a copy.

Annie: Yeah. Okay. I'll read it.

Sissy: I'll get you a copy because you're my friend for the journey. I'm so grateful for you.

Annie: Oh, listen, that is true. I hope that's true.

Sissy: Me too.

Annie: I would like that to be true. You have made me such a better person.

Sissy: Oh, Annie, you have made me-

Annie: So I'm really grateful. I love my seat in kids' lives. And it's only been since I've been friends with you that I've realized that my health affects them. So thank you for making me better as a village parent for all these kids that you see at Sever Park on Tuesdays. So thank you. I'm really grateful.

Sissy: I'm really grateful for you. You make us all better.

[01:03:42] <Music>

Outro: Oh, you guys, isn't she just the best? She's just the best. Gosh, I could just sob. Every time I talk to her, I could just sob. I just love her. If you're a parent or an aunt, an uncle, a grandparent, or you're teaching in school or you're a babysitter or you know someone who could use this book, go grab a copy of *The Worry-Free Parent* for yourself and for them. Go follow Sissy on social media, thank her so much for being on the show.

If you need anything else from me, you know I'm embarrassingly easy to find. Annie F. Downs on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook. Twitter? Do we need to say X now? I don't know. All the places you may need me, that's how you can find me. And don't forget you can find That Sounds Fun Podcast on Instagram @thatsoundsfunpodcast.

I think that's it for me today, friends. Go out or stay home, do something that sounds fun to you. I'll do the same. And y'all have a great week. We'll see you back here Thursday with a crowd favorite for her fifth time. So she's joining the Hall of Fun. It's our girl Bianca Olthoff. Will see y'all on Thursday.