

[00:00:00] <music>

Annie: Friends, have you gotten your copies of *So Happy to Know You!*? It's the book I wanted to write for my MiniBFFs to remind them God made each of them on purpose. It's a kids' book-size reminder that we need them just as they are. Their voice, their heart, their talents, their unique selves that no one else has. Jennie Poh beautifully brought it to life with her illustrations, and *So Happy to Know You!* is just the encouragement your kids need today to live confidently, and honestly, probably a message we all need no matter our age.

And you know, when this book started rolling around in my brain? When I started telling you always Annie stories, things I would do that were a little and a lot. I realize the stories that make me me are your favorite ones and mine too. So this book hopefully helps your kiddos and you see yourself as perfectly unique. And we are so happy to know you. So get your copies of *So Happy To Know You!* wherever books are sold. Available right now.

[00:00:53] <Music>

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, all week, every day. Let's go.

Today is our last episode of the coaching week in our Build Your Board series. And gosh, this week has been so good. I have learned a ton. I hope you have too. If you have not gone back and listened, it starts with business coaching, then health coaching, financial coaching, life coaching, and today we're going in on relationship coaching.

I hope you have your guidebook and have been taking notes and feel like you're able to process it all and figure out the next right person you need for your personal board of directors. This weekend would be a great time to sit with these five coaching conversations and sit with your guidebook and really work through what I've heard so far this month in any of these episodes: which of these people is the next voice I need to build the life that I want?

So today on the show, we continue our Build Your Board series with my friends Janice and EJ Gaines. I know y'all remember Janice from the breakup episode of the Summer Lovin' Series. You guys loved all of the wisdom she had to share that day. And today she is back with her husband, EJ, to help us figure out if our relationships need a coach.

So whether you're married, dating, engaged, or single, a relationship coach might be the person you need to help you navigate the season you're in. And how do we know whether we need relationship coaching or counseling? Big conversation we had.

Janice and EJ are the hosts of their own podcast called Only Gaines, where they talk about everything from marriage and parenting to careers and dreams and everything in between. Janice and EJ share what it looks like to love God and each other in it all. You're going to love their wisdom and guidance today as we figure out what our relationships need.

So here's my Build Your Board conversation with Janice and EJ Gaines.

[00:02:53] <Music>

Annie: Okay, Janice, welcome back to That Sounds Fun.

Janice: Thank you. Glad to be back.

Annie: Could not resist you. Had to have you back. So thank you. Your help with breakups in the Summer Lovin' series has reverberated in people's lives.

Janice: Wow. Thank you for saying that.

Annie: Thank you.

Janice: It's awesome to be back. I love you. I love the podcast. I'm just honored.

Annie: I know. This time we got in EJ.

Janice: Oh, yeah.

Annie: Come on.

EJ: I got jealous. I got jealous and I was like, "Whoa, lemme in. Do something."

Annie: "Wait a minute."

EJ: "Hey, what's going on? "

Janice: "Wait a minute. Wait a minute."

- Annie:** We had to have you.
- EJ:** Yeah, no, major FOMO in that.
- Annie:** Speaking of FOMO, I missed a party and I saw pictures and y'all were at it, and I was like, "Well, that's on me."
- EJ:** Yeah, that was a good one. That was a good one. "Well, that's on me."
- Annie:** Uh-huh.
- EJ:** Yeah.
- Janice:** Oh, that was a fun party.
- Annie:** I know. I know. It was in my spirit. It didn't quite do it.
- Janice:** It ended with great dancing. And I mean like-
- Annie:** Oh, no
- EJ:** Janice was on fire. It was a vibe.
- Annie:** I need to just put a text out to you, Are y'all going?
- EJ:** Y'all right, right. In the Black community, we say, "Who all gonna be there?"
- Janice:** Exactly.
- EJ:** That's how we know like, am I gonna miss this or am I good?
- Annie:** That's right. Had I known, I'd rally, I'd rally so hard. I just didn't have it.
- Janice:** That's right. Who all gonna be there?
- Annie:** That's right. Okay, so we are in our last day of our coaching week.
- Janice:** Okay.
- Annie:** Everybody is trying to sort out who do I need to add to my board. So, Janice, I wanted you to come back in partway because your conversations on relationships are so helpful.

Janice: Thank you.

Annie: And what y'all do on Only Gaines, your podcast... I mean, I can get going on some clips where I go, "Oh, that's it, everybody. Did you hear that?" I can get going. So will y'all talk a little bit about how you have found health in your relationship with each other, but also outside of each other? How do you personally pursue health in relationships?

Janice: I think historically we have... first of all, we've been friends since we were 15. And the interesting thing about that is when we got married, it was 12 years later and we thought we knew each other so very well.

EJ: I mean, what a mind-blowing experience. Like that first week, it just like, "Wait-

Annie: The first Week? I'm terrified.

EJ: Oh, yeah. Well, because there's things like, you know-

Janice: Well, the first week after the honeymoon, I would say.

EJ: Yeah, right. It's like, "Wait, why do you empty the dishwasher like that?"

Annie: Wow.

EJ: I mean, just little things. And they're not big things. But once you are single and you've established your life, you do it the way you do it. And all of a sudden, because you're already dealing with the fears of losing your individuality, losing a sense of yourself, it's little things like, you turn the mugs upside down like that. Oh, okay.

Janice: Yeah. I got my way in that. That's why he always brings that one up because it's still-

EJ: I'm so bitter about it. You're still working through it. We need a coach to help us through the mug placement.

Annie: We misunderstood. You aren't coming here for coaching.

EJ: Oh, right. No, no.

Annie: You were coming here-

EJ: I thought this was help. Sorry.

Janice: You so silly. But I think, you know, after realizing you learn someone in a marriage relationship or especially when you're just living together, period, you learn someone else differently than how you learn them when you're just friends.

So I think historically for us, we have gone to counseling and come to appreciate what it is to look back on our own, the old... as my godfather would say, the tapes that are already playing in your head, look back at those and figure out why they're playing and then come to relationship and figure out how you want to move forward. But yeah, we've gone to counseling. And we have friends who are married who know our business.

Annie: Yes, that's important.

EJ: And friends who are willing to be vulnerable with you because there are seasons where you need someone to just listen and kind of give advice. But then there are also friends and seasons where you need someone to say, "Hey, I've been there." And they'll tell you their horror stories or the stories of their biggest blowups and arguments. And you realize, "Oh, so we're not unfit for one another. That's just common," you know?

Annie: Right.

EJ: And I think once our friends started to say, "Oh, there was a one time, I mean, I stormed out of the house," and it's like, "You did? I'm good."

Annie: "I wanted to yesterday, but I didn't. I thought that was illegal."

EJ: "I thought it was a sign that this wasn't gonna work, that I wanted to peel off at 90 miles per hour. But like all of my male friends were peeling off at 90 miles per hour." So, you know, I think once you start to normalize-

Annie: Look at that. Mind blown. I told you it'll happen, EJ. I told you it'll happen.

EJ: But it's like once you begin to normalize the tension and the struggle of two becoming one, then it doesn't have the hold of over you that it did before. You really do think for a minute, oh man, this is... we made a mistake.

Janice: We're not good Christians.

EJ: We're not good Christians.

Janice: Because what I just said to him, I would not say in the presence of The Lord.

Annie: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

EJ: I forgave you for that. You were pregnant at the time. You didn't know.

Annie: Man, there must be a thing. So good. So everybody gets one pass to say the thing you wouldn't say in the presence of the Lord.

EJ: Yeah. You know, a couple passes. There's grace, new mercies every day.

Annie: That's right. I'm interested in this. I'm laughing with you because I was with a friend last night and we were putting our dishes in his dishwasher and we did it differently. I mean, I'm not marrying him, but we did it differently. And I was like, "Huh, this is two plates and two forks and we're already not doing the same thing." Two humans trying to live one life is not easy.

EJ: That's right.

Janice: I would say, how did we decide how to load the dishwasher? Did you set the precedent or did I?

EJ: I set the precedent on the loading. You set the precedent on the unloading of the placement of the mugs and glasses and how that was gonna go.

Janice: That's right. Because I was like, "I don't remember deciding that. I think I gave you that one."

EJ: But I'm the guy, you know, when we're packing, you know, the car for a road trip, I see it as like Tetris.

Janice: That's right.

EJ: So when it comes to dishwasher, there's a way to do it. If you want to get everything in, let's not be ridiculous. This is not a dumping ground. There's methodology.

Annie: They put the racks in there for a reason.

EJ: They put the racks in there for a reason. Like, don't ignore the racks. If you're a rack ignorer, marry somebody who respects and reveres the rack.

Annie: Yeah, that's right.

Janice: And then go ahead and submit. You'll enjoy life better that way.

Annie: Yeah, that's right. This is not one you gotta win.

Janice: No.

EJ: No.

Annie: Let this one go.

EJ: Because you won't.

Annie: That's it. That's it. So how do you know? I mean, as the not married yet person at the table, how do you know when it's time to get counseling or coaching for your marriage versus for yourself?

Janice: Ooh, you know what, sometimes... and I would say having been on staff at Porter's Call, a lot of times personally and as I've watched other people, you realize that you start in relationship because that's where you feel the tension.

Annie: Oh, interesting.

Janice: That's where you feel the conflict. And you say, we have to go fix this. But it's okay to go in as a couple. And a good counselor will say, "Hey, we need to work on some things individually too, because there is some of your history that is affecting how you are reacting in relationships."

So you don't have to figure that out beforehand. If you feel like I need to go personally, go ahead and go personally. But even then, if you go to your counselor and all you do is talk about your marriage, they're gonna say, "We're gonna want to get your spouse in here."

Annie: Your spouse.

EJ: Right. And I think it's important to de-stigmatize the whole thought of even going to a counselor. You know, like, when is the right time? Always. I mean, it's like a car. You know, you're going in for tune-up, routine maintenance, you know, you

hear a click-clack and you're trying to just make sure everything is good or winter is coming so you know it's time to winterize your vehicle.

It's the same thing with marriage. I mean, you go through seasons. Loved ones become ill or may pass away, or you have a baby or a change of job or you move homes. All of those things are triggers that are not gonna necessarily be sad moments, but they just shift the dynamic of your relationship. And it's good to decide as a couple, Hey, whenever something happens, let's just get in and go in for tune-up.

Annie: Wow.

EJ: Let's just check out the interior, check out the exterior, make sure everything is properly gauged and aligned, and then we're out. You know, you're not signing up for a six-month sentence. Sometimes you're just going in to check in and have someone objectively say, anything y'all want to talk about? And that's important.

Annie: And how do we decipher like we need coaching? So we need to find a coach, like a life coach or a relationships coach as we're talking about today, that'll help us sort out where we want to go and when we need to go, this is a counseling situation.

Janice: I would always say start with what makes you comfortable. If you're just comfortable with a coach because counseling feels, you know, kind of huge and emotional, then start with coaching and let the coach say to you, "Hey, there's some ways that I see you reacting that I think have to do with your history. It might be helpful for you to get counseling." But I would say just start.

And if you already know about yourself, that you're responding because, you know, when I was a kid, you know, I got blamed for everything, so I don't want to be blamed for everything, it's like, Okay, go ahead. Start with counseling. You already know you're-

I think the difference between coaching and counseling is a starting point. Coaching is more about we're starting here and we're thinking about what we want for the future. And counseling kind of zooms out from there and says, we're gonna look all the way back to the past and we're gonna consider the past, and then we're gonna consider goals going through the future. But we have to get you healed of some things first. I think whichever makes you comfortable.

Everybody kind of knows where they stand. But even if you know where you stand and you're not comfortable looking back, I would say start with coaching and build

a rapport with someone and trust. Because trust is usually the thing that people struggle with.

EJ: And I think a good counselor or coach is not gonna try to help you where they're not equipped. You're gonna interview these people, you're gonna talk to them. You don't have to sign up just for, you know, extensive number of sessions just because you met with them once. And if you start to talk about the things that are troubling you or the things that you want out of life, and they're saying, "This is not my thing, that's not my area," they'll generally refer you to somebody.

Janice: That's right.

EJ: I mean, you're not locked in. This is not like, you know, I know beauty salons. It's like, you know, to step outside of the bounds of that. Right?

Annie: You can quit a lot of things easier than you can quit your hairstylist. That is for sure.

Janice: That's right.

Annie: There are less painful breakups. Oh, hair stylists.

Janice: Hair stylists breakups are the worst.

Annie: EJ, I'm thinking about this. So I'd love your male perspective on this. This is not me soft launching anything to the internet, so they don't need to go stalk my Instagram. In a world, I am not, in a world where I'm three months into a dating relationship or six months in, and I start realizing, Man, I don't want this to end but it's got some bumps," is it weird to ask a dating partner to get in therapy, to get in coaching? Is that weird to ask a dating partner to do that?

EJ: I think it depends on the partner. I really do. And I hate to say it because I'm not trying to like [skirt?] that.

Annie: No, no.

EJ: But I think it depends on where that person is in their health journey. You know? I mean, I think if someone has done the work and they say, Hey, you know what, I'm all about it. You know, I go as a regular matter of life, then I don't think that he would see that as weird.

I think if it's someone who's kind of got some stuff and they've not yet worked it out and it's kind of your way of saying, "Mm, you got issues buddy but you're really cute, so just come to counseling with me," that might backfire, you know?

So I think you kind of have to assess, you know, from a fundamental and value standpoint, do we both align in the space of respecting this mental health journey and this wellness journey? And if we do, then throw it out there. But the other piece is, you know, counseling and coaching, that is a lot of hard work to do if you don't see yourself in it with the person.

So if you don't see this as going a long-term thing, you might not want to do it with him. You might not want to subject yourself or open yourself up in front of somebody. Because it's a very soul-bearing experience in front of others.

I mean, there are times, even knowing Janice, as long as I have, we'll be in counseling and she'll say something, I'm like, "Don't talk about it." And the whole point is to talk about it, but I'm like, "Not here. Don't."

Janice: Oh, yes.

EJ: Text me.

Janice: Oh yeah, that used to be a thing. He'd be like, "Please don't say something for the first time in counseling."

EJ: In counseling.

Janice: And I be like, "I'll do my best, but I also want to be honest in the process, but I won't save things for counseling."

Annie: Wow. That's really Interesting.

Janice: It makes you have courage to have the conversation at home. And if you feel like then you start that conversation and we're going nowhere, then we can pause and hold it for counseling. You used to say that like, "Please, please just don't save all the firsts for counseling."

Annie: I don't want to learn everything.

Janice: Yes.

EJ: I want to sit there like everything's never better. And then she's like, "Actually..." It's like, "You couldn't have talked about this in the car?"

Annie: You could've started the sentence when we were-

EJ: Yeah, when we were at a red light for like two minutes. You could've told me before we walked in.

Annie: Yeah. Because I know it's really normal and actually gives you a cut on your cost if you do premarital counseling.

EJ: Yeah. Ish. It can. It can. But I mean, it's funny. Premarital counseling, we did it, you know. Every good Christian, you know, is told they ought to and we went and did it. The things that we talked about in premarital counseling, those are-

Janice: Never came up again.

EJ: They never came up.

Annie: Really?

Janice: No way.

EJ: Because you couldn't possibly know.

Annie: They're like, "Let's talk about sex." You're like, "I mean, we can."

EJ: No, right.

Annie: But-

EJ: And I remember our premarital counselor he did a great job, I think-

Janice: He did.

EJ: ...with what it was supposed to be. He said, "How do you y'all think you'll handle conflict?" And we said so ignorantly and naively, "Oh, well, you know, there'll be hard times, but you know, with the lords in the center of the relationship..." That first hard time, out the window.

A lot of premarital counseling I think sometimes the couples are so in bliss that they have this filtered view of the hardship. So even when you talk about hardship or handling hardship, you can't really fathom it until you're in it.

So while I can respect premarital counseling, I don't want people to walk away thinking, well, check we did that and so we're fortified. Probably that's not gonna be the fortification.

Janice: I will say the benefit is someone else being a witness to you understanding what marriage is even if you don't fully understand that.

Annie: You nailed it. Someone else witnessing that you are willing to try.

Janice: That's Right.

EJ: That's right.

Annie: That's beautiful.

Janice: And then you get in practice with coming to a third party and trusting them to speak into it.

Annie: Oh, sure.

EJ: Good word.

Janice: So even if we don't talk about... I think they were like, "Well, Janice, I know you're an introvert and EJ is an extrovert, so you're gonna have to go to parties with him." It's like, "Totally." But at that point, I was a seventh-grade math teacher in the Bronx, and you were an attorney and our lives looked completely different.

So then I became a recording artist and he a music executive and it's like, well, I have to go to parties for me. So we're not necessarily doubling back on the content, but we were comfortable speaking to a third party and letting them have a word into our marriage.

EJ: That's right.

Annie: Wow. I mean, because that makes me think of the whole series we've done, having a mentor, discipling someone. Anytime that you are... the thing that is being caught but not being taught is you can trust someone else.

Janice: That's right.

EJ: That's right.

Annie: ...to speak into this. So if you'll do that with a partner. But I do think there's such wisdom, EJ because I mean, be thoughtful of when you start, you and that partner start. Because I can't imagine a breakup that would be worse than a breakup after y'all have been in counseling together.

Janice: Thanks.

Annie: That would feel very-

EJ: Well, because you've bared so much of your soul and trusted the other person to hear those fears, hear the insecurities, hear you be challenged, you know, talk about childhood traumas and all these other things that go into that very intimate conversation. And then, you know, it's not possibly as close or the same as a soul tie that might attach or develop from physical intimacy. But there's an emotional intimacy connected to that and that person to walk away and just be like-

Janice: With all your business.

Annie: With all your business.

EJ: With all your business. It's like, Hey, do me a favor and sign this NDA. I know we're broken up, but let's not tell each other-

Annie: Like a prenup, an emotional prenup before you go into counseling. I'm not interested.

Janice: Seriously.

Annie: Whatever you learn about it, I get to take back. You don't need to keep that.

EJ: That's exactly right.

Annie: That's right.

[00:18:33] <Music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation to share about one of our amazing partners, [KiwiCo](#). KiwiCo is like unwrapping a box of fun with their super creative

science, technology, and art projects for kids. With nine different subscription options for different ages and subjects, there's something for every one of my MiniBFFs.

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And now back to finish up our conversation with Janice and EJ.

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Annie: Is coaching, particularly Janice, is coaching preventative or reactive when it comes to relationships?

Janice: I think coaching can be both. When I think of coaching, I know that there are people who are professional marriage coaches. But I often think of the people who have coached us just because they were a part of our community. So I see it more casually.

Annie: Interesting. Yeah.

Janice: And it can be, you know, very formal, but I see it more casually. And in that regard, the people who have coached us over the years, they have prevented many things.

EJ: Yes.

Janice: But also it's been pretty healing and reactive, you know? Honestly, I'll call Adie Camp and be like, "I'm feeling froggy today," and she's like, "Don't jump."

Annie: "I'm feeling froggy."

EJ: And I have the same with Jeremy. And it's that. But also to your point of it being preventative, it's like you get with those types of friends and you get home and there's this exhale. That's in relationships, you know, when you double date or whatever, but also in singlehood. I think you get home and you say, That was good for my soul.

And you may not be able to list all the things that it prevented for you but you know that it was healing and it was helpful and it put you in a better mind space and a better heart and soul space. So you attack the next day differently than you would have if you were running on [E?].

Janice: I remember the instance you referred to in the beginning of the podcast when I was pregnant and I said things that I wouldn't say in the presence of the Lord. It was Adie who told me because I was like-

Annie: I just met her, by the way. I loved her.

EJ: She's incredible.

Janice: She's wonderful.

Annie: She's the best. I really like them.

Janice: And I remember calling her and saying, "My hormones are crazy and I don't feel like myself. And I just popped off at EJ and said some things I didn't even mean, but I couldn't stop it." And her response with a smile was, "Yeah, I know. We're still responsible to walk by the spirit and not the flesh even when we're pregnant."

Annie: Wow.

Janice: And I was like-

EJ: Get her.

Janice: Doggone-

Annie: "You're not helpful."

Janice: But it has stuck with me through a second pregnancy, through life. I think to myself, we are still responsible no matter what's happening hormonally to live by the spirit and not by the flesh.

Annie: Wow. So it has been preventative even though it was reactive in the moment.

EJ: That's right.

Annie: That's amazing. When you're saying that about Adie and Jeremy, I'm thinking, Is it appropriate... So again, not soft launching, if I'm engaged and we decide, what if we call EJ and Janice and ask them to coach us through our first year? Is that an appropriate kind of thing to do versus like, let's go on the internet and find a marriage coach to call and go, Hey, will y'all just coach us through our first year and help us?

EJ: Totally.

Janice: Yeah.

EJ: We do that now with a-

Janice: A couple of people.

EJ: Yeah. There's a couple in mind that I'm smiling about because I love them so much and they will... at any point I'll see a text or a call and it's like, "Hey." And it's like, "Uhoh." And then you just know like, "Okay, they're in a moment, they need a voice. They need some insight." So you call them and within seconds you're on the topic and you're realizing what it is. And they'll come over for dinner and we'll send the kids away and we'll just talk. It's not a deep dive into anything. We don't get notepads out. We just listen and we respond with our stories.

Janice: And we encourage them in that setting to deal with the past things with the counselor.

EJ: That's right.

Annie: Oh wow.

Janice: Because that way we can... I guess our practice is that way we can deal with you two and not have to deal with you individually because what we're coaching is the union.

EJ: That's Right.

Annie: Yeah. We can't deal with age 1 to 27, but we can sit with 28-

EJ: Your siblings and your family.

Annie: That's Right.

Janice: That's right.

EJ: There's too much to unpack and we don't want to be that for them. We really want to be the friends at the end of the day. When all that deep conversation is done at the dinner table, we want to be able to get up and laugh and hug and-

Janice: We're just a couple of steps ahead.

Annie: So I'm thinking about our friends who are listening who are maybe 10 to 12 years into their marriage, they've got kids, you know, they aren't roommates, but they're knocking on the door of roommates because there's just so much. I mean, he's gone and she's gone and they're taking care of the kids. How do they find time for anybody to invest? They aren't even investing in each other because there just isn't time. It's not a lack of desire, it's a lack of time. What do you do? How do you find somebody to help you in that moment?

Janice: Oh man, we have had to make time. I mean, our podcast honestly was a gift to us because it was time. And it was like, we would take a day and tape the podcast and it's like a date day. And it was probably harder for me than him. But it was deciding to not do something for my kids that they don't actually need, but that they're accustomed to or would love, or it satisfies their emotions in the moment to not do something for them, so I can make him a priority.

And that was what it was for us. It's like, wait a minute, some of these kid tasks that would threaten to make us roommates are actually unnecessary. So identifying what actually can I... if we don't have time, what can I take time from and reprioritize you again? Because-

Annie: Man, that feels like you call Janice or and EJ and go, can you come over for 30 minutes tonight and look through our calendar because we aren't seeing each other and we cannot sort out what to cut out?

Janice: That's Right. And sometimes it's like, I'm not gonna spend a whole bunch of time making you a fancy dinner. I'm gonna put some frozen chicken nuggets on this cookie tray and you're gonna be great. You're gonna love it with the ketchup.

Annie: Yeah, that's right.

EJ: I mean, I think at the end of the day, sometimes we think so highly of our tasks and our responsibility-

Janice: Especially with children.

EJ: Especially with children. And with work. And I think with a lot of men for work, because we've been socialized to really find identity in work and our value and our self-worth in our roles as husbands and providers. So we do all these things and we make things non-negotiables that are actually very, very negotiable.

Annie: Wow.

EJ: And then the things that are non-negotiable, my wife and my two boys, they get the leftovers because I know they'll understand or I know they'll be there tomorrow. So what does it look like? There was a time a couple of... I don't even know because time is an issue, I dunno, months, weeks ago, whenever, Janice was just having a moment of like, Man, I have so much coming at me. I gotta get through this day. And I thought-

Annie: "Annie emailed me again? That girl won't stay off."

EJ: And all I could think to do was go home.

Janice: No. This man... I'm gonna tell you, Annie. No, hit the button. Bam. Bam, bam. Because I was like, "I'm overwhelmed and I'm starting to feel anxious because I needed to clean the house. But part of my history and part of my wounds have to do with a space that's not clean. And once that piles up for me, then it paralyzes me as opposed to pushing me forward. So he came home and he cleaned the entire house.

Annie: Wow. EJ!

Janice: You know what I'm saying? And he did his calls with sponge in hand and AirPods in ear.

EJ: And this is everyone's household. So whether you have a spouse and children or it's you by yourself, your household has to be a place of safety and peace. And if it's not that for her while I'm at the office, then what am I coming home to? I'm coming home to a wife who doesn't feel peaceful, who doesn't feel rested.

And that's going to... she sets the tone. You know what I mean? For the kids, for the house, the food. I mean, she comes up with what it's gonna be and she'll make multiple meals because of different tastes and preferences and allergies. So it's like,

"I'm gonna go home and clean. So she feels good. And so she has the mental cloudiness dissipate."

Janice: But counseling is what helped us to identify the places of each other's wounds. So he knows that, Ooh, if she feels like she's heading towards squalor, which she's nowhere near, but her body and her mind are like, "Is squalor around the corner? Is squalor around the corner?" then she's not gonna do well. So I'm gonna help meet her in that place." And counseling has helped us with that.

EJ: I think also, you know, and we talk about this on our podcast quite a bit, and Janice has been very vocal about her journey through postpartum with our first son in particular, and I know what the cloud can look like and I know how hard it can be to swat it away.

Janice: That's right.

EJ: So now preventatively, we as a household do things to make sure that our respective clouds, whether it's me dealing with depression or hurting with postpartum.

Annie: There's a fist in the distance.

EJ: It's like I see something growing, like what do we... Yeah. And so we will cancel on people. We'll not show up to the thing. We will-

Janice: Yes, when we see.

EJ: ...because we've decided we have to make this unit work and it has to be a whole healthy unit, otherwise everything's gonna fall off the tracks.

Annie: Wow. That says other people have spoken into this.

EJ: That's right.

Annie: We can't come up with that stuff by ourselves.

EJ: That's right.

Janice: No way. We can't.

Annie: My best friends from home we always talk about that we mop up messes in each other's lives that we didn't make.

Janice: That's right.

EJ: That's exactly right.

Annie: That's what we get to do is like, I'm gonna help mop this up. I didn't make this, but I'm gonna be here and help mop it up. And so y'all are literally mopping up messes.

Janice: You gotta hit the button for yourself.

Annie: I don't deserve it. I don't deserve it. My friends do. I'll hit it. Didn't earn it, but I'll hit it. What if you think your marriage is too far gone?

Janice: If you're still married I don't think it's too far gone. What it takes is both people being able to work at the same time to pedal to the metal to that degree. I have seen it where it's like, "Oh," where you sit with couples and you're like, "This could work, but you guys trade off on who's gonna work when."

EJ: That's right.

Janice: You know what I mean?

Annie: Oh, wow.

Janice: And it's like, you're willing to work until she's... then finally when she's willing to work, you want to take a break. And it's like if both people can work at the same time, if you're still married, it can work, I believe.

EJ: We've seen couples, to Janice's point, one year, you know, the guy was willing to go forward and the next year the wife was, and they'd never synced up and it just was over because they'd never aligned in that. But I think to Janice's point, if you're married now you have that conversation, do you still want this? And if you do, then the end is the goal. That's the conclusion.

I mean, a lot of times Janice and I will tell people we decided even before we got married because we're both children whose parents divorced when we were kids, we want to stay together forever. So then we work backwards for every conflict. If the end is together forever until we're with Jesus, work backwards from the conflict.

Annie: That is so helpful. If we know the end goal-

EJ: If we know end goal.

Annie: ...and we've set that everyone getting married has set that end goal, honestly.

Janice: That's right.

Annie: So, okay, so going backwards, the way we get there is then we gotta get over this.

EJ: We gotta fix it.

Janice: How do we fight? How are we gonna finish this fight?

EJ: That's exactly right.

Annie: How do we finish this fight if the end goal has not changed?

Janice: That's right.

Annie: Wow. Wow. Wow. Can we back up and talk about dating for a second?

EJ: Of course.

Annie: Because some of our friends listening aren't married yet. I have in my life used a dating coach to help me... It did not get me married, spoiler alert, as y'all know. No ring on the finger. But what it did do is it really revealed patterns that my counselor and I couldn't get to because we had to talk about every other thing.

But this was a specialized dating coach who said, "Hey, when you go on dates, I think you do this in an unhealthy way that may be worth changing."

Janice: Nice.

Annie: Is dating coaching for when you're already in a relationship, do you recommend doing dating coaching for when you're single and looking to get into it?

Janice: I mean, I would recommend it. I think what we're defining as coaching and counseling now is really what the Lord defines as community. And you can specify, you know, somebody's role in your life, right?

Annie: Hmm.

- Janice:** I think, you know, 20 years ago people said you need a Paul, a Timothy, and a Barnabas, right?
- Annie:** A Paul, a Timothy, and a Barnabas.
- Janice:** So I think we're just saying, yeah, we need people in our lives with specified roles. And in this regard, you're saying, I need somebody to walk alongside me as I am getting to know people and inviting them into my life because, I mean, you're in a unique situation. And there are a lot of people who they might not think their situation in life is as unique as yours. But it's like, why wouldn't you ask somebody to walk alongside you with that and be able to hear you out and figure out what are the patterns?
- Annie:** I mean, Tom Brady has a coach. I may be the best dater in the game and I still need to coach.
- EJ:** Listen, everybody, even at the top of their game, gets coached.
- Janice:** That's right.
- EJ:** The vocal coaches. I mean, because you need someone outside of your context and outside of yourself to see the patterns that don't lead to the best results.
- Annie:** That's right.
- EJ:** So if that's in dating, if that's, you know, in work, in executive coaching and life coaching, whatever the case, you need someone who's committed to say, I will watch you and I'll listen to you and then I'll give you feedback and we can watch the tape.
- Janice:** Oh yes.
- Annie:** We can watch the tape. That's right.
- EJ:** We'll watch the tape.
- Annie:** Thank God for Marco Polo because I would get home from a date and be like, "Listen, these three things happened. Why do I always do number two? Why can't I go on one date and not... you know?"
- EJ:** That's right.

- Annie:** But our girlfriends do it for each other too. We have one friend who does not do a first date shorter than two hours. And we're always like, "Get out of there. Get out there." Because we're trying to coach her into going shorter. And then y'all need to... y'all will laugh. My last two first dates have been three-plus hours, and so they have been giving me all the most trouble because they're like, "Oh, how much you talking now?"
- EJ:** Oh, we can get away.
- Annie:** Yeah, yeah. "Oh, two hours. What's it like? You're doubling it." But we're also coaching each other in this season.
- Janice:** That's right.
- Annie:** Okay. Where do we go to find a coach? How would you even recommend finding coaches?
- Janice:** You can always, you know, I mean, I know they're having issues right now because we kind of like Xerox... instead of photocopying you say Xerox. Well, now we just Google everything. Sorry, Google. You're the number one. Yeah. But you can Google things like that in your area. But I would say also be open to the Holy Spirit leading you to people.
- Annie:** That's good.
- Janice:** Because I think He has the best people in line for you. You know what I mean?
- Annie:** Yeah.
- Janice:** That's a way to make sure that people are trustworthy as much as possible is to look around in the community, look around with people, you know, or people at church or people that are trustworthy to start there if you've not, you know, been that open before. But I would say that. You can always Google, but-
- EJ:** And I think not only does the person needing the coach know, but a lot of times in certain situations, the coach themselves may know that God is saying, Hey, you guys do this. I remember there was a season I feel very passionate about trying to walk with and disciple younger guys who were just like, kind of at that pivotal place in life where they're making career decisions or life decisions and just going to coffee with them.

We don't have office hours or anything, but it always starts the same way. And I didn't notice the pattern until Janice said, "You know that happens all the time." And she started calling them your guys. "Hey, I think he's one of your guys." And sure enough, she would be right every time because it would follow this pattern of, "Oh, I just met this person. Oh, they just texted me. Oh, they want to get together." And it's like, oh, okay.

Annie: Okay, the Lord's doing this.

EJ: And the same for her. I mean, there was one time where some younger ladies were following her around at different places and they would always... She said, "Every time I turn around, they're there." And she's like, "Oh, wait a minute."

Janice: They're my girls.

EJ: "They're my girls." So I think God does, to your point, Janice, make those connections.

Janice: On both sides.

EJ: On both sides. Ask in your community. Ask at your church. Ask at your office. But keep an eye out for who lives a life that models something that you feel like you need. You know, if I see strength in someone or if I see fortitude or if I see confidence that I don't have in areas or if I see... I mean-

Annie: Or if they've been married 60 years.

EJ: Yeah, exactly.

Janice: That's right.

EJ: Lean in and say, "Hey..." Just ask the question. It doesn't have to be complex. Hey, how do you do that?

Janice: Because at the end of the day, we don't try every restaurant. We try the restaurants that people have recommended.

Annie: Yeah, that's right.

Janice: Or we don't try every doctor or dentist. We hear from someone we trust. "Hey, we love this person, and then da da da." And then you try that out.

EJ: That's right.

Annie: Oh, that's good, y'all. Okay, well the last question we always ask. You aren't even ready.

Janice: Uhoh.

Annie: Because the show is called, that sounds fun, EJ and Janice, tell me what sounds fun to you?

EJ: Coffee sounds fun to me right now.

Janice: Let's see. What sounds fun to us, a vacation.

EJ: A vacation.

Annie: Where are we going?

EJ: To a beach.

Janice: To a beach. Or the mountains.

EJ: Or the mountains. Whatever it is. It's a very high-end resort with a spa.

Janice: We're bougie.

Annie: Listen-

EJ: Like I'm not-

Annie: The highest end.

EJ: I'm not camping. I ain't in a tent. It ain't the wilderness.

Annie: Listen-

EJ: Even if I do a safari, put me in a nice thing-

Janice: And a nice range-

EJ: Lemme look out there and see.

Annie: [inaudible 00:36:02] maybe.

EJ: Yeah. Yeah.

Annie: Not even promised.

EJ: But it's gotta have a spa that does couple's massages.

Janice: That's right.

EJ: It's gotta have good shopping. It's gotta have good food.

Janice: And good food. That sounds fun.

EJ: That sounds so fun

Annie: Listen, I will wear the same clothes for a year and a half if it means I get to go on a good vacation.

Janice: That's right.

Annie: I can wear Old Navy. I'll wear Old Navy to that resort.

Janice: That's right. That's right.

EJ: If a budget will get me there, I'm in.

Janice: I'm in.

Annie: I'm always like, "I'll save my money elsewhere. I'm gonna eat right and I'm gonna sleep."

Janice: That's right.

Annie: The rest of it I do not care.

Janice: That's right.

Annie: Y'all, thank you for doing this. Thank you for helping us.

Janice: Thank you for having us.

EJ: Thank you so much for having us.

Annie: So grateful. Please don't make it your last time. I mean we get it at Only Gaines, but you are always welcome back here too.

Janice: Thank you.

Annie: So thank y'all.

EJ: Thank you. I'm so happy to be here.

[00:36:45] <Music>

Outro: Oh you guys aren't they the best? Listen, go follow them on social media. Go listen to their podcast, Only Gains, tell them thanks so much for being on this show with us. I thought that was such a helpful conversation.

Hey, if you want a list of all the resources from our Build Your Board series and how to find the guidebook, go to anniefdowns.com/buildyourboard.

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.

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

Have a great weekend. We'll see you back here on Monday as we wrap up our Build Your Board series with a conversation about our relationships with social media. Speaking of influencers, let's speak to some influencers.

We've got Devin and Hunter Cordle joining us on Monday. Y'all are going to love them. You may already follow them on social media. I do, and I adore them. So I can't wait to have them with us on Monday. We'll see y'all then.