

[00:00:00] <music>

**Annie:** Hi friends! Welcome to another episode of That Sounds Fun. I am 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 sponsors. This episode is brought to you by BetterHelp. Between the holidays and the crazy schedule and carrying all the emotions that come along with it, this time of year can be a lot and it's natural to feel some kind of sadness or anxiety about it.

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**Intro:** Today on the show, I get to talk with my friend Jana Kramer. You might know Jana from back in the day when she was on *One Tree Hill* or maybe you know her incredible country music or maybe you've just picked up any of her books. But either way, I'm so excited to have Jana here. I'm really proud of the way she shared parts of her story with such honesty and vulnerability, particularly in her latest book *The Next Chapter*.

Today we're talking about what life looks like after a divorce, her journey with motherhood, the question she's asking God, and what she's learning about freedom and redemption. Because we're talking about some tender parts of her story, I want to encourage you with two things.

Number one, it's probably best for you to listen to this before any of my MiniBFFs do. I just want you to hear as Jana so graciously opens up about what she's walking through when it comes to church and faith and the messy hard parts of that. I think a lot of us need a reminder that God isn't scared of our questions. He's not walking away when we start wrestling with our faith, or wrestling with sin and He takes it on.

The other thing I want to encourage you with and remind you is, one of the best things about you is how you treat our guests. And you're going to hear Jana talk about some of the struggles with what goes on online and how people are perceiving her life and responding to her. My encouragement to you today is to love our friend Jana really well, and to care for her and to enjoy this conversation, and also let it be a springboard for you of seeing your friends and neighbors and knowing that there's always more to the story and the active response to that and how we care for Jana. So I'm thankful. I'm really thankful for her. I think you're gonna love her honesty in this episode.

What I love about us is that we are just this giant group of friends where it is a safe place to ask hard questions, to be honest about the good and the hard, and figure it all out with God. I feel really honored that Jana would process this part of her story with me and with us. So I'm excited for you to hear it and excited for her to experience what it's like to be loved by the That Sounds Fun friends.

So here is my conversation with our friend Jana Kramer.

**[00:03:39] <Music>**

**Annie:** Jana Kramer, welcome to That Sounds Fun.

**Jana:** I'm so excited.

**Annie:** I have to start with a complaint.

**Jana:** Okay.

**Annie:** I'm honored to be mentioned in your book.

**Jana:** Oh, yes.

**Annie:** You quoted the cheesiest thing I've ever said.

**Jana:** It was great. No, it wasn't cheesy. It was great.

**Annie:** I was like, "God's ways are higher than our WAZ, W-A-Z."

**Jana:** But it's true.

**Annie:** I'm glad it stuck with your heart. But Jana, as I was reading, I was like, "No, no, no, no." But you did it.

**Jana:** I was like those are the things... Those are the things.

**Annie:** It is hilarious. This book, *The Next Chapter*, can I just celebrate your courage? Because you wrote a book with your ex-husband about relationships? And then you had to write another book and y'all are no longer married? Will you talk to me about the courage of that? When did you decide you could even start writing?

**Jana:** Well, yeah, we wrote a book called *The Good Fight* and it's all about a couple trying to save their marriage and work through infidelity, and you know, all the toughness of marriage when infidelity strikes. That was a hard book, but I felt like it was a very healing book. I feel like it helps a lot of people.

Having said that, you know, a few... what? Gosh, was it a few months later, you know, I was filing for divorce. I felt like the biggest fraud. And I'm like, Okay, we didn't do anything that... we tried, but it didn't work. We were supposed to write a book about trust. So we started writing a book about trust.

**Annie:** Y'all had already started writing it?

**Jana:** We had just started writing it. So we had the conversations, my ex and I started writing down kind of the chapter outlines, and we did a call with our editor.

**Annie:** Jeez.

**Jana:** So when I called her telling her that I found out that he cheated again, I was like, "I'm done, obviously, for good this time." So then there went the book deal. That went away. So that was hard because, again, I felt like a failure. I felt like something that... you know, financially, too, was something that for us that would have been great but also it was one of those things where I'm like, "Well, I guess I'm never going to write another book." Because he always said he was the writer.

I wrote my piece, but I'm not the best writer. I write from my tone. Like I write how I talk and it's not perfect, and it's just kind of all over the place. So I called my editor and I said, "I'd like to write a book about trusting myself." And she goes, "Well, I think we should wait until you're in a relationship and happy and moved on."

And I'm like, "No, no, no, no, no." I was like, "I need you to hear me, I need you to hear me super loud." I go, "My entire happiness has always been based on if I'm in a relationship, or if I'm with a man. Jana equals happiness when she's in a relationship or loved by a man." I was like, "I have got to figure out, like, what's

wrong with me, how to love myself. And I was like, "I'm just going to start writing down stuff and I'm going to start sending it to you, and then you just let me know."

So then I sent her a bunch of stuff and she goes, "Keep sending. Keep sending." And that's when she kind of had the idea, let's turn this into like a year diary from the day you filed to the year after. The evolution of that.

**Annie:** The outline of that was brilliant.

**Jana:** She's an amazing editor. I owe a lot to Sidney Rogers over at HarperCollins for that.

**Annie:** It was brilliant too, because it is such an invitation to go... I have so many of our friends listening after Brandy Wilson was on and we talked so much about her divorce. So many of our friends listening reached out and we're like, "I have needed a conversation about this because I feel shame. I feel scared. I feel worried."

So In *The Next Chapter*, you are so honest, Jana, about the year after your divorce. Are you excited for people to read it? Are you afraid? Are you all the things?

**Jana:** I'm all the things. Because it's hard to admit some of the things that I felt or that I was going through. But it's also I don't think I'm alone in any event.

**Annie:** That's right.

**Jana:** So I would have loved to have read something knowing that these people went or you know, these women or these men went through the same thing post their divorce or anything that has shaken their life like that.

**Annie:** I want to talk about your faith for a second.

**Jana:** Sure.

**Annie:** Will you retell the story you told me when you sat down? I may cry when you tell it.

**Jana:** I mean, I could share the DM too, if you really want.

**Annie:** I mean, if you want to.

**Jana:** This is just one of the many I got. It's interesting timing and it's probably gonna make me cry. Because I thought to myself, Why... I love you and I love listening to you in church, and I love everything you've written and talked about. But on the

way here, I was so nervous because I'm like, I get messages like this. And this was today at 5:48 am.

"Hi, Jana. I hope you're doing well. I've always enjoyed your page and watching you overcome and rise above with Jesus on your side. My current struggle as a 57-year-old Christian woman who does admire you is this. With the utmost respect, what are you saying to young women who are just beginning their life and also their struggles about premarital sex and being a Christian? I might have missed it. But did you get married already? Immediately, when you found out you were pregnant again, did you come to your page and your fans in humility and state that you made a mistake in having sex outside of marriage and keep the pregnancy low-key and out of the headlines until you make things right for the Lord? I'm not casting blame," which I appreciate her saying that, "I just want to understand because I don't wish to unfollow such a beautiful person who has gone through so much and came up victorious on the other side of the help with Jesus. Please help me understand when you have time. Thank you so much."

And then other messages that I get are like, "How do you call yourself a Christian if you know that you're pregnant and out of wedlock, and how you can explain that to your daughter?" So I had the hardest time going back to church when I found out I was pregnant because I thought everyone was going to look at me and just be the outcast. And I'm like, "Well, then how do I call myself a Christian? But I was baptized. But I do believe that Jesus loves all of us. So I really struggled."

I remember the first time we went back to church in my then second trimester clearly showing, one of the... I used to volunteer in the nursery. So one of the women came over to me and gave me a big hug and started crying. She's like, "Why are you crying?" I was like, "I didn't think you'd like me. I feel embarrassed to be here." And then she was just like, "No, honey. God loves you." And I'm like, "Yeah, but I have all these other people telling me that I've done it bad and wrong, and I'm bad."

**Annie:** I'm so sorry.

**Jana:** Oh, well, I hear the things the Bible says and also I know how God has worked in my life too. And I believe that this is a story that he wrote. So, though it's out of the written order that He wrote, it seems to be the right order for my life. So that's what I'm trying to make sense with it.

**Annie:** There's redemption in every story.

**Jana:** You know, even though it says technically in the Bible you shouldn't. So that's where I'm just struggling.

**Annie:** I hear you. I hear you. And yet what we can really believe is no child is an accident.

**Jana:** Right.

**Annie:** Right?

**Jana:** Yeah.

**Annie:** Every time a baby is made, it's a miracle. So we will figure out how to hold both of those things. I'm at a little bit of a loss for words because if everything I did was known by everyone, who would come and hugged me? Right? So everybody has this real quick ability to look at someone else's life and say whatever they think, because what they believe about you is visible. They can see what they want to judge in you. They can't see what they want to judge in me. So I'm sorry for that. That sucks.

**Jana:** I know this isn't your specimen but how do I walk that balance when it's clearly stated in the Bible as X?

**Annie:** I think there's real purpose to sex inside of marriage. There's a reason. I mean... you've done that. You know, the connection and you know the purpose, and you understand what it does for two people. So I think God knows what He's doing when He asks us to think about sex in those terms of what it does for a man and a woman.

I also think that grace is abundant and that it doesn't change how He feels about any of us when we make mistakes. You know, I think the thing you get to process through is what does sexual purity look like for you. Because one of the things that you talk about so openly in the book is your ex did not live a sexually pure life in your marriage. That's one of the reasons your marriage didn't last. So what does sexual purity look like to you now? My guess is you will not sleep with someone else besides the man you're marrying.

**Jana:** Absolutely not. Yes, yeah.

**Annie:** But you in your core you believe in sexual purity?

**Jana:** Yes.

**Annie:** So we can ask God, okay, God, what does sexual purity look like for Jana? And what does sexual purity look like as she's raising her kids to teach them what would sexual purity be if you're a Jesus follower?

**Jana:** Right.

**Annie:** So that's the question you get to wrestle down. Not is what I did, right or wrong? The Holy Spirit will get you there, you know? But what is sexual purity? Because it doesn't end once you're married.

**Jana:** Right. Well, also my daughter too, and I told her, so you know, we're having a baby, and she's like, "But you're not married?" And I was like, "Yes, you are right." And I was like, "God just blessed us sooner. We will get married, and we are going to get married. He just blessed us sooner." But I believe that. Like, I do believe that this was a blessing that... because again, I have struggled with conceiving. I've had so many miscarriages. When we talked about even trying, "I had said after post-divorce I wasn't gonna have any more kids. I was like, I'm done. I'm almost 40. My ship has sailed for me.

Then with him, I'm like, "I want to create something with him. I love this man. He's everything I dreamt and wrote down in my Bible. I was like, God, this is the man, and put it in there, you know? And it's like it was him. I was like, Well, I just don't think it's even going to be possible. I've had to do IVF. I've had to do all of it and then I've lost. And the first month. So I was just like, okay, you've got a bigger plan than I thought.

**Annie:** I mean, you do this beautifully in the book. When you trace your story, it's very clear. And this is true for me, too in some ways. It's very clear the power of men and love and attraction is in your story. So part of that has played into your sexual life too. Right?

**Jana:** Yeah.

**Annie:** So all of it is one story that as we keep hearing this podcast or listening, this morning was talking about, if God brings you back to the same thing, it's not that He didn't heal it, it's that there's a new level of healing.

**Jana:** Sure.

**Annie:** So my guess is if I was a betting woman, you and I can keep up as much as we want to, but we can have this actual conversation again in a year and you'll be like, Here's one way that I'm thinking differently, and I'll be like, here's one way that I'm thinking differently because of the healing that will happen in the same arena. Does that make sense?

**Jana:** Yeah. I get a lot of people like, are you going to get married before you have the baby? In my mind, I'm like, I would like to but I also want the dream wedding too. I'm like, I want to marry this man. So you know, it's like I just have to sit with that piece a little bit longer.

**Annie:** Yes. Yes. I'm so thankful that you talk about this, and that you wrestle about this. Because it is just so inviting and honest. It makes you so believable as a human.

**Jana:** Thanks.

**Annie:** So thank you for being willing to wrestle about this.

**Jana:** Well, I mean, I sat down with Pastor Kevin because I was having a really hard time going back into the church, and I talked about that in the book of just kind of struggle with men and putting someone in that God, you know, outfit, basically. I'm like, But I have a really hard time believing this. I have a tough time. I struggle with this. And he goes, "That's faith." He's like, the struggle and the questions, that is faith. Keep the questions coming.

**Annie:** Yes. I want you to hear that for me too, that like this thing we're doing, this is faith. This is our faith going like, Okay, what does it actually look like? And if everybody is yelling at me about this, that's not working for me. That doesn't make me want to be different.

But from here on out, I want to be with one person. So what do I do to, you know... I mean, I think the wrestling you're doing is beautiful. I think it really matters. I want to talk about a couple of things that came up in the book to me that I just think are beautiful. First of all, this is so funny. Will you talk about how breakups are better in the summer? I could not agree with you more.

**Jana:** That was my cheesy one.

[crosstalk 00:16:45]

**Annie:** That was my number one but it's January

**Jana:** Oh girl Terrible. I'm not saying like, wait. Don't ever wait. But I'm just saying, if you're gonna break up, the summer-

**Annie:** Talk about why.

**Jana:** Because I need the sun. I feel like, again, everyone needs the vitamin D. Like being out in the sun, you can be out. When you are trapped inside your house and it is

cold and it is just dreary out for me personally, that is when my depression levels start to go down obviously.

But when it's sunny out and it's warm, then more people are out or you want to go to the pool or go hiking. I am a lighter, happier person when I'm outside and I'm just active with people, whether it's just walking around the neighborhood or going for a hike or being on the water. It's hard to do those things. So for me I noticed I was like, man, this is great timing because I'm forcing myself out of bed to get out and feel the sun. It just hits you different. Really does. January's tough. I'm sorry girl. But don't stay with someone just because... It's that time frame.

**Annie:** Oh yeah. I think in like April of COVID and I was like, we are the only people touching each other. No one else is even hugging me. What are you doing? Can we wait? The timing, right? Can we wait a few more weeks till everything opens up? Why? Oh, yeah, January breakup's brutal.

**[00:18:12] <Music>**

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Now back to our conversation with Jana.

[00:20:53] <Music>

**Annie:** So when you're writing about all of this... I mean, your divorce happens and you're writing that first year, how do you parent through this? Because I'm like, I know how to do a breakup in the summer when it's just me and my house. I know actually how to do a breakup in the winter when it's just me and my house. So many of our friends listening, it is cuffing season, and they're gonna have something end they're gonna have a marriage end possibly before this year is over. How do you parent through that?

**Jana:** That was the hardest piece. You know, he left the house. So while I'm trying to pick up the pieces the first week, first two weeks, first month-

**Annie:** Oh, tell about your friend making you, is it this Catherine that's here?

**Jana:** Yeah, that's Katherine.

**Annie:** Oh my gosh. Catherine is here. So why did we not let you sit on the floor? Oh my gosh, please tell that story.

**Jana:** It's a-

**Annie:** Catherine, you're such a hero.

**Jana:** But she is though. That's the thing. I could cry even like talking about her because she knows exactly what I need. And in that moment, I can sometimes tend to ask for help when I know it's not good for me too. I needed to stand up, have approach... because it was the morning after the divorce. So she was like, "I will wait here but you are driving your kids to school." And that just was the first step and just going, okay, I have to zip this up, button myself up, be the parent and drive my kids. And then she's like, "And then you can come home and you can cry the rest of the day until pickup."

I think she also knew that if she did take her kids, it would have delayed my healing because I would have asked her again and then I would have asked her again because it becomes a clutch. And for me, anxiety, I'm like, I can't because I have anxiety. Like no, yes, I just had an anxiety attack and I'm going to drive my kids to school and I'm gonna eat this protein bar because I need to eat something.

**Annie:** Oh, yeah. She was like, "Eat a protein bar.

**Jana:** She was like, "Eat your things bar and go away." I mean, she wasn't that hard about it. It sounds a little harsher in the book. But I mean, she did the absolute right thing as my best friend to do, knowing me and knowing who I am. But it's hard because he was off. I don't even know where he was staying at the time, but golfing and doing that and I'm like I'm picking up all the pieces and trying to parent and try not to explode in front of them every time I saw them. So that was-

**Annie:** Will you talk about the vacation when he took the kids on vacation and you saw it on Facebook?

**Jana:** I mean-

**Annie:** Because so many of our friends listening know this feeling.

**Jana:** It's just I never... and that's the thing too. Like when I first found out our first year of marriage, and our daughter was like five, six months about the first round of affairs, I'm like, "I come from a divorced family. I don't want to not be without my kids." I didn't have a family to have it be separated and like I say goodbye to my daughter and now my son. That's this isn't what I wanted.

So that first realization when he was taking them on a family trip with his family, like, of course, like, Absolutely now, you know, that's amazing and they deserve that time with her grandma and grandpa. But that first one was so hard because I'm like, I should be there. This isn't fair. Just because of what you did, now I'm missing

out on this family vacation that we were all supposed to go on and play in the beach. I'm not going to be able to order my son his little gelato and then hold his hand back to the therapy. I'm just like, that's not fair. What you did took away now memories that like I was supposed to have with them. That piece is still to this day it's hard to... it's still not easy.

It's so sweet that one of our baseball coach kind of saw me saying goodbye to the kids and putting them in Dad's truck and he must have clocked my deep breath. And he's like, "You're okay?" And I was like, "Oh, yeah, no, I'm good." And he goes, "Sorry, that must be hard." And I'm like, "You know what it is?" Even to this day, and I'm very much happy and moved on, it's not easy saying goodbye to your kids no matter if it's three years ago or in the present. It's not a normal thing to go, "Okay, bye. See ya." You know, see ya when you come back from your dad's. I want you in your bed every night at our house. That's our family.

**Annie:** Forgive me, I just have not done this. Does it change all the time? Is it like you're still navigating your relationship with your ex? Because all the time you're like, okay, they are having a great time or I don't like that they come home and say this. I mean, is there just a constant working on it?

**Jana:** Yeah. We have a pretty set schedule but we're also very flexible obviously with work and with things that come up with him or me or whatever. I mean, there's things that I don't love the fact that they play video games all the time at their dad's house. I'm like, We don't do it at our house. So there's just like, can we have... so we have a decent conversation-

**Annie:** About the co-parent.

**Jana:** Yeah. And that's the thing. I have to remember, whenever I talk to him, I have to go, He's your co-parent, he's not your ex-husband, even though he is. He's not your current husband, he's not your ex-husband and he's not like... he's someone who loves and is helping you with the kids. It's co-parent.

**Annie:** What a great thing to do in your brain!

**Jana:** I have to because if not, I'll let too much of the old stuff kind of come up. And I'm like, That is the past and that does not need to come into this. This is a new relationship. We have our past relationship and we have our new relationship. And this is our new relationship is co-parenting interests.

**Annie:** Interesting.

**Jana:** But it can be hard when we get triggered or when he forgets something or if I do something, or if he feels controlled, because I'm like, "Well, why didn't you, you know, or just whatever? He can be triggered too. So we do a decent job of staying in touch with our new relationship. And if something comes up from the past, it's like, "Hey, sorry, that just bothered me because of..." And I'm like, "Yep, I get it. Sorry. I could see how that made you feel controlled?" Because I was like, why did the kids watch iPad for 10 million hours? But also a valid question.

**Annie:** But also I would like to know.

**Jana:** I would like to know. But it's hard to let that piece go?

**Annie:** I mean, as I'm thinking about it, the part of it that you have a lot of us don't have is everything's public, too. He's a public person. Some of your other exes are public people and say things publicly. How does your soul handle that? I mean, Al Andrew says our souls were never meant for fame. How does your soul handle when you read something publicly or see..? I mean, that's been so many years of your life at this point. But I mean, that DM you read us at the start, it's still gonna be hard.

**Jana:** It's challenging. I mean, I have got like, you know, the hate pages and people saying nasty things.

**Annie:** Like hate pages. Like entire things?

**Jana:** Oh, yeah, there's like a Reddit page of like couple thousands trolls. There's just like mean, just really mean-

**Annie:** Why are humans like this?

**Jana:** My therapist is like, You are opening the window, you're letting the gas in. You're doing that to yourself by logging on and going [www.reddit.com/likewhatever](http://www.reddit.com/likewhatever). So she's like, "You got to close the window."

**Annie:** I would burst if I read all that stuff. I'm sure it exists out there but I don't want to read any of it.

**Jana:** But I'm allowing people to take my joy. So I'm in a very joyful season right now. I'm like, Why would I want someone to take that joy from me? Because I did for so many years, I would care about this. Well, that person said that. That's not true. Like, he didn't tell all. I'm like, Those are pieces that aren't true. And like, "I want to defend myself. For what?"

Because although I'd love to, the people that know me know me. People that follow me are going to see... they're going to read through it. And also I'm allowing someone to take my joy away from me. I get to choose that. So why would I choose someone to take my joy?

**Annie:** It's actually one of the reasons I don't really read DMs. Because I'm like, I'm not as tough as you. I'm just not. I mean, my skin is not... I haven't practiced this long enough. You've had massive success globally and so you've had to deal with this a lot longer. I just am not tough enough. So I'm like, sorry, I'm not gonna read my DMs. I'm sure there's a lot of very kind things in there but the eight that aren't.

**Jana:** I know. And that's the thing. It's only just the few.

**Annie:** They are so few.

**Jana:** There are so many more positive comments. So that's another reason too I just stopped because I'm like I've been told... I always wanted 100% approval rate-

**Annie:** I know, right?

**Jana:** ...but I'm not gonna get it.

**Annie:** I know. That's what I want to though.

**Jana:** Although I really strive for it, there's going to be someone... so I will just say now, I'm like, if you don't like me, that sucks. I hope one day you give me the chance to meet you in person and we can have a good exchange.

**Annie:** Yes. Yes. I wish you well. I didn't like everybody from high school either. That doesn't mean that... I mean, literally I told the story from stage last weekend where someone had chirped pretty hard at me on the internet. I said, "I'm sure her friends like her. I'm sure her friends like her." Doesn't mean we have to like each other. But I'm sure her friends like her."

So I wish you well go off and be friends with your friends. You do not have to be friends with me. And you're all gonna be stuck with me and having to if we believe the same thing about Jesus.

**Jana:** Well, you know what's interesting is always nastier comments come from people that say Jesus lover. And I'm like, oh, that's ironic.

**Annie:** I know. What makes you choose Jesus anyway when those are the people who are the most unkind to you?

**Jana:** I mean, it doesn't make sense.

**Annie:** I'm always impressed when people who take massive criticism don't walk away from Him. You know, and you haven't. I mean, you just got baptized when? Last February.

**Jana:** Was it last February?

**Annie:** February this year?

**Jana:** February of last year.

**Annie:** Of 2022?

**Jana:** Mm-hmm.

**Annie:** Will you talk about your decision to do that? It was beautiful. It was beautiful.

**Jana:** After the divorce, I just again was holding so much hate I think. And I felt like I've walked alone for so long. And I've kind of like Got in glimpses. I let Him in glimpses.

**Annie:** Wow.

**Jana:** I wanted to bring Him in more than just like a, hey, you can peek through the window. Like you gotta come in. You're gonna climb in the window. And for me, I needed to feel that movement. And to me baptism was a movement for me. And it was my ultimate... I called it my battle cry. Like, it was my ultimate like, Okay, I still question things but I'd like for you to walk with me. Because what I learned from my divorce is it's a very lonely walk because you got all your friends that are there for you post-divorce, and then they go back to their lives and you're by yourself. And you're very alone.

**Annie:** Everybody's there for a month.

**Jana:** Yeah. And then, of course, they go back to their lives. And then it's just you. I had a tough time being alone and in the quiet. So when I invited Him in, because He's always been there, I just had been the one shutting the door on Him, that was where it was like, Okay, I actually would like to have your voice here or your presence or feel because this is what hasn't worked for me in the past and I don't like to feel this way.

**Annie:** I think it's really beautiful because even back to our conversation about you having a baby, I just go, You know what's amazing about all of us as humans is baptism does not seal our salvation. You already said. It's just as an outward... it's a battle cry. It's an outward and public sign of what you believe about Jesus. And then we still wrestle with how to follow the path. Me too, Jana. Me too.

**Jana:** Do I have to get rebaptized after having a baby?

**Annie:** No.

**Jana:** No, I know.

**Annie:** Yes. No. I mean, it is that though, right, of we all get to keep wrestling out our faith. And because you're willing to do that in front of us, you're giving me permission to do that in my life, too. It's just beautiful. It's absolutely beautiful.

**[00:32:38] <Music>**

**Sponsor:** Hi friend! Just interrupting this conversation one more time to tell you about another amazing partner, KiwiCo. My miniBFFs love KiwiCo. It's like unwrapping a box of fun and they get to create some of the cutest and coolest things they've made.: ukuleles and wind chimes and an astronaut starter kit.

KiwiCo has nine different subscription options for different ages and subjects. So there's something for everyone. When you give KiwiCo, it's so much more than a box of toys. It's the gift of discovery because of their hands-on experiences, giving kids the tools to learn about topics that they love from dinosaurs to rocket ships. KiwiCo delivers seriously fun hands-on projects that inspire a lifelong love for learning.

Their projects spark creative confidence for ongoing tinkering and experimentation. Sure, you can buy a ukulele but isn't it way more fun to build your own? Their crates are fun and stress-free so you can enjoy quality time with your kids and tackle projects together. And they're tested and approved by kids.

KiwiCo projects are designed by a team of educators, makers, engineers, and rocket scientists who brainstorm hundreds of ideas to create the most exciting, age-appropriate, and educational projects. These are real engineering science and art projects with high quality materials. Discover hands-on fun with KiWico. Get your first month free on any crate line at [kiwico.com/thatsoundsfun](http://kiwico.com/thatsoundsfun). That's your first month free at [kiwico.com/thatsoundsfun](http://kiwico.com/thatsoundsfun).

**Sponsor:** And one last amazing partner to tell you about, [Nutrafol](#). Okay, do you ever wish your hair was thicker? Or do you catch yourself noticing how much it is shedding on the floor or in the shower when you're getting ready? That has been my life the last couple of weeks.

There are so many root causes for hair thinning and Nutrafol addresses those through a whole body approach to hair health. Hair thinning is totally normal, and that's why I love Nutrafol. They help us address it from within their science-backed supplements.

Nutrafol is the number one dermatologist-recommended hair growth supplement clinically shown to improve visible thickness and strength. So get this. In a clinical study, 86% of women reported improved hair growth after taking Nutrafol's women hair growth supplement for six months.

Just go to [Nutrafol.com](#) to take their hair health wellness quiz, we love a quiz, and identify the causes of your thinning hair. And Nutrafol will give you your personalized plan for better hair growth through their whole body health approach.

Take the first step to visit thicker, healthier hair. For a limited time, Nutrafol is offering our listeners \$10 off your first month's subscription and free shipping when you go to [Nutrafol.com](#) and enter the promo code THATSOUNDSFUN. Find out why over 4, 000 healthcare professionals recommend Nutrafol for healthier hair. Nutrafol.com, promo code THATSOUNDSFUN. That's Nutrafol.com, promo code THATSOUNDSFUN.

Okay, now back to finish up our conversation with Jana.

[00:35:30] <Music>

**Annie:** You also talk a lot about dating in the book. We did the whole month of June on dating on the podcast.

**Jana:** Oh you did?

**Annie:** Summer Lovin'. Yeah, we talked about it.

**Jana:** Are we in a relationship?

**Annie:** No, not currently. Nothing. And listen, I am a hard launch person. I'm not a soft launch person. So I probably won't be in a relationship until I'm in a relationship publicly.

**Jana:** I just can't wait for that day in church, because I feel like everyone's gonna be like, Wow.

**Annie:** They'll be like, fine.

**Jana:** You know, you didn't settle. Like you got what you deserve.

**Annie:** Oh, you're very kind.

**Jana:** So I'm just waiting for him.

**Annie:** I know. I mean, yes, we can talk down some things. We can wind down some things after this. But one of the things you talk about... so I want to talk about dating for a minute for our friends who are in that season. You talk about not going to the grocery store and you're hungry. Will you teach us that concept? Because in my experience of your book, *The Next Chapter*, that was really when a page turned for you in your dating and in your relationship with men was when you got that concept of not going grocery shopping when you're hungry.

**Jana:** Yeah. That came from my therapist. And it was so true. Because when you're hungry, you're gonna get things that are like, I just want this right now, you know? If it's not good for you, like the Häagen-Dazs and the whatever and the chips, at that moment, it's probably not the best thing for you. But when you're starving for something... I was so starving for love and attention after my divorce that the first person I was like, Oh, my God, he thinks I'm beautiful.

**Annie:** I'm sure his family loves him. But that guy didn't seem like the best one you've ever been with for sure.

**Jana:** I wasn't healthy either. So it's like-

**Annie:** Water finds water.

**Jana:** Exactly. So you know, he might be so healthy now with someone else. But I was also in that same state of finding kind of the same man.

**Annie:** Interesting. Yeah. I noticed that. Because that brought some things up for me in counseling where I was like, "Jana is right. I keep picking similar men."

**Jana:** And there's a reason for that. And there's like that piece in you that still there's something that's feeding that negative belief in you that thinks that you deserve that.

**Annie:** So how'd you get that out?

**Jana:** I mean, I went to Onsite which was like the third time.

**Annie:** Did you? I kind of think about going back and doing an intensive just to like a tune up.

**Jana:** I needed the one-on-one. Love the group settings, but I have to just be one on one and be like, All right, let's figure this out. I didn't realize how much shame I was walking around with from years. I always thought shame was what they did wrong. But I was like, no, that's just guilt. Like for me, I didn't know that that shame was holding me down and I was believing all these messages that weren't true. They were just things that other people told me that I tried on and kept on.

Then going back into dating, it was just... I still had so many unhealed pieces. I thought I was, Oh, well, I've been doing therapy forever for seven years with my ex. So I'm like, I'm good. That was all him. He's one of the problems. But then, again, I go right back to, oh my God, this guy showed me attention and affection and he seems to really care about me. But again, it was just the same man, different name.

And it wasn't until I switched. And that's where I am right now with my fiancé, is, I always say he just loves and respects me so much. And I've never used that respect word because I never asked for respect. I was constantly letting other men disrespect me because I didn't think I deserved respect. So now, of course, I'm getting respect because that's what I expect. And that's what I'm asking for.

**Annie:** How did you do that, though? How do you switch your brain to 'I deserve respect'? I don't know how to do that with the things in me.

**Jana:** I had to say the truth. So when the "I'm not enough"... and again, this it still comes up in things. Like if I miss out on a role, or if I'm having a, you know, I don't know something... It's not as often as it used to be, but the "I'm not enough, I deserve abuse, I deserve, yeah, abuses" that they want... Or I'm not good enough, or I'm not this or that. What is the truth to that? No, I don't deserve abuse. And why do I think. So you have to figure out why you think you deserve all those things. Where did that come from? And really go into the weeds with that.

Well, I think I deserved abuse because of my childhood, and then the men because why would they hit me if I didn't deserve it? Or why didn't I get this or why did they leave me? I obviously wasn't good enough? Well, no, that's not the truth. So it's deep diving into all your messages that you believe about yourself and then

naming the truth of it. Like I know I do deserve to be loved and I haven't had that yet because this X, Y, & Z.

So it's just really like deep diving and then trying to... I had to write... I still have sticky notes around like I'm good enough. I still every day have to look at it to remember.

**Annie:** And just keep calling back... Yeah, for sure. As long as you practice the old narrative, we have to-

**Jana:** Exactly. Because I've had 39 years or you know, however long of believing this. And now I have to really tune my brain to believe, No, I do deserve this. And I am good enough. And it was just unfortunate situations of whatever if something happens.

**Annie:** You're giving me such good language for what I need to ask myself. Why do I keep picking him? What's that movie with Julia... Runaway Bride?

**Jana:** Yeah.

**Annie:** Right? Where she does all the different eggs.

**Jana:** Right. I

**Annie:** I've always been like... you and I are eating whatever kind of eggs the guy eats but there's relational ways that I do that. So I think there's a... you taught some really beautiful things in this book for those of us who are looking for the person we'll end up with around like, but who are you? Why don't you just be fully you and then look who's around?

**Jana:** And also too it's writing down the old narrative. For me, it's like I play into the old narratives, or what people say. What is my narrative? I'm like, who actually am I? Like, who do I want to be? So it's just a lot of journaling and a lot of just reflective work, too.

Some of the things I did to Onsite people can do, like they take the rocks, go to a stream, let it wash it away. And then just things that over time can just... then I'm seeing it doing the act can help you. But you have to... And that's the thing. Sometimes I don't believe it. I know now without a question or doubt, I couldn't have said this two years ago, I know now I do not deserve abuse. I do not deserve someone to talk to me in a certain way or any of those things. I still struggle with the "I'm not enough". But that's again years of repair. And it's gonna take years of work to repair that.

**Annie:** Yes, that's right. We're gonna get to keep saying the truth over and over and over. Will you talk about being in a season of joy now? I mean, new house... I mean, it's just all beautiful to watch. So will you talk about what is the season of joy?

**Jana:** Yeah. Maybe that's the third book is it's been really hard to accept it.

**Annie:** Really?

**Jana:** Mm-hmm. That's been the biggest work with my therapist, because I'm like, Am I dying? Is something happening? Because I don't almost feel like I deserve the joy. So that's been my biggest work with my therapist is the gratitude of it. Because I'm like, "I must be dying of cancer. I must have something. Because I'm like, I can't get everything. I'm like, I've got the dream man. I'm having this family, like the silver lining of all this. I'm like, But it's not possible. It doesn't make sense to me. So that's been my work as of late is just trying to be grateful and accept it. Because there's still those old narratives. I'm like, no, no, when is the shoe dropping? Like there's something that's going to happen or and that's the piece where I'm like, no, okay, thank you God, and thank you and try to accept it.

**Annie:** Will you talk about people writing as you were building the house, having people write messages?

**Jana:** This was a came from my realtor, Nick Woodard and his wife, Katherine

**Annie:** Oh my gosh. Everybody.

**Jana:** Everyone. I like just keep it in the-

**Annie:** You should. But he's been doing that for a while in homes. He would write this the bones of the house and write scripture. He'd all my closest friends come and write scripture. And then me and Alan went to and before we knew the baby was gonna... we weren't sure of the miscarriage or whatever. We would write on the walls and I said, keep beating, baby. We just prayed over the house.

**Annie:** Because you started building before you and Alan, right?

**Jana:** Yeah. I mean, the guest room turned into a nursery.

**Annie:** I mean, that's such a beautiful part of the story. Even of what we were talking about what narratives you're believing in your head of like, you were building the life you wanted and God brought in the right man at the right time. So talk about the kids in the house. Do they love it?

**Jana:** Oh my gosh, they love it. We're still a work in progress. But it's starting to feel like a home now for sure. It's everything in... Again, I have a hard time sitting up there. I'm like, Okay, I did it. And I was so scared and I went into this as a single mom with my two kids and now I'm gonna be bringing home a baby with, you know, my soon-to-be husband. I'm still trying to wrap my mind around it because again, I could not have written this.

**Annie:** I think it's such a good reminder, I hope, to you that God gives really good gifts.

**Jana:** Yeah. Walk with Him and believe and have a little bit of patience. Because I tried to force the outcomes of things. I'm always trying to manipulate the situation or control it. It's like sometimes you just have to put your hands up and go, What do you want to do? Because I'm trying to steer the ship and I'm doing a really bad job.

**Annie:** That's right.

**Jana:** It's like, "What do you want to do? Go for it.

**Annie:** That's right. For our friends listening that have surely fallen in love with you today, I am sure that the messages we will hear are how much they love you. Tell me how you want them to pray for you?

**Jana:** Oh, man. That's a very sweet question. I would say just to be able to relax in the greatness of everything that I have always dreamt and wanted since I was a little girl coming from a broken home, that I've created a safe space and to continue to pray over the safe space.

**Annie:** I'm sure you remember this, but there is this part when Moses is leading the people out of Egypt when they leave. It is 40 years that they are wandering in the desert before they're in the promised land. And you write beautifully about it in *The Next Chapter*, but you have suffered greatly. You have suffered more than most people. And it's promised land time. Now the promised land did not come without its own trials. And they had to battle but-

**Jana:** Well, it's interesting that my due date is my 40th birthday. That has never become lost on me, the what and all of it.

**Annie:** Isn't it just like God? Isn't it just God to write a story like that. So it's promised land time.

**Jana:** Thank you.

- Annie:** It's true. I believe that.
- Jana:** And I can still be healthy to my kids and everything else.
- Annie:** That's right. That's okay.
- Jana:** I deserve happiness.
- Annie:** This does not mean that there's a tragedy around the corner, though, life is very hard.
- Jana:** Sure.
- Annie:** And does not equal B in this story.
- Jana:** Right.
- Annie:** Right. So it's promised land stuff. So that's what we'll have our friends praying to too is that you will really experience the best parts of the promised land.
- Jana:** Thank you.
- Annie:** On your 40th birthday.
- Jana:** I know.
- Annie:** I mean, the Lord. Won't you do it?
- Jana:** I was like, What?
- Annie:** This is our mind-blown emoji. It just says wowie zowie. So that kind of blows my mind that He would have this baby due on your 40th birthday.
- Annie:** Okay, what did we not say that you want to make sure we say?
- Jana:** Just thank you for listening and thank you for having me on. I really do appreciate it. Thank you for the words and the movements that you create to bring people along the journey.
- Annie:** You're very kind. I will imperfectly process anything with you ever.
- Jana:** Thank you.

**Annie:** I mean, I'm figuring it out too. So we can do this a lot off microphone. We can do this whatever you want because we get to figure this out. So we processed what we could hear but I'm not doing it perfectly, you're not doing it perfectly. We're just doing the best we can. But we love God.

**Jana:** We do.

**Annie:** We believe that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. And that's about what matters most to me. Okay, the last question we always ask, Jana Kramer, I'm so thrilled to ask you this. Of all the years that-

**Jana:** Yes, you are my favorite. Campus pastor.

**Annie:** Right. That was my question. Am I your favorite preacher? Because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to you.

**Jana:** Oh, man. Playing games.

**Annie:** Really?

**Jana:** Game nights are my favorite thing ever.

**Annie:** What?

**Jana:** I love game nights.

**Annie:** Do you really?

**Jana:** I'm such a nerd. Yeah.

**Annie:** Do the kids love them too?

**Jana:** Everybody.

**Annie:** Allan too? Did Lord bring you a gamer?

**Jana:** The only thing.

**Annie:** The Lord will bring him around. We'll give it time. We'll try. What games are y'all playing at the house?

- Jana:** Well, I want to do a murder mystery for my 40th. That's what I really want to do. But no, we live... literally anything. Anything you can think of we like to play. From Charades to...Euchre. I'm a big card girl.
- Annie:** That's Michigan stuff.
- Jana:** I know.
- Annie:** That is up north. Summers by the lake.
- Jana:** Anything from Catchphrase to... just all of it.
- Annie:** Have y'all done TENZI?
- Jana:** No. I'm so excited.
- Annie:** I'm getting it for you. Don't even get it. I'm gonna get you what you need.
- Jana:** Katherine's already googling it.
- Annie:** It is a great dice game.
- Jana:** Oh.
- Annie:** Everybody has their own dice and you... It's so fun to play.
- Jana:** Love. Because we play with the kids a lot.
- Annie:** One of my favorite things is I have friends that have kids in other places in the US and you can play TENZI over FaceTime.
- Jana:** Oh fun.
- Annie:** As long as they have their set and you have your set, it's really easy to play. So TENZI is a great one. That's my favorite.
- Jana:** Oh, I love you. Of course. That's great. A game night. Jana, thanks for doing this today and for trusting us. I love you.
- Jana:** I'm happy to be here.
- Annie:** I'm proud of this and I'm proud to share you with my friends. So thank you.

**Jana:** Thank you for sharing.

[00:49:54] <Music>

**Outro:** Y'all, isn't she great? I know. What an important special conversation. So make sure you grab a copy of *The Next Chapter* right now and follow Jana on social media, tell her thank you for being on the show. You can leave a comment in any of the posts that we share today around this episode. But the more we tagged her and tell her we're grateful, the better off. You know, why not? Why not be those friends to her right?

So if you need anything else from me, you know I'm embarrassingly easy to find. Annie F. Downs on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, in my puffy coat in New York. 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. Today what sounds fun to me is there as a coffee shop are right around the corner. I'm gonna walk and get me a chai later.

So y'all have a great weekend. We'll see you back here on Monday with my friend and one of our favorites, y'all get ready, Natalie Grant, is that. We'll see y'all Monday.