



Season 3, Episode 6 - Transcript

Family is Forever

Hey friend. I am so excited to be back again this week because I don't know about you, but it feels like we are living in a perpetual state of, every week is a year. Like what is today? It's like ca-turs-day <Laugh> like, it feels like a blur, but I'm glad that we get to always kind of have this point every Tuesday where we can come back. We can sit, we can kinda review what's happened in the week and then maybe walk away with something that's gonna help us in the future.

So today we've got some really good stuff to chat about and I'm not gonna lie. It might make you a wiggle a little bit in your seat or if you're cooking dinner or working out while listening, you know, you might take a little moment where you're saying to yourself, Ooh, I never thought about it that way, but this is very true to me, but I wanna let you know it's gonna be worthwhile. So thanks for standing in the discomfort with me as we grow together.

But before we dive into that, I wanted to give you guys a chance to speak. Now, if you didn't know in season three, we brought out this entirely new segment called slide into my DMs. And the reason we have this is because you guys are always sending me messages. You are emailing me. You're asking amazing, incredible questions and I love that you trust me to be able to speak into your lives this way. So if you ever wanna leave me a voicemail and possibly end up on an episode, don't worry. It's anonymous. <Laugh> but you can go ahead and click the information in the show notes and just leave me a message because I love to hear from you. So this week's question in the DMs comes from my friend Charise.

Hi Nicole. This is Charise. I have a question, with being in the service field. How do you adequately manage your emotional energy for all things that are important to you? So I'm a wife, I'm a mom, I'm a therapist. I'm building my business. I have consulting. I have friends and of course there's me. And I want to go to bed at a good time. I wanna go to the gym to manage my emotional space, my emotional energy. And sometimes I'm thinking, yes, I'm doing a great job. And then other times I'm thinking I'm so depleted and I have no more energy. And I'm maybe

even a little moody and irritated. So what are your best tips to manage your emotional energy and a service profession?

Oh, such a good question. And I know that we are always looking for answers to this one. Now how many of you are always hearing, oh, we gotta get in balance. We gotta keep things together. Look, I've got three bullet points that are gonna change your life friend. The first one balance is bogus.

This is not the first time you've heard me say it. Balance is bogus. And what that means is this. We are always going to be out of balance. It's about prioritizing what matters most. So if we know that being at that school play or you know, being there on the first day of that science fair or bedtime routines matter a lot to our little ones or to our family or heck even for ourselves, if we know that we gotta have that girls trip or we do not wanna miss our weekly manicure. Well, I want you to know that that is a priority and you don't wanna miss it, but know that everything else you're probably gonna screw up.

Yeah. I said it you're gonna screw up. You're not gonna always be on time. You're not always gonna be prepared. You will forget that book. That note, that file tech will fail you. I mean, things are going to mess up. Life is nothing but the meeting and solving of problems and problems are at every turn. But what I want you to know is that it's okay to drop a ball sometimes, particularly when you're somebody who's responsible for juggling so many.

So this whole concept of balance that everyone's trying to sell us a journal around or, or tell us that we need a new tool or some tech, it just isn't real. All you can do is your best.

Now the second bullet point with that com ties right into the balance part. It's called grace, God girl, grant yourself something, be generous with the grace that you give yourself because of the fact that you're never gonna be in balance. You aren't gonna be able to do all the things you are imperfect. Just like me. We are team hot mess express, and all we can do is be nice to ourselves when we get outta balance.

As soon as you accept that it's gonna happen over and over and over again, you put yourself in a position where you can start instilling some forgiveness instead of sitting in this weird shame circle that we get into that actually prevents us from sort of getting back on the horse and getting back to it. And so it ties right into accepting that you're not always gonna be all the things all the time to all the people.

Give yourself some grace, if once in a while, you're, you're a little bit less than perfect. If once in a while you miss the mark or if once in a while life happens and you're doing your best to respond to it. That is enough.

Now you've heard me talk about those two things before, but it's this last one that I have really started embracing in this season of my life. And if you're just tuning into the podcast, if you're

new around here, or if you maybe have missed some of our earlier episodes, you know, I'm going through a season of my life where I'm transitioning out of my marriage, I'm transitioning, which you know, for those of you guys, who've done it. 50% of America has, you know it means you're transitioning out of everything. You're transitioning out of old titles, old ways of living, out of old habits, out of old dreams. And it's a lot to leave behind and to rebuild and step into something new.

And with all of that, you better believe there's a lot of juggling and balancing because you still need to show up, you know, as a mom, as a business owner for yourself in a lot of ways as a friend, because life is still happening around you. And so as I'm trying to balance and juggle all these things, yes, I'm doing my best to give myself grace. And yes, I'm aware that I'm gonna drop the ball on some things, but friend, this piece has changed my life.

This little tidbit has changed everything. The phrase, it can wait. Yeah, it can wait. And frankly, if it can't wait, it was already broken.

What does that mean? It means that if you have a decision that you need to make, if you have a responsibility that's on you. If somebody's waiting for a file, a folder, a piece of paper, a check, mark, a signature, an opinion, a decision, you name it and they are insistent that you must deliver it now. If the world is asking you to respond at a speed of stress, well, guess what? You don't have to give up your right to peace. You are entitled to take 24 hours to take a couple of hours, take a nap to sleep on it and then respond with your decision or with your perspective or with your action.

And here's why this is so important. One, we make better decisions when we come from a place of ease and sure, you may still have some anxiety around that decision. And sure. It may not be a perfect decision, but you better believe that if you can allow yourself to kind of step back and then get back in there, it'll be a better decision. And when we have so many things that we are juggling, it's really helpful to say, look, it is six o'clock. I am tired. I've been working since 6:00 AM. A 12 hour workday is exceptional. I've done a good job. And my inbox is still full. Anything that is in my inbox, if I'm not able to get to it immediately, well, it can wait. And if the world blows up, if the client wants to quit, if the money runs away, because it could not wait for me to respond and reappear in a more rested state.

Well, that never belonged to me in the first place. That money, that opportunity you name it. Because the last thing you wanna do is train people to work with you in an anxious and urgent manner. The last thing you want is to respond and, and give up your right to peace as you operate in an already a crazy chaotic world.

And so for me, learning to not let other people impose their own stress and urgency on my life and to not match that energy, to basically look at people and say, look, if you wanna ride that rollercoaster of crazy, I'm gonna be right here, standing on the platform, holding the sunglasses and waving to you as you go by, I'll meet you by the pictures. Okay? Like I'm just not taking that

ride with you. And it's changed my life. It really has because I am forced to make a million decisions every day. And it got to the point where all of them are important. All of them, all of them have to do with money. All of them have to do with business. All of 'em have to do with people's lives. My littles, you name it. They're all important. So all I can do is the best I can do. And guess what friend that is enough. And so are you.

Great question, Charise. I hope that helps and give some insight and more than anything, you're doing great right now as you are.

So I have been loving the structure of our new season three, fancy pants. I'm in a studio. Look at me, I record a podcast. <Laugh> I love this format because it's not just telling a straight story. Now, obviously, if you are tuning in for the first time, or if you've been listening for a while, you know that I always offer a story and you're able to just like hop, skip around, listen to it in the car, pick it up, you name it. But these little segments are so fun. I love answering questions. And then I love this part: Don't make yourself content. Because you know what? There's so much stuff that we are exposed to day in and day out. There's always something happening. And our lives are almost dictated by what this influencer or this blogger or what the new pop culture thing is being said on TikTok or you name it.

So, I think it's great to be able to kind of talk about that in a real people way. That's what I feel like we do. It's kind of like me and my girlfriend sit in the car, talk about that cool thing we saw on the internet. So this week don't make yourself content actually has to do with you ready for this. This is a tough one, politics. I know. You're like, Ugh. <Laugh> you're like, Nicole. No, but I want you to know that it's not politics in a traditional sense. I'm not gonna sit here and talk red, blue, liberal, conservative, blah, blah. You can get plenty of that around the internet. And as you know, if you've followed me on any aspect of social media, I am team grace. I am team non-divisive.

It doesn't mean that I don't have opinions. It doesn't mean that I don't know right from wrong. It doesn't mean that I don't think that any type of form of hate or you name it is categorically not okay. However, it does mean that I'm willing to engage in conversation with everyone. Why? Because that's how we get ahead. So saying all of this, I wanna talk specifically about politics and influencers.

Now, I don't know if you guys have noticed about this, but there's been like a whole turn of the tides, right? There was this whole, if you've watched the sort of influencer game, and again, I might be dating myself here a little bit, but when the whole influencer thing started on the internet where we were kind of following regular personalities and kind of watching their lives and seeing what's happening, like not just the Kim Kardashian types, but like the regular mommy bloggers and all that jazz, we were kind of just tuning in for what they wanted to offer us.

Right? If they were telling us about a new recipe or crafting, or, you know, a baby trick or you name it, that was kind of what we were tuning in for at first. Then we were kind of paying attention to other things, new hobbies or relationships or whatever they wanted to be an expert in, but much like anyone to whom much is given much has become expected. And if you're an influencer listening to this, you understand honestly, some of the burden that comes with that and the difficulty and the challenges of balancing that responsibility.

Hopefully you understand that, cuz it's a big one. And if you're a consumer, someone who enjoys influencer content or enjoys social media, you understand what you kind of have come to expect as you're watching these people who have these platforms and these megaphones and have the opportunity to use them for good or for bad frankly.

And what I've noticed in the past maybe two, three years is that we are really putting a call on influencers or anyone with a microphone to use it well. And what happens is the using of that influence, well, it's kind of ill defined. And now what I'm hearing from a lot of my clients and my influencer friends, and sometimes I feel a little bit of it myself, is I'm nervous to say things.

Now I'm not gonna sit here and talk about cancel culture or council culture or whether or not any of those things are okay, that's not what this is about. We've talked about that in past episodes. You've heard my thoughts on it. What I'm talking about is the idea that we can opt out of having an opinion <laugh> that we can just say, look, this thing is happening and I'm just gonna continue to gloss by it and, and just act like it's not occurring.

I gotta tell you if you're an influencer. If you're somebody who's consuming content every day. There's something a little bit weird about watching someone continue to deliver the same content day in and day out when the world is on fire. And I think part of the hesitancy, if you're kind of consuming and watching and wondering why they're not saying something, part of the hesitancy, I think from some to speak is because they don't know what to say. They're not sure if they wanna mess it up. Like they don't wanna cause a situation, right. Everyone's definitely afraid of being canceled.

But I think there's also a little bit of that, our job has always been, right, the job of influencers has always been to provide an escape. That's ultimately the truth of it. When you grab your phone on Instagram or you grab your phone on Facebook, you're spending 20 to 30 minutes a day. That's the average person. We all know it's more than that. Let's just tell the truth, scrolling through and looking for an escape from whatever moment we're in, whether it's standing in line or, you know, you shouldn't be doing it, but waiting in traffic or in between, you know, meetings at work or in an elevator where it's awkward. And none of us wanna look up at the number, you know, whatever it is, we're looking for an escape and influencers provide that.

And it can be very difficult if you're used to providing that escape through humor, through recipes, through fun baby content, through fun family content to suddenly be called, to speak on something that may not be in alignment. And frankly you may not feel qualified to speak on. So I

wanted to offer something, one to those of us that consume this content every day. And two to those of us that create this content every day.

Now first to our creators, because actually the burden is on us. If we've been chosen to have this platform and it is a privilege and an honor to be able to have a microphone, it's to know that we aren't allowed to escape it, but we are allowed to be human. So I gotta tell you whatever it is you believe whether it's politically or values-wise or morally or whatever, I'm gonna tell you the truth, be that, be that and be that entirely.

There are people who will love and support you if you believe in killing bunny rabbits, okay? Which categorically I do not support. <Laugh> buddies are cute. I'm here for fuzzy things, but I will let you know that if that is what you believe in that you will find your people and it is much easier. And here's what I'm getting at. It is much easier to live a life, being authentic to you.

You don't have to worry about being canceled. If the people following you, aren't gonna cancel you. You don't have to worry about whether or not you're gonna lose your income, if you're being honest and true to who you are, odds are. If you're presenting an image of something that is so drastically different from who you really are, that it's only, then that you're not able to speak to issues as you really believe. And speaking as someone who also consumes content, I'll let you know that one thing I'm aware of is I would rather know exactly where you stand so I can decide where I wanna stand.

So if you are a racist, I'm saying it out loud. If you are a racist, let me know. I would love to know so that I can choose not to be in that room. So I can choose not to support you. If you are saying that these are your belief systems, be clear about it. And frankly, if you have belief systems that you've held onto that you are open to changing, we can't change 'em if we don't know about them. The truth is as much as it may be weird to own up to the fact that as a creator, we bear an additional responsibility to speak to global issues, political issues, social issues, things of that sort, all these things do impact us in our daily life, which is why we're expected to speak up to it.

We are not exempt from being part of this greater world. We're all tied together. So we have to speak to it. Now, some tips on how to do that because I've had to do it is one present as yourself. So you know whether or not you see me in a full face of makeup or you see me in a bonnet and pajamas, what you see is what you get anyone who's consumed my content or listen to my podcast, knows that I'm very big on being like, look, this is who I am. I am imperfect. And I know that's hard because it's like, oh no, Nicole's got like this fancypants life. Or she wears shiny things or she has impeccable eyebrows or her skin is just like, what are even pores? Look, God blesses us all in different ways. <Laugh>

No, but seriously, like I do understand that sometimes it can be super weird when you're watching someone live a certain life thinking, oh yeah, sure. They're saying they're I perfect. They're playing vulnerable, whatever, but it's true. I try to let you guys know I'm a hot mess. I

can't figure this out. I'm not perfect. Like even with all the things that I've done, right, I've done a lot of things really, really wrong. Like my marriage, not so hot right now, you know, my weight just figured out how to get that under control.

You know, like I'm literally just navigating through life. But the thing that I know I'm good at is I'm good at getting up and trying again, I'm good at figuring out solutions and I'm a rock star when it comes to business. That's what I've done for a living in corporate America for over 10 years. So I do know where I'm strong and I lean into that and that's where I try to support people, but I don't try to pretend to be the answer for everything.

And that's really lent itself to me being very clear about where I do speak up whenever a political, a social or a moral issue comes up. And if you've ever tuned into any of my content on Instagram, if you don't follow me there, it's at Nicole Walters. But if you ever tune in, I do these things called tough talks and you can see them on my highlight reel, just go ahead and give it a click through. And you'll see that my tough talks basically are around any social issue.

But the way that I try to do them is consistent with me. Instead of me feeling like I need to give some cool political statement or some perfectly worded phrase or that I'm supposed to research everything and know exactly where to send people and do everything flawlessly. I literally just try to have a conversation with my friends, just like we do here, where we talk about how we're feeling.

And we hold space for the fact that we're all different people and that we're doing our best with whatever we have in front of us. And ultimately we all wanna be safe and we all wanna feel comfortable and we all wanna feel respected. And we all wanna feel hopeful about the future and anything that I have a conversation around, moral or political, is from that space. And it's worked really well for me. And if you listen to any of that content, I hope that it inspires you as well to realize that shame is not the best way to get action out of anyone.

But I also hope that if you're a creator, it gives you a little bit of inspiration on how you can address issues and that you don't feel like you're in a position where you just can't say anything and you're frozen, or you do say something and it's the wrong thing. But no matter what I do want you to know that silence actually isn't an option that it really would benefit you to start thinking now about how you're gonna speak to social issues, because they're gonna keep coming up and the call over you and your business to be a leader in one of those spaces is not going to silence itself. It's only getting louder. So if you're a creator and you're wondering how do I approach politics and things of that sort, start working on it. And I hope my tips help.

Now, this is pretty quick, but for my consumers, for those of you are like, look, I'm not in this Instagram game. I'm not out here. You know, trying to put myself on, you know, a platform where people can judge me or whatever. I just wanna let you know, the only thing I ask from you, the only thing that I think we have any responsibility for as people kind of absorbing other people's content is grace.

You hear me say it all the time, grace, grace, grace just be generous with it. And part of that is because I think that a lot of times we forget that we're all evolving people and evolving people means this, the person you were at 20, and I think you know, it's hard to believe cuz like obviously you're thinking I'm 25, which is crazy, cuz I do pretty accurately remember all of the nineties.

But that said, I think you can relate to this, the person you were in your twenties, so different from literally even 25 and like so different from who you were at 30 and so different from 35 and so different from 40, 45. I mean you changed so much in just five year increments. I look at my life and I remind myself that eight years ago, eight years ago, just eight years ago I was married. I did not have three children. I had a business that was just starting. I had never had a TV show. I didn't have a podcast. I had no employees. I had no corporate headquarters. I'd only been to LA just a few times for a couple weeks of the year. Y'all my life is so different now.

And that was just in a span of eight years. I mean it is night and day and above all else. There was no pandemmy. I mean talk about not seeing something coming that, you know, completely change everything for everyone. And so knowing that you're consuming content from real people who are real humans, who honestly are guaranteed to be flawed and imperfect, no matter what they're presenting on the internet. And that if you are feeling like they're presenting an image of perfection all the time, it's likely based in insecurity and fear because of the judgment and the lack of grace that is not being given abundantly in this world.

And so if there's anything you can give to people, it's a little bit of grace. Now, I'm not saying don't hold them accountable. Hear me on that. Save me from the message of my DMs. I'm not saying don't hold people accountable. I'm not saying don't call people to the table to make a call and make a decision and make sure that they're, they're really aligning with their best version of themselves. But I'm just saying, you know, give us a little grace as we kind of fumble through it because isn't that what we all want.

So I'm just letting you know, there's a lot happening in the world and it's not letting up any time soon, but the best way to avoid making yourself content is to start looking ahead and planning your content. Figure out where you stand now so that you're ready when the time comes to make it clear to everyone where they should stand too.

So this segment today, just like I said at the beginning, is a little bit more personal and I think that it may give people little more feels and it's something that I could be completely honest, have not spoken about anywhere. The only people who know about this are people who are close to my family and actually I've been writing about it a lot in my book that is due to come out next year in late summer, early fall.

It's being published by Simon element. That's an imprint of Simon and Schuster. And I'm super excited about the book because it is real, a real deep dive into how I got here and and even

more, a lot of color around how I'm getting out of it. And I'm talking more about all the things, <laugh> all the things, but it's also inspiring a lot of feels that I wanna share here because I think the information, the lessons you guys can't wait for a book for, I think some of the stuff you guys need now, so this episode's called family is forever. And the reason why I called it that is because ironically enough at least for my family, that's what I always believed, but that isn't the case.

And I'm not talking about the family that you guys know, you know, I'm not talking about you know, my littles or you know Josh, my ex, you know, like I'm not talking about that. What I'm talking about is my family, I grew up with my mom, my dad, I have a sister, I don't know. I don't talk about her much, cuz she's very different from me. She is as much as I am a, "I wanna run up and hug people in target and at the checkout I'm like, oh my gosh, hello? Are you living in your purpose?" She is the opposite.

She gives me lectures before we go into store. She's like, Nicole, if we walk into this target and you talk to anyone, I will leave, I will walk away from you. <Laugh> like that's who she is. And for any of you guys who are extroverts, who grew up with like hyper introverted siblings, you understand the pain, right. Of having a sibling who doesn't wanna get into the mess with you. So that's my sister and that's why you don't really see her around on social media cuz she's just not with the life. But I do have a younger sister and my family's really small. It's just the two of us. And then my mom and my dad. And I don't talk about them much on social. You don't see them much on social.

My parents, I retired to Ghana, West Africa about, oh my gosh, I guess it's been about eight years now, maybe nine years. I was their first request after I made my first million in my business. One of the things we talked about was kind of mom, dad, what do you want? You know, like what does it look like for you? What does your future look like? And they were pretty adamant that they just, you know, my dad had been driving a taxi for over 40 years and my mom was a secretary at a boating insurance company and they just, they were ready to kind of go back home is how they described it, go back to Ghana and you know, be with their family for those final years because everyone was aging and that was easy enough to grant.

So they've been living in Ghana for close to 10 years and you know, they come back and forth pre-pandemic of course. And it's all good and great. But you guys have heard me do sort of my mom's accent and you've heard me talk about how my parents are tough on me and critical and always talking about babies and, oh, I'm getting nervous. I don't know if you guys <laugh>, I don't know if you can hear it in my voice kind of quivering. And my hands are actually getting sweaty, but it's because I don't talk about this a lot, cuz it is it's hard. I joke a lot about my parents and I joke a lot about my family about my mom and my dad and their hearts were always in the right place. But my relationship with my dad is not a good one.

And it's a lot to say that out loud. But it is something that I wanted to share because you know, my dad has had Parkinson's disease for about, I'd say about 30 years now. It was early onset.

He got it in his like mid to late forties. That was when we first started seeing symptoms of it. And when my dad was first diagnosed, I ended up having to assume a lot of responsibilities as the head of the household, particularly financially. And at that time I was in my late teens, early twenties.

And I talk about this in detail in the book. So I'll spare you, you know, your ears and your time now, but the, what I wanted to get to is that you know, my dad's not doing so hot, you know, and he's older already. He's 77, you know what I mean? So you know, that compounded with Parkinson's disease, which if you're not familiar with it, it is a terminal disorder. Muhammad Ali, the boxer, if you're familiar with him, he had it. And it essentially just, the best way to describe it. It kind of freezes up your body, you know your brain is sort of being eaten away, kind of like cottage cheese, it's just deteriorating. And if you were to look at a brain scan of someone with Parkinson's, you see a lot of dark shadows because different areas of their brain are kind of deteriorating and dying.

And it's really sad because it's slow moving. But you can see sort of the loss of your ability to walk kind of depending on where, your goal is to preserve that brain tissue, right. But depending on where it starts dying, that's what you start losing. So if it starts dying around your eyeballs, you lose your vision. If it starts dying around your speech patterns, you lose that. If you start dying around like your ability to walk, you lose your motions. And you know, people don't know how or why you get Parkinson's. They don't know if it's hereditary necessarily or not. But you know, it's pretty it's pretty tough to watch someone go through, especially cuz my dad, we share a lot of similarities in terms of being extroverted and being quick movers and quick talkers and all that jazz.

And it's tough, you know, to see him really turn into just a shell of himself. So that's not easy to see, but what I wanted to talk about was that I did not have a great relationship with my dad growing up and actually my whole life and I am not very familiar with what he went through growing up or how he became who he is. And I think that some of us can relate to that. Can relate to having parents that we may not know as well or as intimately or as closely as we'd like to. And for those of you guys who don't relate to that because you do have that type of close relationship, I really hope you cherish that because it's rare, I think.

And if it's not rare, like by golly, you know, for those of us who've gone through it, like aren't we tough cookies, but essentially what I wanna let you know is that I think that there's this thing on the internet where there's so much pressure around the perfect family or the vision of the perfect family, or even if you're an immigrant or the child of immigrants or, you know, Southern or traditional, or you come from this background where these dynamics exist where you firm expectations that we either need to sort of take it with a laugh, you know, or that we need to sort of acknowledge that like, well, you know, it was good intentions and from a good place, but I just kind of wanna call out that, you know, a lot of that stuff can be harmful.

You know, having a parent that doesn't readily know how to display love in a way that is traditional and clinically understood by, by a child can cause impacts. It can affect your decision making around partners in the future, which certainly affected mine. It can affect your ability to see yourself and your sense of self-worth and your self-esteem in the right way. It can be part of why you won't go after certain goals or believe in your ability to accomplish things. It can also be why you overwork yourself and why you stress yourself out or why you feel like things you're doing are inadequate and that all is rooted in and comes from, you know, that background because your parents are the first people to lend you belief when you don't have your own, to put the world into a context that you can understand.

It's a heavy responsibility and I'm not faulting the parents who necessarily didn't know how to do it, or have the resources or tools or had other stressors, but it doesn't change the fact that the responsibility is theirs and as a parent, myself, ours. And when you lack that it does impact you. But one thing that I don't think we talk about enough and what I wanna share here is the expectation compounded on that of us to pretend or act or display as if we do have a good relationship with our parents.

And this was illustrated to me recently because as I was sharing about my dad's condition, he's deteriorating pretty quickly. And I, I, we don't know how long he's gonna be around. And in saying that, I know that for some of you, the first reaction is, oh no, and you know, thoughts and prayers and, you know, Nicole, I'm being with you and all of that's very kind and received and generous, and God bless your empathetic and compassionate hearts. And that's why we're friends here because you're so incredible.

But I also wanna let you know that for some of us, who've had parents that weren't so kind. And for some of us, who've had parents that may not have the best relationship or for some of us that had parents that were downright abusive and harmful and that we needed to separate from and that was probably one of our boldest and bravest moves we've ever made in our entire life to get ourselves safe. We may not feel that way. We may not feel a sense of loss. We may even feel a sense of relief.

We may feel, or have had to work really hard to feel compassion towards the first people who are responsible to love us, instead harming us. And I just wanted to speak to that twofold. One, if you're like me and you're in that place where you're dealing with the complex feelings of having family relationships that people typically are like, that is always your mother. You need to love her. That is always your father. You need to forgive him. I just wanna let you know that I'm kind of in it with you.

And just like you, I am dealing with the complexities of the emotions that are associated with that. And I just wanna let you know and hear for me at least that whatever you feel is valid and you are entitled and allowed to work through those emotions and you do not have to respond at somebody else's expectation when they don't have your experiences. And that's critically important to understand because your relationship and how you reconcile that, how you feel

when you sleep at night is your own. And so does that mean that you need to make it all good or forgive? I don't know. You know, I know I'm still working through forgiveness in certain areas.

The thing that I've landed on, just being completely honest and candid for me is, you know, here's a person who caused me a lot of harm in my life and impacted me greatly. And I say this to say that it's also part of what makes it complex with parents is I also have a lot of gratitude towards my dad, which I know sounds bananas, cuz you're like, you're talking about this guy who did this, this and this. And again, when you read the book, I think you'll understand more cuz I go into some specific stories that I'm sure will make some of your jaws drop. Like Nicole, how'd you get here. But you know, here's someone I still have gratitude for because he was so tough on me that I was more than prepared for what the world would throw at me.

He was so hard on me that I definitely developed a sense and a belief that I could pretty much take anything on because I had to, I was living in a house of horrors where I, it was necessary for me to be able to be tough in order to deal with the day to day. And you better believe that I had to develop a solid belief system because I did not have someone who was putting that in me and telling me I could.

So as awful as that is, I have gratitude because you know, he did help shape me good or for bad in a way that allowed me to show up in the world in the way that I have. But I also had to make some very distinct decisions on things I would not replicate and that I wanted to be, you know, used by God to be a force for good. My dad isn't a Christian, you know, and I don't say that too, for anyone who's listening, who's not a Christian, to demean it. I'm just putting it into context as someone who is a Christian and believes in, you know, the goodness of God and the value system of tolerance and fairness and you know, grace and all of these things.

I did not grow up in a home where those things were echoed to me by my father or supported by my father or even displayed by my father. So saying all of this for those of you who have complicated relationships with your parents and are often feeling like all the messaging, whether it's through social or through your friends or through your peers or through influencers, is all about family being perfect and respecting and getting in there and fixing and repair.

I just wanna let you know it is a journey and I just, if I'm gonna be the only person who's gonna say it to you, I'm gonna let you know, like I've got complex relationships too, and I'm still working through that. But more than anything, I wanna also applaud you for doing the work day in and day out to not be that. And I'm trying not to get choked up about it, but it's true. You know when you've had such a complex upbringing in that way, that's also compounded by, not for everyone, but for me, poverty and trauma and you know, all those other things.

It's a lot to say I'm going to be better. Even if I don't know how. I don't have examples, I don't have a mentor. I don't have someone to ask, but I am going to be better. I am going to figure it out and I'm going to do it differently. I'm not going to raise my children in a home where fear

reigns. I'm not going to raise my children in a place where they don't hear I love you. And they aren't hugged.

You know, I'm choosing to do it differently because, even though I don't know what that is, I do know that it's what's right. And it takes a lot to be that person. And so you know, to all of you, you know, who are hearing that, I just wanna let you know that's big and I'm proud of you.

Now I also wanna talk about the other side of it, which this whole family forever thing. I've always been really proud of the present day, right? So I took you back to move you forward. You know, the present day, having this incredible family, I've got these three incredible littles you know, that are turning 11, 20 and 23 this year.

And you better believe that after if you haven't heard, this is episode one of season one of this podcast, the story of how I got my girls. But having become a mother in the most unexpected way and definitely not planning for it and three sisters at one time. I mean, it not only has changed and shaped me in every way, but it's given me so much peace because the classic traditional family that I saw emulated on social media and TV that I knew I never had in my own life. I also learned very quickly that it just doesn't exist. It just doesn't exist. All these perfectly curated photos of, you know, people on the beach with khakis and white polos and their golden retrievers.

And you know, these matching Christmas pajama photos that just hit the internet. Like those families have issues too. And we gotta stop being so shocked when they have those problems, you know, come to center stage because their families and families are complex. You know, and if you're gonna have like three or four kids, you better believe one of 'em is gonna do something disastrous. Like it's just how it works out, you know?

And I am just learning and I'm hoping that all of you're embracing that this whole family is forever, sure, you know, you don't divorce your kids family's forever, but what I will and you don't divorce the, the connection, you know, whether or not you choose to have that family member in your life actively based on your personal boundaries and what's needed is one thing, but you don't divorce or remove or cut the connection. You're always gonna have that blood.

But I want you to know and hopefully hear and embrace that what your family dynamic looks like, that is not forever. It is to your advantage to embrace the idea that your concept of family will need to evolve. And I'm hoping you can hear me when I say this. So many of us deal with pain and struggle when we realize like it's time for the kids to move out, or I'm going through an unexpected divorce that I was not ready for, did not ask for. And here I am, you know, and I need to figure out what I'm going to do because my family doesn't look the same. Or we adopted a kid and holy cow, our family looks different. We weren't planning that five years ago, and now we got a baby, you know, or I have a family dynamic and we have a spouse who has addiction, or we have a kid who has addiction issues, or, you know, we have a grandfather who's a narcissist or abusive or whatever.

I just wanna let you know that holding onto your image of family, looking a certain way as forever is not helpful. And no matter what's being reinforced out there all the time, I wanna let you know that the truth is whatever family you have and how you're choosing to navigate it with therapy, with prayer, with good old grit. That is great. And that is amazing. And if your family looks like you and just some of your best friends pulling together for holidays and doing the best you can, because you had to create a unit of love because you just didn't have one that you were automatically born into. That's amazing and impressive.

And it's still just as valid as the 2.5 kids with the picket fence and the dog and the mom and the dad. And all of that. If you have a family, that's a dad and a dad or a mom and a mom, or, you know, a grandma or, you know, just one mom or whatever it is, you know, all that matters is that you have somebody who loves you, who cares about you. Who's showing up every day and giving you their best and know that that is going to evolve too.

I remember seasons of my life which, you know, this is what I was writing about just for the past two days where I was writing about how it felt like my family was my teachers. And for all the teachers out here, you already know if you followed me before on social, I'm a pretty vocal advocate for teachers and for protecting them in so many ways and forms because teachers for me, they protected me.

And having teachers who noticed when I came to school and like my hair was a little frizzy and not done, or that I was at the Scholastic book fair, and I didn't have money to pay for books. And so they picked up one or two items for me or that you know, I never ever brought, you know, a breakfast or a snack and they always had something extra in their drawer. And that's not teaching, that's parenting, you know, that's love.

That is being there for someone that is treating and acting and, and receiving me as family and as an extension of self. And you know, and I realize now where I am today in a place where, as I'm looking to build a new life and embrace what may be a second life, you know, I thought I was already in a family that would stay the same forever. And I'm learning that, you know, I may just be taking pieces of that family, me and my girls, and maybe building something different that is gonna last awhile, you know, and hopefully a really, really long time. Right.

You know, but I hesitate to say forever. But I just hope that it lasts a long time and before it changes again, you know, maybe I'll adopt three more kids. Maybe I'll have a couple more kids, you know, hopefully we'll see. But you know, these are all things that I just really wanna share with you to know that I hope and pray that your family is everything that you dream it will be.

And I hope and pray that you don't deal with anything that is indicated by heartbreak or by, you know, medical challenges or addiction, or even just like personal life changes or goals or diversity, whatever, you know, I, I pray that those things don't come into your life because they're difficult, but life is difficult. You know, life is hard and we're really, really good at solving

problems. And I have a strong feeling that if you're listening to this now friend, you know, as we listen week after week, you're probably listening and thinking about a family thing right now.

You're probably in your head right now. Like, yeah, you know, I'm dealing with this with a kid or I'm dealing with this with my sister, or I'm trying to figure out how to, you know, start this conversation topic. Or I really wish my husband or my wife would do this or my partner. And I just wanna let you know that don't get too caught up in what it should be and that not being enough. And instead focus on the fact that you are always surrounded by opportunities to welcome more people into your family to show love and be love and know that the greatest thing is that you don't have to be alone.

That family is something that can be created and it isn't any less valuable. It isn't any less impactful. It isn't any less meaningful or fruitful than the one that you were born into.

So friend, while I know that it can be a downer to deal with the family stuff day in and day out. I want you to know it's your journey. Don't let social media dictate how you do it. And definitely don't let social make you feel bad about it. You are doing the best you can, and that is always enough. And if nothing else, I'm in it with you and we're doing life together.