



## **Season 3, Episode 7 - Transcript**

### *Grief In Grace*

Hey friend. So week after week, we come back here and we have an awesome chat and typically we'll cover everything from your questions, Q & A. And I just love hearing from you and, you know, you can always reach out to me all over the internet, DMS @NicoleWalters, and the details are obviously in the show notes below.

But whenever we have something really important to talk about, whenever we have to have a one on one, we just keep it simple. It's just me and you sitting in your car or around your table or in your kitchen preparing or working out. It's just us having a friend chat and that's what today's gonna be. So if there are little kiddos listening, then I just want you to keep it in mind that this is more adult subject matter, but it's nothing inappropriate. You just may wanna have a follow up chat to explain and give a little bit of context.

Last week we chatted and it was a tougher one. One that seemed to really resonate with you, the episode was called Family is forever, and this is one of my fastest downloaded episodes ever because the subject matter really seemed to connect for a lot of us. And in that particular chat, just high level, we talked a lot about how some of us feel so much pressure to keep people in our lives, no matter how they treat us, whether we have been abused by them, manipulated, mistreated, whether we just don't really like the lifestyle they're living.

And we find that it's out of alignment or those people just frankly, aren't very kind. And we feel pressure, whether it's from society or friends or peers to maintain relationships or reignite relationships and not necessarily make the choice that might be best for ourselves or our future growth. And in that episode, I talked about how not only did that include our friends, you know but it also included our family, sometimes relationships as close as our own parents. And the example that I used in that particular episode was talking about my relationship with my father.

And I shared that you know, I'll be going into detail about it extensively in my book with, you know, some specific highlighted stories that I think will really connect with a lot of you, but that I decided, you know, in the past several years to really minimize contact with my father, I hadn't

entirely chosen not to speak with him. Although there were seasons where I definitely did not, but I really had minimized his exposure to my mind, my family, my wellbeing, and generally my sense of self.

And I did that to maintain peace as well as to protect the growth that I'd made and the healing that I'd really fought for from, you know, a difficult childhood and somebody who, unfortunately, hadn't done a lot of the work himself to be in a place where he could interact, you know, in a healthy manner for me and for my family.

That conversation was really tough to have. It was not easy to share with you guys that much like anything else, even though I say it all the time and you always give me so much grace, whenever I do that, my family is yet again in another way, imperfect and you know, a bit of a hot mess. <Laugh>, I think what's nice about our growing friendship that we have here. Our internet best friendship is that we're realizing more and more one, gosh, how alike we are, two, that no matter what, no one's life is perfect. And hopefully three, that even with all the imperfection, we can still grow and, and be better and not continue generational cycles that are harmful.

And I'd really just step into our best selves, but that's my intent behind sharing these things. And that was why I shared with you sort of my choice around that family decision. What, I didn't know when we had that chat was that I would have that chat on a Friday afternoon and then Saturday morning I would get a phone call that my father had died.

I did know that my dad was ill for a while, and I did know that it was a possibility because he was older. And it's important for me to update you on where I am and how I feel. It's only been, just being completely transparent with you guys, like I always have, it's only been about a week. And so I want to kind of address, you know, how I feel today, which very much feels like on the other side of what I was seeing just, you know, a few chats back with you.

So first I want to address that, I know the initial response for most people is one that is of empathy. It's one of loss and acknowledgement of my loss, if you will, and condolences and sympathy. And when I shared that my father had passed online, that was the vast majority of the outpouring. And so I wanna say here, if you didn't hear me say it on social, or if you know, I wasn't able to respond to you privately in the DMs, thank you so much. The offering of, you know, extended peace for me and my family and prayers is well received.

And the fact that you even think to share those simple words or to take a brief moment in order to send positivity and healing and just general softness, you know, my way, and my family's way is really meaningful. And it's something that I hope you recognize is one more reminder that no matter whether it's the internet or, you know, podcast, or what have you, there is still a very real connection between people. So I just wanna say thank you for that. Every single thing has been received and internalized, and thank you. I also wanna address that, I know that here, and you know, if you've ever seen me on stage or watched, you know, our TV show or, you know, any

place that we've interacted, you know, that I love sharing a lot of my family's traditional Ghanaian antics and stories, right?

I'm constantly talking about how, you know, my dad was pushing me to be the best or how, whatever I did wasn't good enough. And you know, these classic Southern ways, my mom wants you to have more babies, yada, yada, yada. Right. So, you know, and I usually do that with their accent and I'm, you know, telling stories about my father's work ethic and, you know, his immigrant can-do-ism and, you know, things like "We are Afri-CANs, we are not Afri-CANTs" <laugh>, you know, things like that. And we've had a lot of laughs about it. And frankly, what you may not have known is that a lot of times, I managed to turn these experiences into laughter to keep from crying, because it was really difficult to grow up in a household where somebody was so focused on their definition of success and making sure that all, all of the people around fit into it.

And the truth is that while I always managed, thankfully, to extract the messaging and the meaning out of a lot of the pain, and I managed to get everything I needed in order to thrive as an adult, the truth is our relationship was not a good one. It wasn't healthy, it wasn't balanced. And it wasn't a relationship that reflected, I think what is at least clinically described as a healthy father-daughter relationship. And it was complex at best and traumatic at worst.

And what I can tell you is that thankfully through the past decade, I have had a lot of therapy. Lot of, I am very well-therapied. I have paid multiple college tuitions in therapy. <Laugh> okay. I have therapy down and having had that therapy, it's really helped me put into context, the difficult childhood I had and how it has shaped me into who I am today. And it's really helped me learn.

For those of you guys who are considering therapy, have heard me talk about it before, how not to let the negative narratives, right? The thoughts, the perceptions ideas, the concepts that were put into me by a fearful parent or an anxious parent or a ill-equipped parent to not let me absorb those thoughts as my own, to identify them and reject them when they don't serve me and to make sure that they aren't influencing and dictating the decision making that I make around my own life, because I, I don't have to carry or inherit the trauma and the anxiety of my forefathers. You know, I can inherit their gifts and leave the rest. And I'm really grateful because it also puts me in a position where now, today I can speak pretty comfortably about, and candidly, honestly, about both sides of grief and also the grace that exists with hard family relationships.

And it's with that, that I wanna say that I am aware that for most, many, I really hope many, that the loss of a parent is an intensely painful event. I have had to tell many people about the loss of my father and just update them. And I see in their eyes, the immediate connection to either their own loss, if they've already experienced it or a flash of fear that, you know, they've sort of realized how real mortality is. And they think of their own parents, you know, eventual passing. And I see that always tinge with love.

And I understand that this is difficult. And for some of you who are listening right now, who've experienced this loss or in the process of dealing with the transition or know that this time will come soon. It hurts five years, 10 years, 20 years down the line, you still miss them. When I think of the relationship that I fostered with my daughters and you know, being the adult on the other side of things, I'm gonna miss them too. <Laugh>, you know, when, when my time comes and I know that we'll miss each other and it's one sign of sort of doing the whole parenting thing, right, is that the losses felt, even though you leave behind very equipped children who are able to take on the world without you.

But I also wanted to speak to, and that's kind of the intent of this time right now that for many like me, the loss of a parent is complicated. It's a multi-layered moment that realistically challenges the strength of the therapy you've been getting. And it really does encourage and foster and necessitate really honest conversations with yourself, with God and with that therapist. And it really makes you reflect on how you feel about this loss.

Now I can say for me, in the end, nothing's changed about how I feel about the conversation that I had with you a few weeks ago. I do not regret the choices that I made regarding the relationship that I had with my father while he was here. I do not regret the choice that I made to focus on my future, protect my peace and choose a life that is filled with joy and surrounded by people that wanted to support the lifestyle required for that joy.

I'm not mourning the loss of my father in the same way now, because one of the things that I'm aware of and something that I think many of you may feel as well, is that I had to mourn the loss of what a father could be many, many years ago when I had to acknowledge that I would never have the relationship that I wanted or deserved from the man that was my father. And so this isn't the first death. This is truly the second.

And in the end, my father, he battled early onset Parkinson's disease for over 20 years. So I saw him morph and change and wither away into someone that I barely recognized. And of course I still had compassion and empathy for this because the person that eventually passed didn't even look or resemble the person that was so frightening to me when I was younger and so traumatic, you know, through my twenties and thirties. And I am grateful that through therapy and through the support and help of loving people in my life, that I got to a place where when this moment arrived, I was well prepared to receive it. And the place that I was in was that I was grateful, you know, as a daughter and a Christian, to see him have relief from many years of suffering.

And for those of you that are going back and forth on whether or not you want to do the work that's required in order to get to a place where you're able to have that peace around that relationship, I encourage you to do it because it is something you'll have to face no matter what. And if you have people in your life right now, your children, your partners, your spouses, your businesses, even you wanna make sure you're able to be present in those moments and that your world isn't rocked on a level that it doesn't have to be and doing the work therapeutically

helps with that. And where I can tell you that I stand right now is truly in a place of grace, not just for him, but also for myself.

And there's nothing more grace-filled in a moment of grief than being able to reach a place where you can pray for peace for those who may not have ever represented it in your own life. It's easy for me right now to let go, to close a chapter, to find freedom from a very painful and difficult childhood, and to actually give thanks for what I was able to extract and know that even though, you know, his DNA still courses through my veins, that I've been able to change and morph that into something that shows up in the world for good and always will from here forward. And that's the whole point.

So I know that I recorded that chat just hours before my dad passed away. But again, it's still my truth. And for those of you who are hearing these words, so many of you have reached out to me, you know, when, when I had this discussion online and said, Nicole, you have no idea how freeing it is to hear that I'm not alone in having a complicated grief. And how seen you felt in knowing that you weren't the only one wearing a smile and still having some positive things to say about your parents.

You know, ultimately can't reject the fact that it was not all good. And frankly, you're kind of glad that you're able to be free of the burden of caring in a daily way, the obligation to show up or behave a certain way, or protect the family secret. Not having to do that anymore is freeing. And so it's my hope that in these conversations we've had online.

And so many of you who've reached out to me, some of you who are still working because your parents are still present, but maybe you're their caregiver, what have you, still battling these feelings of grief in real time, I hope that if you see yourselves in these words, in this conversation we've had today, I pray that it gives you some ease in your own truth. I pray that it helps you recognize that you have the right and the ability, as I said before, to seek healing and to have happiness and that you don't have to wait until they're gone to say yes to yourself and your future.

And with that a message for my dad.

I'm really sorry, dad, that your inner turmoil prevented you from receiving the love that God readily put around you. It was everywhere. I know because I found it. I'm grateful though, for what you did, give me my smile, these very consistently awesome eyebrows, those are yours, these tiny pores and one half a dimple and my charisma and ability to chat with anyone. I know that I got that from you. But what I also know is that I've chosen to leverage these gifts, these God-given gifts to show up as good in the world. And I wish that you knew how and definitely chose to leverage those gifts to find your own happiness. Because I know somewhere, I believe that if you had your own happiness, you would've chosen to extend it to others. Maybe that's something I would've gotten from you too.

It's ultimately my hope that in your final moments, whatever they were like, that you met Him, that you were able to reconcile your choices with God. And then that way, maybe dad we'll meet again. And I know that if we do, we'll both be meeting as the best version of ourselves. Rest in peace, dad. I know I'm in peace right now.