

Welcome to Empowering
Homeschool Conversations,
your authority in
navigating the world of
homeschooling diverse learners.

Featuring Peggy Ployer from
Sped Homeschool,
Annie Yorty from AnnieYorty.com,
Leilani Melendez from Living with Eve,
Stephanie Buckwalter from ELARP Learning,
and Dawn Jackson from Dawn
Jackson Educational
Consulting and Tutoring.

With over seventy five years
of combined homeschooling expertise,
experiences and perspectives,
this group is eager to
share their wealth of
wisdom to empower your
homeschooling journey.

So grab your favorite mug,
settle in and get ready for
insightful discussions,

valuable insights and practical tips.

Give your homeschool the
power boost it needs to
successfully educate the
unique learners in your home.
you

Welcome everyone to another
exciting episode of
Empowering Homeschool Conversations.

I am so,
so blessed tonight to be with a
really special guest, Clarissa Moll.

She is an award-winning
writer and podcaster who
helps bereaved people find
flourishing after loss.

She produces and moderates
Christianity Today's
flagship news podcast, The Bulletin, and
She's hosted CT's Surprise
by Grief podcast,
as well as a podcast for
authors called The Writerly Life.

Can I say that?

Clarissa's writing appears

in Christianity Today,

The Gospel Coalition, Relevant,

Modern Loss, Grief Digest, and more.

She is the author of four

books on bereavement,

including the best-selling

Beyond the Darkness,

A Gentle Guide for Living with Grief,

and thriving asked your loss and hurt.

Help and hope.

Hope I said that right a

real conversation about

teen grief and life after loss.

Hope I said that.

Okay.

And that's what we're really

going to be talking about

tonight your work.

And somehow we just got disconnected.

Let's see if she's going to

come back here in a second.

Might have to start this one over.

doodles let's start that one

over oh there you are

you're back no just uh kick

me out but you're back yay

all right about that I

don't know what happened

there um but I just I just

was saying that we are

going to be really diving

into this book hurt help and hope for

for, um,

it's a real conversation about

teen grief and life after loss,

but it's really a book

about any kind of grief.

And I can attest to that

because I was so blessed by this book.

So Clarissa, thank you for being here.

I feel like,

thank you for being in my home

and I'm in your home, I think.

And it's just a joy to be with you.

I'm so excited.

I

Just be prepared, people,

when you read this to

please have some tissues on hand.

You can really read this as a devotional,

which I did.

I spent it in my devotional time.

And it was an amazing time

between the scriptures, the prayers,

the stories, your daughter,

her voice in this book.

It was just amazing.

Can you tell us?

Oh, you're welcome.

Can you tell us and our

audience today your story?

just whatever is on your

heart to share I know the

book goes into it and

you've shared it many times

on many podcasts but just

for our audience and and I

just want to preface it by
saying when I thought about
you being on this podcast I
was just so um you know
really touched because one
thing we don't talk about a
lot is when we have
children with special needs
or challenges or any kind of disabilities,
we don't realize it is a type of loss.

There is maybe a loss for a
dream that we had for that child, right?

We all experience losses,
there's no doubt.

But that's a unique loss
when you lose someone that
you love or you lose a
dream of someone you love.

And that's kind of what I
just try to keep in mind as
I was reading your book and
just listening to this whole thing.

Like, how does this...

How does this apply to
people that have lost
something like a dream to them?

Share your story because
it's precious and it's a
gift that you're giving this world.

Thank you.

Well, it's an honor to be with you, Dawn.

You know,
homeschooling is something that's
very precious to me, to my family.

We homeschooled for nine
years and it was a joy to do that.

And we did it in all kinds
of different ways.

And we've gone through all
different kinds of schooling options.

And I feel really in many
ways that homeschooling was
a particular gift to us
in our rawest season of loss.

We had been homeschooling for seven years,
almost eight years.

And my husband and I had
been married for almost seventeen.

We had four kids when on our
family vacation in twenty nineteen,
he died in a hiking accident.

I was with the kids.

My daughter was
at a four-h county fair with
some old friends we were
visiting an area we had
lived in before and uh he
went off for the day with a
climbing partner and didn't
come home and uh and so it
was a sudden loss
experience for us and uh
certainly reordered
everything about our world
brought us down to those
fundamental things of what
deeply matters to you.

Is it the way that you have
organized your family,

the way that you have
prioritized your schooling, perhaps?
What does a family even look like?
We had to ask those
questions for ourselves
over and again because this was...
This was not a life-shaping loss for us.
And so, you know,
when I think about homeschooling,
and perhaps we'll talk
about this a little bit more,
I think about the
unexpected gift that it was
to us when we needed that
kind of intimacy and that kind of care.
And I think in many ways how
homeschooling prepared us
for this thing that you
really can't be prepared for at all.
Wow, that's amazing.
That's amazing.
I know,
just as you were even just sharing

that little glimpse into the past,

can you tell me...

Because I don't remember how

many years ago this happened now.

How many years has it been now?

Yeah, it'll be six years in July.

Six years.

I'm sure every year is,

it just doesn't get easier

when you lose someone.

I know I've had some great

loss in my life over the

years and unexpected things,

things I never dreamed of or asked for,

right?

Right.

And when I read this book,

so many emotions were going

on for me inside of me.

Number one,

how the first thing I kept

saying was how I wish I had

this book my whole life,

even though I didn't
experience loss in the same way.
But it's a it's a it's a
guide to navigate your life.
in the simplest things,
like the things that came up for me,
I struggled with in this book.
The places I wanted to go
and run and hide and all that,
I did not want to face it.
I did not want to deal with it.
And you touch on that.
My son lost his best,
best friend in high school.
And I know after that,
he was devastated for years, for years.
And if he would have had
something like this, him and his friends,
What a difference that would have made.
What an incredible difference.
So I thank you.
But I wanted to, if you don't mind,
just jump into a couple of concepts,

which I know will probably
take us on some other trails.

And I'm OK with that.

I don't mind.

the first thing um coming
from an educator profession
you know profession and
also working having worked
with children that have
been traumatized um either
by the education system or
just life in general one of
the the terms that I
absolutely loved on page
ten was called the grief brain
brain.

What a beautiful concept.

Was that something you made
up or was that something
that you've heard before?

I've never heard that term.

No, it's not something that I made up.

Actually, in bereavement advocacy,

which is where I spend a
lot of my time when I'm not podcasting,
brain fog, grief brain,
these are descriptions for
the kind of confusion that
and foggiess that descends
on us after we've experienced a loss.

And I love that you bring up
the different kinds of losses,
non-death losses,
because one of the things
that I think a lot of
people don't understand is
that anytime we encounter a
significant kind of loss, physiologically,
emotionally, spiritually, practically,
we're having to make
adjustments for that change in our lives.

And grief is the result.

That's a natural result.

And so I think about some of
the folks that you interact
with who perhaps have

pulled a child out of
school because they're struggling there.

And they think, oh, you know what?

We're at home now.

This is going to be great.

I've got curriculum that's
picked out just for you.

It's tailored for you.

And they find that their
child still struggles.

And he can't pay attention
or he's struggling to retain information.

Right.

And there could be any
number of reasons why those
things are the case.

But if grief and loss is part of that,
then that's something that
has to be named as part of
your education plan,
as part of the kind of care
that you offer to your
child in that transition period.

Grief brain for someone who

has lost a loved one,

it's usually a merciful shock.

That's how I usually describe it.

Our brain can't take in all

of the magnitude of what it

means to experience the

death of a loved one.

I believe it's God's mercy

to us that our brains move

down into a torpor, almost like a

A sleeping version, you know,

you've got the sleep screen

on your computer where

everything just runs,

but it runs at a much

slower and lower level.

And this can be confusing for people.

You know,

I lost my keys and I can't find

where to find them.

I can't figure out where to find them.

Or I was drunk.

And then I forgot why I was even going.

You know,

these are very normal experiences

that folks have when

they've lost a loved one.

And it's all part of the

brain's adaptation to this

new big earth shattering information.

And the reality is that

whether your child has

experienced a divorce,

has experienced a big move,

a breakup of an important

friendship or relationship in their life,

or yes,

even coming away from a difficult

experience in school,

they may experience this

kind of foggiess for a little while.

As their minds and their

hearts adjust to their new environment,

the good news is that grief

brain doesn't last forever.

That as slowly we are able
to take in and wrap our
heads around our new surroundings,
around our new lives,
the details of our new lives,
we're able to adjust.

I mean,
in as much as God has given us this
mercy in allowing our
brains to sort of slow down
and take things in a little
bit more slowly and carefully,
he's also given us brains
that are plastic, that are resilient,
that can develop new neural pathways.

And so we know that not only
is resurrection possible for us,
that kind of
coming back to new life
after the death of a dream
or the death of a loved one.

But we also know that
resilience is just written in our bones.

It's how we were made.

And I think that can bring a
lot of hope for parents who
are watching a child struggle,
for parents who are
experiencing a loss themselves,
because even as home educators,

Sometimes it's not our child
who is struggling a loss.

Maybe it's our loss and
we're grappling with it and
also trying to show up to
our kid every day at the kitchen table.

And so we bring that into
our educational setting as well.

And and that can bring with
it a lot of challenges.

Yeah,

I know you go into this in the book a
little bit,

but can you share with our
audience how your mornings,
your school days looked

like after this event, this tragic event?

And I also want to say,

because I have so many thoughts,

your husband just sounds

like he was the most amazing person.

And the book that he wrote before, I mean,

this story is amazing.

This isn't...

Fat enough.

Oh, I think you popped off again.

There you are.

But this book isn't big enough.

It has to be a part two.

But can you share that?

Like, what did that look like for you?

Like you kind of touched on it,

just having that gathering, you know,

with your family, your children,

were there other people

they're supporting and helping?

Because like you said,

you're trying to keep it all together,

but you're also, you know,

comforting your family and

trying to teach them, right?

Yeah, I had, when my husband died,

it was right before the

beginning of the school year.

So it was mid-July and we

started school late that year.

I usually was pretty good

about staying on track with

starting right after Labor Day,

But we really eased into the

school year because even

though my husband wasn't

the primary educator in our home,

I was that person.

My daughter was heading into

junior high and we had made

plans for him to teach her geometry.

I wasn't...

I maxed out on my math

abilities pretty early on.

And so that had been part of the plan.

We had enrolled our two

oldest in a co-op that was

meeting two days a week.

And so it was, what do we do?

We had planned on having two drivers.

You know,

I would be home with the younger

ones and he would pop over

to drop them off and pick them up.

How is even the parent

involvement component of

this cooperative learning

environment going to work

if I'm a single mom now?

You know,

I had to wrestle with a lot of

those questions from

changes in curriculum.

to the logistical changes that come with,

as homeschooling parents,

our kids are involved in so

many different things and it's great,

but it's not like all the

activities are in one place.

It's not a one-stop shop
like it would be if they
headed to school and the
theater program and the
music program and the
sports were all on the same campus.
And so we do a lot of running around.
And so there was the
logistic part of that.
And then there was also,
and I don't wanna
underestimate it at all,
the emotional differences.
My youngest had just turned seven.
My oldest was just turning fourteen.
Developmentally,
they were in very different places.
And while that works,
at home when you're
homeschooling in ideal conditions.
You set the younger one to do a task.
You have the older one do
some independent work so

you can focus with the younger one.

You can't do that easily in

grief because grief is all hands on deck.

It is

Nobody is left alone to cry

unless they want to be left alone.

That the insecurity of

losing another parent can

really cause clinginess,

fears to crop up that were

never there before, new insecurities.

And so it really reshapes

the way that you homeschool.

But I don't think that's a bad thing.

And I think this is the sort

of secret sauce that we as

homeschooling parents really have.

From the very beginning,

our desire has been to

deeply know our children,

to know their strengths,

know their weaknesses,

know the things they're afraid of.

And not only that,
but we've also always had
the wisdom to pull in other experts to
to supplement, scaffold,
to teach alongside of us,
whether that is a grandpa
who comes over and teaches
an economics class like my
dad did that first year,
or whether it is going to a
church-based co-op or a
community-based co-op.

We think of schooling really
as a community effort,
even as it's a family effort.

And what I realized was that
to survive and also thrive
in this new landscape,
I needed to lean into those
things that I did know how
to do well as a homeschooling mom.

I could pay attention to my kids.

I knew when math was

overwhelming and so we'd

have to really pull back

and take it super slow.

We were used to doing that already.

I knew when they needed a

little extra care from a co-op teacher.

And so I could email or text

that person in advance saying, hey,

so-and-so is coming in today,

needs a little TLC.

Because that was another mom who cared.

And I knew that building

that village was something

I had already done.

So I think even as

disorienting as that very

early season of raw grief was, I

Homeschooling had provided

me with vital tools that I

believe have brought us to

the place that we are today,

which is a family that's deeply connected,

loves each other,

has experienced different
educational journeys,
but has each other's best
interests at heart.

I just love that so much.

Two visuals that I remember
that I loved in the book,
one was when your family
took special books that you
list in the appendix in the back here,
just novels to help you process.

Like, who does that?

I mean, this music, songs, everything.

A homeschool mom does that.

A homeschool mom does that.

Yep, we read so much.

Just see, I could see your family...

oopsie sitting down reading
these books together
talking about them crying
about them how did
literature or the bible or
anything like you said the

songs you have songs of joy
when it's time to dance you
have songs of sorrow by the
way I listen to
a couple of them this morning,
about five in the morning,
I was just trying to dive
into that appendix and
sitting there crying and,
and really like just having
a sense of this, this community,
like you said,
that you have grown and you
are an amazing mom.
I will have to say that I
can only imagine.
I mean, your husband,
I can feel him in this book.
I can feel this family and I
don't even know you,
but I feel like I do
through this story and just not the story,
but the care and the

thoughtfulness that went

through every single detail.

The other part was when your

daughter was talking about

the rocks when they went through a hike.

I think it was your daughter.

And no matter how the rocks were moved,

the boys were building the rocks,

that the water came through.

And that was how life was now,

that we had to navigate

these boulders that were

tossed into our lives.

and learn to move around them.

I'm not saying that probably as well.

Can you expound on that a

little bit for our audience?

Yeah.

So I think that for us as home educators,

literature is just

It is such a rich garden.

And we were always a very

book-based family.

You know,

it was something we were in a rhythm.

We are now over ten years

reading novels as read-alouds together.

When my daughter comes home from college,

she still joins us for the read-alouds.

Senior in high school, you know,

that's just part of our family rhythm.

that we would read together

and then we would pray

together and then we would

go to bed every night.

And we started doing that

when they were really little.

Our first book was Charlotte's Web.

And, you know,

when I think about the way

that children grieve,

it isn't like adults.

You know, when adults experience a loss,

there is some predictability.

I'll feel sad.

I'll feel sad for a while.

I may pull away from relationships.

I may struggle to be

enthusiastic about the

things that used to bring me joy.

And these are all normal

adult responses to loss,

but they're not normal

responses for children to loss.

When it comes to children,

they understand loss as

they develop over the years.

And so a child who is four

or five may experience the

death of a loved one.

And head straight back to

play and never think anything more of it.

And an eight-year-old may

ask questions that really

feel like a knife to the heart.

Things like,

what does it mean to be cremated?

Or can grandma breathe

underground when they're

sitting there at the
funeral service or at a
graveside service?

And those questions are so literal.

They rock us, right?

But we know as educators

that our children are

moving from those very

concrete building block

ideas to more abstraction.

And so we see that in their

educational journey,

and we know that's a part

of their developmental journey as well.

And so one of the reasons

why I really leaned into literature,

we've leaned into music,

is that it has a wide range

of emotions that are expressed.

And so maybe you're feeling

joyful and you're not missing dad today.

Well, sing it out.

Be joyful.

There is so much world and
so much hope that's still
in store for you.

And if you're having a really rough day,
then, you know,
a character in a read aloud
that we're reading at night
may deeply resonate with you.

One of the things that we've
taken as an opportunity to
do together as a family is
to talk about how poorly
death is described in literature.

Having lost a loved one,
sometimes we'll pause and be like,
is it like that?

No, nobody would actually ever say that.

It's even been some literary analysis,
you know, working in there as we...

Kind of understand, exactly, you know,
kind of understand
characters and what they're
experiencing and whether

that's authentic.

So I really feel like, you know,

in so many ways,

perhaps I've done this grief thing,

just like a homeschool mom would do it.

Because we were so primed

with these amazing

resources around us anyways,

that it's something, and even, you know,

you mentioned the rocks in the stream.

We were very much an outdoor family,

still are.

Love to do nature studies

and just be outside.

And what better picture of

renewal and life after death,

God's promise of resurrection,

than to be out there raking leaves,

to see the daffodil bulbs

begin to sprout in the spring.

We've got object lessons all around us.

And so, you know,

it's a lot of that

integration that we were
just doing on an everyday
basis that we were now able
to apply to a new area of our lives.

What a blessing.

I mean,
so many things you said about community,
about just being together,
already having those relationships built.

It was just a natural
progression to keep going
and find those questions and those,
like you said, through the characters,
through the different characters.

And I know one thing in your book,
and I'm jumping ahead because there's

I've got these pages marked,

but I know you talk in a

section about the kind of I

was going to say to my words,

the dumb things people say

when you lose someone.

Right.

And and did you would you

say that you experienced

those things or your children did?

Or were those things that

you found in literature like.

you know, that's not a kind thing to say,

or how, how was that?

How did that come about?

Because that's a pretty

unique thing that you write about.

I, again, I cannot say how impressed I am.

I'm glad I have this book.

Like, thank you for sending it to me.

And, um,

I will treasure this and refer back to it.

I was thinking of all the

people that I know that should read this.

It's okay.

Anyway, back to my question.

I think that all of us are

fumbling along to develop a

language of consolation.

We're not good at it.

As a culture, we avoid death.

Even as Christians, we avoid death.

It's hard to think about.

We want to go straight to

empty tombs and the joy

that comes after and the

daffodils and the...

It's hard for us to sit with hard things.

And so, you know,

when I think about the hard

things that were said to me, to my family,

I taught my children early on.

I said, you know what,

all the stupid things that

people say that actually really pinch,

really hurt.

What they're trying to say is,

I love you and I'm sorry.

And they don't feel like that's enough.

And so they kind of spin

extra words because no one

has told them it's enough to say,

I love you and I'm sorry.

Right.

And so I think, you know,
being able to interpret
that and being able to
understand that is really helpful.

And I think for anyone who has experienced,
you know,
you talk about the loss of a dream.

You know, if a parent,
I think about a parent I
know who recently received
an autism diagnosis for their child,
you wouldn't walk up to
that parent and say, well,
Well, I know it's hard now,
but better days are coming.

It would fall so flat.

When we're going through
something that is challenging for us,
that may feel like a loss to us,
may feel like a disappointment,
new information that's big
and unknown that we're

trying to grapple with,
we don't need someone to
sort of correct the feeling.

We simply need someone to sit with us,
right?

Right.

And, um, and I think even in that,
it's just another way that I feel like,
um,
you know,
when I think about home educators,
it's something that we have,
if you want to have
community as a home educator,
you better get good at that.

Right.

Because we all are taking
different paths and there's
no place for judgment there.

There's really only space for grace.

And so, you know, when,
when a parent is struggling
with their child, um,

We don't try to correct them.

We just say, gosh, I'm really sorry.

You know,

I've had a similar kind of

problem with my kid or I've

never gone through that before,

but that must be super hard.

You know,

we are because of the diversity

of the community in which

we move and work as home educators.

I think that we are already

practicing the skills of

that language that builds

bridges and can offer

consolation in a way that

is really comforting and

enriching to people who are

deeply in need.

That's amazing.

I just love that so much.

I think I'm moving back

toward the other way now.

There was a section where you went into...

like a survival response.

You know,

we talk about the stages of grief, right?

And most of us have heard

about the stages of grief,

but how many of us have heard,

here's the response,

here's what you can do to

survive and things like movement, food,

the foods you eat,

be careful that it's not

sugar and laden with not good stuff.

Sleep,

the power of sleep and giving

yourself the grace to take

naps when your body is just done.

Moving slowly,

like these were just so

precious and spoke so deeply to me.

How about this one?

Avoid loud or crowded spaces

because it might be overwhelming, right?

And then on and on,
and I'm sure you have more to share, but
I'm always kind of a little
bit of a nerd and I'm like,
how did you come up with these and why?
I mean,
I'm sure it's through your work and
studying the grief process and everything,
but some of these to me are very unique.
And then we get into the eight ways,
which I absolutely love to
help your body adjust to grief.
We just don't think about that.
We think, oh, you know,
there's stages of grief.
We have to go through the,
is it five stages of grief?
We go through those stages
and then we're done.
But that's not the case for everyone,
right?
Some people can grieve for
years and years and years.

I know a little girl right
now who's grieving for her grandpa.
And to be honest, there's times I'm like,
can we stop talking about the grandpa?
Because it's been years,
but that was her best friend.
And I mean, that sounds kind of mean to me,
but it's not out of being mean.
It's out of, I can't fix this.
I want you to be okay.
But it's like not unraveling for her.
It's not being...
completed in her or maybe
processed I don't know that
I'll ever feel complete for
her what what would you say
to someone like that like a
little girl say you know
fifth grader you know and
we're talking about all the
things I just the survival
response the things that
she would need to do even

at this stage because some
of us take a very long time to grieve
Could be years before we finally say, okay,
I'm going to stop running.
I'm going to stop Netflixing, you know,
and eating.

And I'm going to get down to
the nitty gritty here.

Yeah, so in that kind of circumstance,
I would say that her
response may be entirely normal.

We know that children
regrieve at every developmental milestone,
so she will grieve the loss
of her grandfather when she is eight.

She may grieve it again when
she turns sixteen and gets her license,
and she just wishes she
could tell him about it.

She will probably grieve his
absence again when she
graduates from high school,
when she goes to college,

maybe when she has her
first baby and she slips
his name into that baby's middle name.

All of those points in time
are appropriate moments.
to experience that loss
perhaps in a very raw and
tender way again.

It may come back like a wave.

A child may say,

I just feel like it's
crashing over me again.

When two days ago, two weeks ago,
they seemed to an outside
observer to be totally fine.

And that's because our
understanding of grief,
of the ramifications for
our person's absence
changes and grows as we change and grow.

Wow.

And so to accommodate those children,
it's important to receive

their grief responses and

then help them to enact

something to help them

integrate that loss.

So maybe it's, you know,

I know Grandpa can't read your letter,

but would you like to write

him a letter tonight to

just tell him how much you miss him?

And maybe it's, you know what?

I've been missing him too.

I wonder what grandpa would

like for dessert tonight.

Let's make his favorite dessert.

Or let's just sit and look

at old pictures and talk about memories.

You know,

all of these things take the

emotions from what is just

an internal spin.

And it gives a child a sense of agency.

I can do something with these feelings.

I don't have to hold them inside.

I see an adult who's here as a companion.

who's not going to abandon me,

who's going to sit with me in that,

who's going to receive my

pain and help me do something with it.

Not pack it away,

but be able to talk about

it so that in a way it's

woven like threads into the

tapestry of their lives.

Really those threads are of grief,

are threads of love.

And it's just like,

creating a hole in your own sweater.

You know, you love the sweater so much,

you don't want to send it to Goodwill.

So what do you do?

You take out a needle and

you weave those threads

back into the sweater.

And that's really what

you're doing as you're

helping a child at any

developmental milestone.

And

Those aren't just physical.

Maybe it's puberty.

Maybe it's not.

It could simply be final

exams or standardized tests.

The first time they take a

standardized test,

it could be an achievement in Boy Scouts.

It could just be an ordinary

day that they wake up and say, wow,

on a sunny day like this,

grandpa would have brought me fishing.

And so those kind of moments

allow a child to weave that

love into the fabric of their story.

Right.

Well, I thank you for that.

I didn't mean to sound like

calloused or anything.

No, not at all.

I feel helpless that, you know,

I don't know what to say.

I can support in the beginning,

but when it's later and I

see her still entangled or hurting,

but I love that she is an artist,

this little girl.

And I have a game, it's an emotional game,

and it talks about your feelings,

your choices, and then something else.

But she would always come in

and play that whenever she

was really hurting.

But just to tell you on a side note,

after I finished your book,

the morning that I finished it,

I wrote a letter to my dad.

And my dad's been gone for

twenty eight years.

And he was my best friend in

the whole world.

I said, Jesus, but the worldly dad.

And I wrote this little poem.

It was called Just One More Time.

If I could just, you know,

wear your socks and your

old big sweatshirt and sit

across the table from you.

You know, it was just that.

And it was.

I didn't know that was in me then.

But you you just gave the

whole world that's

listening to this and every

child and every grown up.

I'm sixty four years old.

You gave this to me in this

book that I can still have those moments,

not just to remember in my head,

but to put something in writing that

And then I listened to one

of those songs called,

I think it was called like,

I'll Never Forget You or something.

Do you remember that one?

I don't remember it off the top of my head,

but we put a lot of them on there.

It's called I Won't Let You Go.

Oh, yes.

And I added that at the
bottom of my little poem to my dad.

And then I did like an art
piece with a heart and said,

I won't let you go.

And it was just so good.

So thank you for that, for my own part,
because sometimes when you're a grown-up,
you feel kind of silly
crying for your dad,
but I still do cry for him.

I still love him.

And this can transfer to...

all kinds of people right in

our lives all kinds of

losses um you really touch

on that in the book and I

just love that can I I jump

over to a new idea what I

love as a teacher and if I

could just read this

On page forty-eight,
in every classroom there
are students who like to
answer questions and those who hold back.

There are students who like
to draw attention to
themselves and those who'd
like to disappear into the woodwork.

Whether or not a student
wants to raise a hand in class,
each body in each seat matters.

The same is true for your emotions.

Such beautiful writer.

In the classroom of your heart,
you're the teacher.

You stand at the front.

I'm going to cry.

And you get to choose who speaks.

I would love to read this to
this little girl.

Does fear often raise her hand to share?

You need to listen to her.

Do you sense anger has

something to say but
doesn't feel brave enough to say it?
Maybe it's time to create
space in your day to let anger speak.
Does sadness seem to want to
drown out all the other emotions?
It's okay to ask her to be
quiet for a moment so joy
can finally talk.
All your emotions,
both the loud and the quiet voices,
have important things to
say about your loss.
Just so precious to be able
to acknowledge our hearts
in the simplest ways.
I want to just say one more
thing that keeps coming to me.
if any, everyone should read this book.
I truly believe that because
if you don't need it,
someone that you know is
going to need it.

And it's going to create in
your heart of compassion
for those people.

But I felt like this was
like a mother coming to my soul,
like a mother coming and speaking,
just peace into me, like holding me.

Like I felt held.

I remember saying that at the end.

I feel really held in all my sorrow.

And I had a pretty rough life, you know,
in my childhood, a lot of trauma.

And this really spoke to that.

Can you believe that after
all those years?

Absolutely.

I'm so glad.

Well, you know, we all, you know,
we scoff at the idea of
that inner child sometimes,
but I think we all have,
we are all still tender people.

You know, this is why,

why Jesus calls us lambs.

It's okay to be a little

lamb and need to be held.

And I think, you know,

I always love it when folks

will share with me that they,

that they're engaging with

their loss in new ways many years later.

Because I think for a lot of us,

depending on the culture you grew up,

the generation you grew up in,

there could be any number of factors,

we're told to stuff the hard things down.

We live in a very

pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps

culture.

We have this idea,

this picture of American

idealism where we can

venture off into the sunset

and rub some dirt in it and

get back in the game.

We have this picture of

unreasonable strength.

And, you know, if you're a person of faith,

whatever faith you are a part of,

your faith does not call

you to that kind of superhuman strength.

But we impose that as like

bondage on ourselves.

And so, you know,

it's always an honor for me

to meet with folks who say, hey,

you know what?

I've let that stuff go.

I'm going to

face this in ways that I

haven't faced it before or

face it in a new and fresh

perspective because the

grief will remain forever

we know that grief will one

day come to an end but it's

not in this lifetime and so

really it's about how do we

learn to live with this

unwelcome companion

Which students, by the way, you know,

in one of the largest

children's bereavement

studies that the New York

Life Foundation does,

they said in their twenty

twenty three study that

almost eighty percent of

students who were surveyed

after the death of a loved

one said that they believed

they had been able to move forward.

And that their loss had

created within them a sense

of resilience and a bravery

to face hard things that

came before them in life.

That's just amazing.

So, you know,

it really is acknowledging

our weakness is actually a

pathway to real strength.

I really believe that.

I've experienced that.

I'm looking at the time and I'm like,
oh my gosh, we could talk for an hour.

There are two other areas that really,
there are many areas that
stuck out to me.

And I'll list those at the end,
the prayers and the scriptures.

The prayers, I mean,
how many times when we're
struggling and we're hurting,
we can't pray.

We don't have the words.

You have the most beautiful
prayers in this book.

But one of the areas that I
really loved was,
and I wrote the science of crying.
the science of crying of
letting yourself cry
whenever the tears come.

And that's something that I

even tell myself when as adult, don't cry,

don't cry, don't cry.

And I cried in this book.

I left, I,

I want to tell you the honest truth.

Hello world.

I went, after I finished this book,

I went and crawled in my bed and,

And I just covered myself up

with all these blankets and I just cried.

I can't even say exactly.

I'm going to cry right now.

Why I was crying,

but it was just like this

freedom to honor that need to do that.

You know,

sometimes life just wells up and my age,

you know, there's a lot of life there.

Right.

And your life too.

But but you go into this so

in such tiny detail for children,

for kids, for adults.

This really should be for adults.

But next one.

But when you say,

how do I handle my emotions

when I'm at school, work or church?

Like you said, some trigger may happen.

The son, you see,

you smell the coffee or you go, oh,

he looks like my grandpa.

That happens to me a lot.

I notice as I'm getting older,

like people remind me of people.

Like, you know,

I'll see someone that looks

like my son when he was a

little boy and I'll go,

oh, that looks just like him,

and it just brings those things up.

But that and then I'm going

to put two things together here.

You know how I am.

Five ways to make peace.

That was so essential to

help you make peace with the past,
embrace the present,
and release the future into God's hands.

And, again,

I would segue that into
sometimes when we ask God why.

Can you speak to any of that?

I don't know.

It was a lot,
but I have to make sure it's covered.

Well, I think first, you know,

I want to honor that
vulnerability of the story
that you shared about
crying because I think
that's how we do this well
is we model for our children crying.
vulnerability in a safe way.

In our culture,
vulnerability is not
considered to be a prize or a virtue.

We are not always handled
with tenderness in our vulnerability.

And

And so really as parents, as caregivers,

as loved ones,

that's a lot of our work

when we're dealing with

someone who is grieving to

model the kind of

vulnerability that we hope

that they'll develop as adults.

And

And that vulnerability comes

in a lot of different ways.

It may be crying.

It may also be, like you say,

making peace with the past.

Part of what needs to be

acknowledged is that when

we lose a loved one,

It's not always a sad event.

Sometimes there has been a

complicated relationship.

Sometimes there has been estrangement.

Sometimes there has been

abusiveness or deep unkindness.

Not every death is a good one.

And so, you know,

when we're talking

specifically about teenagers, which,

you know,

Hurt Help Hope is directed

specifically for teenagers,

they know this and we know it too.

And so part of what we're

doing is modeling the

vulnerability of being

willing to sit with that complexity.

That we may need to say,

I forgive you to someone

who isn't around anymore.

That we may need to say, no.

you hurt me and I'm sorry

for the words I said to you in return.

There may be reconciling

work that we have to do

around our loss and that

takes a great deal of vulnerability.

It takes time.

It takes thoughtfulness.

It takes a trusting

relationship with a trusted

adult who will come

alongside that teenager and say,

you know what,

I'll sit without judgment

and just listen.

Because your response to the

death of this loved one,

to the death of this marriage,

to the diagnosis of a sibling,

it's different from mine.

And I want to learn.

I want to sit at your feet.

You be the teacher now.

I will be the vulnerable adult and say,

I don't have all the answers.

Would you teach me what it's

like to be a teenager who's

wrestling with something like this?

Because I trust that you

actually have wisdom to

share in this moment.

And that takes a lot of

vulnerability all around, you know?

Yeah.

When I think about our

experience of loss as a family,

it hasn't been an easy

trajectory in any way.

It has been a deeply painful journey.

My children will be the

first to say I've made a lot of mistakes,

that there are things that

we wish we could have done differently,

that we should have done

differently if we had known better.

And so it is creating a

space where those truths

can sit in an atmosphere of mercy and

and grace and forgiveness

and um and if you have lost

something that was hurtful

in your life it will take a

long time for you to feel a
sense of peace in that and
um and that's where for us
as as christians as people
who love jesus we don't
have to depend on our own you know
intellect, wit, savvy,
deep wells of compassion to
get that job done.

We can rest in knowing that
as we're forgiven in Jesus,
we can extend forgiveness to others,
that we can bring our whole
selves to him and find full acceptance.

And we can rest in that
because when you know
you're fully accepted and loved,
it's a lot easier to do the
beginning work of

That is hard work of
forgiving someone else.

I love that so much.

I was talking to a lady

yesterday with the magazine.

She was interviewing me and

I kept saying to her,

you have to know the backstory.

You have to know the

backstory and how God used

that story to bring me

where I am today and what

I'm doing in my work today.

And the poor lady, like,

I don't think she was

anticipating that kind of, she's like,

wow, you know, it was a pretty big story.

But one of the components that God used,

a couple of components,

one was art and writing.

And I am in the process

right now of writing my story,

like my memoir for my children.

And

whoever else is interested.

But that process of just

going back to those

journals and reading
through those journals and
seeing where I was and the
questions of my heart, the anger,
the hurting, and then how God,
just like David in the Psalms, right?
He'd be like, God, where are you?
And the next verse, he would be like,
Blessed is the Lord for me, you know,
in some great thing.
And it was like that for me,
that ebb and flow.
But you're right.
At the end,
it was knowing how loved I was.
When God really tenderly years,
even when many people would leave me,
even friends were like, you know what?
We just don't think we can
handle your life anymore.
God was like, no, I'm not leaving you.
I'm going to teach you.
I'm going to teach you what real love is.

And that's him.

It was him.

And it has made all the difference.

So, but I have to say too,

even this moment with you,

and this was no,

this was no just funny

thing that you came into my

life with a story and that

I had the beautiful blessed

opportunity of speaking to

you because I needed this.

I still needed it.

I still need healing.

We all do.

And I think sometimes we can stay busy.

We can stay, let's get more education.

Let's just do other things.

But this really is such a

beautiful journey of sitting down.

I think everyone needs it.

I know it's for teenagers,

but I'm thankful that you

wrote it and I got to read it.

Because I may not have ever read that.

But I think it's the best book I've ever,
ever read on grief.

on suffering and on love,

like truly knowing that you're loved.

One of my favorite activities,

and I love your activities,

like these circles, right?

Who are your closest people?

Who are your friends?

Who are your acquaintances

in your community?

And how you teach us

we don't have to tell

everyone all the gory

details even if people ask

we can hold a lot of that

story like you said there

are details that are sacred

to you and your family that

other people don't need to

know and that I was just

like gosh I wish I had a
mom like that you are just
a blessed woman I'm telling
and your children are
blessed too but I want to
ask you in this last little
bit of time is there anything
from this book um that you
want to point out or share
like because I'm sure I
didn't cover everything
there's no way but that
would you that's on your
heart today for these moms
for our families at sped
homeschooling that that
just comes to mind for you
I think the number one thing
is that it is a book that
we wrote specifically for a
teenage reader.
It's the first book in
twenty years that has been

published by it's the first
Christian grief support
book for teenagers that's
been published in the last
twenty years in traditional publishing.

So it really is a landmark
book in that respect.

And, you know, my my book for adults,
my guidebook for adults is
Beyond the Darkness.

And I have a picture book
for I have a picture book
for four to eight year olds
called Hope Comes to Stay.

And so really trying to
create a whole spectrum of
bereavement advocacy books.

There's a devotional in there.

But really,

this book is special because
it's written by a teenager
and her mom first.

for a teenager or trusted adult.

We know that teenagers don't
like to talk about big
feelings with adults.
They're pretty selective
about what they share and with whom.
And we want to honor that.
And so if this is a book
that a student in your life needs,
it's one of those,
just slip it across the
kitchen table and they can
tuck it under their pillow
and read it at night.
and read it, come back to it.
It doesn't need to be read in order.
It really is just pop around
and find the information that you need.
We've tried to be really
organized in how we laid out the book.
So it could be used by a
teenager who wasn't ready
to talk to an adult.
But over and over throughout the book,

we say,

Talk to a trusted adult.

Talk to a trusted adult.

And we set the book up in a

Q&A format specifically for that reason,

because we know that it's

hard to get the conversation started.

And so we wanted to model

that for students.

We even give students

questions that they can ask.

So, you know, I encourage teenagers.

I say, read the book.

And then choose one of those

questions and go ask an

adult in your life.

And you can decide who gives

you the better answer.

If it's the book or if it's

your parent or your coach,

your Sunday school teacher,

see what new information

that you gain from asking a

real live person this question.

So we really wanted to model

the kind of discourse that

we hope students develop as

they're learning to live with loss.

I love that.

Clarissa, your daughter is so beautiful,

just like you.

Can you tell me how is your family today?

Like,

I feel like I know them a little bit

and send them my love.

But how are you doing?

How is everyone doing?

I mean,

I don't know if that's a good question.

It probably is one of those.

Don't ask that.

I don't know in the book,

but I really mean that from my heart.

How are you?

Well, I'm newly remarried,

so I'm a remarried widow.

We've been married for two years now,
and we have a blended family of nine.

Wow.

It's a wild and crazy place with two dogs,
a cat, and a hamster.

You know, this is...

It's like a zoo sometimes.

But you know,

one of the things that's so

impressed upon me,

even as I see my children

thrive and develop as people,

is the truth that grief never leaves.

And that what you realize

over time is that grief

comes with it so much wisdom.

It helps you to prioritize,

to understand what your values are,

to make life choices

according to an eternal

perspective instead of a

perspective of just the here and now.

So I think that, you know, for our family,

even as there are
significant challenges for
children after puberty,
remarriage and the
reconstitution of a family
and a blended family,
the ongoing experience of
grief as they move into adulthood.

I trust that they have the
skills that they need, that really what

What we began all those
years ago in homeschooling
them around the kitchen table,
we didn't believe we could
teach them everything they
needed to know.

But we hoped that we would
give them good tools in their toolbox,
tools of curiosity, a drive to discover,
inquisitiveness, persistence,
all of these kinds of tools
that would make them good
learners and good people.

And I find that the same is true today,
that as they grow,
that I think they've got
the tools that they're
going to need to succeed.

Can you tell me all their ages?

Well, since we have seven children,
they range from age twelve
to age nineteen.

So we've got someone
graduating from high school.

Okay, so you don't have any little,
little ones, but that's great.

Well, Clarissa, this has been amazing.

And I know it's going to
bless so many people.

It has blessed me.

I was not anticipating that.

I was coming at this with a
different mindset.

God blew me away with this book.

So I just pray people reach out to you.

And I know we'll have all

your information where
people can find the book
and your other books on Amazon.
That's wherever they can find them.

and then any way to contact
you do you do any kind of
coaching like one-on-one
with people or anything I
don't I don't I would love
to uh but yeah I um I read
a sub stack and on the
weekly so that folks can
connect there and try to
offer as much encouragement
I can in that community

Wow, that's amazing.

Well,

you are just an angel on this earth
for everyone.

And I thank you so much for
your beautiful time.

So hang in there.

I'm going to end this recording.

And if anyone has any
questions or comments,
please like our page and
share our ministry with
other families that may
need to hear these amazing
insights today.

Thank you so much.

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