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Sponsor: Okay, shout out to [Claritin](#) for supporting this episode and providing us with some samples. Y'all, there are a lot of seasonal allergy sufferers over here at AFD Inc. and the That Sounds Fun Network, and Claritin D really works for this crew.

I also realized a few years ago that I developed an allergy to dogs, so I'm thankful to have Claritin D on hand when I'm around my friends' dogs. Luckily, for those of us who live with the symptoms of allergies, we can live Claritin-clear with Claritin D. It's designed for serious allergy sufferers.

Claritin D has two powerful ingredients in just one pill. This double-action combination of prescription-strength allergy medicine and the best decongestant available relieves sneezing, a running nose, itchy, watery eyes, and an itchy nose and throat, and sinus congestion and pressure with ease. Amen.

Ready to live life as if you don't have allergies? It is time to live Claritin-clear. Fast and powerful relief is just a quick trip away. Ask for Claritin D at your local pharmacy counter. You don't even need a prescription, y'all. Just go to [claritin.com](#) right now for a discount so you can live Claritin-clear. Use as directed.

[00:01:05] <music>

Annie: Hi friends, welcome to another episode of That Sounds Fun. I'm your host Annie F. Downs. I'm so happy to be here with you today. I hope you have enjoyed listening to our AFD in NYC essays this week as well. Today you are hearing episode number six, A lot of people's very favorite one. I get it. Tomorrow, you get to hear episode number seven from the fall. And then Saturday, I hope you'll check in with us Saturday, because that is when you get the brand new episode of AFD in NYC, kind of telling you what's been going on this year in New York for me and what's to come in the future. So that will be on Saturday.

Before we dive into today's conversation though, oh my gosh, I'm ready for today's conversation, I want to tell you about one of our incredible sponsors. This show is sponsored by [BetterHelp](#). Can you believe how fast this year is flying by, y'all? It is crazy.

What is something you're really proud of that you've accomplished so far in 2024? And what is still on your to-do list for the back half of this year? Remember, it's important to celebrate the wins and make shifts when you need to. You guys know that one thing that has been a game-changer for me is therapy. I highly recommend giving it a try if you never have.

Whether you're considering starting therapy or maybe looking for a change, let me tell you about BetterHelp. It's entirely online, super convenient, and flexible to your schedule. Plus, getting started is so easy. You just fill out a quick questionnaire — y'all know we love a quiz — and you'll be matched with a licensed therapist. Plus, you can switch therapists anytime at no extra cost, so you make sure you find the right match for you.

So take a moment for yourself this summer. Visit betterhelp.com/thatsoundsfun, and you'll get 10% off your first month. That's betterhelp.com/thatsoundsfun.

Intro:

Today on the show, I get to chat with my friend Ally Fallon. Ally is an author, a speaker, a coach, and the founder of *Find Your Voice*, a community that supports anyone who wants to write anything. You may remember her from way back on Episode 88. We talk about that today, but that episode is also linked in our show notes below.

Y'all are often asking me questions about writing your story and writing in general, and I'm telling you, you are going to love learning from Ally.

Through *Find Your Voice*, she has helped leaders of multinational corporations, stay-at-home moms, Olympic gold medalists, recovering addicts, political figures, CEOs, and prison inmates use her methods as powerful tools to generate change in their lives.

Her brand new book, *Write Your Story*, just came out about a month ago. It is an incredible resource if you've been dreaming about writing but don't know where to start. This is going to be a great summer read and a great summer project if you've been thinking about documenting your story.

We're going to give away two signed copies, so we tell you how to get that in the show. Also, she is going to give us a discount code for her cohort that is going to write your book in six months. She literally just walked out of the studio when I'm recording this, so she is going home to make that code.

So you're going to have to look in the show notes or go look on my socials @AnnieFDowns and also @ThatSoundsFunPodcast. We will have that code for you as well as how you win a signed copy of this book and a copy of *Bird by Bird*, the two books that I think are most important when you are wanting to *Write Your Story*.

So before we even get to that, you've got to hear it. Listen, alert, alert. [Wowie zowie] Wowie zowie, this is a note-taking episode. I already rewrote down some of

the things she said in the show. Note-taking episode, you have been warned. So here is my conversation with my friend Ally Fallon.

[00:04:49] <music>

Annie: Ally Fallon, welcome to That Sounds Fun.

Fallon: Thank you for having me. I'm so excited to be here.

Annie: Starting with a huge apology. This is your first time. I'm looking at my cheat sheet and it says "new guest".

Fallon: No, no, no, no.

Annie: I didn't think so.

Fallon: I think I was on in like 2018.

Annie: I think so too. I think you were right at the beginning. Okay, great. That makes me feel way better. I was like, I am horrified at myself.

Fallon: What have we been doing all these years?

Annie: Okay, great. Well, good. That is on me that I did not look that correctly, but I am very... okay, good. Welcome back to That Sound Fun.

Fallon: Thank you.

Annie: So you know the question we usually ask at the end we're asking at the beginning this year to celebrate our 10th anniversary is, because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to Ally Fallon right now.

Fallon: Oh man, this has shifted so much for me in the last couple of years.

Annie: I know, I can't wait for people to hear.

Fallon: I'm having so much fun hanging out with my kids. Like just doing dumb stuff with them. I'll tell a fun, little story. So the other day... I'm trying to create fun summer memories, but they're little, they're two and a half and three and a half. So they don't remember much. And it's kind of hard to get them excited. I mean, easy and hard to get them excited. Like take them to the park and they're excited. But Disney is too much for them. They're not ready for those big things.

So the other day I took them to Barnes and Noble and I told them that they could go in and they could pick out any book or any puzzle or anything in the store that they found that they really loved. Well, apparently this made a huge impression on my two-and-a-half-year-old because he woke up this morning begging to go to Barnes & Noble. He was like, "Mom, I want to go to Barnes & Noble. And I'm just like, this little tiny two-and-a-half-year-old who can hardly say Barnes & Noble is like running around the house going, "Can we please go to Barnes & Noble?"

It just gave me the biggest smile. I was smiling ear to ear. I was just like, are you a 30-year-old man trapped in a tiny little two-year-old body-

Annie: Or are you my son?

Fallon: ...asking to go to Barnes & Noble? But just silly stuff like that. It was such a fun memory to make to do that with them and have him like... to have it make such an impression on him was so special.

Annie: Will you talk about a life update?

Fallon: Yeah.

Annie: Like since the pandemic, I mean, I feel like your life shifted dramatically 2019, 2020. Is that the window?

Fallon: I feel like the last time I was on the show, it was when *Indestructible* had just come out. So this is my fourth book that is out now called *Write Your Story*, but *Indestructible* was my second book. That book was the story of leaving an abusive relationship and ending a marriage and finding myself on the other side of that experience. And my life has taken a dramatic turn for the better. I mean, I'm remarried-

Annie: What did you think? Did you think you'd stay single forever or did you hope to get married again?

Fallon: I really hoped to get married again, but honestly, many times... I mean, you could talk to friends of mine and they'll say that I said to them, "I guess I'm just gonna have to be single forever." It felt-

Annie: That is my memory. My memory is that you kind of went like, "I did it, I'm good, I think I'm gonna be single."

Fallon: Totally. I really wanted to be married again, but it felt impossible. I mean, I was 33 when I got divorced, which is not too old to find another partner by any means, but

it felt like to heal from what just happened to me, to find my feet again, to meet someone who would be compatible with me, to overcome the obstacle of the trauma that I had in my last relationship in order to trust someone again, I'm just like, there's just no way, you know?

I was in therapy, I went to Onsite twice, I was doing all the things, but I think it just felt like so far-reaching that that could ever be a reality for me. So now I'm remarried. I have two little kids. What a bizarre, just alternate universe that I'm living in. I hope that it's a testament to other people how quickly things can change. And it doesn't even require-

Annie: Right. Because literally, dear everyone, remember the pandemic. This is all since then.

Fallon: Yes.

Annie: This is all since 2020.

Fallon: A thousand percent.

Annie: Which is awesome.

Fallon: Almost no credit to me. I mean, I do give myself credit for really kind of digging in and doing the work and owning what was on my side of the street. But also I just like to remind people, because so much of the advice people give is like, You have to let it go completely and then God will bring you your person. I did not let it go completely.

Annie: No.

Fallon: No way.

Annie: I've never sorted out how to do that.

Fallon: No, it's impossible. If your heart is desiring this thing, then your heart is desiring it. I mean, I did have moments of being like, Okay, forget it, God. I'll make peace with my life as a single person. And I did do that.

Annie: How did you and Matt meet?

Fallon: A blind date.

Annie: A friend just set y'all up?

Fallon: A friend set us up.

Annie: Let's go.

Fallon: It was the most serendipitous, out-of-nowhere thing. I was on a business trip in L.A. and I was supposed to meet a client of mine at her house. Well, I wasn't privy to L.A. geography and traffic and stuff and so I was going to go to her house and realize it was like an hour and a half from where I was staying.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Fallon: So anyway, so at the last minute, she was like, "Instead of meeting at my house, we're going to meet at this other place. My friend has this venue we can meet at." So we met at a place I was not expecting to go and I bumped into someone at that venue who I hadn't seen... I mean, I knew this person very loosely and hadn't seen them in a long time. We struck up a conversation and he was like, "What are you up to these days? How's life?" And I was like, "Pretty good."

He was like, "Are you dating? Are you seeing anyone?" And I was like, "Aren't you married?" He was like, "I have a friend I want to set you up with. How long are you here?" And I was like, "I fly out tomorrow morning." He was like, "What are you doing tonight?" So it was that fast. It was literally like... and then Matt and I got together for 45 minutes for a drink that night. That was it.

It was such a good... it was not like fireworks, but it was like, Oh, like I could totally hang out with you. Then he was like, "I'd love to see you again." He flew out to Nashville, we went on our first date in Nashville. It was a slow burn in the beginning, because I was very traumatized and needed some time to feel comfortable in a relationship with a person.

So it took us like six months to really start officially dating. But then after we started officially dating, it was like a year and we were engaged and then married.

Annie: I remember seeing y'all at the airport when you were engaged or were you married? I don't know if you were married.

Fallon: I feel like we had... Didn't we have Nella with us? Or maybe I was just pregnant.

Annie: I don't remember. Maybe this is in the airport time then. I remember hugging him so tight the first time I met him. So maybe it was at the airport, but I remember hugging him so tight the first time I met him and being like, "I've watched this on the internet. I'm so happy. I'm so glad you're real." You know what I mean?

Fallon: Yes.

Annie: "You're here, you're real, you're a person and you love Ally and I'm so happy."

Fallon: Totally.

Annie: You know, we have a group called the Single Purpose League. We are serving our single friends with conversations and relationship and community. This month, our Single Purpose League podcast challenged all of our members to, in June and July, go to one new place and meet one new person.

Fallon: Yes, I love that.

Annie: I mean, literally, you went to a new place and your friend said, can I set you up?

Fallon: I did nothing. I feel like if there's anything that I want to say to people about this story, it's like, I did nothing. I feel like so often with whatever you're trying to achieve, whether it's finding a partner or whatever it is that you're dreaming of or longing for, this is a good quality to have, but we're so proactive. We're like, "I gotta do this, and I gotta do this, and I gotta get out of my comfort zone, and I gotta be this way and have this." And I just want people to know, also it can be just gifted to you. It can just be handed to you.

Annie: One of the reasons we did the "go to one new place and meet one new person" is so often people feel stuck in their lives and they haven't met anybody new.

Fallon: Sure. Sure. And it's good to do those things.

Annie: Even me. Help me balance. Because so often I think, "Okay, let's get the apps rolling again. Here we go. I'm gonna do my part and get out there." Because there can be this inclination where I've only seen my house and my girlfriends for four weeks. So help us meet in the middle of...

Fallon: To me, the balance is this. There's the physical things that you go into the world and do. And this is, by the way, advice not just for dating. This is advice for literally anything you want to achieve. There's the physical things you go into the world and do. And those things are helpful but they can only really get you so far. Because at some point you get to the place where you're sort of manipulating circumstances and you're wanting it so desperately that you're almost like agreeing to something that's not really the right fit for you or whatever.

Then there's the more energetic or spiritual opening of the heart.

Annie: Wow.

Fallon: And I feel like that's the more powerful of the two. Like the physical manipulating of circumstances is helpful. And sometimes it's a natural outflowing of the spiritual opening of the heart. It's like, I'm opening my heart to receive this partner who I so desperately desire and want to. I want to share my life with someone and so I'm opening my heart to that, energetically and spiritually. And I don't have to do anything. I don't have to get off my couch.

But then, because I opened my heart, I might be motivated or kind of pulled to go do a thing-

Annie: Available to.

Fallon: ...that's outside of my comfort zone or that's outside of my normal patterning. I mean, this is true for like having a baby or starting a business or, you know, a dream that you have to get a book on a New York Times list or whatever it is. It's like you can go do the physical things. And those are necessary and important and helpful, but they really only get you so far.

The energetic spiritual opening of the heart, the like, I'm opening myself to receive this, I'm becoming the kind of person who could stand on two feet in this experience is more powerful.

Annie: I'm becoming the kind of person who could stand on two feet in this experience.

Fallon: Because really like... so then Matt came into my life. Matt was gifted to me. I wouldn't have been able to find him. He was just sort of like brought into my life. But then, it's interesting because he was everything that I was looking for, but it also, like I said, it took me six months to trust it. It took me a long time to stand on two feet in that experience.

Annie: Is it okay... I'm thinking mantra-wise, I'm thinking prayer-wise, I'm thinking of this summer, even for myself, I have experienced... Like, when people say, "Have you met anybody lately?" I can always say, No, and I can tell you why not. I have not been available to that because of this, this, and this.

Fallon: Sure.

Annie: So I know that even though I've gone to concerts and I've gone to coffee shops, I know the energy I'm putting off is I'm not available right now because of things you don't know, dude, across the coffee shop. But my energy says my heart is not open.

- Fallon:** Says "I'm fine on my own. I don't need anyone's help."
- Annie:** That's right.
- Fallon:** I mean, this is-
- Annie:** And too busy for you to walk to my... My energy says that even when my words never do. So would you say that when I'm thinking of this sentence, I'm becoming the person who can stand on two feet in this experience, you're right, it's opening businesses, it's having kids, it's switching jobs, it's meeting a partner. Can we be praying that and believing that while we're still becoming, and that be part of an opening?
- Fallon:** Amen.
- Annie:** So we don't have to be able to stand... because I wouldn't know how to stand on two feet in the right relationship before I get into it.
- Fallon:** Even saying to yourself, I'm open to receiving an experience that will open my heart even further.
- Annie:** Ally Fallon.
- Fallon:** Because, you know, a lot of times too, especially dating is such a great metaphor for the rest of it because it's an experience that basically every single one of us go through at some point in our life. But a lot of us are moving through the world like, "I'm not open to getting my heart broken. I'm closed to that experience." But you can't fall in love if you're not open to getting your heart broken.
- Annie:** Right, right.
- Fallon:** Those two come in the same package.
- Annie:** Yeah, right. That is true for the New York Times.
- Fallon:** It's true for all of it.
- Annie:** Yeah, that's exactly right.
- Fallon:** Try to have a baby without being open to getting your heart broken. Try to start a business without being open to getting your heart broken. So to be open to receive an experience that will break your heart is also to be open to receive the experience

that will expand you, that will grow you, that brings you all the joy that you're looking for, all the peace that you're looking for.

Annie: You're ruining everyone's life who's driving right now because they want to be taking notes and they can't. So this is when I start getting DMs of like, I have to listen to this one twice. This is what's happening. Everyone's going to have to listen twice. We get it. Me too. Me too. I'm going to go back and listen again.

Ally, that is so helpful because even when we're talking... I mean, one of my hopes today is that as we're getting into the summer, as people may have a little more time, as the days are longer, and as people start thinking about, Well, I have a week off of work, the ministry I'm a part of takes a summer break... for our single friends, they have a little more time in the summer maybe. For our mom and dad friends, the kids are home, but there's a vacation, whatever. If they want to write their story... So many people want to write their story.

So even you saying like, You are becoming the person who can stand on two feet in the middle of writing your own story for the first time, too.

Fallon: Yes, 100%.

Annie: Wow.

Fallon: And here's the thing. So the reason that I wrote *Write Your Story* is in large part because of what I went through in my divorce. Because writing about that experience helped me to re-experience it a time in my life when I could stand on two feet in the experience. Because the first time it happened, I left my body. It was so traumatic, I couldn't have the experience, and so I just turned all the lights off in the house. It was like, nobody's home. These things were happening to me, but I wasn't really fully receiving them.

When I went back to go write the story, I was able to fully receive the experience awake and alive to have it, and it was horrifically painful, but it also closed the wound for me. I really believe through and through that writing about what has happened in your life can close the wound for you. And that's why I wrote this book.

Many people, I think, will take the framework that I've offered here and they'll turn it into a memoir or a TED Talk or something to share more broadly. But the reason I wrote the book is because I wanted to give people that gift that I got in 2016 or whatever it was when I wrote that story down. And it changed the way that I experienced it.

Annie: I tell people a lot when I'm at... I mean, almost every Q&A I ever do, someone says, "I want to write a book. How do I get started?" So, answer that first. I want to write a book, our friends are saying, listening on the other side, I want to tell my story, how do I get started?

Fallon: The first thing you have to do is decide what the story is about or what the book is about. So if someone came to me and... you know, this is what I do full time now is work with authors, helping them outline their books. So all the time I get asked this question. It's like, I want to write a book, where should I start? And my question always is, what is your book about?

And surprisingly, even though people have spent a lot of time thinking about their book, they really, really want to write the book, they may have large portions of the book already written, when it comes time to tell me what it's about, they have a really hard time. And I do too, by the way.

Annie: I do too.

Fallon: If I'm working on a new book and someone's like, what's it about? I'm like, Don't even, I don't even.

Annie: I'm like, "I don't know. I can tell you kind of the title, but I'm not sure if it'll..." I am the exact same way out.

Fallon: Yeah, it's challenging because to tell someone what the book is about, in the framework that I teach, this is called the controlling idea. So to land on the controlling idea of a story or a book takes incredible discipline. Because a book can only be about one thing. It can't be about 50 things. It can't be about 10 things. It can't even be about three things. It has to be about one thing.

And to drill down on what that one thing is means that you have to sacrifice the 10 or 50 or 100 other things that you hoped the book would be about. So you gotta really narrow in on that one thing. And so that's the first step in writing a book, or writing a story.

So what I would recommend someone do, especially if you've never written a book before, writing a book can be a really overwhelming task. I always tell people if you can start with one story, and you can... this is what I teach people to do in the book is to take a story from your life and to turn it into about three to five pages. If you can do that-

Annie: How many words is that if we're on...?

Fallon: Like 5,000.

Annie: 5,000.

Fallon: So it's like one chapter of a book. If you can do that, then you can replicate that process over and over again, and it can very easily become a book. But if you're focusing on writing the book, a book is 50,000 words. So to get to 50,000 words can be very overwhelming for someone who hasn't done that before. But learn the framework, and the framework becomes second nature, and then writing a book is much, much easier and more attainable.

Annie: When I get to talk to people about this, I'm always like, I wish my grandparents would have written a book. I would love to have a memoir from anyone older than me in our family. We have one from a great aunt who lived in China. So we have one.

But I'm often reminding people to write a book is not to get a publishing deal. To write a book is not to be on a bookshelf. To write a book is not to hit New York Times. I like to ask people often, like, who do you want to read? Are you starting a career as an author? Then that's actually a very different conversation than you have a book to write and you hope your grandkids read it one day.

Fallon: I'm glad you said that. So I tell people all the time if they want to have a conversation about publishing, like getting an agent, signing with a publisher, book contracts, book proposal documents, New York Times list, that's one conversation. If you want to talk about writing a book is another conversation.

The act of writing a book, the whole purpose, in my opinion, is, and I take a different approach on this than almost any other book coach I've ever met, the whole purpose of writing a book is to transform you.

Annie: wow.

Fallon: If you have a book idea, that is a gift to you. It's yours first. And you write it, it transforms you. You become the embodied version of your message, living and breathing and walking through the world. And it literally doesn't matter if anyone ever reads it, because you are the book.

And then the publishing conversation is a totally different conversation, which honestly, the longer I've been in my career, the more I realize, and the reason I wrote this book, it's because the more I realize the publishing conversation is just not as interesting to me. I'm not saying I can't have it. I know a bunch about

publishing and I've been in this world for a long time. But I don't get as excited about it. It's not what gets me out of bed in the morning.

What gets me out of bed in the morning is helping someone take an idea that's been gifted to them from something that's beyond them that they don't understand, helping them manifest it, like bring it into physical form. And in the process, it changes who they are so completely that they're a different person, they live and move and breathe differently. And if someone reads the book, amazing. And if no one reads the book, it doesn't matter.

A great example of that is, you know, the four books I've written... *Indestructible* is the second book I wrote. That's the memoir of leaving an abusive marriage. That book has sold the fewest number of copies and it's the most important book that I've ever written because it completely changed my life.

I would not have Matt. I would not have my kids if it weren't for that book. I would not be living this life that I'm living now if it weren't for that book. That's why I wrote *Write Your Story* because I wanted to give people access to that. It's like whether this book is for your spouse or your therapist or your children or for a million readers that you've never met, this is the process to getting the thing actually written. And the publishing stuff is like icing on the cake. It's the cherry on the top.

It's fun to have strangers read your book — I mean, I'm sure you've had this experience — have strangers read your book and send you an email that says, This changed my life. It's validating, it's fun, but it's not the reason that you do it.

Annie: That's right.

[00:24:39] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends, just interrupting this conversation to tell you about one of our incredible partners, [Liquid I.V.](#). Summer is jam-packed with fun and rest and lots of time outside, I hope. And the heat is no joke up here in the Northern Hemisphere. So we have got to prioritize hydration.

We are made of 60% to 70% water, so when we're dehydrated, we feel imbalanced. I know you know what that feels like. I do too. One stick of Liquid I.V. delivers superior hydration to water alone with three times the electrolytes of the leading sports drinks plus eight vitamins and nutrients.

There's even four delicious sugar-free flavors, white peach, green grape, raspberry melon, and lemon lime. Listen, is sugar-free white peach not the perfect poolside

companion? Throw some in your pool bag or beach bag this summer or take it with you for a workout.

And you know how I feel about staying hydrated on a plane, so make sure you have those little travel sticks with you. As you travel this summer, just throw them in your bag. Just tear open a stick, put it in your water bottle, and you are good to go.

Turn your ordinary water into extraordinary hydration with Liquid I.V. Get 20% off your first order of Liquid I.V. when you go to liquidiv.com. and use the code THATSOUNDSFUN at checkout. That's 20% off your first order when you shop better hydration today using the promo code THATSOUNDSFUN at liquidiv.com.

That link and pretty much every other link you could ever hope for are in these show notes, or we will send them to you Friday in the AFD Week in Review email. So be sure to check those out.

Sponsor: One more amazing partner I get to tell you about, [Hiya Health](https://hiyahealth.com). This one is for my MiniBFFs. Where you at? I want them to stay as healthy as possible. Hiya Health is the pediatrician-approved chewable vitamin that is super-powered and made with zero sugar and zero gummy junk, yet it still tastes great and they are perfect for even the pickiest eaters.

You know typical children's vitamins are basically candy in disguise, right? They're cute, but they're packed with sugar and other junk that my miniBFFs do not need. But that's why we love partnering with Hiya Health.

Hiya Health was formulated with the help of nutritional experts and is pressed with a blend of 12 organic fruits and vegetables, and then supercharged with 15 essential vitamins and minerals. A lot of my MiniBFFs love them, and I love knowing they're getting the nourishment they need without any of the junk.

So we've worked out a special deal with Hiya for their best-selling children's vitamins. You guys can get 50% off your first order. That's five-zero percent off your first order. To claim this deal, you must go to [Hiyahealth.com/thatoundsfun](https://hiyahealth.com/thatoundsfun). Go to hiyahealth.com/thatoundsfun and get your kids the full body nourishment they need to help grow into healthy adults.

Sponsor: Okay, y'all, a question I get a lot, especially around our Let's Read the Gospels podcast and at live events during Q&As is about my personal Bible. I've had it since I was a freshman in high school, a Christmas gift from my parents. It is honestly my favorite possession that I own.

It's an [NIV Quest Study Bible](#). I love the question and answers it features along the edges. It gives me so much space to be curious. And in fact, it's the only question-and-answer Bible. They highlight the top 100 questions that have been asked by readers. Isn't that cool? It legit always meets me in my curiosity, creates more curiosity in me, and it gives me some space around the edges to write other questions and other thoughts I might have to mark some dates and important moments that are helpful for me.

There are over 7,000 notes, 350 articles included in the Quest Study Bible as well. It also has reading plans, charts, timelines, maps, book introductions, a dictionary, and a concordance. I am telling y'all, it is a fun Bible. It is available in both regular size and personal size, and there are editions for teens and kids too.

If you're looking for a Bible or looking to gift a Bible this summer, this is the one. You can go to amazon.com/queststudybible. Check out all the options and then use the promo code 10soundsfun for 10% off all Quest Study Bibles on Amazon. That's amazon.com/queststudybible and use the code 10soundsfun to get 10% off all the Quest Study Bibles on Amazon.

Okay, now back to our conversation with Ally.

[00:28:59] <music>

Annie: There is so much lore and fantasy about what it's like to be a traditionally published author that I often want to be like, The joy of writing your story and... the barrier to entry to having a book that people can buy is nothing now. All you got to do is write your book, hire an editor, get someone to design the cover, and put the thing on Amazon, and everyone who loves you can read your story.

Fallon: And honestly, you could sell as many copies as a traditionally published author.

Annie: Listen, let's tell them this. Average book sells 2,000 copies in its life. In its life. So many of our friends listening could figure out how to sell 2,000 copies of their self-published book and make far more back per book than you and I will ever make in a traditional...

Fallon: Yes, 100,000%.

Annie: But I also don't want to downplay... the thing I struggle with, Ally, is advantage privilege.

Fallon: Sure.

- Annie:** Because I sometimes downplay traditional publishing because I've gotten to do it. And so I'm like, "Oh, don't go for this. Get your story out. Get it for your family." And I'm like, Well, Annie, you can say that because you've done the thing. I do remember the burn in my soul of wanting to be a published author. So in a traditionally published way, to have an agent, to have a book deal, to have it read by strangers.
- Fallon:** I think what I ask people to do is just to be really honest with themselves about their motives. If it's a dream for you to be a traditionally published author, then by all means, go for a dream.
- Annie:** Go for it. Yes.
- Fallon:** But get really honest with yourself and ask yourself, is it really a dream to be traditionally published? Or am I just going after that because I've told myself that the only legit authors are traditionally published authors and that self-publishing is kind of the JV way to do this? It's just not true.
- Annie:** It's not true anymore. It may have been true 20 years ago. It's not true now.
- Fallon:** 100%.
- Annie:** It's not true now.
- Fallon:** Yeah. I've worked with clients who have sold hundreds of thousands of books self-published, and they're laughing all the way to the bank, because they're just-
- Annie:** All the way to the bank.
- Fallon:** Dollar, dollar bills.
- Annie:** Darren Whitehead, who was on the show talking about his *Digital Fast*, that book is self-published and was just nominated for a K-Love Fan Award.
- Fallon:** No way. I didn't realize he self-published that.
- Annie:** Exactly. Dear everyone, no one knows that he self-published that. I'm not telling a secret. It's very clear. You can look at the book and see that it's not traditionally published by a large publisher. Every door is open to you if you want to put the book on Amazon in six weeks.
- Fallon:** You got it. That's it.

Annie: Please have an editor first.

Fallon: Yes, yes, yes. And that's the thing, too, is... So one of the benefits to traditional publishing is that there's quality control. And I think that's why people get this sense that, well, traditionally published books are, quote-unquote, better or higher quality, because there's someone else outside of you saying, no, no, no, we're not putting this up for sale until it's perfect or until it's been, you know, checked by multiple people.

You can put those, you know, boundaries in place yourself. You could hire your own editors. You could have three different people edit the book if you want.

Annie: I pay someone to edit my book before I turn it into my publisher.

Fallon: Oh, yeah. It's brilliant. I know.

Annie: Because I'm like, I want them to get the closest to perfect I can give them so that it gets changed as little as possible. I want them to get the book I want to write before-

Fallon: Smart.

Annie: And then for the first time ever with That Sounds Fun, there's a chapter called Ebenezer Road about where I grew up, and my publisher said, "It's perfect. Not a thing." We did not change one sentence in that chapter.

Fallon: No way.

Annie: And that's never happened.

Fallon: Sure

Annie: I mean, in my amount of books and chapters, that's never happened before. But part of it is because I went through rounds of edits before I handed it to my publisher.

Fallon: A hundred percent.

Annie: And my first book was self-published. Do you know that?

Fallon: I didn't know that.

Annie: Yes. The other thing that can happen, which is what happened to me, is I hired an editor and I hired a cover designer, and an interior designer. We put it up. We

self-published. This is 15 years ago now. We self-published and after that sold... what it sold, publishers came to me.

Fallon: Publishers came to you. That's happened for a handful of clients that I've worked with. And sometimes even if you self-publish a book, a publisher will come to you and they'll buy it out from you and give you a distribution deal. So they just cut you a check and then they decide to distribute the book because they know they can make more money off of it than you could on your own.

Annie: That's right.

Fallon: Yeah, there are all kinds of different ways for it to work out. But I just would hate for people to... I just tell people like, don't be your own gatekeeper. Because it used to be 20 years ago that there were all these gatekeepers to publishing and only certain people were allowed to publish. Now those external gatekeepers aren't there anymore.

Annie: That's exactly right.

Fallon: So don't be your own gatekeeper. Don't be the one who's just like, I'm not a good writer. I'm bad with grammar. It's like no, no published author... Well, I shouldn't say no published author. Most published authors that I know are not great with grammar. I'm not good with grammar.

Annie: No, me neither.

Fallon: This is what an editor is for.

Annie: I mean, Ashley Warren sits in the office next to me, edits every single thing I put out except Instagram comments. That's Instagram posts. I think it's really... I mean, clearly, I love talking about this stuff as well. So I was like, Jonesing for you to come in here so we could do this.

But I want for us to talk to the people who want to write a book, but don't necessarily have the dream of a big traditional deal. They just are like, I'd love to have a book. I think there are 9 out of 10 people would probably like to write a book. So if that's going to be your path, if you aren't necessarily jonesing for traditional publishing right now, you just would like to tell your story because it will help someone.

So often I hear people say, Well, I had a miscarriage, and I want to write that story, but there are already books like that. Or I got married young, and it's been really

successful and beautiful, and I want to tell that story. A thousand examples. We can give a thousand examples.

Fallon: Sure.

Annie: But people talk themselves out of believing their story matters. Help us with that.

Fallon: Your story is as unique as your fingerprint. There's nobody else in the world who has your exact story. I tell people, go into the bookstore and see if you can find your story on the shelves.

Annie: Oh, so smart, Ally.

Fallon: If you can't find it on the shelves, then it needs to be written. The other thing I give people, too, is because a lot of times we file our stories topically and we think like, oh, the miscarriage story, that one's already been told, or like, you know, the losing everything story, that story's already been told.

We have to as human beings receive stories or topics a hundred different times from a hundred different voices before it really sinks in for us. Think about how many self-help books you've read, or how many spiritual development books you've read, or how many books on money you've read, or how many books on finding the one you've read.

You need a hundred different people with a hundred different ways of saying it to tell you the same thing over and over and over again. And then on the hundredth time, you're like, Oh, I think I just got that.

So there's this beauty in us deciding, I'm going to contribute my voice to the conversation. It's like a kaleidoscope. It is one of hundreds of thousands of voices, but it matters. It's part of the conversation. And it adds something really valuable and unique and different that hasn't been added yet.

Annie: I love that. Go into the bookstore and find your story. And if you can't, there's a spot on the bookshelf. Ally, you're making me want to write. Good, because I have a deadline, so it's about time. Someone's needed to do this.

Really, like the marketing gurus say, you have to have seven impressions before you buy something. And so even if any number between seven and a hundred is how many times someone needs, it is not one and done.

Fallon: Yeah, 100%. I used to think when I first started doing this and I was creating content online and stuff, I wanted every single piece of content I created to be

unique. So I didn't want to tell the same story again. If I told it on a podcast, I didn't want to say it on Instagram or whatever, vice versa.

And now I'm like, because of this idea of seven impressions, I'm like, actually, you can literally tell the same story 100 different times on Instagram in a bunch of different ways. One of them is a reel, one of them is, you know, a carousel post, one of them's in your stories, then just plug and play, repeat.

And people actually appreciate it. It's not like, oh gosh, she's recycling content. It's like, Oh yeah, I needed to hear that. She's said that before and I needed to hear it again and again and again before it really sunk in.

Annie: I mean, the much less important example is there's a group of guys called the Montana Boys who dance on the internet. They do the exact same video over and over and over again.

Fallon: And we love it. Our brains love it.

Annie: We watch it again. So the reminder is you can actually stand by your message for a very long time.

Fallon: A very long time.

Annie: And again, if you are writing a book to heal yourself and to bless your family, who cares? Tell us. Your story matters because the same reason I wish my grandparents had written books is why I want to write books, is I want my nephew, Sam, or any other kids that come along in our family to really know me in ways that they can't. He didn't live my 20s with me, but he can read about it.

Fallon: And by the way, when he knows you, he also knows himself better. You bring up this sort of generational storytelling. For thousands of years this is how humanity learned about how to be alive and how to be a human in the world is by sharing of stories and passing them down from generation to generation.

We've lost track of this and we don't share our stories anymore. We don't tell them verbally and we don't write them down. And it's one of the visions that I had for this book when I wrote it is I wanted parents and grandparents to tell their story and just pass it on to their kids. Because your desire to know your grandparents' story is also a desire to know yourself better. It's like, where did I come from? What's my place in this massive scope of humanity? How do I fit into this whole big human story? And when you understand the stories of those who came before you, you better understand your own story.

Annie: I'm finishing up... This is not an ad, but it can be, I'm finishing up my parents' Storyworth book, that program where you can tell your stories. They've finished all the writing, it's mine now to put it together and get it to all of our cousins. I have learned things about them that I did not know and reading through their answers. And you're right, there's something where I'm like, Oh, that's me too. Oh, I totally didn't know that about them, or about me, or about... yeah, that's beautiful.

Fallon: Yeah. Isn't that weird you learn things about your relatives and you're just like, Oh, everything's making more sense? You know what I mean?

Annie: Yeah.

Fallon: I learned very recently that my uncle, who died really young on my mom's side, was also a writer and published books.

Annie: Oh my gosh!

Fallon: And I was just like, how weird that all this time, you know... I felt a connection. I was like, oh, I never even really knew him. He died before I could know him. But he was a writer. He published books. I immediately went and ordered his books on Amazon and have just kind of held them close. Because I'm like, oh, someone else in the family was interested in this too. And it just made me feel less alone.

Annie: As I was reading *Write Your Story*... I would say it's behind your back, so I'm going to say it to your face too. When I picture a gift I would give someone who told me they want to write their book, I would hand them *Write Your Story* and *Bird by Bird*. I feel like these two could really...

Because *Bird by Bird* gives you the like, you can do it. She kind of gives you the go for it. And you give us the go for it as well, but you also literally like, step by step. So someone could literally buy *Write Your Story* today, get it from their favorite bookstore or online by the weekend, and then spend two months of the summer going through chapter by chapter.

Annie: I'm just going to read the controlling idea, the opening line, the hero who wants something, the one big problem, the guide, the struggle and relief, the resolution, the moral. I mean, you literally walk us through the entire book.

Fallon: Yeah, I joked with Matt when I was writing it. I'm like, it's basically *Write Your Story* for dummies.

Annie: Ah, right, which is all of us who don't know how to write a book.

Fallon: I wanted to make it so easy and such low-hanging fruit because energetically and spiritually, there's so much resistance to doing this because, you know, like-

Annie: Yeah, why is that? Answer the because.

Fallon: Steven Pressfield talks about the resistance and personifies this idea of resistance. Like when you go to do something that is going to improve you and make you a better person, there's inevitably resistance. So there's resistance to going to the gym and getting fit because, you know, it's going to make you stronger and better, whatever. There's resistance to therapy because it's gonna make you stronger and a better person.

So same with writing your story. I think that's the big reason why there's resistance, it's because the forces of good and evil at work in the world, you know. It's like if you're gonna grow and become a better person then there's an inevitably gonna be resistance that you come up against.

I also like to think of it though and I talk about this in the book, you can think of it as forces of good and evil and there's this like force of evil up against you as you sort of become more of the goodness that you already are. But another way to frame that or to think about it is like gravity. So if you're going to do a push-up, if you're going to get stronger, you need something to push against. The only way for you to grow is to have gravity to push against. And I think of the resistance kind of like that.

Annie: Gosh, that's so true.

Fallon: You can think of it as this force of evil or you can think of it actually as another force of good that's pushing against you so that you can become the kind of person who can overcome this obstacle.

Annie: Another force of good. Wouldn't the enemy just hate being called that?

Fallon: Yes.

Annie: Right, right, right. Oh, you're just helping.

Fallon: Yes, thank you for your contribution to my unfolding.

Annie: To my growth, to my having two feet under me, to the experience. That is really interesting to hear. You know, we send this email on Fridays to our AFD Week in Review friends. It literally just reviews the week and then offers them to ask

questions to our guests who are coming in. It's kind of the sneak peek of what's coming the next week.

One of the questions we got for you, which has been a thing I've butted up against in writing, you said you have to is... one of our friends asked, what is the best way to *Write Your Story* when it involves others that might not be willing to share that part of their story?

Fallon: This can be tough. It's a question I probably get more often than any other question. And I have really personal experience with this because I did write *Indestructible*, which involved my now ex-husband, who I did not get permission to write about ahead of time. I think if I had tried to get permission, the answer would have been no.

So a couple of things I'll say. There's two different parts of this to talk about. One is just the act of actually writing the story. And then the other is like the legal ramifications of publishing the story more widely. Because if you're just going to write this story for you or for your close friends or whatever, you don't really have to worry about legal ramifications. It's just like an emotional block that you're going to have to overcome, that you're telling a story that you know would be frustrating or upsetting to somebody else.

Annie: And in my first draft, I always use real names and real places, do you?

Fallon: A hundred percent.

Annie: Because I'm like, I don't want to confuse myself and I've got to tell this story to heal me.

Fallon: Yes. And I tell people to do that too, because otherwise what happens is you forget whose name you changed and you're just like-

Annie: That's exactly right. First draft, tell the whole truth.

Fallon: Exactly as it happened. And I tell people to just tell the whole truth exactly the way that it happened.

Annie: Perfect.

Fallon: It's so important to do that because it teaches you that your perspective is just as important as someone else's perspective.

Annie: That's good. What I bumped up against a lot with *Indestructible* was feeling like I was writing this the way that I would tell the story, but I could hear his voice in my head going, That's not the way he would tell the story. And I could sort of hear him telling the story in his own different way. And it was such a healing experience for me to just be like, This was the way that I experienced this situation, and my experience matters equally as much as his does. And if he wants to write his own story, he can, but this is my version, and I'm gonna tell it the way that it happened from my view.

Annie: Man, Ally, that heals me right now, because I have one story and one book that I've always felt in my stomach. Not that story wasn't true, I told the whole truth of my experience. But I've always been like, he would have told this differently. But even you saying that is going like, but Annie, that was your experience. You didn't lie about your experience.

Fallon: And you are allowed to have your own experience.

Annie: Yeah, thank you. That takes away a years-old pit in my belly.

[00:45:16] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends, just interrupting this conversation one more time to tell you about one of our incredible partners, [Ritual](#). We've talked about this before, but did you know women were excluded from clinical research policy by federal law until 1993? Okay, that's crazy.

Women belong in scientific research. Ritual knows this too because they conducted a university-led human clinical trial for their Essential for Women 18+ Multivitamin. You want to know the results? It increased vitamin D levels by 43% and Omega-3 DHA levels by 41% in just 12 weeks. That is awesome.

I love their multivitamin for women. It has high quality traceable key ingredients and clean bioavailable forms. The multivitamin includes omega-3 DHA to support brain health, vitamin D, magnesium, and boron to help maintain bone health, and iron and methylate folate to promote red blood cell formation.

You just take Two capsules a day, which includes nine key ingredients. and the capsules feature a delayed release, which helps it dissolve later and makes it not make your stomach hurt in the mornings, you know? I really appreciate that. It also has this minty essence in every bottle that keeps things fresh, helps make taking your multivitamins every day actually enjoyable.

Plus, Ritual's multivitamins are vegan, non-GMO, gluten, and major allergen-free. And they're a female-founded B Corp, meaning they are holding themselves accountable to not just their company's financial health, but also to the health of people and our planet.

No more shady business. Ritual's Essential for Women 18+ is a multivitamin you can actually trust. Get 25% off your first month at ritual.com/thatsoundsfun. Start Ritual or add Essential For Women 18+ to your subscription today. That's ritual.com/thatsoundsfun for 25% off.

Sponsor: Y'all, I never knew how much I'd love custom hair care until I tried it and now I cannot go back. [Prose](https://prose.com) truly has changed my hair game. We all know your hair can sway your mood for the day. Ever since I switched to a custom hair routine with Prose, I've noticed so many benefits, healthier hair being one of them.

With Prose, it is all about personalization. You do their in-depth consultation, y'all know we love a quiz, and they come up with your made-to-order products. There are millions of possible formulas, but only one is uniquely yours, or mine.

Take my custom shampoo and conditioner, for example. They were formulated to make my hair shiny and hydrated, and they deliver. Y'all compliment my hair all the time, and I'm telling you, it is Prose.

Prose isn't just better for you, it's better for the planet. They're a certified B Corp, and they're cruelty-free, and they're the first and only carbon-neutral custom beauty brand.

Prose is so confident that they'll bring out your best hair and skin that they're offering an exclusive trial offer of 50% off your first subscription order at prose.com/thatsoundsfun. So you get your free consultation, then 50% off, five-zero, at prose.com/thatsoundsfun. That's prose.com/thatsoundsfun.

And now back to finish up our conversation with Ally.

[00:48:20] <music>

Annie: You mentioned before we started that you had a friend who gave you some advice in this line too.

Fallon: Okay, so on the legal side of things, if you're planning to publish this, or let's say the story is already written and you're wondering if you should share it more broadly. When I finished *Indestructible*, at first I thought I was just writing this for

my own healing. So I did what I call letting the manuscript rest. I wrote the whole thing and then I put my computer away. I mean, I put the story away for like a year.

Annie: A year.

Fallon: And then I came back to it and started to think about maybe publishing it more broadly. And when I did that, the first thing I did was to call a few friends who are attorneys because I wanted to know what are the legal ramifications. I knew I wasn't gonna be able to get signed permissions for this story.

I could change his name, but when it comes to legal permissions, there is a challenge with changing someone's name when the identifiable details of their life can't be changed. So if you're writing about a family member, for example, it's like, your brother is just your brother. Even if you change his name, he's still your brother. Same with an ex-spouse. It's like, even now, if you wanted to Google who this person is, you could figure out who he is, even though his name has changed.

So I really wanted to know, am I opening myself to a lawsuit? So I called a few friends of mine who are all attorneys. They're all practicing different types of law in different places. But I wanted to get their feedback on what the ramifications were going to be for me.

Two things I'll say. Number one is the phrase that I heard from each of these four people practicing different types of law in different locations is the truth is an absolute defense. Meaning if you're telling the truth, and especially if the truth you're telling could be defended with physical evidence, this person could take you to court, but it's very unlikely that they would win because you have physical evidence to back up what you're saying.

So I took that into account when I went through and edited the story. I made sure that the pieces of the story that I was telling were parts that I felt like if you took me to court, and if I had to, I could have witnesses, I could have screenshots, I could have photo evidence, whatever, in order to back up my side of the story.

Then the other piece of advice that I was given is from a mutual friend of ours who told me, you know, if you change his name and you make every effort that you can to distort his identity, the last thing he's going to want to do is raise his hand to take you to court to go, "I'm the guy, I'm the guy she's talking about and I'm going to sue her."

So that gave me a little bit of peace, too, because I was just like, yeah, I mean, I'm not taking his name and dragging it through the mud. I'm not intentionally trying to defame him. Of course, he would tell the story differently, or he would prefer that I

would have kept some of these details private. But in the way that I presented the story, it wasn't about getting even, getting revenge, making him suffer, bringing him any pain at all. It was literally just about telling my story.

Annie: And your book can still be the whole truth, even if you have to change details.

Fallon: A hundred percent.

Annie: So if you went to Shoney's instead of Denny's, you can say Denny's, and that is still a true story.

Fallon: A hundred percent.

Annie: I think people sometimes worry that, well, if I change the location or if I say it happened in the fall instead of the spring, I'm lying.

Fallon: No.

Annie: No. You're telling a story and you're changing the details in order to protect someone. And you're telling your story. Now, if you're writing a biography of someone and they went to Shoney's, you have to say they went to Shoney's. But if you're telling your story, it can still be true and switch it to Denny's if that is how you need to keep everyone safe in the story.

Mine has never been the legal ramifications you mentioned. Mine has been breakups or friendship problems.

Fallon: Sure.

Annie: And I often think back to *The Help*. And remember in the book, *The Help*, she tells a story about someone eating a pie made out of poop. And the woman who actually ate that pie never wanted anyone to know it was her in the book. So she never admits that it was her because that's so embarrassing that she would eat a pie made of poop..

Fallon: Totally. Made of poop. Yeah, that's just like that advice. No one's going to want to raise their hand and be like, I'm taking her to court because I'm the guy she wrote about in that book.

Annie: That's exactly right. So even in my non-litigation stories, I have been like, I don't want to defame this person. I don't want anyone to guess that it is him or her. I also bet they won't raise their hand.

Fallon: A hundred percent.

Annie: I have one friendship dissolving that has never recovered. And I had to write about it because I had to write about friendship. And I thought, well, I'm not going to say everything that happened but no one's going to want to be that person.

Fallon: A hundred percent.

Annie: But I also just needed to tell enough. You also don't have to tell everything. You just need to tell enough to tell what you're telling.

Fallon: In the first draft, you tell everything, and then when you're editing is when you start to decide, what of this can I leave out and the reader still understands what's going on, and they still get the point of the story? But they don't need to know every single salacious detail. In the editing process is when you start to weed that stuff out.

Annie: That's right. I usually do an edit myself, and then my agent does an edit, and then I hire an editor, and then I also start passing it. Talk about the traditional publishing side of how people have to sign a piece of paper if they're in the book.

Fallon: Legal permissions. If you're publishing with a traditional publisher, every person who's in the book who you name or who has identifiable details attached to them, they have to sign a legal permissions, a legal release for their story to be told.

So most of the time when you're writing a book, this is a really fun part of the process where you get to send the book to people and go, You're in chapter seven. I wrote about us. I wrote about you. And people love it and they feel really honored. And then, you know, every once in a while, there's a time when you're like, "I wrote about that thing that happened." And it may not be, you know, whatever. I tried to paint you in an okay light, but it's not...

Annie: I was written about in a book in a not flattering way and was not given... but not in like an eating the poop pie kind of way. We were in a situation together and it didn't go the way my friend wanted it to. And it kind of paints me a little bit like I'm the reason it didn't go the way they wanted it to.

After it was published... She was a new author. And after it was published, her agent realized that she hadn't gotten permissions from anyone.

Fallon: And did she name you?

Annie: Yeah.

Fallon: No way.

Annie: And I had this moment where I was like, "I wouldn't have signed off on this. I would have been fine with the story. I would have asked that I would be anonymous in the story." And that's all I would have requested. Tell the story. It is your story. I don't need to be in it. That has also changed how I feel on the writing side. Of like, I actually want to make sure everybody in this knows because one time in my whole life, years ago, I was not given the opportunity to say, I don't want to be this character in this story publicly, even though I was privately.

Fallon: Totally. And that's one of the things that I teach in the book too. There's a whole chapter in the book where I talk about how to tell challenging stories about the villains in our lives. I tell people in the book, first of all, to think of yourself as the hero in the story, which that's a whole other rabbit trail that we don't maybe have time to go down. But to put yourself in the position of the hero of the story, to not pay too much attention to the villain. And to remember that the villain, as a narrative device, the villain enters the story to help the hero change.

Annie: Wow.

Fallon: So the purpose of the villain coming into your story is to help you grow. Not to give the villain too much credit in your story, because think of it, the villain in your story is the hero in their own story.

Annie: That's exactly right. And the hero in their kid's story, and the hero in their... yeah, most likely, they are doing something right on the planet at the same time. That's the complication with humans.

Fallon: I mean, here's the thing. So when I say put yourself in the position of the hero of your story, a lot of times people balk at that, because they're like, I'm not the hero in the story.

Annie: Jesus is the hero of my story.

Fallon: But the hero in a story, as a literary device, so just focus on that part. As a literary device, the hero in the story struggles, struggles, struggles, struggles, struggles. They're deeply flawed. They can't get it right. They can't figure out how to overcome their problems. And then at the very end of the story, right before the story ends, they finally get it right. And they've transformed. They've changed. They've become someone new.

So thinking of yourself as the hero in the story, it doesn't mean you're perfect. It doesn't mean you have it all figured out. It doesn't mean you're saving a cat from a tree or whatever. As a hero in the story, you're a deeply flawed character in the story who struggles to overcome a problem and needs outside help, the guide, to come into the story to give you a new perspective so that you can finally, by the end of the story, overcome your obstacle.

Annie: That's beautiful.

Fallon: We're all heroes in our own stories. Even the villain in your story is a hero in their own story.

Annie: Because we're the villains in someone else's story. I mean, there are people from middle school who would absolutely say, I am not the hero in their story, right? I think that's so good because so often the Christianese line about Jesus being the hero of our story actually puts Him in the wrong seat because the hero is flawed. The guide is the one who is not flawed.

Fallon: A hundred percent.

Annie: Yeah, that's so helpful, Ally. Oh, I can't wait for people to get this. Okay, so as they're starting to get going on *Write Your Story*, help us a little bit with... because now they're going to go, and they're going to get halfway through, and they're going to hate it. Or they're going to get halfway through, and they're going to be like, "What do I do now? I don't know what to do. I thought I knew how to write this book. I don't." What do we do when we feel, quote, "writer's block", or when we are stuck?

Fallon: Okay, so well, I'm going to talk about writer's block separately and I'll also talk about this. Feel free to cut it if you want.

Annie: No way.

Fallon: I'm not trying to do another sales pitch. But I do have a program called A Book in Six Months. I walk people through the process of writing a book from start to finish.

Annie: I want you to tell us about that.

Fallon: It's a cohort of people and we do it together. So we spend six months together, we outline your book together, we literally write the manuscript and by the end of the six months you're holding your finished manuscript in your hands.

Annie: When does your next one start?

Fallon: July 10th.

Annie: Oh. Oh, my gosh.

Fallon: So it's literally perfect timing. We'll work through the summer.

Annie: Right.

Fallon: Our last meeting is December 18th before we roll into Christmas.

Annie: So we can have our book done by the end of the year.

Fallon: By the end of 2024.

Annie: Ally, okay, I'm going to ask you this live. Can we have a little code for TSF Friends?

Fallon: Yeah, yeah, yeah. We'll do a 10% off discount for you.

Annie: Oh my gosh, we're all going to write our books.

Fallon: I know.

Annie: Okay, okay, okay. So we'll make sure that code is in the outro and in the show notes. We'll make sure that's very clear today that there is a code for our TSF friends to do write your book. Okay.

Fallon: Fun. Fun.

Annie: Okay, keep going. Sorry, your book in six months.

Fallon: So yeah, so book in six months. We walk through the process together. It takes six months and by the end you have a finished manuscript in your hands. So there's that. That's really practical.

If you're wanting accountability, support, and coaching, as part of the course, we meet every other week on Wednesday afternoons for an hour and a half usually. And I do some group coaching, I'll do some teaching, and then I pull in people and do little hot seat demos with different people's book outlines to give direct feedback. So that's a really great way to come together with a group of people and get your book written.

But I also want to talk about writer's block for a second because this takes us all the way back to what I said at the beginning of the episode. But in my opinion, writer's block is not writer's block. Writer's block is life block. And when there's something that you want to say or do in your life that you feel you cannot say or do for some reason, it shows up on the page.

And writer's block in that way can be diagnostic. It can show you, like, if you want to write the story of losing your father at 10, let's just say, and every time you sit down to write, you stare at the blinking cursor and you just feel the sinking pit in your gut and you just can't do it. Or maybe you have physical symptoms when you sit down to do it, like your head starts hurting or your palms get sweaty or something. What I would tell you is, it's not writer's block. It's nothing to do with the writing. The writing is just showing you the block that was already there.

Annie: Wow.

Fallon: There are feelings or emotions or thoughts that you have about this event in your life that you haven't found the strength to say quite yet. And writing will help you. First of all, it shows you where the block is, and then it helps you to unblock it.

Annie: Wow. That is really helpful. Seth Godin also told me one time, he asked me, "Annie, do you ever have talker's block?" And I was like, "No, sir." He was like, "Exactly." A practical iteration of this too is I will go on a walk and I will talk into my phone. I'll start seeing what the life block is that is keeping me from the writing. But getting out of your desk and leaving the blinking cursor and going on a walk and having your phone and just start telling yourself a story that you can't get out of your fingers yet, and you will see the life block and you will also have words to put in the computer.

Fallon: Another really practical tip is to give your writing a destination. This made me think of it because for me, talking into a phone, if there's not someone on the other end, it doesn't really help me with writer's block. But if I were to call my husband or call my best friend and say, Hey, can I talk this out with you really quick? There's something about having someone on the other end of the line that really helps me on... it helps me to clear the lines of communication.

So I teach people to do the same thing with writing. Because think if you sat down to write an email and the subject line of the email was like "what's been up with me lately?" but you didn't know who you were sending it to, it'd be really hard to craft the email. You're like, What am I? Is this going to my grandma? Or is it going to my boss? Or is it going to my sister? But if you know who the email is going to, it makes it much easier to tell the parts of the story that matter to that relationship.

Annie: Interesting. Wow. Right.

Fallon: So if you can give your book a destination, if you're just like, I'm writing this book and I'm writing it to my sister, she's the number one person who I want to read this book when it's done. It opens up those lines of communication and helps the words to really flow.

Annie: When I wrote... historically, I will print out the picture of who the book is for and frame it on the desk.

Fallon: Love it. Yes, love it.

Annie: But when I wrote Remember God, I was like, this one's for me. And I thought, this is the book I am writing-

Fallon: Did you print out a picture of yourself at a younger age?

Annie: Yes. I did. I had a picture of me sitting right beside me the whole time.

Fallon: So good.

Annie: There's a project we're working on now that's not a traditional published book, but it's for Single Purpose League and we had them mail us their picture. So we have this ring with hundreds of their pictures.

Fallon: So cool.

Annie: And so we just flip through it and go like, this is who this is for. Remember, they are with their dogs. Remember, they are with their friends' kids. Remember, they are traveling. Remember, they are at a new job this year. A lot of them sent us old Christmas cards. So you're getting this information too. But seeing who you're writing for, it is so different. I

Fallon: It's so helpful.

Annie: The email is such a profound way to think of it. Because what I'm going to tell my grandmother and what I'm going to tell my four girlfriends, be different, Ally.

Fallon: Totally different.

Annie: Be different.

- Fallon:** The tone is going to be quite different. There might be certain details left out.
- Annie:** That's right. Man, I hope I've said this to you before. I have thought it a lot. You are such a generous teacher.
- Fallon:** Oh, thank you.
- Annie:** You have modeled the absence of gatekeeping unlike many. And so thank you so much for how generously you've taught us to write. You have helped me write better. You are helping me write the word I'm writing on right now better. I'm thinking about our friends who do wanna write their story. I wonder if you will sign this book.
- Fallon:** Yes, I should have brought you... I will find a way to get you hardback because I have two hardback copies for you that are signed.
- Annie:** Oh, great, oh, two of them?
- Fallon:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, I'll give you two and you can give them both away.
- Annie:** And we will order from our local bookstore from Parnassus. We'll order two copies of *Bird by Bird*. And then we'll get the two from you, if you'll sign those. And then we'll give those away today to people who go in the comments and give us the sentence your book is about, right? Is that how you want to get them to whittle it down?
- Fallon:** Perfect.
- Annie:** Give us your controlling idea. What is your book you want to write? Give us it in a sentence. It can't be a paragraph. If you give us a paragraph, you've told us too much. So try to whittle it down to a sentence. And we'll pick two of our friends and send them your signed, *Write Your Story* and a non-autographed copy, a Parnassus purchase copy of *Bird by Bird*.
- Fallon:** Love it.
- Annie:** If that's okay.
- Fallon:** Perfect.
- Annie:** What did we not say that you want to make sure we say?
- Fallon:** I think we covered it.

Annie: Thank you so much for offering a discount code for your course.

Fallon: Of course. My pleasure.

Annie: I hope you are prepared for what could come.

Fallon: Honestly, you were saying thank you for the very sweet compliment about being a generous teacher.

Annie: You are.

Fallon: My payback is always people taking this work and running with it. You know, like really putting this work to work in your own life to actually write your book. Like, when I get books in the mail from people who have used my content to complete their manuscripts, that's like everything to me.

Annie: So when you write this book, make sure you thank Ally in the back. Even if it's just to your grandkids. Even if... not even if. Even if more than one person reads your book, you have impacted somebody.

Fallon: A hundred percent.

Annie: Whoever reads this book, thank Ally in the back. Ally, thanks for making time for this today.

Fallon: Thank you. Thank you for having me.

Annie: What a fun summer for people to get to finally... I mean, I just feel this thing in my belly of like, finally, people are going to get to do the thing they've wanted to do.

Fallon: I love it.

Annie: They are finally going to write that book and you're going to coach them through. So thank you, thank you.

Fallon: Thank you for having me.

[01:05:46] <music>

Outro: Oh friends, don't you love her? Isn't she brilliant? She's so quotable. She's just like a quote factory. I am so inspired to work on the book I am working on. I hope you are inspired to work on your book as well.

Go grab your copy of *Write Your Story* and go follow Ally on social media. She gives so many tips like all the time. And of course, tell her thank you for being on the show. It matters so much to our guests when y'all thank them for being on the show.

And remember, there is a discount code for her Write Your Book in Six Months cohort that you can find in the show notes. Literally, she just walked out of the studio. We don't have that code yet, but we will by the time you are hearing this. So look in the show notes.

And remember, we're giving away two signed copies of *Write Your Story* today and a copy of *Bird by Bird* to each of you over on Instagram. So you can head to Annie F. Downs and that's where you can enter to win. Remember, just tell us your sentence about what is the book you want to write. What is the one story you want to tell first? I cannot wait to hear. We will pick two of you to win. and also we'll have the code over there to sign up for her Write Your Book in Six Months cohort.

And remember we talked about Storyworth in this, and I have loved doing this with my parents. You can save \$10 on your first purchase when you go to storyworth.com/thatsoundsfun. That's storyworth.com/thatsoundsfun to save \$10.

And if you like this episode and you want to keep going with that inspiration, I think you're going to love Episode 865 with my girls Audrey Elledge and Elizabeth Moore and their latest book, as well as Episode 493 with Carolyn Weber, author of *Surprised by Oxford*.

If you got any questions from this episode, drop them in the Q and a box on your Spotify app. If you're a Spotify listener or send them to us on Instagram @thatsoundsfunpodcast. We will try to answer them there.

If you need anything else from me, you know I'm embarrassingly easy to find. Annie F. Downs on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook. anywhere you need me, that's where you can find me.

Well, for two more days, and then it is summer Sabbath time for me. I will be gone for the internet for about a month. I will be back on July 8th and time for us to launch a lot of your favorite series that comes in the summer. I'll be back on July 8th. We've got some great podcast interviews in between now and then for you on That Sounds Fun.

You know, we always take a summer Sabbath as a team as well. So the week of July 4th, there will be no shows, but we've got brand new shows for you leading up

to that. Make sure you're following That Sounds Fun podcast for all that information. I do not want you to miss these continued episodes. about how to plan for the best summer ever, how to make sure you are living your best summer life, and what God might have for you this summer. So do not miss those. I'm not gonna miss it either.

I think that's it for me today, friends. Go out or stay home, do something that sounds fun to you, and I will do the same. Today what sounds fun to me is taking a long walk at Central Park. That is what I'm gonna do.

Y'all have a great weekend. We'll see you back here tomorrow on Friday and Saturday for AFD in NYC episodes. Saturday is a brand new one, but I hope you're all caught up. If you haven't, spend some time today and tomorrow listening to episodes one through seven so that you can hear where we've been so you know where we're going. We'll see y'all on Monday.