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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.

Listen, if you weren't at our That Sounds Fun event at the Ryman, and you may not have seen it on Instagram, I do have a big thank you to say to you. We have very recently hit 100 million downloads of the That Sounds Fun podcast, which is a number that makes no sense to me. I cannot fathom 100 million downloads.

But it's thanks to you, you listening to our shows, you sharing these shows with your friends. As we continue to try to make the best podcast you get to listen to and the one that you love the most, that's who we hope to be, the work we hope to do, it just means the world to me that you keep tuning in and you keep bringing your friends along. So thank you, thank you, thank you for that. It is such an honor to do this work.

It's funny, right, because we just make each episode as we go. And it's one of those things where you don't realize the compounding effect of the work you do every day. So I also hope that our 100 million downloads remind you and whatever you are doing, that you are doing compounding work in the daily tasks like you are making a bigger impact than you realize. I hope this reminds you of that.

We also have a beautiful little trophy that the network gave us. Thank you to the That Sounds Fun Network. I was genuinely shocked when they brought it out. So if you want to go back and look on my Instagram, you can see it there. It's on Annie F. Downs. If you look under the TSF Ryman highlight, all the posts from the Ryman are there, but one of them is about the 100 million downloads.

And thanks to the team that makes this all possible. This is the only part I know how to do is talk. The rest of them know how to do the rest. So I am really, really grateful for our team and really, really grateful to you. We love getting to do this. And so I'm grateful, y'all.

Keep showing up with us and keep inviting your friends. Keep doing it. Rate, review the show. That's how it gets in front of new people. When an episode stands out to you, text it over to your people, share it with the people around you. The more the merrier is what we like to say around here. So your friends are invited to join us too. So thank you again.

Before we dive into today's conversation that you are gonna love, I want to tell you about one of our incredible sponsors. This show is sponsored by [BetterHelp](#). Sometimes I get jealous that kids are back in school because I love learning and I

miss teaching. But then I realize I still have full control of being able to learn something new whenever I want to. We all do we just have to make time for it.

I'm such a fan of being a lifelong learner, and that includes learning more about myself too. Therapy can help you reconnect with your curiosity to learn and help you learn more about yourself too.

So if you've been thinking about starting therapy, give BetterHelp a try. It's done entirely online so it is super convenient and flexible to your schedule. And 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 to find the right match for you.

Rediscover your curiosity with BetterHelp. [Betterhelp.com/ThatSoundsFun](https://www.betterhelp.com/ThatSoundsFun) today to get 10% off your first month. That's better help [help.com/ThatSoundsFun](https://www.betterhelp.com/ThatSoundsFun).

Intro: Today on the show I get to talk with one of our favorites around here, a real star in the Hall of Fun, Carlos Whitaker. You know him and love him and he is as I said, a Hall of Funner.

Today we are diving into this project he's been working on the past few years. It is fascinating. If you don't follow Carlos on social media, you may not have heard about this, but you are going to love it.

Carlos spent seven weeks away from screens, spent time with monks and Amish farmers. It was all to see how it would impact his life and his actual brain. Seriously, he did a scan of his brain before and after. So he's written all about it in his brand new book that releases this week called *Reconnected*. And he's been working on a documentary of the whole thing. We're going to talk about it all today. So buckle up. Here's my conversation with my friend Carlos Whitaker.

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Annie: Carlos Whitaker, welcome back to That Sounds Fun.

Carlos: Back. Hold on. You need to say, Carlos, welcome back, back, back, back.

Annie: I got to say it eight times?

Carlos: Eight times.

Annie: Eight times. I think you... I need to double-check. Eddie's probably ahead of you because we do monthly, but after Eddie.

Carlos: Sure. Yeah, absolutely. You know, what's great is my brother's name's Eddie.

Annie: That's right. That's all right.

Carlos: So it just makes sense that you need a Carlos and Eddie.

Annie: My favorite thing that's happened so far at this table is you have an air tag on your keys. Your keys are sitting next to us. You have an air tag on your keys.

Carlos: Wait, you're saying that as if that's not normal.

Annie: No, I didn't know you could... Remember when I lost my ring. Yes, you heard me talk about it every night of tour. One of the first things I thought-

Carlos: "How do I get an air tag on my ring?"

Annie: How do I get an air tag on my jewelry?

Carlos: I've got an air tag on my keys and in my wallet.

Annie: Oh, smart.

Carlos: They make like a little slim wallet or card-looking thing that you stick an air tag in. So it becomes a card. So those are the only two things I need air tags in.

Annie: Not in your luggage?

Carlos: No, not in my luggage. Well, because I don't ever check my luggage.

Annie: Man, every piece of my luggage has an air tag.

Carlos: Oh, really? Okay.

Annie: Oh, every piece, whether it's with me or not.

Carlos: Hold on. I take this back. When you and I went to Rwanda, my luggage was lost until the last day. I don't know if you remember.

Annie: Oh, I remember.

Carlos: And I did not have an air tag. And so maybe I do.

- Annie:** I mean, let's talk about when everyone is on the flight from LaGuardia? No. Where did we come out of?
- Carlos:** I-
- Annie:** Was it New York?
- Carlos:** Yes, it was. Because I just remember... No, it was Atlanta.
- Annie:** It was Atlanta. It was Atlanta to... it was the only flight that got us to Amsterdam to Rwanda. We were boarding and you were in the air from Nashville.
- Carlos:** You were watching. I was like Instagramming and going like, What are the chances? What's the percentage? You know, it was like 97% of people were like, There's no way. And honestly, there wasn't... I think you were on the plane, I was still in the air.
- Annie:** I was sitting down and you were posting that you were still in the air. I was on our plane.
- Carlos:** You were actually supposed to be with me.
- Annie:** I was supposed to be with you.
- Carlos:** And I don't think you would have handled it with the same grade.
- Annie:** To be sure, Carlos Whitaker, there is no chance I would have handled it with the joy you did because I'd have been like, Well, I'm not... I mean, literally when we got to Atlanta in that flight... if I would have missed the flight from Atlanta to Amsterdam-
- Carlos:** You would have not ever gone to Rwanda.
- Annie:** To this minute would have not experienced Rwanda. And I love Lillian and Rwanda. I love everybody with African New Life. I still get letters and pictures from Bruno and his sister that I sponsor.
- Carlos:** Blessing.
- Annie:** I know.
- Carlos:** I get it too.

Annie: I love what they're doing.

Carlos: Me too.

Annie: I cannot wait to go back someday.

Carlos: I am going to be hanging out with them if they're... two galas, galas. I mean, what do you call them?

Annie: I usually say gala.

Carlos: Gala. Yeah.

Annie: Or Gala.

Carlos: Gala. I don't know. Who knows what it is.

Annie: I don't know, but it's fancy.

Carlos: Yeah, it's fancy. And so I get to-

Annie: You're speaking?

Carlos: Yes, in September and October, Austin-

Annie: And Portland.

Carlos: And Portland. So I'll be speaking at both places.

Annie: Lucky you.

Carlos: I get to see Morgan.

Annie: Yes. Gosh, I love Morgan.

Carlos: I know.

Annie: I have been so impressed... when I tell people about so much of what I loved about Rwanda was Morgan's leadership of our lives, taking us places, and the ability of a Marriott to be so international that besides what you're eating and that you can't brush your teeth in the sink-

Carlos: It felt like we're in Dallas.

- Annie:** I literally said to so many people, once I walk in the doors, I don't know if I'm in Rwanda or Minneapolis.
- Carlos:** Yes, totally. No, no.
- Annie:** It's wild.
- Carlos:** Well done, Marriott.
- Annie:** Yeah, well done, Marriott helping us be in both places at once.
- Carlos:** Totally.
- Annie:** I loved it. I'm thinking about the night that we all had chicken Caesar salads and French fries at the bar in that hotel. And it was like, this is... how are we in Rwanda right now?
- Carlos:** It's totally true. I think there was a sporting event or something we were watching too.
- Annie:** Yes, there was soccer on TV. It was great.
- Carlos:** Oh, it was good.
- Annie:** Oh Lord. Let's talk about what sounds fun to us. Nashville SC, Carlos.
- Carlos:** It doesn't sound fun. Eight losses in a row.
- Annie:** Nine now.
- Carlos:** Oh, nine now.
- Annie:** They just lost since you were sitting there.
- Carlos:** No, I was sitting right there, right behind the bench. You know, it was funny, BJ Callahan, I think is our new coach-
- Annie:** I think so, yes.
- Carlos:** At one point after Joe Willis, God bless him, but we had a pass giveaway and then he's running 40 yards up the field to try to stop this attacker and he goes around him, scores a goal. And BJ turns around, I'm sitting right behind the bench, kind of

puts his face in his hands and just for one second of exasperation, like one second of doubting all of his life choices-

Annie: Yeah, because he's only been here for a month or something.

Carlos: No, yeah, yeah. And so this was his first MLS game. But it just was that look of like, I've got some work to do, you know?

Annie: So many of those dudes... you have good friends on the team. I have good friends on the team. Best dudes.

Carlos: Best dudes.

Annie: And you hate to see it like this.

Carlos: I know.

Annie: You hate to see it like this.

Carlos: I know.

Annie: Such a bad streak. Because also then all the win gets taken out of the games.

Carlos: Totally.

Annie: And we don't want to be... I mean, you know I'm more fairweather than you are, but it's so hard.

Carlos: It's hard. You go and now you're just kind of a long-suffering fan. And you're almost going for them.

Annie: Yeah, that's right.

Carlos: Instead of for you. I'm like, the stadium's emptying out. Because when you're not winning-

Annie: And we're so young and we're only a three-year team. And when you're so young, it's so hard to keep the momentum. Whereas like... well, I was about to say the Mets. But the Mets also, when they were having such a bad start to the season, no one was going.

Carlos: Right, right.

Annie: But I am still going. I'm still at season ticket number one. I absolutely love it.

Carlos: And we still have a shot to make playoffs. So listen-

Annie: What?

Carlos: We actually still have a shot to make the playoffs.

Annie: How?

Carlos: We do. We do. So we're still in it. We're still in the fight for it. How is that? MLS this year added two playoff spots in both divisions underneath eight. So it goes all the way to 10. So there's actually only-

Annie: Out of 15?

Carlos: There's actually only like three or 14 teams that don't make the playoffs.

Annie: We got a shot.

Carlos: We got a shot.

Annie: Have I told you about going to the game in New York?

Carlos: No.

Annie: So I went to a New York Red Bulls against Nashville.

Carlos: Oh, you did. Okay.

Annie: Walker gave me his ticket because the families all have tickets everywhere and none of his family was coming. So he said, "Yeah, yeah, you could use mine and bring your friends. So me and my friends, Jack and Lauren went. And we're sitting in the family section. Everybody knows everybody except us. So finally one of the parents turned around and was like, "Hi..." I mean, this is like 40 minutes into a 90-minute game.

Carlos: Sure.

Annie: "Hi. Who do y'all know?" It was very clear that there was only 40 of us in this section and there were three that were like, Three of these things or not like the others.

Carlos: Totally. I love that.

Annie: But it was so fun going to... I'd never been doing away game. Have you been doing away game?

Carlos: Actually Walker gave me his tickets to an LAFC game.

Annie: Oh yeah.

Carlos: And so I got to see Nashville and LAFC. And we beat them. And listen, we're in downtown LA, LAFC is like LA, right, and I'm proudly wearing my Nashville shirt. I'm passing by all these guys from the barrio, they look like my cousins, they're like, "You're a Nashville fanassay. And I was like, "Yeah. And we won." It was awesome. That was great.

Annie: I hilariously don't remember if we won.

Carlos: Oh really? Yeah, that's fine.

Annie: I don't remember if we won. Because I just had such a good time. I just remember all the snacks we tried because my friends, Jack and Lauren are very snack-venturous. And so one of my favorite things in New York is we will eat and eat and order 15 small things because we want to try everything.

Carlos: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Annie: So I remember the snacks, sadly, for better or for worse. Okay, everyone is hearing this. This is book launch week for *Reconnected*.

Carlos: It is book launch week.

Annie: Congratulations.

Carlos: Thank you. Thank you.

Annie: I want to talk to you a little bit about... you made this decision to get off your phone to get off of socials, but you still took a camera with you and recorded a bunch of stuff. I've seen people say these things in your comments. Wait, so how'd you have a camera and how'd you do all this? And I thought you were leaving technology. So were you leaving technology or were you leaving the connectivity of phones? Will you kind of explain the difference?

Carlos: So the subtitle is-

Annie: Let me read it.

Carlos: Go ahead and read it. First of all, the longest subtitle in America.

Annie: It's great. Lots of capital letters and lowercase letters. *How 7 Screen-Free Weeks with Monks and Amish Farmers Helped Me Recover the Lost Art of Being Human.* And this was the cover I loved. When we were cover voting-

Carlos: I know.

Annie: I love this cover.

Carlos: I sent it to like 10 friends. That was yours.

Annie: Oh, I loved it.

Carlos: Screen-free. People have forgotten... first of all, because I have a documentary coming out. That's really where a lot of this happened. So people are like, "Well, how do you have a documentary? You didn't have a phone." I was like, "I took a camera."

Annie: These old things.

Carlos: People forget that you can actually have a camera.

Annie: Yeah, that's right.

Carlos: I mean, honestly, you talk to anybody, what is the problem? The number one problem and pain point people have with technology in general, it's not a camera. It's not your headphones. It's not, if we go back to 15 years ago, an MP3 player. It's the screen.

Annie: Yeah, that's right.

Carlos: It's the screen. So that's why it's screen-free weeks.

Annie: Got it.

Carlos: So I didn't look at an iPhone, an Apple Watch, an iPad, a laptop, a TV. I did not consume any content for almost two months from any screens. Every night I'd set up a camera. And I was actually doing that specifically so I could write the book.

So I'd set it up, and for the first two weeks, I just would talk to it every night. "Okay, this is what I did." It was like a journal. And then so when I got home-

Annie: And quicker than writing it.

Carlos: Yes, than writing it down. So I'd talk about it. And then I got home. And when I started writing the book, I literally would watch the footage. And I was like, "Okay, this is what I did on day three."

Annie: Oh, brilliant.

Carlos: Because I wanted to make sure I had that. But then the longer I was there, the more I was kind of filming other things. You know, I'd film my walk or I'd film this. Or "Oh, you know what? I'm with a monk. Let me interview him. Let me put up the camera."

So when I got back, I had about 60 hours of footage. So I gave that to Hodges and it turned into a documentary. We'll talk about that later. But the idea of the book wasn't to be technology-free. It was to be screen-free. Screen-free is the kicker. Most of us, that is something that we're all working on. That is something that-

And I'd seen enough books about the dangers of screens. I'd seen enough books about five ways to, you know, stop looking at your screen. I'm like, Okay, like there's enough of those books. But I want to write a book about what's beautiful on the other side of the screen. So this book isn't about why phones are bad.

Annie: You genuinely don't talk about it.

Carlos: No.

Annie: I read the whole thing and there's like very little mention of phones being-

Carlos: Yeah. Go read another book for that. This book is about all the things we've forgotten how to do on the other side of the screen.

The first four days was all about the phone because I was legitimately detoxing coming off of it. But then after day five, I'd forgotten about the phone. It was now just an experiment about community and experiment about all these beautiful things that I was experiencing. And so it was life-changing.

I also had not found anyone that had done it. Like I'm like, all these people are telling me why phones are bad. And I'm like, but who's actually done it? I was at a point in my life where I was like, "I think I can do this." Let me get my brain scan

before and after. Let me make a little experiment. And let me not look at a single screen for seven straight weeks. Not delete Instagram. Not delete Twitter. Not stop reading email. Not only look at an out. Like literally not look at a screen for seven weeks and see what happened. Oh, and it changed everything.

Annie: One of the things I dislike about myself, if I was to make a list of what's not working in my life, which Hannah Bridget taught us to do, I am great at a Sabbath from my phone for a day. I'm actually really great at a summer break. I take a month off every summer. And then I come back and I go, Man, I'm not even going to look anymore. And it takes me about four days to be back to like in my discover tab and Instagram.

Carlos: Oh, totally.

Annie: You may not want to answer this. Have you actually made any changes that have stuck?

Carlos: Well, put it this way. I was at seven hours and 23 minutes a day on my phone. And now I'm at three and a half hours a day on my phone.

Annie: Wow.

Carlos: And can I tell you something?

Annie: Yes.

Carlos: I have not made one... Yes, I can. Because that's the whole point of the podcast. So I can tell you everything. I have not purposely made one decision about screen time with my phone. I haven't put anything in place.

Annie: You're half down to the amount you used it before your seven weeks and you haven't... you don't have any external stopper. It's just you.

Carlos: I don't have screen time. I don't have rules. I don't have why. Because what I realized is when I fell back in love with what's on the other side of the screen, when I started doing those things instead, I just picked up my phone less. Yeah. Now I'm just living more... Again, this book's not going to... yeah, it'll give you tangible handlebars at the end of every chapter, things that you can try. But those things that you're trying is actually living.

A great example is I no longer use maps on my phone.

Annie: I love this. You have to talk about this. This was a great part of the book.

Carlos: I no longer... Literally, anywhere I go, I look it up before I leave. I write it on a napkin. I'll write it on a piece of paper and I just start going. So I no longer have Siri telling me "in 900 feet". Who ever knew what 900 feet was until now? You know, turn left. And I get lost and I get stuck in traffic. But I do all these things because I feel like we were created to get lost and find our way. That has an even deeper spiritual-

Annie: That was literally probably one... I'm glad you're talking about this. Of the things I wrote down that I loved in your book, getting lost, the power of getting lost, and waking up your intuition.

Carlos: Yes. Yes.

Annie: That is profound, Carlos. I mean, I can't wait... Y'all are going to have to read all the way to page 187. But by the time you're at 187... I mean, I just was really blown away at what it looks like to wake up your intuition. Why is that? Tell me what happened to our intuition. Because I think one of the reasons I love that is I feel that really profoundly that my... I don't lean on my own intuition very much.

Carlos: It's gone. We don't wonder anymore. We literally don't wonder. We ask questions, but we don't wonder. So people think that by saying, "I wonder what", that that's wondering. Wondering isn't asking the question. Wondering is what happens after you ask the question. So wonder is gone, right? When someone says, I wonder, pick up a phone, wonder is over in one second.

So because we're not using that part of our brain anymore, because we're literally not stuck in wonder bill anymore, we don't have to trust our gut. We don't have to use our intuition. Yelp, legitimately the thing that's ruined I believe so much intuition. Like you pass by a restaurant and it's like, Man, that kind of looks good. You look it up on Yelp, "Oh, it's only got two and a half stars." But now we're trusting Joe with his taste buds over our intuition and our experience.

Annie: I don't know how the food's going to taste, but that place looks fun.

Carlos: So like intuition gone, intuition, you know... I'm watching my Amish friends, you know, farm, there's so much intuition when he was farming. I tell this story about intuition. I'll share it where Willis... I'm what? I think at this point, six days deep into farming with Willis. And so we're with the sheep every day, but we've been waiting to cut the hay, to cut the grass.

Annie: Yes, please tell this.

Carlos: So we're waiting to cut the hay and by day six-

Annie: Why do you have to wait? Because it has to dry up.

Carlos: Yes. Because it has to dry. And so it's not every day. It's a little too wet because it poured a couple of days before I got there. He's like, "We're letting it dry." By day six I'm like a freaking grass expert. I'm walking out there like I know. I'm picking it up, you know, walking. And I was like, Oh yeah, it feels like today's ripe for the harvest. Willis is like one more day of letting it dry.

So then it's the day that we're supposed to cut the hay and I'm so freaking pumped. I'm like, I'm going to get on the horse or the whole thing. But I wake up and it's like a thunderstorm outside. So I'm like, "Shoot, we're not going to get to cut the hay again. I wonder if we were going to get to cut it while I'm here."

So I walked there dejected and Willis is like... And literally you could see it raining. You could see the clouds. You could see all the rain. I was like, it's a--

Annie: You walk to where he's living.

Carlos: So I'm like in a little tiny house and then I walk a hundred yards to their house. They have breakfast for me every morning at 7 a.m. Like big farm breakfast. And, you know, we're sitting there. I was like, "Well, it looks like we're not going to get to cut the hay." And he's like, "Well, why?" And I was like, "Well, it's raining." He's like, "Well, it's not raining here." And I said, "I know, but it's raining." He's like, come outside." So I walk outside.

And we walk in the grass and he points to my boots and he goes, "What's on your boot?" I go, "This dude's weird. What are you doing? What are you talking about?" I said, "Nothing." He's like, "No, look at it." And I was like, "Oh, there's water. It's wet. The grass is wet." He's like, "My daddy always told me, if there's dew on your boots, it's not going to rain." And I was like, "Excuse me. That's the stupidest thing I've ever heard. Look, there's thunder. There's lightning. There's rain all around us." He's like, "We're going to cut the hay because there's dew on your boots." And so I'm like, "This is dumb. You're going to ruin this entire field's harvest."

So I get with Kathy, his wife and Diane. We go somewhere. It's dumping rain. We drive a mile away, it's dumping rain. We're there a couple hours. It's dumping rain. Literally never stops raining to where I even look at Diane and Kathy almost like, "I'm so sorry that you've lost your harvest. Yeah, that you've wasted. It's going to mildew. Like you can't cut it while it's like that."

We start driving back. We get about half a mile from the farm and the rain just stops and it's dry. The road is completely dry. And Kathy turns around to me and she goes, "We ain't home yet." And so we got home and Willis is standing in his driveway with his arms crossed on his belly, smiling at me. And I walked up to him, he's like, "There was dew on my boots." And he cut the hay. That was intuition. That was trusting your gut. Google has killed intuition.

Again, whenever I'm at dinner with my friends now and someone utters the words "I wonder," and then someone picks up their phone, I make them stop. No, we're just going to wonder. It's okay to not know. It's okay to just wonder. We're addicted to knowledge. We're addicted to the... not knowledge, but the feeling of control that knowledge gives us. When ultimately I realized during these seven weeks, oh, knowledge doesn't give me control because I'm actually out of control.

Annie: This is my big question I wrote. When I finished reading the book, I wrote, is this all a control thing? And do we know too much?

Carlos: Oh, yes.

Annie: I can show you. Those are my two questions.

Carlos: You don't even need to interview me. Just let me talk.

Annie: Yeah, right.

Carlos: Why I'm glad you're asking these questions is because that right there, those are the questions. The phone is not the problem. Control. What are you-

Annie: Because we work so hard to be comfortable. We are constantly controlling every environment we are in. And a hundred years ago, that was not possible. But now give me air conditioning. Now give me the food I want. Now make sure we have everything we need. And our phones give us the sense of I can get comfortable if I know more.

Carlos: And the truth is, if you think about it and you start unpacking this control and this knowledge--

Annie: No, thank you.

Carlos: ...what's actually happening is it's actually causing way more anxiety in us.

Annie: Right.

Carlos: Because when the control just starts to slip a little bit... Well, our great, great grandparents never even had that control. So they never worried about that control. Now I can track my kids. I can track my mom. I can see how fast my kids are going. 52 miles an hour. I can see when they get to this location. My mom's like, "Carlos, if I had that when you were a teenager, I would be stressed out 24/7.

Annie: All the time. I know.

Carlos: And so she's like, it's actually giving you more anxiety than it's giving you more.

Annie: Are you hearing John Eldredge talk about this right now?

Carlos: Oh, yeah.

Annie: For starters, if there are two people who are bigger fans of John Eldredge, I don't know who they are besides you. And maybe your wife. But he's talking right now on his podcast about... what John's saying right now is we have more counselors than ever, more therapists than ever, more medicine than ever, more knowledge than ever and we are still more anxious than ever.

So in his podcast, he's teaching when you feel anxious in the middle of the night, you can't go to a counseling appointment, you can't go to God. And so let's learn how to go to God for our peace when we feel out of control. And also have these other resources. He's not... I mean, he's a therapist.

Carlos: Sure.

Annie: He's not anti those other resources.

Carlos: I'm not anti-phone. I'm back on my phone. It does great things. But it's causing us to become addicted to knowledge and control. Knowledge that leads to control or this false sense of control. You know, something that I say a lot is our souls and our psyche were not created with the capacity to consume the amount of content we consume. They just weren't. And so, yes, we know too much.

When I was at the monastery for two weeks, all I knew was what was happening within 100 yards of me. I knew that Father Dominic was sick. So I knew that I could go to the mess hall and the cafeteria and get him some food and go visit with him. I knew that Abbott Francis had a retreat with these dancers that were coming. I knew a lot. I actually knew enough to fill my mind and heart all day long. But I only knew what was right there in my community.

And I just started thinking, do we just know too much? Like now we know what's happening across the planet. And I think it's okay.

Annie: At all times.

Carlos: At all times. 24/7. There's no way we were created with the capacity to know all that.

Annie: Yes. I think that is one of my brain's biggest problems. This happened to me this week. Our mutual friend, KB, KB, and I were at the same event and he said, "Did you see what happened to mutual friend on Twitter?" And I was like, "Nope." He said, "Have you heard that everybody's met?" "Nope. I'm not on Twitter. So I don't know." And all of a sudden... you just have these moments. And this happens to me all summer when I take the month off when people like, "Hey, did you see this happen?" "No, I don't. I don't see anything." But I'm never bored. I see everything.

Carlos: Totally.

Annie: I was walking at Central Park every day. I was listening to podcasts. I was doing puzzles. I mean, I was still living like you're saying. We could just only take in what we can take in. And without my phone I wasn't taking in things outside of my life.

Carlos: That's why the book's called *Reconnected*. Because when I told people I left my phone, literally, my phone was hundreds of miles away from me for two months. Everyone's like, what was it like when you disconnected? Initially, I was like, Oh... and I would explain it. But then I was like, I actually didn't. Like, I actually plugged back in. I actually reconnected to everything that is around me. All the things that I think God created me to notice and to savor, all of these things, I reconnected to. So, yeah, everything, Annie. I mean, it's all too much. Just too much.

[00:28:03] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends, just interrupting this conversation to tell you about one of our incredible partners, one of my favorites, [Wayfair](#). Fall is calling and Wayfair has everything you need to welcome the new season into your space. They've got cozy throws that you need, seasonal decor, cookware, and more.

Creating your own autumn ambiance is easier than you think. So I'm in my New York apartment right now, and y'all know how much I love the stuff I got from Wayfair for my apartment here, I'm getting to use my absolute favorite couch ever. And now it is time for me to add a little fall touch in here too. I am very excited

about that. And I finally am not using a travel shelving unit that is in my closet. I finally got a dresser from Wayfair and I'm very, very grateful to have drawers.

No matter your style or budget, Wayfair is the go-to destination for everything autumn, which I am excited to do the updates around the apartment. Anything you need for the entryway, the dining table, kitchen, and more.

Wayfair has everything from your favorite fall traditions, whether you prefer hosting, baking, or just getting cozy. Wayfair makes it easy with fast and free shipping, even on the big stuff. They'll even help you set it up.

Get ready for the season of change. Visit [Wayfair.com](https://www.wayfair.com) or get the Wayfair mobile app. Y'all, if you want something else to scroll, the Wayfair mobile app is enjoyable. That's wayfair.com. Wayfair, every style, every home.

Sponsor: And I have another incredible partner to tell you about, [Nurture Life](https://www.nurturelife.com). Listen, I was on vacation with five littles under four this summer, my family MiniBFFs. I know how hard it is for you parents to prep meals that your kids will actually eat. And so I need you to know about this hack.

Nurture Life is a meal delivery service focused on helping busy parents easily feed my MiniBFFs from 10 months old to 10 years old. And my nephew Sammy is a fan. We sent him a box of Nurture Life to try and he sent me back a video. I showed the whole team. It was adorable. He gave it all two thumbs up and said they tasted, and I quote, "vewy dewicious". He was definitely a fan of their little corn dogs.

Nurture Life lets kids enjoy a nutritionally balanced meal while still eating all of their favorites. And their meals are made fresh every week. Seriously, they're never frozen. And they're shipped directly to your door. It is even allergy friendly too. It's about time that a flexible meal subscription existed for babies and kids.

So head to [NurtureLife.com](https://www.nurturelife.com) and use the code TSF for 55% off your first order. That's right, 55% off. Once again, that's NurtureLife.com for 55% off. And make sure you use our promo code TSF so they know we sent you.

Okay, now back to our conversation with Carlos.

[00:30:42] <music>

Annie: Okay, here is my question. In our spiritual lives... Let's talk about the Holy Spirit-

Carlos: Sure.

Annie: You and I both have... all of our friends listening, a lot of our friends listening. You and I both have relationships with the Lord. A lot of our friends listening do. What has been stolen from us? I'm thinking a lot about steal, kill, and destroy right now in my life. What has been stolen from us that the Lord wants to restore by changing our relationship with screens?

Carlos: What's been stolen from us is our ability... I think, our true ability to have a one-on-one relationship with the Lord. Let me unpack that a little bit.

Annie: Wow. Please. Yikes.

Carlos: We get so much help. We get too much help in our faith journey, I believe.

Annie: I mean, I've said so many times, how did people say the Bible before Google?

Carlos: So listen, suddenly, I'm at the monastery, 23 hours a day of silence, no screens. I have my Bible, and I have these monks. And I've got six times a prayer a day. So when you go from seven and a half hours a day looking at your phone to no... you can't get out of your head anymore. You just can't escape, right, your thoughts. It was very overwhelming.

But suddenly what I didn't have anymore... I would have these questions. "God, I don't understand. Why are you allowing this suffering to happen?" I couldn't go listen to a Matt Chandler sermon. That's going to fix me in the moment. Oh, you know what? That feels better. Okay, I'm fine.

I had to sit and exist in the discomfort of questioning God. So suddenly now, here's where a relationship really happens, is when you question and then He responds. And then you question that. I don't like that. And then you start.

So suddenly I actually, within 72 hours, my faith just completely unraveled. I was like, this is all a facade. Like did God... really this dude that was murdered and then rose again. Come on. Like it all started feeling so fluffy and fairy tale to me because I didn't have this constant stream of podcasts and YouTube videos and sermons and all these things, book, audiobooks that I was using to box God up into this perfect little package that, okay, this fits neatly in my life.

Suddenly all of those walls crumbled and God went spilling everywhere. And so what happened to me was God actually got way bigger than He did smaller. I feel like these screens are making our faith so small. Like we've just kept boxing God in smaller and smaller and smaller until it's like, Oh, this is perfect for me. Whereas I feel like God is supposed to be an overwhelming God.

Like I just had to get to the point of being okay with God being so gigantic and so massive. And there was a lot more "I don't know" than there was "Oh yeah, no, this is the answer to God".

Annie: But you and I both spend our days making content that we share on social media that hopefully brings people closer to Jesus.

Carlos: Absolutely.

Annie: How do we balance that? How do we balance the God gets bigger the farther you get from your screens and we both spend our lives trying to help connect with people via a screen that will draw them closer to God? That's tense for me.

Carlos: It should be. And it's tense for me. And it's actually changed a lot of what I'm putting out into the world. The questions I'm asking... what I'm trying to do now is have people ask more questions than give people more answers. That's in the last year and a half since I've done this, where... and again, this isn't for everybody, but for me, I'm like, I just want to lead people to more questions. Because God is ultimately going to answer these questions.

Annie: He can handle it. Yeah, that's right.

Carlos: He can handle our questions. He can handle all these things. But the amount of questions I started having in these seven weeks when I didn't have answers readily available to me, suddenly my faith had to become my faith. It couldn't become what Carlos... I love my book, Kill the Spider. I know it's helped a lot of people.

Annie: Oh my gosh, it helped me so much.

Carlos: But ultimately I have to be okay with offering... You know, I'm almost 51 now. The older I get, the more I do feel like I've got some things figured out. I got a few things. I can help people with some of these things. But what I don't want to do is cheat people the opportunity of asking God some hard questions and having to wrestle with God by me coming in and giving my kind of cookie cutter, a little basic morsel of like, Well, this is it. I hope you feel better.

Annie: That's right. I'm writing my next book so differently because of my version of that.

Carlos: But does that make sense?

Annie: Yes, totally.

Carlos: Again, podcasts and books... I'm writing a freaking book. I'm talking about a book that I'm hoping people are going to read so it helps them. But what I'm hoping it does is it helps them reconnect with who God has created them to be. But I'm not telling them who that person is and I'm not telling them what God is supposed to look like.

Annie: That's right. We had a live stream last night for our Single Purpose.

Carlos: Yeah, SPL.

Annie: Yeah. It's called The Chapter Meeting. One of the things we talked about is when God says, he's your husband in Isaiah. And that's true for men and women. And y'all get to suss out what that feels like for you. But for women... and people are kind of starting to talk about how God has filled that role for them. And the variety of answers is just this reminder that God is individual.

So for us to say, for God to be your husband looks like this, or for us to give exact answers is being prescriptive instead of descriptive of who He could be. But so when people are asking me, I was going, "I'll tell you two examples, but I need you to go ask Him."

Carlos: Yes, that's it.

Annie: "Because what you need in an earthly husband is not the same thing I need in an earthly husband. And what you need in God as your husband, as it says in Isaiah, is not what I need, it is God as my husband today." And so it has been such a gift- I mean, I teared up during the live stream.

One girl was like, "I had a list of the dream car I wanted and God helped me find it." And another girl was like, "I am telling you, God fixed my dishwasher this summer." I mean, stuff like that that is like just make you want to sob that He is so personal and kind and loving and can be in that role for all of us." But if we say as creators, this is who you have to be... I mean, an introvert is not going to connect with who they have to be, if that's what you and I are telling them. Can you imagine?

Carlos: Let me tell you, Single Purpose League, God is your handyman. Period. He was for the dishwasher girl, but he's not going to be for this person.

Annie:

Carlos: Right. So again, being disconnected from content and content creators that I love and that helped me, you know, just left me alone with the word of God and people that I could talk to face to face.

Annie: Face to face.

Carlos: And I'm telling you, it unraveled a lot and it reconstructed a lot. I'm better for it.

Annie: It must be how the rabbis... a common thing we hear about is that rabbis enjoy arguing over scripture together.

Carlos: Yeah, totally.

Annie: And when we see that happen on the internet, it's very toxic and divisive. I would have to imagine that you sat with some of these monks and some of the friends of the Amish went like, "That cannot be true. Work that out with me." And there's no risk of it being a public thing because you're just sitting around a table.

Carlos: There's also no risk of... it's funny. Believe it or not, the Amish and I don't see eye to eye in a lot. I've got a lot of like ultra-conservative friends. Close, close friends of mine. And I came back and I was like, "Hey, listen, I know that you call yourself ultra-conservative, but you are the most liberal Amish person I've ever met. So let me tell you about conservatism. Conservatism."

And so I'm sitting across the table, Willis and I, we're talking about socioeconomic issues. We're talking about worldviews. We're talking about all of these things that we are vehemently disagreeing on. But can I tell you? I'm thinking about these rabbis you're talking about. The disagreements we had were across a what? A table.

Annie: Yeah, that's right.

Carlos: And the table, although we were disagreeing about things in our minds, we were agreeing about the thing in front of us. "Oh my gosh. But you know what? This freaking bread, did she bake it this morning? Did she bake it?" So there's this commonality, this common love face-to-face that we're sharing. We're disagreeing, but we're together long enough to where... the point isn't just to argue and come up with a solution or come up with a point of agreement. Sometimes we just disagreed. And it was fine because we spent such a long time together.

I go into the book... One of the chapters is about the table and how every meal I had with the monks and the Amish was over an hour. Every single breakfast, lunch, and dinner. There was not a meal that was shorter than an hour.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Carlos: Most of them were an hour and a half.

Annie: Even breakfast.

Carlos: Even breakfast.

Annie: When they had so much to do.

Carlos: They have so much to do, but a lot of what they have to do is this, is talking. And so I got home and I started doing research for the book and I was like, Well, I wonder like... I feel like the American meal has changed too. And sure enough, a hundred years ago, the average American meal was 90 minutes long meal.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Carlos: Not dinner. A hundred years ago, the average American meal was 90 minutes long. In 2023, it was 12 minutes.

Annie: Oh my gosh, Carlos.

Carlos: So let's think.

Annie: 90 to 12.

Carlos: Let's think. What have we lost? Because we no longer communicate over a meal. What have we lost because we're no longer with each other, having FaceTime and letting meals linger and savor and all these things?

Annie: Yeah. Because that feels like the best dinner that you get once a month.

Carlos: Yes. Yes. But what we've lost is the ability to communicate. And we've seen it now. We're communicating with our thumbs on screens. That's not the place to solve these disagreements. It's over a meal.

So that was something else that I fell back in love with. Most of my meals now are at least an hour. If my kids are getting itchy at 20 minutes, you know, I'll just ask another question. Anyway.

Annie: Okay. Let's talk about your kids for a minute because Sohaila is married.

Carlos: She's married.

Annie: That's wild, isn't it?

Carlos: She's months into the marriage.

Annie: Yeah. And cut all her hair off.

Carlos: Cut all her hair off.

Annie: She's already got her mom bob going.

Carlos: She's got the mom bob.

Annie: You're back from this reconnected experience and your daughter's getting married. So that is a ton of change happening. Talk to me about your experience internally from doing this and then coming back and within a year, your daughter's married, moved out of the house. Seanna has moved back in the house. I mean, there's just been a lot-

Carlos: Just to get ready to move back out.

Annie: Yeah.

Carlos: My parents.

Annie: Oh my gosh. I'm so sorry. Of course. Your parents are across the driveway now.

Carlos: Across the driveway. So it's a lot. I actually feel like I did this at the perfect time because I've come back to... I came back with... the order of importance of things just drastically shifted in my world when I wasn't attached to this. You know, you kind of like you feel at the end of your month, right? Like I didn't turn it on for four days. I was supposed to turn it on, I didn't turn on. I just was like... I was scared.

Annie: That part of the book is fascinating how you cried at Brian's house.

Carlos: It was scary to turn it on. So you know, coming back, what has happened to me is I'm so much more present in every conversation now. I look my dad in the eyes way more than he's comfortable with me looking him in the eyes. I hug my mom longer than she's comfortable with me hugging her. My kids, you know...

And what's been really cool is that again, I didn't come home and set up all these rules, screen time rules, but I went through all my kids, I asked them what their

screen time was maybe three months after me coming home. And all of them had cut theirs in half, like almost in half.

Annie: Oh, wow.

Carlos: Simply because their dad wasn't on his phone. So they felt uncomfortable being on their phone. If we're together-

Annie: And they probably weren't connecting with you on socials as much anymore because you weren't on socials.

Carlos: Yeah.

Annie: Wow.

Carlos: I've become a better friend. I think I've become a better husband. I've become a better father and a better son.

Annie: Better pickleball player.

Carlos: A way better pickleball player.

Annie: You're a very good pickleball player.

Carlos: I'm really good. I'm actually really good. I'm playing tonight with Nelson publishing team.

Annie: Are you really? That's really fun.

Carlos: So, Andrew, I'm coming for you. It's just so much better on the other side, you know? I even think I'm a better influencer on Instagram. I just feel like people feel it. You know, like people feel the difference and... there's just not a lot. There's not a lot-

Annie: Do you ever feel embarrassed that people feel the difference? I do about some things.

Carlos: Oh yeah. No. I could see how you say that. I think that I'm like, oh man, that means I must've been a pretty crappy version of this before.

Annie: That's how I feel about the thing that people-

Carlos: It's like, wow, Annie, they're trying to compliment you and you're like... you're such a better friend. And you're like, Oh.

Annie: Yeah. When I'm like, "They can tell I care about something that I didn't use to care about and they keep being like, Yeah, we can feel the difference." And I'm like, "I'm sorry. I'm embarrassed." So I didn't know if you had wrestled with, amongst all the other emotions that have happened in the last year of your life, if it was-

Carlos: I mean, yeah. But I think it set me up to be so present for my daughter's wedding.

Annie: I was shocked how little content we got during the wedding. It was wild.

Carlos: And if it was any content, it was just me crying, you know? And I cried, Annie... It's so funny because I wasn't even emotional about it. They'd been dating since they were 16.

Annie: Certainly.

Carlos: So I'm just like, "You know, let's get this over with. It's about time." We're leading up to the wedding, I'm in Jackson, no tears. Sohaila shows up, no tears. The day my first friend showed up, I just started bawling. And then the next friend, I started bawling. And then the next family... And I'm like, all these people flew here to spend three days together. I cried literally the entire time. I think I still have a rash on my cheek. It was beautiful. I was very present.

Something else I've done is my phone is on permanent "Do not disturb". So I never get a ring or a buzz literally for any notification.

Annie: Oh wow.

Carlos: They show up on the screen if I swipe up, but it's not... Because that's something else that happened during those seven weeks that I realized was so powerful. I never had a single thing buzz on my body to remove me from the person in front of me.

Annie: Wow.

Carlos: And it was so powerful. It was actually so palpable when a monk that I was talking to, their phone would buzz in their pocket and I'm spilling my guts, and then they're like, "Oh, sorry, Carlos." And they reach in and they do something, they put it back, okay, "Back to what you were saying." I was like, "Did this monk just do what I've been doing?" So that was so powerful that I just stuck my phone on Do Not Disturb.

Annie: There a world where I can "do not disturb" on text, but not call?

Carlos: You can set Do Not Disturb for anything. So Do Not Disturb I have it set up like hours of the day that Whitney, my assistant, if she texts me, my phone will buzz. She's the only one.

Annie: Oh, got it.

Carlos: My family, if they text me, my phone won't buzz. But if my family calls me, my phone will buzz.

Annie: That goes through.

Carlos: I've got it set to where my family knows, listen, if you need me, you're going to call me. Anyone else that texts me, when I happen to pick my phone up, I'll see it, but I'll never be interrupted. So I'm suddenly living this... you know, it's been a year and a half that I've had it on permanent do not disturb. I feel like that's also been another huge reason my screen time is gone.

Annie: I'm going to do that. I'm gonna "do not disturb". Because then even when you're waiting somewhere-

Carlos: You can just be present with what's around you. And you're not just like pick it up 15 minutes later. Why am I on this TikTok? No, it's just-

Annie: That's even what happens with my watch. I'm so thankful for it. But then even since we've been sitting here, I took it off and dropped it behind me because it will buzz and I'm getting texts but I'm with you.

Carlos: Again, I had an Apple watch. I actually got an Apple watch from That Sounds Fun. I don't know if you remember this. It was like my first podcast year or whatever.

Annie: When you joined the network.

Carlos: When I joined the network. It died before I got to the monastery. And I just kept it on my wrist because I had a horrible tan on it, right? If your Apple watch ever dies, it'll still tell you the time on it, like in red. But after like three or four days, I was like, "You know what? Why do I need to know what time it is? The bells ring five minutes before prayer. So I know that the bell is going to ring at six, at seven-thirty, at noon at five and at seven thirty. So I took it off.

That was like my last screen. Even though the screen wasn't giving me any content, it still was telling me what time it was and I didn't want to know anything. So I'd walk outside. It was 97 degrees. All I knew was it was hot.

Annie: That's right.

Carlos: I couldn't tell how hot it was. I just was removing anything... So anyway. Again, back to the notifications and the "do not disturb" and being present with people. You know, at the wedding, I was just so present. Now literally I will never be taken away from the place that I'm in, into an alternate universe when I'm in a conversation with somebody. They're the most important thing, and they will always stay that most important thing.

Annie: So no watch at all anymore.

Carlos: Only when I play pickleball.

Annie: Oh, right. Which one do you wear? So you can mark your...

Carlos: This is what your Apple watch has given me. There's a new app called SwingVision. This is why phones aren't bad. It's on your phone. And it's an AI tracker. And you put it on a tripod, hanging on the fence behind you while you're playing pickleball.

Annie: Oh, yeah. I've seen those videos.

Carlos: It actually shows how fast I'm serving. It shows where the balls are hitting. But it also shows on my watch when you're playing with somebody. My son is notorious for this. That was in. Nobody. And I hit my watch replay, and it'll show the exact ball landing and it'll tell us if it's in or out. It's so awesome.

Annie: Oh, wow. That's unbelievable. That's a very helpful app.

Carlos: So technology screens... like I'm not the anti-screen guy. I'm not the AI's bad guy. I'm like, no, like let's just be in charge of them instead of them being in charge of us.

Annie: I love that. I'm going to put my text on Do Not Disturb today.

Carlos: Give it a shot.

Annie: What a great gift to just like, I'm available. I mean, it's the thing that people talk about as far... I haven't had no social notifications ever. But I think, man, what a

great gift to give myself of like, I respond when I respond. If it's an emergency, they'll hit the button or they'll call me. And because you can notify anyway. Boy, have I done that to friends. I've probably done that to you where I'm like, "Ring, buzz it. Watch me not care."

Carlos: Totally, totally.

Annie: That's really interesting, Carlos.

Carlos: And you pick up your phone enough. We all pick up our phones enough to where we're going to see, oh, 20 minutes ago, someone called.

Annie: I'll tell you the thing that has changed my life. When people ask me, what's it like in New York and what's New York done? I'd say, New York has changed me in every way. I am a different person in every city because of New York.

The number one thing about New York is walking. And you talk a lot in this book about walking. So will you talk about that for just a minute as we finish up? Because I want people to... I feel like I'm a new evangelist for walking places.

Carlos: We walk at three miles an hour. That's how fast a human being walks. Some walk at three and a half miles an hour. Some walk a little slower. But three miles an hour is our average. When I was with the monks, and they're walking everywhere... and when they would walk, Annie, their robes would kind of sway like bells. There was just this cadence to them walking. It was actually really beautiful.

I had no vehicle anywhere I went, besides a horse and buggy. So I started walking everywhere.

Annie: No, Scooter or a bike.

Carlos: An e-bike.

Annie: An e-bike at the end.

Carlos: I got really fast at the end. Three miles an hour is the... I call it Godspeed. Because that's the speed God designed us to move. So I've started to say, what in my life can I get back to three miles an hour? Well, when you walk, and you find this in New York City, you notice things that you never would have noticed if you're driving. So if someone right now doesn't live in a walkable place or whatever, go on a walk.

Annie: Everybody lives in a walkable place.

Carlos: Yes, everybody lives in a walkable place.

Annie: But if you don't live in a city, yes.

Carlos: Go walk around your block. And if you're like, "Well, I don't know when the last time I did that was. You will notice things in your neighbor's yards. You will notice rose. I talk about walking around my block and smelling this rosebush in my neighbor's backyard. Then I'll say, I've never smelled that before. Well, why? Because I've gone too fast by it in order to... so you notice more incredible things. You're able to savor things. Walking is so important.

When my family... We love to vacation. We love to go to New York City. The reason why is because you basically can't be on your phone and walking or you'll die.

Annie: Yeah, that's right.

Carlos: You'll walk into the street and get smashed by a dump truck. You'll walk into a... you know, there's people everywhere. You can't just be staring at your phone. So we've always loved taking our kids to New York City because when, you know, they're teenagers and we're walking around, their phones were in their pocket because they couldn't-

Annie: People say it's the fastest. It's so fast. Everything just goes so fast. I'm like, I am so much slower there. I cannot get anywhere fast because from my door to the subway is a four-minute walk on my best day. It's a four-minute walk. And then I got to trust the subway when it's going to go. Whereas in here, I run out my door, jump in my car, drive.

Carlos: Totally. And not using maps for me has helped as well.

Annie: I'm going to try that this week. When everyone's hearing this, I'm in New York as well. So maybe I'll see you this actual day. But I want to try doing it without maps. Looking before I leave.

Carlos: Look before you leave and then write it down. Like write it down on a napkin if you want. You know, I actually checked, MapQuest is still a thing. Go on MapQuest, go to your printer, print it out.

Annie: Can you imagine?

Carlos: And yeah, follow your gut. Get lost. Sit in traffic. It's okay. So you're 15 minutes, you're not going to... you're going to lose. Are you really losing it or are you

actually being able to savor? Hey, talk to God. What do you want me to think about?

I'm excited. I'm excited that people have the opportunity to reconnect. I think the book is going to give them a lot of ways to do that.

Annie: Yeah. And as well, the documentary, I can't wait to see it. And the Kickstarter is still going. So people can still jump on, even though you met your original goal, you can still jump on and get all the bonuses.

Carlos: Absolutely. So the original goal was met in seven hours. The CEO of Kickstarter told me that was the fastest that a Kickstarter campaign has ever been funded. That's been \$50,000 or more.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Carlos: Crazy.

Annie: Carlos, congratulations. Thank you. So that was nuts. But anyway, all the bonuses and the tiers and the rewards are still there. So you can still get all those things. We're doing a screening of national premiere of the documentary. There's a tier that includes that.

Annie: That's the one I bought.

Carlos: So all of those are still there. And yeah, every, every amount that continues to get raised, this goes back into like, how can I get this, you know, to go farther? We'll put it in a film festival now. So there's all kinds of things we're excited about.

Annie: Oh, Carlos.

Carlos: I made a movie.

Annie: That's cool. A film festival. That's really cool.

Carlos: I know. That's crazy.

[00:54:36] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends, just interrupting this conversation to tell you about one of our incredible partners, [KiwiCo](#). We love KiwiCo around here. My MiniBFFs have made some of the cutest things from their crates over the years.

If you don't know about KiwiCo, you're going to love it. Each month kids receive crates packed with engaging hands-on activities designed to introduce them to exciting science, technology, and art concepts. There's always something new for kids to discover in their crate, like engineering robots or learning about the science of ice cream.

There's nine monthly programs to choose from. So KiwiCo has something for kids of all ages, ranging from infants and preschoolers to teens and beyond. If you're trying to keep your toddler entertained during the day or want to keep your big kids off the screens over the weekend, KiwiCo has you covered.

KiwiCo truly is such a great way to encourage kids to get outside, to explore, and to stay off their screens. They get to work on things like little planters they get to decorate or adorable magnetic car set for littles or doodle kits that inspire crafting for older kids. Y'all, they're all so fun. Plus, every KiwiCo crate comes with everything you need. Materials and instructions that are easy to follow, and there's also no commitment, so you can pause or cancel anytime.

Redefine learning with play. Explore projects that build confidence and problem-solving skills with KiwiCo. Get 50% off your first month on any crate line at [KiwiCo.com](https://www.kiwico.com). With the promo code THATSOUNDSFUN. That's 50% off your first month at KiwiCo.com, promo code THATSOUNDSFUN.

And now back to finish up our conversation with Carlos.

[00:56:14] <music>

Annie: Give us a quick update on your parents.

Carlos: Mom and dad are good. You know, we've called hospice in. Again, I'm learning so much about just end of life. We're all going to go through it. Nobody talks about it.

Annie: For your dad, if people aren't following along.

Carlos: My dad has dementia. We've been walking on this journey. Moved them into the house a year ago.

Annie: I cannot believe it.

Carlos: Crazy.

Annie: That was crazy. We were on tour last summer.

- Carlos:** And I remember sitting down with you, and I was like, "Hey, Annie."
- Annie:** And I remember saying, "Let us buy that house. Please let Instafamilia buy that house." But the Lord provided anyway.
- Carlos:** The Lord provided.
- Annie:** The Lord provided anyway.
- Carlos:** Anyway, so dad's... he was declining pretty rapidly. We put him on hospice. I think I always thought of hospice as like the last week, the last few days. What I've learned from hospice people is like, no, like hospice is there to support a family member in the end-life stages of the other family member.
- But what happened, and it happened to my dad, is they started taking him off all of this medicine that he was on and-
- Annie:** That was life-saving medicine?
- Carlos:** Like cholesterol, for example. My dad had a heart attack. But then the hospice came in, and they're like, why is he on cholesterol medicine? He's eating salmon and a couple things a day. My mom's like, "Oh, I never thought about that." We take him off, those side effects go away, my dad's brain turns on, and he improves.
- Annie:** Dude.
- Carlos:** So I'm like, We call in hospice, and my dad gets better. And that happens a lot. So we're on this kind of upward swing right now with my dad, which is a lot of fun. He's recognizing me more. He's in more conversations.
- Annie:** Really?
- Carlos:** My mom and I are talking in the kitchen, and he'll pipe in. The stuff he hasn't done in years.
- Annie:** Are you so happy with them across the street?
- Carlos:** Oh, yeah.
- Annie:** What a gift. That is such a wild story.

Carlos: I mean, my mom texted me this morning, and she's, you know, texted me a picture of her handle on her fridge. It had come off. So I'm just going to go over there and fix it. I mean, like, come on. It's so freaking sweet I get to do that.

Annie: It's just the best. And for as long as your mom and dad are with us, they're across the street from you.

Carlos: They are across the street.

Annie: I just think that is really cool you get to be there with your dad and your mom.

Carlos: Yeah, yeah. I'll get to be with them.

Annie: I think it's really cool. He is internet celeb. People love him so much.

Carlos: They really do.

Annie: I think you've done... I've said this to you privately. I hope. I think I have. But you've done such a beautiful job not making him a character, but sharing him. And I think that is a hard line to balance. I think about that with my nephew, TJ, that died, and with my nephew, Sam. I want to make sure that I share appropriately and honoringly, but without benefiting or making a character out of them.

Carlos: Totally.

Annie: And you are modeling that really well for us.

Carlos: Thank you. Well, I'm trying. I just ask the question every day, like, what would my dad want people to see so that it helps them feel seen?

Annie: Are there times where you record things and don't show it?

Carlos: Oh, yeah.

Annie: Interesting. Wow.

Carlos: Tons. And my mom sees that too, she's like, "You didn't post that thing that you recorded." And I was like, "Yeah, I just didn't feel right."

Annie: Yeah, that's right. I think one of the benefits of us not being 30 or 25 and having phones is that we do have a pause now. I was going to share something yesterday, and I sat with my team... I think I wouldn't have done 10 years ago. I said to my

team, Do we feel good about this? And they said, maybe later. Maybe not today. I said, Okay, that's great. You're right. That's it.

Carlos: So much more.

Annie: So, Carlos, because the show is called That Sounds Fun... you've answered this one, two, three, four, eight times before. Because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me, what is sounding fun to you right now?

Carlos: You're not going to be surprised by my answer.

Annie: Yeah, I know.

Carlos: It's all pickleball all the time.

Annie: It's all pickleball all the time for you.

Carlos: It's all pickleball all the time, Annie.

Annie: Where are you playing? Where is the place? Are you going to Lifetime? I saw you play at Lifetime once.

Carlos: I have played there before. But I'm at Maryland Farms, the former YMCA.

Annie: I heard.

Carlos: It's basically now the Williamson County Pickleball and Tennis Center. But there's four new pickleball-only facilities being built currently right now in Asheville. They've got a bar, and they've got coffee, and they've got a locker room. It's super fancy pickleball. So I'm all in pickleball all the time. I've got a pickleball Instagram account. I'm trying to play in tournaments now. I'm legitimately trying to play... My goal is to play in my first professional senior. Oh, cool. Because I just turned 50. So I can play in a senior tour. Legitimately, I can play in a senior. So I'm trying to play in a senior tour tournament and see how I can do.

Annie: I died yesterday that you're in a celebrity pickleball tournament. I was like, Oh, we've reached a day where Carlos is in a celebrity pickleball tournament.

Carlos: With Hannah Brown.

Annie: With Hannah Brown, who I love. I love Hannah so much. I loved it. I was like, Carlos and all these bachelorettes.

Carlos: I know.

Annie: It's so fun.

Carlos: I thought it was funny that they call it a celebrity pickleball. My wife's kind of rolling her eyes like, "Listen. Please remove that word from your brain, because that is not what you are." But I'm going to have fun. It'll be fun.

Annie: That's so good.

Carlos: Sean Johnson like will... We'll be real celebrities with it.

Annie: That's also the thing right now for people meeting people. You're supposed to go to play pickleball.

Carlos: I, every single day, meet... Annie, you're actually set up for pickleball. Just your personality. I have made more connections, business connections, just friends through pickleball than I've done at CrossFit or anything else that I've really gotten into.

Also, here's a kicker. Racket sports... and I'll send you this reel so you can see it. Racket sports are the best thing you can do for your brain. So as the son of a dementia patient, I'm thinking about all these things. And it shows that racket sports... because there's something about not hand-eye, but racket-eye coordination, because it's an extension from your hand that sparks things in your brain that swimming or running or all these other things don't do. And so racket sports are the best thing for your brain. So if you want a healthy brain, pick up a pickleball.

Annie: I've played a few times. I've enjoyed it. I have not made it a habit. But up in New York, that is like get off apps and start playing pickleball is what they're telling everyone who wants to meet someone to date. They're like, start playing pickleball.

Carlos: The courts at Westmead every Tuesday and Thursday nights have a singles pickleball night.

Annie: What? Every Tuesday and Thursday?

Carlos: Every Tuesday and Thursday at 7 p.m. under the lights. And it is packed. I've never gone, but I play there all the time and I'm on their Instagram feed. Packed. There's just, you know, people meeting each other. SPL's in Nashville.

Annie: SPL.

Carlos: Let's go.

Annie: We got a sport. We got a sport. Carlos, I love you. Thanks for doing this.

Carlos: I love you too.

Annie: I'm so glad this book is out this week. People can read it. I enjoyed it a ton. So thank you.

Carlos: You're welcome.

[01:02:56] <music>

Outro: Oh, you guys, isn't he the best? Wasn't that fascinating? Oh my gosh. You've got to read the whole book. Hearing the stories from the monks and from the Amish farmers is just amazing. So head over to social media, tell Carlos, thanks for being on the show, and go grab your copy of *Reconnected*.

If you like these conversations about what's going on with our screens and what we're doing with phone and technology, I think you'll also love Episode 433 with another one with Carlos or Episode 861 with Darren Whitehead, or just go back to last week where we talked to Hannah Brencher. She's awesome.

If you have any questions from this episode, drop them in the Q&A box on your Spotify app, if you're a Spotify listener like me, or you can send them to us on Instagram @ThatSoundsFunPodcast. We'll try to answer them there. I love seeing y'all following over @ThatSoundsFunPodcast because you know you're getting all the goods from the pod. Just like you share the show, keep sharing about that Instagram account.

If you need anything else from me, you know I'm embarrassingly easy to find. Annie F. Downs on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook. Anywhere you may need me, that is how you can find me.

And 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 a weekend in New York before I head back to Nash.

Y'all have a great weekend too. We'll see you back here on Monday with our friend and Nashville's newest resident, Alyssa Bethke. I'm so happy they're in Nash. All right. We'll see y'all on Monday.