



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Help for Stressed-Out Moms

Guest(s): Rob and Dianne Parsons

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Dr. James Dobson: Well, hello everyone. I'm James Dobson and you're listening to Family Talk, a listener supported ministry. In fact, thank you so much for being part of that support for James Dobson Family Institute.

Roger Marsh: Hello, and welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, I'm Roger Marsh and I'd like to take a moment just to say thank you for making Family Talk a part of your day. Dr. Dobson has been sharing his timeless wisdom concerning parenting and marriage across the airwaves for over 40 years now. And we can continue to bring you relevant, godly wisdom, thanks to the support of listeners just like you. Now today's broadcast is centered around the topic of the stressed out mom. As a parent, do you ever find yourself wrestling with unfounded guilt about whether or not you are good enough, quote unquote? Or are you so overwhelmed with the tasks of motherhood that you feel that you just can't do it all?

Well today, Dr. Dobson will be discussing these topics and more with his guests, Dianne and Rob Parsons. Dr. Dobson has been friends with the Parsons for decades and was instrumental in founding their UK ministry, Care for the Family, back in 1988. Rob Parsons is a prolific author and today Dr. Dobson will be talking with him and Dianne about a book that Rob wrote and Dianne contributed to called *The Sixty Minute Mother*. Let's join their conversation right now.

Dr. James Dobson: I am really pleased to have my good friends with me again. Or at least Rob Parsons has been here before. His wife, Dianne, has not. And it is just really neat to have them here. They're both in jet lag, they'll probably go to sleep and just fall over here. But other than talking funny, these are special people. Rob and Dianne, how nice to have you here?

Dianne Parsons: Thank you. It's great to be here.

Rob Parsons: Wonderful to be here. Thank you.

Dr. James Dobson: I remember meeting with you in the very early days when we agreed that I was not needed to come to London or to the UK, why not have somebody there that

the people in that country know and trust and Rob stepped up to the plate, left, I'm sure, a lucrative assignment and started this ministry that God has blessed. Rob, looking back on it, you must be excited.

Rob Parsons: It is amazing because I'd left this quite large law practice. And suddenly we began Care for the Family, just myself and a part-time secretary in one room and hardly knowing how it would go, Jim. But my scariest time came when you and Shirley came to one of our marriage seminars.

Dr. James Dobson: I remember it well.

Rob Parsons: And you just happen to be in Edinburgh. And Dianne and I were doing a marriage seminar, and suddenly you slip in, stay the whole seminar and you came up to me in the interval and you said, "Rob, I love this material." And I said, "Well, I'm not surprised because it's your stuff."

Dr. James Dobson: I remember that day well. I was there working on a book which turned out to be, *When God Doesn't Make Sense*. And you came to Edinburgh and Shirley and I came to hear you. And again, I'm just so proud of you and what's happening. Now, you've written a number of books that have been very, very successful, including *The Sixty Minute Father* and *The Sixty Minute Marriage*. And what else can you do in 60 minutes? But Dianne, you've got a book that now you have collaborated with Rob on.

Dianne Parsons: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: Describe it.

Dianne Parsons: Well, it's called *The Sixty Minute Mother* and it's come out of a passion that I have for women who are mums and who have a tough job bringing up children. And lots of it not recognized. And mine came out of, I think, a time when I was really unwell. I'd had Katie who was three and Lloyd who was six months old. And I can remember waking up one morning thinking, "I just can't cope anymore." And something just happened to me and I was a relatively normal bubbly person. But something happened. And I can remember waking up that morning thinking, "I cannot cope anymore."

Dr. James Dobson: Would you call that postpartum depression or do they not call it that?

Dianne Parsons: I didn't call it that because I knew it was something different, because it went on for not weeks or months but years. So, and out of that came a burning desire to be very real and honest with women and for women.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, let's go back to the autobiographical aspect of this book, *The Sixty Minute Mother*, because you're really talking about your journey and yourself, as it relates to many, many others. Why were you depressed? You had a good husband who loved you and therefore a good marriage. And you had

responsibilities that women long for, who don't have it, those who can't have children. There, you've got two precious, healthy kids and you're depressed. Why?

Dianne Parsons: I don't know, is the answer. I look back on it and wished I hadn't had to go through it. But you know life is strange, isn't it? You learn things through the dark times that you would never learn if the sun was shining all the time. And it did just suddenly happen, so much so, I couldn't even write a check in the local supermarket. I couldn't look after my own children and that made me feel incredibly inadequate. Rob was on this fast track ladder in the law practice and here I was hanging onto the bottom rung trying to survive. And when I came out of that, it made me feel there must other women that go through those things and they need to know it's okay, that something good may come out of it at the end.

Dr. James Dobson: Rob, did you understand what Dianne was going through?

Rob Parsons: I did, Jim. But I honestly feel that I made many mistakes. Where I was from, a very poor home, dad was a mailman. Mum was an office cleaner. We didn't have things like an inside bathroom or running hot water. So, when I had the chance to be a lawyer, it was amazing for me. And I think I went on a kick to prove myself. And frankly, I think I was just too busy. I wrote *The Sixty Minute Father* about mistakes I felt I'd made in those years when the children were very young. I'd come home late from the office and Dianne had long since given up trying to talk to me, but two small children hadn't. And these kids would be trying to share their day with me and I'd be on another planet. And it wasn't until the telephone rang and a little boy said, "Daddy, it's for you." I'd suddenly come alive and I'd be dispensing my wisdom, my strategy, and my counsel.

And then Dianne became ill and it really shook me because I realized that although I was relatively successful, certainly more than I'd ever dreamed of, my family were cracking up around me and my kids were missing me, my wife. I wasn't giving her the support I needed and I was trying to say yes to the whole world and in the process, saying no to those who were my primary responsibility.

Dr. James Dobson: Does that sound familiar? I mean, I have heard this combination. I mean, that just comes up repeatedly.

Dianne Parsons: Absolutely. And I think for me, it was Rob was in this career and motherhood was being just a mother. And I thought, "Is this all worthwhile? Is this job worthwhile?" Because it never seemed to me that anybody ever praised mothers for the job that they do at home.

Dr. James Dobson: They still don't, do they?

Dianne Parsons: Not really, not really. I didn't -

Dr. James Dobson: You probably suffered from low self-esteem at that time.

Dianne Parsons: Oh, very low self-esteem.

Dr. James Dobson: And felt like a very bad mother.

Dianne Parsons: Very low self-esteem.

Dr. James Dobson: All those things go with it.

Dianne Parsons: Absolutely. In fact, I can remember being at a law society dinner with Rob. We were sat around a table, similar to this and a young lawyer woman said to me, "Hi, Di. How are you? Do you work?" And I just wanted the floor to open up and swallow her and I can remember thinking, "Well, do I work? I know that I have two children that are totally dependent on me. And I know that the hours I put in are probably a lot longer than the hours that she puts in. But I can remember mattering back, 'I'm just a mother at home with children.'"

But somebody gave me something years later and I have some sympathy with the woman who wrote this. "Yes, I do work. I'm in a program of social development. And at present I'm working with three age groups. First, with babies and toddlers. That involves a basic grasp of medicine and child psychology. Next, I'm working with teenagers and I confess, the program is not going too well in that area at the moment. And finally, it's evenings and weekends, I work with a man, age 39, who's exhibiting all the classic symptoms of midlife crisis. That's mainly psychiatric work. The whole job involves planning and a, make it happen attitude, and the ability to crisis manage. I used to be an international fashion model, but I got bored."

Dr. James Dobson: That is great stuff.

Dianne Parsons: And I tell you, the women who are mums at home, when I say that in the seminars, they are so relieved. And to just tell them that they are directors of social development. You can see their heads rise and self-esteem just build in them.

Rob Parsons: I actually had some business cards printed for Dianne, which said, Dianne Parsons, Director of Social Development. And she noticed that when she was in government buildings or somewhere, and they asked what she did and she gave them this card, they really treated her well.

Dianne Parsons: Oh, yes. It was amazing.

Dr. James Dobson: That's a sad value system of the culture that says it's not worth a woman's time to raise children. The husband is a key to it because if he values her, she can make it. And if he doesn't, then it becomes really difficult.

Dianne Parsons: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Rob Parsons: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: Dianne, we can't leave you in a state of depression. How did you get out of it?

Dianne Parsons: I just believe God gradually brought me out of it. It was a long, long time and it was a time when I couldn't even go to church. So, we opened our home to a group of people who were struggling because I was struggling with my faith. And lots of people came in, all different walks of life, including mums and it was a long time before I came out of it. But when I did eventually get a lot better, I felt I wanted to give something back in to these mothers who might be going through the same thing. So, I get days now where I still feel tired and I have to be very careful. But I do feel a lot better and I just really, really want my life to be able to share with mothers and women, how special they are.

Dr. James Dobson: So, you began to come out of it when you began giving to others?

Dianne Parsons: Do you know, I don't even know that. I think that it just went over such a long period of time and I had to, in that time, have mums into the home because I couldn't go out. So it was a gradual process, really. But I did come out of it and I really believe that God wants me to use it as a great tool to get to other mums and ladies.

Rob Parsons: But that is an interesting comment, Dr. Dobson, because the church got behind us and asked us to open our home in this way. And we called it, 'For Strugglers' and it was for people who kind of had lost their faith or had no faith, or were going through some emotional difficulty and people crowded into our home once a week. In fact, we still hold it. We still have that.

Dr. James Dobson: That was before Care for the Family.

Rob Parsons: That was long before Care for the Family. And I think there were the seeds of Care for the Family, because we discovered a principle of the faith there, which is at the heart of all we do now in Care for the Family. And Dianne calls it the power of weakness. The world is full of successful people who've got it all together and they're nice, but they don't help us too much. We need people to come and say, "me too," and then to introduce us to God's grace. And there is a sense about vulnerability that allows people to find answers in their own life and to see the grace of God in all. So those strugglers evenings were remarkable times and my respect and love for Dianne just grew and grew. I saw a whole new woman emerge out of this experience. It just frighten the life out of me.

Dr. James Dobson: Dianne, were your children affected? How did they cope with your illness?

Dianne Parsons: Well, they were very young. But I can remember sitting in a chair very clearly thinking, "Do I love my husband? Do I love my children?" And I look back now

and sometimes I get a pang of pain to realize that Lloyd didn't have the bedtime stories from me that Katie did. And I just looked to heaven and say, "God, this is obviously not my problem, but I'm sad, nonetheless." But I don't think they have been affected long-term by it, no because Rob was in the background and I have to say he was amazing with time that I could not give.

Rob Parsons: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: There are the standard questions that women ask when they go through something like this. One is, "Am I worthy as a person? Do I have any value at all? Does anybody love me? Am I a good mother? I'm probably not. Do I love my kids?" And then you come to the real kicker. Satan really throws this one at you. "Is God there? Does he care? Does he know? Does he value me?"

Dianne Parsons: I often thought that. I often thought that.

Dr. James Dobson: You get the wrong answers to those five questions and it's a difficult season of life. You call it the dark times. How common is, rather, irrational guilt in the women that you're talking to?

Dianne Parsons: Very common. I think as somebody once put it, guilt comes with the umbilical cord. Most women would feel guilty of, are they a good mother? Are they a good wife? Are people sort of looking at them and thinking, are they doing a good enough job? So, it's a real issue. Guilt is a huge word for women today. Especially those moms at home with children.

Rob Parsons: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: Rob, what about unrealistic expectations? You talk about that in the book.

Rob Parsons: Well, I sometimes think that we begin with our kids and we honestly think that for a while, we're the perfect parents and we are going to produce the perfect children. I think that's particularly hard if your compliant child comes first. Our little girl came into the world. The first thing she did was apologize to the midwife for being a little late. She begged for extra copies of Encyclopedia Britannica. And so for a while, we honestly thought we were the perfect parents. Lloyd came into our life, stamping and kick. That little boy woke up every morning thinking, how can I drive my mother crazy today and went to bed worrying he hadn't fulfilled that task. And for a while, and I'm sure, unless we have people talking about it or writing books on it, we think it's just us. "Where did we go wrong? Where did we go wrong with this child? We did everything the same as we did with the first, but they're different." And I think it's especially true in the teenage years.

Dianne Parsons: But that's the time when lots of mothers feel guilty. Guilty that they've made a terrible job, they're a failure and that nobody else could have gone through that as badly as they've gone through it. I can remember looking at Lloyd and

thinking, when he was about 11 or 12, he was never going to leave home. He was always going to be around me. And suddenly, as you say, here was this teenager totally switched off from me. I mean, I could only get through to him by almost taking a grunting degree and you take it personally and you say to people, "don't take it personally." But it's so hard not to take it personally. Then you feel the failure.

Dr. James Dobson: You know, Dianne, there's another aspect of this that I talked about in my book, *Bringing Up Boys*, which I think would be helpful to mothers to see. Mothers stand in the way, to some degree, of a boy becoming a man. You see, as long as he is linked to her, and it's a mommy little boy relationship, he can't be a man. So he denigrates her. He attacks her. He belittles her as your son did, as a way of moving you out of the way so that he can identify with his father and be a man. It's a perfectly normal thing, but you have to understand what's taking place there.

Dianne Parsons: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Rob Parsons: Boy, that's very powerful.

Dianne Parsons: Interestingly though, I still get quite hurt, I suppose, is the word I'm looking for, if Lloyd phones Rob a lot more often than he'll phone me. So is that normal? Is that natural?

Dr. James Dobson: It is normal and you ought to encourage it because he's saying, in effect, "I'm a guy like you." That doesn't mean he doesn't love you. You have a role to play. You will always be his mother. You're the only mother he will ever have, and as he gets a little older, he will come back to you. But at this time, he needs to identify primarily with Rob.

Rob Parsons: Yeah.

Dianne Parsons: That's interesting because I think women need to know that. Because I think there's a lot of pain that goes on that.

Dr. James Dobson: Because they get rejected.

Dianne Parsons: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: It is perfectly normal and healthy. But hard.

Dianne Parsons: I can remember Rob being away with a legal practice and him coming home late at nights and I'd leave a message on his pillow and say, "I'm really missing you. I need you." And I believe that communication obviously is the big issue here. And it is hard for some men to not be able to put in any more time. But I think they need to know and understand what a difficult task motherhood is. And when he comes home at night, she yearns for some conversation and she just

doesn't want to hear, "how's your day been? Fine." She needs to have the whole in-depth conversation of his day. And I understand-

Dr. James Dobson: And that is the last thing he wants.

Dianne Parsons: I know, I know, and I understand that now. But when the children were small and at home, I needed that conversation, because all I'd done all day was change diapers, feed and pick up toys. It was just so mundane at the time and I needed some adult conversation. That's why, sorry.

Rob Parsons: But you know... Sorry, darling.

Dianne Parsons: That's why mother and toddlers groups are brilliant. They are so brilliant.

Rob Parsons: I was only just going to say, while I'm in the swing of being honest, that I'll probably regret it when I leave the studio, but the truth is, for most of us, me, especially, this is an ongoing battle. It wasn't finished when I left business and began Care for the Family. I remember my most embarrassing experience. I had just run a marriage seminar to 500 people and I got home one o'clock in the morning and there was a note on my pillow from Dianne, "Darling, we haven't talked much recently and I'm missing it." For most of us, this is an ongoing battle, but at least the light is switched on. At least we know what's happening and we can recognize it and try to do something about it.

Dr. James Dobson: What turned the light on for you, Rob? How come you saw it? I mean, a lot of guys never see it. But you saw it and responded to it.

Rob Parsons: I often believe that it needs almost a crisis to make it happen in many men's lives because they are so driven and so an unable to lift their heads. I was speaking to a man recently in a business seminar and I said, "I've not seen you recently." He said, "No, I was in a car crash. I fought for my life for six months." And I said, "Anything good come up for that period?" He said, "Rob, two things. First of all, the partners in the legal practice told me I was more use on my back convalescent for six months than ever I was in the legal practice. Because for the first time in 25 years, somebody had time to think." But he said, "Secondly, I began to appreciate more wife and kids." He said, "I used to carry photographs of them around to remind myself what they look like."

And there comes a time in your life when you say to yourself, what's it all about? What really is it all about? And what happened to me, though, is I changed so radically that nothing could buy me my kids time or time with Dianne.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. A lot of single mothers come to hear you speak?

Rob Parsons: They do. Let me just tell you a little story about a single parent mum. I was finishing a seminar; her son was a 23-year-old punk rocker. He had a pin in his

eye, a pin in his lower lip, he wore black leather gear. And she was there at the checkout, in the supermarket with him and he went off to get something else and the second he'd gone, the woman at the checkout said, "How can you bear to be seen out with him when he looks like that?" She said, "My dear, is very easy. I brought him up all these years. I love him. He's my son." And we spent ages with single parent mums saying it is tougher for you because you're alone, because you've got the pain, perhaps with broken relationship, because money's hard. But every family minister that says a kid should have a mum and a dad must also stand by the single parent mum. That's why we've dedicated a chapter of the book to that person.

Dr. James Dobson: I hope that what we're doing today will turn a light on for some men and help some women who are at home feeling neglected and depressed and somehow not useful. We contribute to each other and neither of us make it very well without the other. Now there are a lot of single mothers out there and single fathers and we need to talk to them because they've got to deal with life as it is. And it's never ideal. It's never perfect. There's no perfect marriage. There's no perfect family and so you take life where you find it. But the ideal situation, or at least the model, is for husbands and wives to build each other up and encourage each other. I've talked many, many times about what Shirley has done for me. I wouldn't be sitting in this chair if it were not for what she has contributed to my confidence and my willingness to take a risk. A lot of things I've done have been risky, leaving an academic position and starting a little ministry with no money and everything else and all that. That's risky. Shirley gave me the confidence to do that.

Rob Parsons: And do you know, Dr. Dobson, I believe that also with all my heart, we talked about Dianne's period of a depressive illness and I said a whole new woman came out of that. And often I'm at the back of an auditorium. There are 2,000 women filling it and Dianne is on the stage talking to them about the principles in this book. And I mean what I'm about to say with all my heart, I would now carry Dianne's bags all over the world and just enable her to touch women's lives.

Dianne Parsons: I must remember that one.

Dr. James Dobson: You want to write that down?

Dianne Parsons: I got that down now. I will remember that.

Dr. James Dobson: My goodness. We're just flat out of time. A good little book, *The Sixty Minute Mother: An Hour of Reading for a Lifetime of Love*, Rob and Dianne Parsons. My great friends. It's been good to have you all here. Whenever you finish a book, you ring us up, as you say, and let us know because we'd love to have you back.

Rob Parsons: It's been a joy to be with you. Thank you so much.

Dianne Parsons: Thank you so much.

Roger Marsh: Well, what heartfelt tangible advice from Dr. Dobson and his friends from across the pond, Rob and Dianne Parsons, today here on Family Talk. We hope that you have been encouraged by their authenticity today. You know, it's true. Moms wear so many hats and are so important in the lives of their children, it can be hard and sometimes overwhelming and even impossible for moms to keep up with all the demands that life throws at them. When moms go through hard times, it's important for their husbands and or the church to step up and support them. Whether that be through help with childcare, housework, giving rides to and from activities, or simply through friendship. Today, try to think of a mom in your life who could use an encouraging phone call or a free night of babysitting. You'd be amazed what a blessing those little acts can be.

By the way, if you want to learn more about Rob and Dianne Parsons, the ministry, Care for the Family or their book, *The Sixty Minute Mother*, you'll find all that and more on our website at drjamesdobson.org. Just go to drjamesdobson.org/broadcast. And be sure to also check out the Care For The Family site at careforthefamily.org.uk.

Well, that closes another week of broadcasting for us here at Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. Thanks so much for listening. Join us again on Monday.

Announcer: This has been a presentation of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.