



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** It's Okay Not to Be Okay

**Guest(s):** Sheila Walsh

**Air Date:** November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2019

[Listen to the broadcast](#)

*NOTE: This transcript may contain minor errors and/or discrepancies from the audio. This copy may be updated.*

Sheila Walsh: Hi, this is Sheila Walsh and you're listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Roger Marsh: Welcome everyone to Family Talk, a division of the James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh and I want to share some news with you before we listen to today's broadcast. A group of generous partners recently blessed our ministry with a \$325,000 matching grant. This effectively doubles every donation we receive until we reach our goal. You can learn how you can contribute to this match by going online at [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org). That's [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org), or by calling us at 877-732-6825 that's 877-732-6825. And now let's get to our program. Too often in our Christian walk, we fixate on our shortcomings or past failures and they invariably weigh us down. We should instead focus on how God can use us and the way he sees us.

Well, that is the direction we are heading through a conversation with bestselling author Sheila Walsh. Dr. Tim Clinton is our host for today, filling in behind the microphone for Dr. Dobson, and in just a moment, Dr. Clinton will talk with Sheila Walsh who will share her story, which includes a lot of deep emotional and psychological pain. Sheila Walsh is a prominent speaker, evangelist and Bible teacher. She studied theology at London School of Theology and also Fuller Theological Seminary. She's the author of books that have sold more than 5 million copies and her newest work is called, *It's Okay Not to Be Okay*. There's a great deal of insightful content to get to, so let's begin. This interview was recorded at the recent American Association of Christian Counselors Convention in Nashville, Tennessee. Here now is Dr. Tim Clinton on this edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Dr. Clinton: Sheila, thanks for joining us on Family Talk.

Sheila Walsh: I'm happy to be here, especially, I've such love and respect for Dr. Dobson. I mean, what a legacy he's left in the life of our nation and in my own life.

Dr. Clinton: Sheila, we're praying right now, I know Dr. Dobson is, that God would awaken the church, that He would move so mightily in this day because there's so much coming against us. I believe God is at work. Do you see that?

Sheila Walsh: I feel it, absolutely. It's almost as if, as the darkness gets darker, the light of Christ is getting brighter, and I see it in God's people. I see a passion to rise up and make a difference and to be the compassionate, caring body that we're called to be.

Dr. Clinton: I couldn't wait to get to this interview. Your new book, *It's Okay Not to Be Okay*, is exciting to me because it's in a space that I live in and you know that, but it's a message that I think the church needs to hear. And Sheila, I want to make this really personal. I want to go all the way back. Take us back to Scotland as a little girl. What was it like growing up for you? And then we're going to go on a journey and I think most people know your story. They know you. I want them to see something really unique about you today.

Sheila Walsh: Thanks Tim. And can I just add to that Tim, how grateful I am that God has put me on this earth at the same time as you. You're truly someone who has captured God's heart for this day and this time, and it's just an honor to partner with you. But yeah, let's go back to Scotland, small fishing town. My mom and dad were believers, which wouldn't be unusual in America, but in Scotland, where less than 2% of our population even went to church, was such a gift to have a mum and dad who loved Jesus.

My dad was quite a character. He's tall, beautiful singing voice, but a heart for people. When I was growing up, there was a real depression in Scotland, and often my dad would invite people that he just saw on the road on the way home from work. And they would join us for dinner, and often they were homeless people, and then they would join us for our family devotions.

And so I always saw my dad as someone who didn't go to church, but who understood that being the church means that your eyes are open all the time and your ears here all the time. So life was wonderful until I was about five when my dad had a massive cerebral hemorrhage, which impacted his personality. It was almost like living with Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Yeah. Not quite knowing which one you would wake up to. Sometimes he would be himself and when he was, he was paralyzed on his left side and he'd lost the ability to speak, but he would sit with his head in his hands and weep. But then when the other personality showed up, he was angry and confusing and ultimately very violent. And until the last day, the only person he took his anger out on was me, which was confusing to me because of the three children, I was a tomboy. I was the one closest to my dad.

Final day in our home he just, things got out of control and he attempted to bring his cane down and my skull. And my mom locked my sister, my brother and I in a room while she dialed 911, and it took five men to carry my dad out of the house that day.

He was just roaring like an animal and he was taken to what was called back then our local lunatic asylum, a psych hospital these days. But he managed to escape and he drowned himself in the river behind the hospital when he was 34 years old. And I was left with- back in those days, you didn't take children to a funeral, to a grave site. All I remember is my mom coming home in a black dress with a black hat on and she took every single picture that had my father in it off the walls and the tables and she put them in a little suitcase, which she locked and pushed under her bed and we never mentioned his name again.

It was as if he'd never existed. And I lived believing that I'd brought the house down on my whole family. The medical expenses, my mum didn't have any money, we lost our home, we lost our car, we moved into government housing. And I knew as a child it was all my fault.

Dr. Clinton: Wow. Shelia I can't even imagine what begins to swirl in the heart of a little girl - you know that - trying to make her way through it. I think a lot of parents think that they don't talk to their son or daughter about what's going on, that somehow they won't be really that impacted by it. That they're resilient, that they're able just to kind of go through and go on. But nothing could be further from the truth because kids do absorb all this. And by the way, they process it every day of their life, and usually in a very confused mind. What started happening with you.

Sheila Walsh: Yeah, you're right Tim because kids are great recorders of information but poor interpreters.

Dr. Clinton: Terrible interpreters. Yeah.

Sheila Walsh: And that's what happened to me. I felt so full of shame because the last look I ever saw in my dad's eyes was one of hatred. And I just, I didn't know what he saw in me, but I was determined that whatever it was, no one would ever see that again. So I basically built a wall around my heart and I observed people from inside that wall and I felt so guilty about my mom not having a husband. In fact, when I was 10 I took everything I had as a little girl, all my books, little bits of jewelry, toys to school, and I sold them all so that I could buy my mom a big present. The way that my dad would have done if he was still there.

And no matter what I did, I felt if I live to be 100 I could never balance the scales. I could never put enough good things on one side that would outweigh the damage that I had done to my family.

Dr. Clinton: Did you feel like your mother blamed you or was that you or did you ever feel that from-?

Sheila Walsh: It's interesting: when there's no conversation, then you come to your own conclusions. I never saw my mom cry. Although one night I woke up in the middle of the night, maybe I was 10 or 11 and I was going to the restroom and I

saw light under my mom's bedroom door and I put my hand on the handle and I was about to go in, but I heard that she was sobbing into her pillow. And I just instinctively knew she didn't want me to come in.

So, I sat down on the other side of the bedroom door and wept, too. And the message I took from that is, you cry on your own.

Dr. Clinton: Alone.

Sheila Walsh: Yeah, I'm absolutely alone. Until I gave my life to Christ at 11.

Dr. Clinton: Let's go there because I mean this story is just stunning to me.

Sheila Walsh: My mom took me to hear Scotland's only gospel group. They were called The Heralds. And I remember at the end the guy, the evangelist, called Ian Leach said, God has no grandchildren. He only has sons and daughters. And just because your parents are believers doesn't mean you are. And so a lot of people went forward that night. I couldn't move. I was stunned to think that God might actually want to know me. But when I got home and I tried to go to sleep, I couldn't. So I came back downstairs and I asked my mom, do I have to wait till Sunday to give my life to Christ or is God still open?

And she assured me he was open 24/7 and she prayed with me. But she said something that I heard differently than probably 99.9% of believers. She said, not only is Jesus Christ your savior and you get to make them Lord of every area of your life, you have a Heavenly Father now watching over you. And I remember clearly, it was like a lightning bolt, I've got one more chance to get it right. Whatever my earthly dad saw in me that made him hate me. My Heavenly Father is never going to see this. I will be the perfect Christian if it kills me.

Dr. Clinton: What was it like for this 11 year old girl who started to press in toward God in a way that this vacuum begins to get filled slowly but meaningfully.

Sheila Walsh: Sometimes you can do all the right things for the wrong reasons. Like when I got married, I'd never slept with anyone, I'd never drunk, had never, I mean, I'd never done anything, but all of that was because I didn't want to lose the love of God.

I think when you think it's possible to lose the love of a father who you adored, then it becomes possible that you could lose the love of God too. So, I mean, I remember as a teenager I would walk along the beach in Scotland, which is not like Florida or LA. I mean it was pretty wild. But I would call out loud to the Lord and say, I'm all in until I die. You ask me anything and I will do it. It did come from a place of love, but it also came from a place of fear. Thinking if I get something wrong, it's possible I'm going to blow this last chance I've got.

So, I went to seminary in London to train to be a missionary in India because I couldn't think of anything I would hate more. I mean, seriously, it's ridiculous now, but I really thought God would think, "Oh great, good for you. There's a lot of people down here messing up. But look at Sheila she's going to do everything she doesn't like just to keep us happy." But while I was there, God redirected my steps. I ended up working with Youth for Christ in Europe, speaking in colleges and universities and clubs, any place that would allow us to come. And then I ended up in America. I'd worked a lot with Dr. Billy Graham, who was such a sweet friend to me, particularly his wife, Ruth. Sundays when Billy would be off on crusades, Ruth would have me to the house and she was a real mentor.

I mean she poured back into my life, but then I got a phone call one day from a program I'd never heard of called The 700 Club.

Dr. Clinton: And you are catapulted onto a national stage.

Sheila Walsh: Yes.

Dr. Clinton: Here you are, boom, under the lights and CBN, the whole bit. Boom. It's Sheila Walsh. It was like America, the world now knows who you are, and you're pouring yourself out.

Sheila Walsh: But the truth is the inside I was still the same, scared, broken little girl who wouldn't let anybody get close to her. It's definitely possible to be very well known and desperately lonely.

Dr. Clinton: It's interesting in psychology we talk about people who have an avoidant attachment style. Those are who have an overinflated view of self and a poor view of others. In other words, they grow up and typically feel like they can't trust relationships. They can't disclose, they want to believe in and they desire relationship, but they don't believe people are really going to be there for them in the end. Looking back at your past that makes sense, that's the narrative. And by the way, we often juxtapose that over on our relationship with God too. We want to say God is good all the time, all the time God is good, but maybe not to me really.

Sheila Walsh: I remember when-

Dr. Clinton: I want that, but I don't know.

Sheila Walsh: I remember seeing Cinderella when I was, I don't know, 9, 10, 11 and hating it. All my friends loved it and I thought, that's a big fat lie. There is no Prince coming to rescue you. You're going to have to rescue yourself. But God's mercy blows me away, Tim. I mean if you just watch TV, it looked like I was great, but he knew I was barely hanging by a thread, and one morning I just fell apart.

Dr. Clinton: Let's go there. I know a lot of people probably have heard a little bit about that story. You're on the stage, the world's there and it just like comes completely apart inside. Let's go into that moment.

Sheila Walsh: All it took was one kind question from a woman and I don't even remember who it was. I'm interviewing my guest, first guest, ask my first question and instead of answering, she turns the tables on me and said, Sheila, you sit here every day and you talk to us about our lives, tell me how are you doing? And there was such kindness in her eyes and I wasn't prepared for it. And it was as if she reached in and took the first brick out of the wall.

And I had felt for maybe a year before as if I was living on the edge of a volcano, and there was just this distant rumble getting louder every day. And I just tried to ignore it, but it was like on that morning, I felt like internally I just collapsed and started to cry and I couldn't stop. And I walked off the set and the only thing I knew to do was, a few months before, Dr. Henry Cloud had been on the program, and he had his book *Changes That Heal* and I interviewed him on it, and it was like very disturbing to me, but it was like distant bells inside of me.

Something was like a little warning light. And Henry had given me his card when he left and I actually called him and I said, I think I'm losing my mind. And he said, no, you're not, but you need some help and you need it quickly. And within no time at all. I was in the locked ward of a psychiatric hospital, same age as my dad.

Dr. Clinton: You're listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm your host today, Dr. Tim Clinton. In studio, the quintessential Sheila Walsh, and we're going to talk more about her story, her journey, but if you're on a journey right now, we'd love to be a part of your life. Sheila, growing up as a little girl, thinking about a psych ward, a lunatic place, that's scary.

Sheila Walsh: Terrifying.

Dr. Clinton: That's terrifying.

Sheila Walsh: When I was 16 years old, I lost the friendship of my best friend because her dad, for a different reason, was committed to that same hospital and she wanted me to go with her and I couldn't tell her why because we never talked about the fact that my dad ended up in a place like that. It was like after his suicide, we moved to a different town and nobody knew.

And it broke my heart that I broke her heart. She wanted me to be there for her and I couldn't. And I couldn't tell her why. But to end up in a place like that- I remember so clearly that Pat Robertson, who was incredibly kind to me through all of this, he wanted one of the security guards to drive me to Washington. And I said, absolutely not. I couldn't stand the thought of somebody watching me

walk through those doors that would lock behind me. So, I drove myself and I remember a young nurse take-

Dr. Clinton: Really?

Sheila Walsh: Oh yeah, this is crazy looking back, but I believed it. Halfway there, there was this awful storm. You know one of those storms from the sky kind of changes color and it's, and so, one or two cars had pulled up underneath a bridge. And so I did too. And the guy in front of me got out of his car and he said there's talk of tornadoes. I think we need to take shelter over there. And I ignored them because I thought it was because God was angry with me.

I thought- how ridiculous. I mean, looking back, I'm like, are you kidding? But I really felt as if it was just heavens rage.

Dr. Clinton: Sheila, the mind can be a very free, beautiful place, or it can get very dark, very turbulent, very confused, lost. And I think we need to- in this moment Sheila I want you to speak to listeners out there because depression's real. It's overwhelmingly real. The CDC said by 2020, that soon, by the year 2020 depression will be second only to heart disease as the greatest health challenge in the world. Clinical depression. And people need to hear this: you can be a Christian and your mind can begin to spin on you and you can go to a place where you feel completely lost, hopeless.

Sheila Walsh: Yeah. Soul crushingly alone. And if that is where you are right now, I just want you to know you're not alone. You know one of my favorite psalms, Psalm 34 said, the "Lord is close – close - to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. And if that's you right now, I just want you to know the Lord is close and some days you can't even pray. But I've discovered one of the most powerful prayers in the world is just one word. It's just the name of Jesus.

Sometimes just being able to call on the name of the Lord, just to call on His name. But I want you to know that I am your sister. I walk beside you. You are not alone, and do not believe the lies of the enemy who want you to believe that it's because of your spiritual life. Somedays there's things in our life that we need to address. This is your brain chemistry. You don't walk up to somebody wearing glasses and say, where's your faith? Any more than you would walk up to somebody who has to take- I took my little pill this morning before I came on the air because that's God's provision for those who struggle with severe clinical depression in this world, there's no shame there.

Dr. Clinton: I've learned this. It's not about the darkness. Hear me, everybody needs to hear this. It's not about the darkness. It really is about the light. And where did you start finding glimpses of light Sheila that started to come in and to break up the darkness? And by the way, you can be overwhelmed by your circumstances. It may be money, kids gone awry. It could be a horrible marriage. It could be just the weight of the world, grief, loss, all kinds of things that starts feeling this and

then brain chemistry and more gets out of whack. But where does the light come from?

Sheila Walsh: It's funny, my very first morning in the hospital, it was one of those shocking moments that actually, when the shock began to recede, I started to laugh. I walked into the patient's lounge because what hadn't occurred to me was, this was a Christian unit within a psych hospital. And it hadn't even occurred to me that some of these people would know who I was. So I mean, my makeup's gone, my hair dryers gone. It's all in the sharps box. So, I walk in in my robe and they'd all been talking, and suddenly there's silence.

And this guy looked at me and he said, "Are you Sheila Walsh?" And I said, "Yeah." And he said, "Look, I don't mean to offend you, but we watch you every morning. You're supposed to be helping us." And honestly, it was like I fell off my shelf and joined the rest of those who love God and don't have all the answers. It was this strange companionship of brokenness that I'd never experienced before in my life. And it literally was lifesaving because one of the girls kind of smacked him and said, "oh, Tom, hush" and came over and hugged me. And it was as if I felt for the first time, I felt I'd taken the first step toward coming home.

Dr. Clinton: The old Puritans used to call it the valley of vision, that down in those places, God loves to use that brokenness to send us fleeing back to him. He never abandons us. That's Psalm 46: Elohim is our refuge and our strength. He's a present help during times of trouble. Therefore, we don't have to fear, He's in the midst of it. He was there, Sheila, he took you from there to a new place. And there is hope. We know this: when people seek out help, when they reach out. By the way, you've got to take that first step, and you start embracing the light, that people actually can find help. You don't have to struggle in clinical depression. You don't have to be lost. It's a shame where people live right now. We don't have to be there. Our God is bigger than all that and He... I believe this: He will make a way. Sheila, you must have thought that the world was over for you.

Sheila Walsh: Absolutely.

Dr. Clinton: I can't imagine. There you were on the stage, and you make a decision to go to get help, and you must have thought, "You know what? My career in Christianity's done."

Sheila Walsh: In fact, I was told that, not by Pat, but by one of our senior executives before I left that day, he walked me round and round the lake that there's- at the founders in the Christian broadcasting network and said, "Don't do this. If people find out where you've been, no one will ever trust you again. Your ministry will be over." And I said to him, "I'm not trying to save my ministry. I'm trying to save my life."



But I felt that pronouncement over me of this is all over. And I remember thinking, then let it be all over. If this is something that I've just manufactured, if I've just been inflating some balloon, then let it collapse. If God's not in it, I don't want it. And if God is in it, there's nothing anybody can do to stop it. And I began, it's like you finally find courage again, that you're not afraid of other people. You're not afraid of what people say, because somehow I began to understand that God had always been there, that he was cheering that little girl on and saying, "Come on, keep walking. This is good."

"I've always been there. But now how about you just run into my arms and let me carry you for a while?" And that's how I felt.

Dr. Clinton: Sheila, you've given hope to so many. God has restored you in a powerful way. I think expanded your ministry. Women of Faith was a massive platform. You're speaking all over the world. You're on Life Today with James Robeson and Betty and God has given you an amazing voice. This new book, and I want to wrap up the program because I want to just give it to you, *It's Okay Not to Be Okay*. What's the gift that you're trying to give to all of us in this journey called life?

Sheila Walsh: I used to pursue perfection, and it almost killed me, and now I pursue Christ, who is perfect. It's never been about us getting it all right. Christ has made us right, as you are right now, with all the things you don't like and the things you wish you could change, you are completely loved by God.

You have never lived an unloved moment in your life. God has seen your whole movie and he loves you, and it's okay. Okay doesn't live here, but Jesus does.

Dr. Clinton: I love self-help. Okay. You come back and say, Tim, it's not about self-help. It's about God-help. These pages are soaked with Him, but you're also clinically wise. You understand that there is a journey people have to go on. This isn't just let's just lay down and try to get something to come our way and get a little karma going or something. No. You take people on a journey, a meaningful journey. You've got to open up.

Sheila Walsh: Yeah.

Dr. Clinton: You've got to prescriptively make your way through. You talked earlier about, "I take a little pill." You understand the value of medication for you and your life, and more.

Sheila Walsh: Yeah, medication, the Word of God, community with other brothers and sisters. I mean, that's what makes a huge difference. Celebrate your scars as tattoos of triumph. To me, scars are proof that God heals.

Dr. Clinton: I love that. Sheila, the final word, what's the big take home? Hey, remember, Tim, everybody listening. Remember this one thing from today.

Sheila Walsh: God is for you, not just for the woman beside you, not just for your husband who you think is doing better than you, not just for your children, not for your pastor or for anybody else. God himself is for you.

Dr. Clinton: I know Dr. Dobson would want me to say this to you, may God expand what he's doing in and through you. We love you, Sheila. Thanks for your message.

Sheila Walsh: Love you too, Tim. Thank you.

Roger Marsh: Incredible biblical truth to end this very special Family Talk broadcast. I'm Roger Marsh and you've been listening to Dr. Tim Clinton's recent conversation with Sheila Walsh. You can learn more about her writings and her illustrious career by visiting our broadcast page at [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org).

You'll find all this and much more when you visit today's broadcast page at [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org). Well, that's all the time we have for today. Join us again tomorrow to hear from world renowned apologist Lee Strobel. He'll be talking about the lack of biblical foundation that is becoming more and more apparent in the millennial generation. It's an intriguing presentation. You won't want to miss it. So join us here next time for Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk

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