



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Remaining You While Raising Them – Part 2

Guest(s): Alli Worthington

Air Date: April 14, 2023

[Listen to the broadcast](#)

Dr. James Dobson: Welcome everyone to Family Talk. It's a ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute supported by listeners just like you. I'm Dr. James Dobson and I'm thrilled that you've joined us.

Roger Marsh: Welcome back to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. Moms wear many hats and oftentimes it can be a challenge for them not to lose themselves amongst the daily challenges and many routines. It's important for moms to be true to who they are as individuals while raising their kids. And that's the topic we'll dive into today with our guest, Alli Worthington. Alli is back on the program again to discuss her latest book called *Remaining You While Raising Them*. It's releasing in August of this year. Today's episode was recorded last month at the Extraordinary Women Conference in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Alli Worthington is an author, speaker, career coach, and the founder of the Coach School. She teaches women how to become more successful in their careers, businesses, and with their entrepreneurial goals. Alli and her husband, Mark, have five sons and make their home in Tennessee. So let's join our own Dr. Tim Clinton and Alli Worthington right now, right here on Family Talk.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Well, Alli, welcome back. What a fun day yesterday as we talked a little bit about your background, what you and Mark went through and how God got your feet back underneath you. Today we're going to talk about a brand new book coming out *Remaining You While Raising Them: The Secret Art of Confident Motherhood*. Again, on behalf of Dr. Dobson, he sends his regards and he has such a love, you know that for the family, and he has a real love for parents who are willing to step up and into the moment. A few years back, Alli, Dr. Dobson wrote that book, *Parenting Isn't for Cowards*, and of course he wrote raising boys and girls and everything else, and the *Strong-Willed Child*, you name it. But parenting today is a little different. A lot of the timeless truths hold but it's a little more challenging uniquely, especially because of the internet and so much that's going on, but it's just wild. Alli, you and Mark, you have five boys. We, let's start there. Let's talk about raising boys.

Alli Worthington: Well, so much thanks to Dr. Dobson. We read all of his books. I can remember we would take long car trips when our oldest was younger, and I would read Dr. Dobson's books out loud and we would decide what parents we were going to

be and what advice we were going to take. But yeah, it's definitely a different world now with social media, we found has been such an issue for moms. When I was surveying women before I went about writing this book, I did an end up survey of over 1,000 women and wanted to find out what's the biggest issue that you have. And by far it was mom guilt and 95% of women said they struggled with it. I don't know what the other 5% of women were thinking, but it was the problem that is really weighing down women right now.

Dr. Tim Clinton:

Technology is such a gift because we have instant access to everything, but you're right, most of what we see on social media are the, let's call them the blissful sets, if you like the word bliss or bless, it's all the good moments, et cetera, and you often compare yourself to what everybody else is living in and maybe you're not living in or they have pictures of these perfect kids. You name it, you know that, and you're wondering what in the world, what happened? Like a bomb went up at our house. I want to stay with this issue of mommy guilt and mommy shaming stuff. Let me start this way, Alli, my daughter Megan, her husband Ben, they're young parents. We have four year old granddaughter and we have now a new granddaughter. Her name's Sophia.

And Megan works part-time out of the house. She's in dermatology. So the beautiful thing here is Julie, Gigi. My wife takes care of Olivia a couple of days a week, and that's a wonderful thing, and Megan gets the whole issue of attachment bonding and more. But what I see often in Megan is she's a perfectionist like her mama, and she wants everything right, and she's breastfeeding, et cetera. You get all this, and it starts weighing on her. And Sophia, for example, won't sleep. I mean, this girl's getting up every two hours all night long and has for what? Eight, nine months now. No. She's like going through fire and always worried about, hey, are the kids getting a fever or what have you. It's one thing after another, but it's all the responsibilities of everything. And then you know what happened? Intuitively, you begin to say, "Am I doing a good job?" And if you're not careful, that can really begin to consume you and you can get lost in it and it will drag you down. It'll shut you down. What are you seeing?

Alli Worthington:

Well, there's just these unrealistic demands that we put on ourselves for perfection. As moms, we believe there's something inside of us that we should be able to do everything, and it makes sense when we have a newborn. We're going to be able to take care of that newborn, protect them, hold them, be there for them, do everything perfectly. But once you get out of that newborn phase and life goes back to normal, you just can't do everything. But we all of a sudden wake up 15 years later and we still have this mindset that we should be doing everything perfectly for our child when really there's this process of differentiation. And I've come to figure out if I did everything, it would do my children a disservice because if I did everything, my children would expect everyone to do everything right, and they wouldn't have any ability to deal with it when people let them down or people were fallible, which we all are. So the way I think about it is we have to let go of our unrealistic expectations of what we can do because we're all humans.

Dr. Tim Clinton: In other words, you can't control everything.

Alli Worthington: We can't control everything.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And you'd like believe you can.

Alli Worthington: 100%.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And there's nothing wrong with working your soul out, if you will. I mean, there's nothing wrong with working hard and saying, "Hey, I want to get all this right." But then at the end of the day, it's realizing, listen, "I can only do so much. I've got to take a nap. Somebody else needs help."

Alli Worthington: It's like those years when I was building my business around it with little kids, I just decided my standards for cleanliness of the home was going to be a lot lower because I couldn't do it all. Kids were going to be fine. The crockpot was going, but nobody needed to look at my baseboards. We need to put it that way. So once we go, "I'm going to focus on what I can control. I'm going to make sure these couple of areas with my children are going to be amazing." Then we let other areas slide a little bit because if we have that pressure internally, plus we live in a culture because of social media that says everybody else is doing it great. Everybody else's children are wearing white linen outfits and smiling in a field, and even their dog is smiling in the photos. And meanwhile we're like, "My baby just threw up in my hair and the dog threw up on the carpet." It's very depressing to compare our real life to other people's pictures of perfection that they're sharing out there.

Dr. Tim Clinton: It's so easy to portray what isn't real. Hey, throw on top of it though, you got a culture though that also says you need to look good as a mom, stay fit, best wife, homemaker, whatever. Do it. You know what I mean? Let's check the list. And all that stuff continues to compound itself. And if you're not careful, Alli, you can get yourself into a pretty dark place. People I don't think they understand, for example, having babies. We know postpartum stuff is real. I mean, it's real. And you can get into a really challenging place with that, but that's just the hormonal stuff. If you're breastfeeding, et cetera, maybe it's in and of itself, it's just wiping you out. It's exhausting.

That's the kind of thing we're trying to figure out. Most people are unaware or they're under unaware of all the pressure that they're really up against. And by the time they hit maybe a counselor's office that's just like the wheels have come off the bus and they just don't know why. We're trying to get everything right. God, we're praying, we're doing everything we're trying to show up at church. I mean, it's a nightmare.

Alli Worthington: What I call it in the book is the "good mom myths." These five myths that say, these are the things that you have to do and you have to be, be a good mother. And the way I tackle it is by bringing in gospel truth, but bringing in a lot of

research to show, you don't have to do it this way. You can do it this way for your family. And to give women a freedom of understanding what God says, what the research says that's really important, and how they can give themselves a little bit of a break on some of the pressure that we're putting on ourselves.

Dr. Tim Clinton: In your book, your focus is on remaining you for a second. Can you help us clarify what that means or what you mean by that?

Alli Worthington: Yeah. It came from the expression, "if mama ain't happy, ain't nobody happy." Because the thing about being a mother is whatever room you're in, you will affect how everyone else feels. If you're in a bad mood, eventually everybody's going to be in a bad mood. If you're in a good mood-

Dr. Tim Clinton: Even the dogs get in a bad mood.

Alli Worthington: Even the dog's going to run out the room.

Dr. Tim Clinton: They're going up under the bed.

Alli Worthington: And to manage ourselves to make sure that we can remain us without, while we're raising our kids, we want to make sure that as we're raising our kids, we don't abandon ourselves. Because that's what often happens. I believe that when God calls us to be mothers, whether it's through birth or adoption or marriage, He's calling us not only to mother our children, but to continue mothering ourselves. If we don't take care of ourselves, we can get burned out.

Dr. Tim Clinton: So what you're doing is you're pushing back against this cultural shove, if you will, that is in current contemporary society in parenting and trying to "find yourself" so that you can stabilize yourself so you have something to give to your family. Because if you don't, what happens is you get caught up in this grinder, which eventually destroys everything anyway. It's not going to work. Okay. It's the old, "How's that working for you" statement. So if you don't understand these myths and you don't understand how to "bring some mental health," if you will, stability sanity back into place, you are probably going to get run over.

Alli Worthington: Absolutely. I call it an emotional health book for women. And with emotional health, I consider that mental health and spiritual health because we need to take care of our mental health, but even more important than taking care of our mental health, spiritual health. So once we take care of our mental health and our spiritual health together, emotionally, we're going to be so much better for ourselves. And sometimes moms really feel guilty for taking time for themselves to think about self-care. And sometimes we think self-care is a bubble bath. Self-care is not just a bubble bath. It's making sure you can read your Bible. It's having a cup of tea, it's going for a walk, it's talking to a friend on the phone. It's whatever we need to help our souls. Self-care is really soul care.

Dr. Tim Clinton: So that that's going to come back to the marriage for example, if you're married. That relationship needs to be healthy. And by the way, there needs to be responsibilities between both parents and it's okay to bring that up, and it's okay to say, "Hey, listen, help me shoulder the load here. We've got to do this together, and we've got to be on the same sheet of music because if we're not, it's going to be out of tune, a mess." Alli, I'm going to jump onto something that I think was fascinating in your book. And you talk about "good moms kids are obedient, well-behaved" and you think back, and a lot of people judge others by the conduct of their kids. You know what I'm saying? Sometimes you just got a two year old that is on a different planet, or you got a four year old that's running down the hall, I mean wide open, and she's saying, "No, I'm not doing that. I'm not going to do that. I don't like you." And it's like, and we assess our value and worth based on "temporary moments" because that's really what they are.

Alli Worthington: I have a lot to say about that. My oldest are 22 and 24. When they were three and five, our backyard connected to a neighbor's backyard with a little shallow koi pond, and I was inside with the baby, and they decided to take butterfly nets and catch a koi. They had been watching some Discovery Channel show about cavemen, and they were going to catch this coy and be cavemen. They panicked when it flopped around on the ground and instead of putting it back in the water for some reason they buried it in a shallow grave. They came in, they admitted everything to me. Mark came home from work and I said, "I'm a terrible mother. I'm raising future serial killers." And he said, "What do you mean?" I said, "Haven't you seen the research? If you abuse animals, you're going to prison?"

He said, "I don't think our kids are ready for prison, but we'll do something about it." So I talked to a mentor of mine. She had raised four kids of her own. She was brilliant. And I told her that my kids were going to jail one day and I was a terrible mother. And she laughed and she said, "You need to learn that what your kids do is not about you." And I said, "Well, what do you mean it's not about me? I'm the one raising them." And she said, "Is God your father?" And I said, "Well, yeah." And she said, "Well, when you do things wrong and you mess up, do you think it's because God is a bad father?" And I was like, "Well, no, of course not. It's because I'm making bad decisions."

She said, "Exactly. Your kids are going to make bad decisions no matter how good of a job you do." And that was a real light bulb moment for me because I realized whether it's a two year old having a tantrum because water's on his sippy cup and he needs a nap, or it's a teenager misbehaving because of hormones and that God-given desire to separate from parents, kids are going to mess up no matter how perfectly we do, and we have to just know it's part of the process and not everything our kids do is about us.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I think a lot of people... We understand the issue of consequences. We understand the importance of appropriate discipline, and we understand the

importance of grace and forgiveness. And what you're saying is by nature, kids can blow up the room. You know what I'm saying?

Alli Worthington: Yeah. No matter what job we do, how great of a job we do.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And how you handle that, how you internalize it is what's really important here.

Alli Worthington: Exactly. Just like God shows us the right way to behave and lets us suffer the natural consequences when we misbehave and shows us a better way, our job as mothers is to show our kids the right way to behave. Give them discipline and consequences when things happen and show them the right way. We can't internalize everything our kids do, or it'll just drive us crazy in the process.

Dr. Tim Clinton: With that, some people grow up in life and don't manage their emotions all that well. Some are ragers and it just pours out of them. Some people stuff their emotions. I think that happens often in motherhood. You get to a point where you're pretty frustrated or you're angry, and if you don't know what to do with it, that too can be a real nightmare. Okay. Because you got extremes on both ends where mom's always going off or she's never allowed to be angry. You hear what I'm saying?

Alli Worthington: Oh yeah.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Help us through that little piece for a moment, because I know there are a lot of people who wrestle with emotion regulation as adults and with their kids.

Alli Worthington: Yeah. Emotional regulation and anger is something we talk about a lot in the book because it's one of those things that most moms struggle with because our kids are like Navy Seals of bothering us. They know where our buttons are. They're pushing them. They're throwing stuff at our heads. Stuff's getting knocked over. I mean, it is just awful dealing with little kids on a day-to-day basis. I mean, we're honest about it.

Dr. Tim Clinton: That's like push that button and that button and that button and that one too.

Alli Worthington: But my idea about this is that mad isn't necessarily bad. Mad just means that we're having an emotion. Mad is a reaction to what's going on around us. We need to be able to regulate it. We need to be able to manage it, and we can't beat ourselves up because we feel frustrated. So one thing that I used to do with my kids, I didn't even know this was emotional regulation at the time, is when they would all start freaking out and doing whatever they were doing. I would start counting from 10 down to one, and I was calming myself down.

So when I yell at them, but they all went, "This is our warning. We need to just chill out before mom flips out on us." So that was my technique. So techniques like that are really handy, but also going outside and getting some activity. If you can put your kids in the stroller, drive your kids around, listen to music that

calms you down, sing really loud to the music that calms you down. Move your body. get that anger out is something that's really important for moms who are lonely during the day, who are in that house with the kids, feeling lonely, get outside, get some fresh air, move around. Really, really important in talking to friends is important too.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Alli, we're fighting time here. And in the middle of it, the discussion, I think we've probably scratched a lot. Well, we've exposed a lot of need, challenge, maybe some hurt inside of some homes. And then people say, "Well, what can we do?" I like your practical advice, meaning you understand that small changes can begin to lead to bigger things. In other words, don't get overwhelmed. Hey, we're not going to fix all this today. But if we start taking a step, a step leads to another step and then another step, that's what a girl positive coach is going to do. They're going to get prescriptive. They're going to get you going because we know this success breeds success. If I can get it going, if I can lose three pounds. If I can get five. If I can get five, I can get 10. You know what I'm saying? That's the mindset here. Take us down that road, Alli, toward how you began to get it under control, manage it, and give it as a gift to those who are listening.

Alli Worthington: You're exactly right. The power of small changes is everything to moms when we're managing things. Years ago, I decided we were all going to get healthy, so I threw out all the junk food. We joined a gym. I woke everybody up at 5:00 AM. It was mutiny. Everyone was miserable. My husband was buying secret pizzas on the side, and what I realized is I was overwhelming myself and overwhelming the whole family trying to train.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Just blowing it up.

Alli Worthington: Yeah, it was-

Dr. Tim Clinton: So already had a disaster. Now we just dropped another one on it.

Alli Worthington: Within a week. So again, I felt like a failure. I'm trying to get us healthy and I can't even do this, but I read about how this mathematician came up with this rule that said, "If you get 1% better every day, by the end of the year, you'll be 37 times better." And I was like, "I can do 1% better." So I would do small things like I'd add an extra veggie at dinner or we would go on a walk in the neighborhood once a week or we'd make sure I had a vitamin. I gave all the kids a vitamin in the morning. Just one little simple step that I knew if all the time I was getting 1% better because we can do 1% by the end of the year, we were going to look completely different.

So we did that with our health. We did that with communication. We did that with so many different things with the family, just taking those baby steps because if we can not overwhelm ourselves and not make things harder for ourselves because it's hard enough for moms out there. But just go, "Okay. Right now today, what small step can I take today to make life in this house, in

this family just 1% better?" We will look back in a month. We'll look back in a year. We'll look back in five years and go, "Wow. I am so glad I did that." For so many women, the issue is loneliness. We don't have the community around us that we want. So one thing I started doing.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Nobody to talk to.

Alli Worthington: Nobody to talk to.

Dr. Tim Clinton: No encouragement coming into her heart.

Alli Worthington: No. When I was building my business, when my kids were younger, I met other moms from all over the world, and we started sharing online because we were all in our homes with newborns. We couldn't really get out and find each other. But for me, for that power of 1% better and Carline, when I was picking up my kids, one of my girlfriends and I would always call each other to talk about things or if I wanted to get some exercise, but the baby needed a nap, I'd put them in a stroller and take them out. So things weren't perfect, but I could make them good enough to make sure that I was always taking the family to the step that I wanted them to be in, but also that I was taking care of myself so I didn't get burned out and I didn't let myself get depressed while I was raising my kids.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I love that. Alli, before you go, I've got to ask you this. You showed up on Good Morning America a little while back, the subject was slacker parenting. How in the world did that come together? Because it seems appropriate right here.

Alli Worthington: It does. I wrote an article, kind of about tongue in cheek saying, "I'm a slacker mom. I'm not going to get everyone presents for Christmas this year. Not the teachers, not my cousins, not everyone else. I can't do it." And just wrote an ode to moms just doing what they can and saying, 'Hey everyone. This is all I can do right now is take care of the kids and keep my head above water.' And women all over the country went crazy for it because everyone went, 'I'm feeling this pressure too to be all things to all people,' and it was just a reminder that we're called to follow the Lord. We're called to take care of our family and in different seasons of life, we have different capacities and sometimes we're at a season of life where we don't have a capacity to make an organic cake and throw a massive birthday party and have ponies all the time. Sometimes we're just getting by and that's okay too.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Let's close this way. Alli, I'd love for you to speak to the mom out there who right now says, "You know what? I'm in that place. This is tough. That I'm barely keeping my head above the water," and she just needs a word of hope and encouragement. It's been such a joy to have you, but speak to her because that's what this is all about.

Alli Worthington: Yeah. I want you to hear me say that you are such a good mom. That I know every time you open up your phone, you see images and videos of people who

are pretending their lives are perfect. But I'm here to tell you no one's life is perfect. We are all fighting battles behind the scenes, the way you love your kid, the way you're fighting every day to make sure that there's food on the table and a roof overheads, and your child feels loved and knows the Lord, you're doing a great job already. The moms who spend their days worried that they're not doing enough by default, are doing more than enough because moms who don't do enough, don't worry about it. You're worried about it. Your heart is in the right place. You're trying to do those things for your kids. I promise you, you're doing a great job already.

If there's something practical, something simple I can ask you to do is take a piece of paper this week and every time you do something wonderful, something loving, something simple for your kids, just write it down and at the end of the day, look at that list and give it to the Lord and say, 'Lord, help me see that the job I do for you and for my kids is good, and that you will take the work that I'm doing. You'll take my 50% and add your 100%, and we're going to raise these kids to be amazing people who love you.'

Dr. Tim Clinton: Alli, what a delight to have you. Her new book coming out is *Remaining You While Raising Them: The Secret Art of Confident Motherhood*. Alli, that's been a joy to have you. I know you're got to take a few moments and get ready. You're going to hit the stage out there. 5,000 women waiting for you to speak. We'll pray that God does a special move of His Spirit in and through you when you hit that stage. Hey, on behalf of Dr. Dobson, his wife, Shirley entire team, thank you for giving us some of your time. Pray for those boys by the way, as they continue to grow up and would love you and appreciate what God's doing. Thank you for joining us.

Alli Worthington: Thanks so much for having me.

Roger Marsh: Wow. Alli's story is truly inspiring. Friend, you're listening to Family Talk, and that was the conclusion of a two-part conversation featuring Alli Worthington and our own Dr. Tim Clinton. Now, if you missed any part of today's program or you want to hear yesterday's conversation again in its entirety, remember all you have to do is go to our website at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. That's drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. And if you enjoyed today's program, you may also enjoy listening to the new "Defending Faith Family and Freedom" podcast featuring Gary Bauer. Gary, as you know, is our senior vice president of public policy here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. He shares his unique perspective on current public policies through the lens of the U.S. Constitution and an unapologetic biblical worldview.

Now, to listen to this podcast, just visit our main homepage at drjamesdobson.org and then select the image for the "Defending Faith Family and Freedom" podcast. Once you do, you'll be directed to the podcast page and then just choose your favorite listening platform and begin the episode you'd like to listen to. It's that easy. I'm Roger Marsh, and from all of us here at Family Talk, thank you so much for making us a part of your day and your week. Hope

you have a peaceful weekend. May God's richest blessings be upon you and your family, and be sure to join us again next time right here for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Announcer:

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