



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** Letting Go of Worry

**Guest(s):** Dr. Linda Mintle

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**Dr. James Dobson:** You're listening to Family Talk, the radio broadcasting division of the James Dobson Family Institute. I am that James Dobson, and I'm so pleased that you've joined us today.

**Roger Marsh:** Well, greetings and welcome to Family Talk, the radio division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh. Thank you for making us a part of your day. As we wrap up another week here on the broadcast, I'd like to ask you, how are you dealing with physical stress and emotional pain? Well, today's guest is an expert in addressing pain, every type from physical to mental and even spiritual. And for each of these, she provides biblical solutions, her name is Dr. Linda Mintle. Dr. Mintle is a licensed marriage and family therapist, a clinical social worker and an expert on relationships and the psychology of food, weight, and body image. She is also a best-selling author with over 20 books in print. Dr. Mintle is a member of the American Association of Christian Counselors, and recently published her latest book entitled Living Beyond Pain, which offers a holistic whole person approach to managing pain and getting your life back.

Linda likes to say that she is passionate about helping people live life to the fullest, to walk confidently in what God has called them to do, and to find healing and hope as needed. Now, doctors Clinton and Mintle are old friends, so you're going to be able to tell that right away. The kindness and mutual respect that they have for each other in the conversation is very evident, and even though we have had her on this program several times before, today we're going to learn more about Linda, the person and her backstory. I don't want to lose another moment, so let's join them now and listen to a conversation that was recorded last September at the American Association of Christian Counselors World Conference.

**Dr. Tim Clinton:** Linda, such a delight to have you back. Thank you for joining us.

**Dr. Linda Mintle:** I love to come and I love to talk about all the things that we talk about in mental health that you have such wonderful conferences with, and I've had the honor and the privilege to be a part of that. And I love training people in these areas of dealing with stress and anxiety and worry, and the things that people deal with every day.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Linda, I was thinking the other day we've been down the road a time or two together, I had a lot of conversation about mental health and God has raised you up as a strong voice in today's culture. What brought you into mental health care and this love and passion that you have?

Dr. Linda Mintle: Well, I was going to be a lawyer. I'll just tell you that. That was my plan in life. I was accepted the University of Michigan. I was going to do a Law degree, and then my oldest brother, who was quite a bit older than I was, but I had such a great relationship with him, he was killed on an airplane from a terrorist bomb. And when that event happened, it really was a crisis of my faith and I was really struggling, and I just didn't get why this horrible thing happened. So since I was in college I thought, "Well, you know what? I feel a little bit crazy. I think I'll study psychology and get credit, and try to figure out what's going on in my life." And once I started doing that, I just got hooked into the whole psychology field and that just led to me continuing to pursue that path.

And then the more I got into it, I also really love health and healthcare. So when I was able to really marry mental health with a lot of medical things, and then I've been at two medical schools and I've been in Department of Psychiatry and Department of Clinical Pediatrics in different places, it's just been a wonderful ride. But I always struggle with this idea of the fairness in life because I didn't feel it was fair. And I read every Philip Yancey book, I'll just tell you right now, I've read every one of them. I've met him, I've talked with him. He really helped me during that time sort of figure out how faith plays into this. So I've been able to integrate my faith into what I do as well, which has just been wonderful to have that type of voice.

Dr. Tim Clinton: It's beautiful to see the voice that God's given to you, anchored in that very thing, a love for the Lord.

Dr. Linda Mintle: It's my worldview. So everything I see is through the lens of Scripture and my relationship with Jesus. And so if it doesn't fit that it's not really going to be something I'm going to incorporate, so I'm very careful in the field of medicine and mental health to make sure that everything we do is done with a biblical lens on it so that we're not offering things to people that would be against that worldview because that's a part of who I am.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Linda, I was at an event not long ago and a national Christian leader stepped up to the microphone and he just went off. He said 75%. 75% and then he qualified it, of Christians are filled with fear. You are out there on the front lines. What are you seeing? What are you hearing?

Dr. Linda Mintle: Well, it's the pile on effect of all this stress. We've got so many problems and I think when people watch the news and the news is always bad news, it does impact the day-to-day life that people have. So what we're seeing is what they call in medicine allostatic load. It's just this pile on effect of a lot of things that feel out of our control that we don't have certainty about, and then you don't really have a way to deal with it and control. And as we take more of God out of

the culture, we've really taken the main thing that helps us through fear and anxiety out of people's lives. And so people are out there just feeling afraid and there's a lot of social contagion with that, so negativity breeds negativity. We really need to help people calm down. If you just look at things that are happening, it would be the natural response to be fearful.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah. Linda, do you think all this insanity, if you will, is making us hypervigilant, on hyper alert or something, and then things that we may be worried a little bit about now, that was maybe a one or two, now they're a seven or eight? You know that?

Dr. Linda Mintle: What happens is we have this part of our autonomic nervous system that goes easily into fight and flight when it gets aroused, so some people have heard of it, this sympathetic nervous system. So all of these things can trigger whatever is going on in you, this whole anxiety response and you start to get very anxious. And if you don't have ways to calm yourself down, if you don't have a way to get the parasympathetic nervous system involved in this, and that's the part that calms.

So one part is arousing you and reveling you up, and then the other part of your nervous system is calming you. And a lot of people do not have a good balance or what we would call homeostasis with that. So they hear something on the news and they go, "Oo," and then they don't have a way to calm with that. And so they stay in those alert states because the body is automatically searching for threats. So we have a natural threat system in our body that's looking for things to be afraid of, that we have to counter with ways to calm ourself and calm our body.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And that's exhausting.

Dr. Linda Mintle: It's exhausting, but there's good ways to do that and you have to practice it and you have to learn it. So I think in part we're hearing so much more with the 24/7 news cycles. We're seeing more and we're seeing traumatic images on TV, and we know that people are influenced by trauma by just watching trauma, and they can have similar effects to hyper arousal with all of that. And then all the things that people get triggered by, so if you've had something in your past or there's something that your emotional brain is remembering and you're not even aware of it, you can have a feeling of panic or you can have a feeling of anxiety, and it's just a feeling and you don't even know where that feeling is coming from, but it's actually tied to something you're seeing or hearing or you're experiencing that your emotional brain is remembering, and so it's triggering that. So the more and more experiences we put into our brain with all these negative things that are happening, the easier it is to get triggered in these events.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And when the trigger comes, it goes there quick.

Dr. Linda Mintle: Yeah.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Linda, let's start with just clarifying terms for a moment. You've got the word fear, you've got worry, and we've got anxiety. Can you help us understand them?

Dr. Linda Mintle: Yeah. So I think fear is in our system that we're looking for threats and safety, so the body is geared, it's wired to look for threats. Now what anxiety is, anxiety is a future focused emotion. So anxiety is when you're anticipating something, it isn't an actual threat, there isn't something there right now like there is with fear, and the mental part of that is what worry is. So worry is the mental part of anxiety where it's all about your thoughts. Again, where we anticipate a negative outcome, we think something terrible is going to happen, we catastrophize in our mind where we're thinking it's going to be really bad. I'm not going to be able to handle it. I'm going to be overwhelmed. All of those thoughts. So the worrier, the person that has generalized anxiety disorder is really a chronic worrier is what's happening. It's a thought base that's prompting that anxiety.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And what's really again, difficult there is if the body is on that alert system. It's draining everything it can out of you even though you're on hyper alert and you're ready to respond. I remember Linda, I was going into a mall in the Charlotte area, Charlotte, North Carolina, and as I was walking toward this Dave & Buster's place, there were two guys to my left and I just had my eye on them, I don't know why. I just looked at them, a shorter guy and a tall guy. The short guy turned around out of nowhere, I startled him, he startled me, and in his hands was a knife.

Dr. Linda Mintle: Oh boy.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And he started coming right at me. I really believe he wanted to stab someone. As I took a couple of steps, I looked at him and I moved with my hands because I realized I was in a threatening situation and I stared at him straight in the eyes. I think I was bigger than he anticipated for a moment, so he backed off and I just walked away from him carefully and slowly. But I'm telling you what, my body was in insane mode. It was like a-

Dr. Linda Mintle: Fight or flight.

Dr. Tim Clinton: ... oh yeah.

Dr. Linda Mintle: There it is.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I mean, I amped up in a matter of seconds to a place that was unbelievable. And I mean, every ounce of my body was responding. That's the emotion that we're talking about that can happen, that cortisol and everything starts flooding your body in a, not a reality situation it can be perceived.

Dr. Linda Mintle: Right. It's when the threat really isn't there. So if you were then to go back to the mall the next time and there was nobody there, you could still be triggered by that event and have huge anxiety. And that's because it's an emotional memory that's in your brain that's being triggered again, and you just feel it. It doesn't make a lot of sense because you're thinking, "Well, there's nobody here, there's nothing around me that's being threatening, but I'm still feeling anxious."

There's a part of your brain that remembers that emotional memory and it's triggering it right away. But what happens with most people is when they get into those states, then there's a part of their nervous system that calms them down. Then you can go, "Okay, wait, there's nothing there. I need to rest. I need to relax, I need to get back into a calm state," but when people are anxious, they don't do that very well and they don't do that very quickly. And in fact, they can stay in those hyper states of arousal which are very negative to the body, so it puts you at risk for heart disease and a whole lot of other illnesses and problems. So we really have to learn how to calm down and then how to deal with those anxious thoughts.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Linda, some of what's going on is based in reality. They're just watching it. You hear what I'm saying? And then what's happening is our minds are running away from us and then maybe some trigger things, like you said, we've got some past history memory stuff and it's bringing all of it up to the surface. Linda, when are we in trouble?

Dr. Linda Mintle: Just like what you're explaining now, it's normal to have thoughts and concerns about things, but when it impairs you, when it's impairing your functioning and you're not able to go about your daily tasks or when you're having such distress that you're walking around with that feeling of "ah," all the time, then you really do need to go see somebody because that's going to impact your health and your mental health, and it's going to get in the way of you doing the things that you need to do during the day.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You're listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Dr. Tim Clinton, co-host here at JDFI and our special and studio guest today, Dr. Linda Mintle. We're talking about a subject that really is related to a book she wrote a couple of years ago called *Letting Go of Worry*, best-selling book, amazing work. And it's something by the way, if you're struggling with anxiety, that's the kind of resource you need to go to and get your hands on it. Again, the book is entitled, *Letting Go of Worry*. Linda, a lot of people turn to medication because they have a real trouble with shutting this thing down. And I want you to talk about the significance of medication when it's helpful, maybe when we need to take a look at patterns of life that really need to be taken care of, and what really is the best treatment for helping someone break free?

Dr. Linda Mintle: Well, let me say this, the first line medications for anxiety are something called the SSRIs, so that is a type of medication. If you go to your doctor and they will put you on something for anxiety, they will use an SSRI. Now, a lot of people

have been given a type of medication called a Benzodiazepine, and those are really problematic when they're taken long-term or when they're given just to use for a number of years. I read reports on patients where they've been on Benzodiazepines for five years, for 10 years, for 40 years. The problem with those is that when you take those, the brain cannot do new learning, and it really is just managing symptoms, it's not getting at the root cause. So one of the things that we tell people is that there are a number of things you can do, therapeutic tools, practical skills you can learn to calm yourself down to deal with your anxiety, tools and techniques. And if you are on a medication, you still need to do that work.

So the best combination if you're on a med is to also be doing the work with a therapist and trying to... So we look at things like cognitive behavior therapy that is really good with anxiety because it's looking at your thoughts and how your thoughts are promoting anxiety. Actually, you're thinking part of your brain is actually triggering the feeling part of the brain towards anxiety when your thoughts are negative and worried. The other thing that we sometimes look at is acceptance commitment therapy, but that's another type of therapy where you're taught to observe your thoughts, that thoughts are just there. They're not reality. So there's something called cognitive fusion that people sometimes deal with where they have a thought and they think, "Well, that's how I am.

Now, the Scripture does say that our thoughts are important to who we are. So we have to look at those thoughts and look to see if those thoughts are in line with godly things or they're not in line. And we can start to then direct our actions towards, "What can I do to make things better or what kind of technique or tool can I use to really stop that anxious thought at this moment?" So those two type of therapies, the ACT, the CBT, are the ones that people should look for when they're looking to work on anxiety.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Linda, in other words, some people say pay attention to what you're paying attention to.

Dr. Linda Mintle: Yeah. We call it consolidation in the brain. So what you're doing is you're like skiing on the same pathway over and over and over, and when you ski on the same path over and over, it goes faster and faster and you can do it very easily. And that's what happens when you concentrate on worried thoughts, is you're developing that groove in the snow that's going to be really fast. So when people are working on changing their thoughts, it takes practice because you're pruning the brain away from those curves, those deep grooves, and you're trying to create a new pattern in the brain.

So you're exactly right. What you tell the brain to focus on, it will focus on. At one of your conferences, at one point we were working on all these different types of thoughts and we started singing the Goodness of God. And it was great because the whole group knew it and we were thinking, "This is how the brain focuses, you tell it to focus," plus music is also calming. It has a calming effect on a person. So just think about when we worship and we're singing to the Lord,

we're actually involving a part of our nervous system that's calming us down. So there's a whole lot of techniques you can do also to calm yourself in the moment so that the thinking part of your brain can think. But if you're a worrier, your thinking part of your brain is in overdrive and that's the part that you have to change, and you have to learn to think different thoughts.

Dr. Tim Clinton: The Scriptures become really important here, do you know that? I think if Philippians 4 where the apostle Paul said, "Be anxious for nothing but in everything through prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God." And he goes on down through there and talks about thinking on things that really help change the equation. But be anxious for nothing is tough to do when the wheels are coming off the bus and when your brain's running a hundred mile an hour. What about the word rumination? I know in suicide, rumination has become a concept that everybody really is giving a lot of attention to. It's that-

Dr. Linda Mintle: It's that constant cycle.

Dr. Tim Clinton: ... it's that marinating, if you will, in the mind that just doesn't stop. And it's like somehow you've got to get it to stop, and I think a lot of people quote, "want that thought stopping piece," Linda. But they don't understand, you've got to do thought replacement too.

Dr. Linda Mintle: Right. So if we think about the Scripture, "take a thought captive," so what do we do with a thought? We grab it, we confine it, and we don't allow it to go into those worried waters. So we're confining our thoughts and we're changing those thoughts to something that is more true, more scripturally true. If God is really in our lives and he's really for us, and he really is control of our life, if we really believe that God is in control of our life, then when we feel out of control, we have to surrender to that control of God. And we have to start thinking, "Well, it isn't going exactly like I want it, maybe something could happen, but God is with me in this process and his promises, he's going to walk me through it, and he's going to get me through it. He is in control of my life. He's ordering my steps."

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yes.

Dr. Linda Mintle: It's a very big cliché, but it's true, Tim, he's got this. So when you surrender that type of thought and that type of thinking, and you have to do that a lot of times by meditating on Scripture. When I'm getting to the point where I'm starting to get anxious, I go right back to the Word and I start reading those Scriptures that tell me, Philippians, like you said, "Think on these things." God is giving us the prescription, and that's why I think it was so important for the Bible to tell us we have to renew our mind daily. The brain tends to go negative, it's got what they call a negative bias to it, and so you have to renew that with the goodness of God, the Scriptures of the Bible and the things that you know to be true in your life.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Linda, what happens when I don't make the adjustments? I begin to think about people who get anxious. They begin to pull in.

Dr. Linda Mintle: And get more isolated.

Dr. Tim Clinton: When feel and anxiety begin to control or dominate your life, you tend to move away from things that matter.

Dr. Linda Mintle: And that's really dangerous, and it's also a strategy of the enemy. When isolation happens, we don't do well with isolation. And there really is a part of your nervous system that when you're with other people and you can connect with other people, it will calm you down.

Dr. Tim Clinton: That's the piece where I think, if people would just understand this, and by the way seek out help, it's not embarrassing.

Dr. Linda Mintle: Oh, we know what to do. We've got so many ways that we can use treatment to help with what's going on if people would just seek help. And you know what we know Tim, and this is really important for parents listening, is that when child anxiety is not treated, it goes into a lot of times adult depression. So treating anxiety early on is a really good thing for parents to do.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah, I'm thinking of kids who just struggle. They just break down.

Dr. Linda Mintle: So the treatment for that is really to induce those panic feelings and to make them feel those feelings, and then expose them to whatever it is they're afraid of and make them work through it. And that makes people better. They begin to feel what they're feeling in their body which is those symptoms of panic. You're sweating, and your heart is racing and all the things that come, and you expose yourself and you make the person do it, go through whatever it is, and they get to the end of it and they go, "Oh, I'm okay. I didn't die."

What you're doing is you're training the brain to a different outcome, so you're rewriting the script in the brain and they have a different outcome, and that treatment is very powerful and it works, and it doesn't take a long time. And again, do it with somebody who's safe. Do these things with someone because our brains are wired for each other. We need connection, and I can't stress enough that when you're feeling this way, when you isolate, you're going to get worse, not better. So being with another person who is safe for you and working through, and that's usually what a therapist does, a Christian therapist, they're trying to be that safe person for you so the brain can calm down, it can actually engage in the work and you can do new things.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Linda, before we go, I mean, I think we'd be remiss if we didn't acknowledge things like medications can actually trigger.



- Dr. Linda Mintle: Yeah. When we're seeing somebody in therapy, we should get a medication list and find out, and look at the list and think, "Is there anything on here where the side effect of that medication is anxiety?" Because then the issue is to stop the medication and then work with somebody.
- Dr. Tim Clinton: Linda, as we go here, I want to go back to Philippians 4. The apostle Paul said something about peace in there. He said that the peace of God will reign in your heart and life, and that peace will come from the God of peace. Linda, take us to that place. What does it look like, what should it be like?
- Dr. Linda Mintle: Well, there's a whole section at the end of the book on peace and contentment. And I was always so stunned that Paul wrote, "Rejoice the Lord, always. And again, I say rejoice," while he's in prison. Here's a guy rejoicing in prison, does that make any sense to any of us? So again, when we center ourselves in Christ and we are able to really understand what's important in our lives and what we need to do in terms of all the things that we're talking about, it is possible to be in negative circumstances all around us and live in the crazy world that we're facing right now, but still have a peace and a joy. So you can lose your joy even when things are going well, but you can keep your joy even in the middle of very difficult circumstances because of who God in us, He is the God of peace, so He will keep you in perfect peace if your mind is stayed on Him.
- Dr. Tim Clinton: On him. That passage goes back into verse four that says, "Rejoice in the Lord, always. And again, I say rejoice." And then verse five is the verse I always missed, "Let your confidence be known to everyone." The apostle Paul knew this. He had a confidence in that one who loved Him.
- Dr. Linda Mintle: And it wasn't his self-confidence, it was confidence in Christ in him. With Christ in him, I can do all things because of Christ in me. That's where we get our confidence, that's where we get our overcoming. That's where we get our resilience to deal with all these things that are facing us in our lives.
- Dr. Tim Clinton: Our special guest again today has been Dr. Linda Mintle. Some great content around anxiety coming from her book, *Letting Go of Worry*. One of those best-selling books, it's a mainstay, if you will, in modern day Christianity on helping overcome fear and understanding, worry and anxiety in our everyday lives. Linda, it's been such a delight to have you, and we've got to do this a whole lot more now. God has given you such a gift and voice, and I appreciate the friendship. And on behalf of Dr. Dobson, his wife, Shirley, the entire team here at Family Talk, we salute you. We pray that God would continue to give you strength, courage and boldness, especially for such a time as this. Thank you for joining us.
- Dr. Linda Mintle: Thanks. It's always a pleasure.
- Roger Marsh: Well, what an encouraging and heartfelt conversation that was. I'm Roger Marsh. And to learn more about today's guest, Dr. Linda Mintle, just go to the

broadcast page at [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk). Dr. Dobson, Dr. Clinton and the entire staff here at the Dobson Institute are committed to helping you and your family in your walk with Christ and your spiritual wellbeing. Now, very important, if you are at this moment in crisis, I need to remind you of the new National Suicide Prevention and Intervention Hotline, just dial 988, that's 988 to speak to someone who is trained to assist you right away. You can also find a licensed Christian counselor in your area by going to [connect.aacc.net](http://connect.aacc.net). And with that, once again, this is Roger Marsh letting you know that whoever you are, wherever you are, Jesus loves you and so do we. Take care of yourself and each other, and we'll see you again next time on Family Talk.

Announcer:

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