



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** Help for Stressed-Out Moms

**Guest(s):** Rob and Dianne Parsons

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- 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: Well, welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast ministry of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh. If you're a mom, well, this is your week. So let me ask you a question. Do you ever feel like you're running on empty? No matter how much you give, it's still never quite enough. Well, on today's edition to Family Talk, Dr. James Dobson sits down with his longtime friends, Rob and Dianne Parsons, to talk about the real struggles moms face from guilt to exhaustion, to feeling invisible. Dianne's own journey through a dark season of depression gave her a heart for encouraging other mothers as well. So let's join the conversation right now on today's edition of Family Talk.
- Dr. James Dobson: I am really pleased to have my good friends with me again. 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.
- Rob Parsons: Thank you. It was great meeting you.
- Dianne Parsons: Well, 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 U.K. 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 happened to be in Edinburgh and Dianne and I were doing a marriage seminar and suddenly you slipped and stayed the whole seminar and you came up to him 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*.

Rob Parsons: Yes, that's right.

Dr. James Dobson: 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 came 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 so 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. And out of that came a burning desire to be very real and honest with women and for women.

Dr. James Dobson: 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 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.

Dr. James Dobson: That's right.

Dianne Parsons: 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 be 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. 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 dreamt of, my family were cracking up around me and my kids were missing and 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 for 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.

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 muttering back, "I'm just a mum at home with children." But somebody gave me something years later and I have some sympathy with a 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 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: Oh, that is great stuff.

Dianne Parsons: And I tell you, the women who are mums at home, when I say that in these 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 have some business cards printed with Dianne which said "Dianne Parsons, Director of Social Development." And she noticed that when she was in government buildings or somewhere and they asked for what she did and she gave them this card, they really treated her well.

Dianne Parsons: Oh yes. It was amazing.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah, 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. That's right. And if he doesn't, then it becomes really difficult.

Dianne Parsons: Absolutely. Absolutely.

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

Dianne Parsons: No. 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: Yeah, 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 struggles evenings were remarkable times and my respect and love for Dianne just grew and grew as I saw this. I saw a whole new woman emerge out of this experience, just fighting 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 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.

Roger Marsh: While we've reached the midpoint of today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, I'm Roger Marsh. Dr. Dobson's conversation with Rob and Dianne Parsons continues after this.

Dr. James Dobson: I recall a time many years ago when my wife broke her leg skiing, requiring me to play Mr. Mom for about two weeks.

Roger Marsh: With today's Dr. Dobson Minute, here's Dr. James Dobson.

Dr. James Dobson: My first morning on the job, our headstrong three-year-old boy began teaching me the rules of the game called motherhood. He followed me into the kitchen where I rummaged through the cupboards with blurry eyes, all the while being barraged with questions. "Why isn't the milk poured? And don't you even know where the eggs are? And are you sure you've ever done this before?" And why do I share these memories with you? Because if you're a mother raising your kids with love and devotion, you deserve a lot of credit and praise. You may not get applause from your kids, but you deserve a standing ovation from the rest of us. Commitment, dedication, perseverance, these are the hallmarks of a hero, an unsung hero. Happy Mother's Day, Mom.

Roger Marsh: For more information on this topic, visit [drdobsonminute.org](http://drdobsonminute.org).

And now let's continue with the conclusion of today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

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?

Dianne Parsons: Oh.

Dr. James Dobson: 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 mums at home with children.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. Rob, what about unrealistic expectations?

Rob Parsons: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: 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 kicking and 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. Yes. Guilty that they've made a terrible job, that 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. That's very powerful. Interestingly though, I still get quite hurt, I suppose, is the word I'm looking for. If Lloyd phones Rob a lot more often and 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.

Dianne Parsons: Right.

Dr. James Dobson: You have a role to play. You will always be his mother. You're the only mother who he'll 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.

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 with that. Absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: Absolutely. 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 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- And that is the last thing he wants. 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. And it was just so mundane at the time. And I needed some adult conversation. 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 and 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 just run a marriage seminar to 500 people and I got home one o'clock in the morning. 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 it'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 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." Said, "No, I was in a car crash. I fought for my life for six months." And I said, "Did anything good come of that period?" He said, "You know, Rob, two things. First of all, the partners in the legal practice told me I was more used 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 my 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 was 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 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 she'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, it's very easy. I brought him up all these years. I love him. He's my son." And we spent ages with single parenting mum saying it is tougher for you because you're alone, because you've got the pain, perhaps of a broken relationship, because money's hard, but every family ministry that says a kid should have a mum and a dad must also stand by the single parent mum.

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.

Dianne Parsons: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: 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 is 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 the things I've done have been risky. Leaving an academic position and starting a little ministry with no money and everything else, that's risky. Surely 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.

Dianne Parsons: And let's remember that one.

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

Dianne Parsons: I've 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: Joy to be with you.

Dianne Parsons: Thank you so much.

Rob Parsons: Thank you so much.

Roger Marsh: Moms wear more hats than anyone gives them credit for. And sometimes the bravest thing a mother can do is admit that she needs help. You're listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, featuring a conversation with Dr. Dobson and his guests, Rob and Dianne Parsons. Now to hear this program again or to share it with a mom who needs some encouragement, visit [jdfi.net](http://jdfi.net). And while you're there, you'll also find a link for the book that Dr. Dobson mentioned at the end of today's broadcast. It's called *The Sixty Minute Mother: An Hour of Reading for a Lifetime of Love*. Every day, families all across America are looking for trustworthy, biblical guidance on marriage, parenting, and the challenges of raising kids in an increasingly complicated culture. Your generous support at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute helps us meet those families right where they are with truth, with compassion, and with resources that strengthen homes for generations to come. To make a secure donation, visit [jdfi.net](http://jdfi.net).

Well, I'm Roger Marsh and on behalf of all of us here at Family Talk and the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. Thanks so much for listening today. Be sure to join us again next time right here for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the voice you trust for the family you love.

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