

Stories of Transformation...One Mom's Journey

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SUMMARY

Stacy Belward interviews Anna Brush, the Executive Director of Connected Families, discussing Anna's personal parenting journey and the impact of Connected Families on her life. They reflect on the importance of identity messages in parenting and the organization's upcoming initiatives, including a year-end fundraising campaign aimed at expanding their reach and resources.

- Anna shares her struggles with anger and anxiety during her early parenting years and how Connected Families provided the support she needed.*
- The importance of focusing on identity messages, such as "you are safe with me" and "you are loved no matter what," in parenting.*
- Anna's transition from being a user of Connected Families resources to becoming the Executive Director after a personal connection with the founders.*
- The significance of a three-year commitment from donors to help plan for the future and expand their coaching and partnership programs.*
- Connected Families operates with a small budget, relying heavily on donor support, with a goal of raising \$1.5 million over three years.*
- The podcast emphasizes the transformative power of Christ-centered parenting and the ongoing journey of growth for families.*
- They highlight a couple's testimony from England about their moment of change through Connected Families' resources.*
- The episode concludes with a call for listener support to continue the organization's mission.*

[Music] hey everybody welcome back I'm Stacy belward the host of the connected families podcast Welcome to our community we are people committed to pursuing God's grace and truth for ourselves and then daily working to pass that Grace and Truth on to our children I'm so glad that you're here today with us well I'm looking forward to my conversation today because I get to talk with my longtime friend and executive director of connected families Anna brush we we're going to be talking about

her parenting journey and how connected families came to her at just the right time as well as talking about an update around what's coming up here in the next couple months at Connected families so Anna welcome to the podcast thanks Stacy it's really fun to be here it's fun to have you here you know we've known each other a very long time haven't we I was thinking about it has it been 18 years already well my oldest is going to be 20

so probably because our kids were so small when we met little babies 18 19 years yeah that's right that's right

we're both part of the Ethiopian adoption community and that's where we met at some of our local events and then we got involved in a smaller group and we raised our kids together we sure did that was just so many beautiful memories from when those kids were so little we would go camping together and yes have

lots of meals together and water parks learn how to make Ethiopian food and devour inira Good Times amazing pictures of those little ones I know I know it special times well it's actually been 10 years ago that you joined the team at Connected families so could you tell us more about how that happened oh yeah 10 years K I just want to take it back a couple years prior to that so I have been on the team for 10 years but a few

years before that is when I was first introduced to connected families and it was actually at one of those Ethiopian family events where we were and I was talking through one of the struggles that I was having a pretty significant struggle with our oldest at the time and and our mutual friend Amy said um have you considered checking out connected families so she was the one that first put that in my head I remember exactly where I was I went home

ordered the first edition of the discipline that connects book when it arrived I remember just sitting it down and devouring it and feeling like this is what I've been looking for for so long it hit exactly what I needed when I needed it and believe me I've been reading all the books and listening to all the podcasts but it just what I was looking at before it just didn't hit what I needed at that moment I think

that that's a similar story to so many people that come to Connected families just searching through all of the resources and then they come to Connected families and find uh something that's just a little bit different and really hits home were there any resources any specific thing that really landed for you well every single email that landed in my inbox I was like what were they just in my house last night how did they know I needed this and so

you know my kids were I don't know three and five at the time and it just felt like they were writing to me exactly but one of the things I saw early on that really resonated with me was the rendition of the serenity prayer that was shared Lord help me accept the people I cannot change the courage to change the one I can and the wisdom to know it's me and that just landed on my heart in such a profound way that was

really my moment where I knew that my focus needed to be on myself I love that version of The Serenity Prayer our version of it the connected version of it it's free on our website as a download and we'll put a link to that in our show notes so Anna how did you get from being a devoted parent a user of connected families to being on the team in 2012 I was in a job transition and

it's a really long story but the short short part of it is that I reached out to Jim with a question I was starting a home organizing business so I reached out to Jim with a question and through that conversation I ended up organizing Jim and Lynn's home office and then their kitchen and then their garage and so we just had fun I had fun organizing their home and they were one of my very first clients and we just we hit it off

we had a really good connection but then getting to know them and then seeing the impact that this content was making in my own life I just wanted so desperately to be part of the organization that was sharing this content and I wasn't sure what that looked like but Jim and I kept in touch for a while and then in the fall of 2013 so probably 18 months after we first met position became available and yeah I started working part-time for

connected families I still had my home organizing business so I was doing both for a little while and then when I was uh offered the role as executive director in 2016 I closed my organizing business and started working only at Connected families and it's been an amazing journey it's been so much fun it's been the most fun I've ever had and it's just been such a privilege to be part of this organization well it's our privilege to have you you have taken

those organizing skills and put them to good use here at Connected families and it might not be with your favorite thing which is a label maker Anna because I know you but it's that organizing mind that really has set connected families apart in setting up our own systems and all the things that we have so we appreciate that part of you Anna yeah thanks Stacy it's fun I love it it's good well back to your story though can you

describe what was going on in your home during that time and why connected families was so impactful to you yeah I don't share a lot publicly about my kids or about our their Early Childhood or why they how they were able to join our family I'm happy to share what was happening in my own life and I can tell you that I was just pretty angry all the time like it just felt like there was this undercurrent of anger in my life

that life was more difficult than I wanted it to be and that I felt like I deserved I was grieving I didn't know that I was grieving so much but I was grieving the biological children that I didn't have I was very anxious about the future I was catastrophizing is that the right word like I was big big mountains out of mole Hills I was envisioning the future and I I couldn't see the hope I was I had Shame about the choices the

parenting choices that I had made in the past and about losing my temper and and I honestly just felt really isolated I didn't know who I could trust with these big feelings basically if you've taken the Grace and Truth for Mom's online course I was having all of those feelings all of the feelings and I was putting so much energy on fixing my kids that their identity became one of Brokenness so in their in their little

Minds you know they're little three four five years old and if all this energy is on fixing then they must be developing a mindset or an identity that they're broken I had no idea of the messages that I was sending and I had all the best intentions but I had no idea the messages I was sending really until I saw the connected families framework identity messages framework we'll get to that in a second but just feel that it's

so powerful when we share our stories our before stories because there's an after Story and there's so many people listening that really can resonate Anna with what you just shared because they're in the same boat and so on behalf of all of us thanks for sharing that because I know it's not easy to talk about that stuff but you talked about the framework you talked about identity and messages say more about the framework and how that broke into all of

those emotions that you were just feeling the visual aspect of the framework and seeing the foundation as the largest part at the bottom and then connect the next and seeing that the messages I'm sending you are safe with me and you are loved no matter what that has to be there before I have any chance to coach or correct and I was spending all of my energy on correcting and coaching and I just thought there's a

reason that this isn't Landing there's a reason it's not working that I'm not seeing what I want to see in my parenting and my family so yeah it was it was the visual of the framework was so transformative to me and that's what I wanted to be part of and those messages because it is biblically based and it's just it's memorable and it's easy to talk about and I'm like this is so good I want more people to see this

so I'm sure as you started to learn about it dig into it read the book read the emails Thursday parenting tips email everything changed like immediately didn't it Anna that's right Stacy it sure [Laughter] did not at all no not even close there were so many bumps and challenges along the way and times when I was just like what are we doing this is oh it was it

was many many opportuni to send identity messages of you are safe with me and you were loved no matter what and you're responsible for your actions so lots and lots of opportunities to share those messages and because of this mind shift when opportunities came up we knew the messages we wanted to send but you know we were the kids were young during this time 4 and six or so that we were starting to change and and we had the

opportunity to really just take a a family reset family wide redo and we chose at that time to make our worlds really small we didn't have the kids in many activities we stopped traveling we just really needed to focus and Cocoon while we're figuring out all of this stuff and even then it was difficult but we just needed to pause and reset and then move forward yeah you know and the discipline that can next online course we have the

visual and Jim and Lynn talk about the idea of a barge versus a sailboat in in our world today we often think oh I'm going to get this little tool and it's going to be like a sailboat it's going to be just like you know turn the steering wheel and boom we're going in another Direction and woohoo but really you know what we teach the framework the work that you were doing is a lot more like like a barge it's slow course

Corrections continually that over time you see big huge change so how did things really begin to change for your family and for you yeah barge versus sailboat I wanted the sailboat I wanted the Quick Fix but our family was definitely the barge and we are still the barge our long-term Vision changed for our family but that's a longer Messier process I guess one of the biggest significant changes for me was that my relationship with Christ was

completely trans transformed through my parenting one of the things that totally changed is having those conversations with the holy spirit being in prayer and and relying on the Holy Spirit wisdom in between the incident and the conversation so all of the opportunities that we had to share these messages praying and asking for wisdom and seeking Holy Spirit guidance in between whatever thing happened and how we were

going to engage with the moment and one of the verses that just came to life for me was 2 Corinthians 10:5 a verse I've known and has been important to me in my my whole Christian walk but during parenting we demolish arguments and every pretention that sets itself up against the knowledge of God and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ so I take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ so then previously I was talking

about the anger and the fear and the anxiety and the shame and the isolation and so then when those feelings would come up I would be able to recognize them ask for Holy Spirit wisdom take them captive and really see my relationship with Christ transformed wow it Chang is just so significant and it is it's a Christ centered spirit filled process and I think that's why even our whole team it's just such a privilege to

walk along alongside families because it is a work of the Lord in people's hearts so thanks for sharing that you know a parent wrote To Us recently and said he was so grateful because the trajectory of his family had changed things began to change when we love that phrase we're gonna be saying a lot more about that phrase aren't we Anna yeah so our year and fundraising campaign is the the tagline or what we'll be answering is

things began to change when dot dot dot so we'll ask people to fill in that blank when did things begin to change for you when was your light bulb moment when you were introduced to Connected families or with when the Holy Spirit spoke to you in a in a really powerful way and things began to change in your in your life and in your heart and none of us have arrived we are all in process in our parenting and in our faith

Journey so we're just highlighting the tools connected families and the takeaway moments when things began to change in people's life just like I explained at the beginning of our conversation when things began to change when I saw that serenity prayer and when I saw the connected family's framework when I saw that image so good and before the end of the show today we're gonna have a clip from a couple in England and they're going to be sharing just quick

but about when things began to change in their life um so Anna my next question is why is our year-end fundraising campaign so important well Stacy I'm glad you asked shift yeah well I don't know if people know this but 40% of our revenue is through products and services so the online course you buy or the book you buy or signing up for coaching or any of our products and services 40% of our revenue is generated through that which

means 60% of our Reven is given through our generous and faithful donor team and honestly the majority of that is given at the end of the year so the in December and honestly the very last week of December is when the majority of our funding comes in for the next year this year we are we're in a really important time so of course we're seeking donors for the year in campaign and a one-time donation is so

so appreciated but we're also seeking three-year commitments so for the people who are interested in making a three-year commitment rather than waiting and not knowing and having that yeah the unknown about yearend funding for the people who are interested and able to make a three-year commitment that will help us plan for

the future with confidence you talked about plan the future with confidence and that's part of the goals around getting three-year commitments can you share more

about that oh for sure we have a growing team and so being able to plan salaries and who's going to be on the team and making the commitment to those team members that's really important growing our reach and our impact and what we're able to do with with a three-year commitment our primary focus as many people know has been on content but now we are expanding our certified parent coaching program and that takes resources we're also launching and

developing a partnership program well people people will hear about that quite a bit more this coming year so there's just there's lots of plans in the future that look different than what we've done in the past and to be able to plan confidently it really does take financial commitment for people so we can plan for the next three years and then integrating the content and our certified parent coaching program and our partnership program and bringing

those all together to serve parents well all around the world what that looks like with our technology and what we offer and uh just bringing it all together so that that's why I mean really a three-year commitment is pretty important if people are able to do that if people are able to give at the end of this year we are so grateful either one so much gratitude so you named a lot of things and the coming together of content and

coaching and Partnerships and are wanting to plan with confidence into the future how much will all of that cost what is the investment that we'd like to make well our year-end campaign is 380,000 so that is what we need to launch next year fully funded and then we are seeking 137 donors who were willing and able to make a three-year commitment the total commitment needed for the next three years is 500,000 a

year for the next three years so 1.5 million so if someone can give 50,000 a year for the next 3 years 5,000 a year for the next three years 250 a year for the next three years any of those ranges yeah very needed all of the ranges are needed but in total it will be 1.5 million for the next three years W so what is our annual budget Anna if I don't know but I want everybody to

know well we're just uh under one million a year our annual budgets just under one million I think as people hear that they're thinking wow that is not a large budget it's actually pretty small for an organization with the impact that Connected Families has internationally we hear that a lot right people think that we're way bigger than we actually are oh yeah yeah a lot of people are surprised but we are a small and Nimble organization there's just a handful of

us who are salaried full time the rest are hourly and part-time so I think people I think people like to know that we are a Frugal bunch here at Connected Families I was raised in a Ministry Home you were raised in a Ministry home we all have a Ministry mindset we yeah we run Connected Families with that same mindset every single dollar we spend I'm aware that a faithful donor has contributed and you know Stacy we've been praying for years

we've worked together for eight years and you've heard us pray we've prayed over and over that God would multiply our efforts and he does and he has again and again so we yeah we're we're just so in awe of what God has done with the team that we have with the resources that we have and the way that he continues to use use our Loaves and Fishes to reach a lot of people a lot a lot of millions of people

around the world through all of the things that were involved in well I'm just going to ask Anna I'm going to ask you friends as we launch our year-end campaign will you consider a gift to Connected families well as promised we're going to play a clip of a couple who live in England and the wife is a certified parent coach now but they're talking about their moment when things began to change so listen in everybody

well there was this time when I I think I listened to a podcast on Curious questions from from connected families and I I immediately went into I can do this I can ask some Curious questions so I just went into I I can't remember whether the children were having playing with some toys and it was time for supper or something like that and I sort of said rather than come to the table please come to the table please I

instead I said something like you know oh what time is it now are you hungry you know and it was just the beginning of a conversation I think it was something like that and it just made me see oh my goodness I don't need to be telling my children all the time what to do I can ask them a question they know what to do I can sort of Coach them along to sort of become a bit more

autonomous bit more I don't know Wise so that that I remember you you sort of heard me in behind the door or something I didn't it and um you were astounded it was good by the the change in me so that was a that was a for me it was a beautiful moment I just thought I can do this you know and it was change and I I just felt yes I've changed I'm so grateful to have

you as a friend Anna I'm honored that we've gotten to work together for years now and I think our whole staff really feels such gratitude to be working to support Christ centered transformation in families it's just been fantastic Anna thanks for being on the show today my pleasure it's been fun well thanks for tuning in today friends we are are a listener supported organization over 54,000 parents like you listen to this podcast every month individual donations

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