

Kim Strobel: [00:00](#) Hello, hello, hello friends, and welcome to the She Finds Joy podcast where we reclaim the super shiny lights that burn in each of us. I'm Kim Strobel your truth telling, real talk, happiness coach who believes in the power of showing up as our flawsome-selves even, and especially my friends, when it comes to working through our hard stuff. After all, when we're playing in our arenas of bigness, life gets better as we get bolder. So buckle up for the no BS, zero fluff advice that gives you the small steps for big joy. One of the best things about She Finds Joy is our community. So be sure to join us in our free private Facebook group to connect with other women who are creating more joy in their lives, just like you. You can find us at kimstrobel.com/shefindsjoy. All right, let's dive in to today's episode. Here we go.

Kim Strobel: [01:17](#) I am super excited to introduce my guest today. Her name is Sara Dean. Sara and I actually met in a mutual mastermind and I'm going to read her bio for you in just a moment, but she is one of those women that I just immediately felt a sense of connection to. I felt like she was a sister friend. I don't know. I have to say I was just glued to your energy and your presence and the way you navigated the world, Ms. Sara, and so let me do your bio and then we're going to get into some great questions that we have planned for today. So Sara Dean is the creator and host of the Shameless Mom Academy podcast. Get this, you guys. It's a top rated podcast with over 2 million downloads. Sara's biggest passion is helping women own their space after enduring her own identity crisis following the birth of her son, Sara took her background in psychology, health and wellness and rebuilt her identity one step at a time.

Kim Strobel: [02:20](#) Sara motivates and inspires women to stop shrinking and start shining. She is on a mission to inspire women and moms in particular to live bigger, older, braver every damn day. That's her hashtag. #Everydaydamnday. Sara serves women through her podcast, her Thriving Momentum, Mama's Membership community, her Tenacious Mama's Business and Leadership Mastermind and her annual event for which I recently saw she has secured a bomb ass location. The annual event called the Shameless Mom-con. When she's not supporting Shameless, you'll find Sara with her husband and seven year old son building Legos and pretending to understand Pokemon. Welcome to the She Finds Joy podcast Ms. Sara Dean.

Sara Dean: [03:11](#) Thank you for having me. I'm excited to be here.

Kim Strobel: [03:14](#) Yes. I can't wait to dig into this because you and I definitely have this. I don't know what it is. There's a special thing between the

two of us. I felt it from the very beginning and it has been a joy to just be in the same circle as you. You are one of those women who consistently raise the ceiling on what I think is possible for my own life, so thank you for that.

Sara Dean: [03:39](#)

Oh my gosh. I would say the same for you.

Kim Strobel: [03:43](#)

Yeah, we are good support systems for each other. All right. So what I want to know is I want you to tell me a little bit more about who is the Sara Dean behind this great bio. What are the dynamics of, let's just start with your professional life? Like how did you get to become an entrepreneur? How did you get to become a woman who has this podcast with 2 million downloads? Who runs these groups, where she coaches women? Like take us back to that. Where, where did you start and how did you get here?

Sara Dean: [04:17](#)

So I think it began years ago, I, so I started off with a career in psychology. I worked in a psych hospital with kids for seven years. When I left that career, I left to go be a personal trainer. And when I became a personal trainer, I had two options in terms of how to gain employment. One was I could go work at a big box gym like 24 Hour Fitness or LA Fitness and I could make \$13 an hour. The other option was I could go out on my own, build my own business and make \$60 to \$65 an hour. And so for me, there was this, it was like, there was no question as to how I was going to go about this. And I have this very strong sense of fairness and justice and I also have a very strong sense of like, I will not be a victim of the patriarchy, so I am not going to go work for \$13 an hour at some big gym run by male dominated corporation. And so that's kind of where entrepreneurship began for me. I had no desire to be an entrepreneur, to build my own business. I just want it to be a really good personal trainer who made decent money and set my own schedule. And so I did that. I built my own personal training business. I ended up eventually owning my own gym, and that business was amazing. I loved it. I loved building the community around it. So my gym was a fitness studio for women

Kim Strobel: [05:39](#)

In Seattle?

Sara Dean: [05:40](#)

In Seattle. Yeah. And so I built that community about 10 years into that venture or probably eight years into that venture my husband and I started trying to get pregnant. We went through a lot of things around infertility. I ended up having my son and I learned pretty quickly after my son was born that I had built a business that I was very, very proud of and I loved the community that I built, but the business did not seem to really

align with my core values after I became a mom. And what that looked like for me was I had built a business around helping women shrink their bodies. And primarily the way I marketed to people on a local level was helping women with weight loss programs and really marketing around like, you know, join this program. You're going to lose 21 pounds in 21 days.

- Sara Dean: [06:31](#) And like really kitschy things that men say in fitness marketing. And which made me a lot of money and it helped me build a really great community. But all of a sudden I was like, this is not how I want to be a service to women. Like I do not want to be selling this to women as like your biggest goal in life should be to lose weight. And so again, justice, fairness and like smashing the patriarchy. I was like, I can't do this anymore. This is not an alignment in my core values. So I decided to start a podcast where I was really talking around motherhood and kind of just all the things that come with motherhood that I didn't expect and so I started the Shameless Mom Academy podcast while I still have the gym.
- Kim Strobel: [07:13](#) What year was that you started the podcast?
- Sara Dean: [07:15](#) That was March of 2016.
- Kim Strobel: [07:20](#) Okay, so you still had the gym?
- Sara Dean: [07:22](#) Yup. Still have the gym.
- Kim Strobel: [07:24](#) And he's how old? Your son?
- Sara Dean: [07:24](#) Vinny's currently seven. He was about three when I started the podcast.
- Kim Strobel: [07:29](#) Three when you start the podcast, you still have the gym, there's this struggle between your core values being a mom running this gym.
- Sara Dean: [07:37](#) And the gym. I really, as I built the podcast more and more, I felt like this is, these are my core values now. Like I'm really proud of what I built back then, but this is not where I want to be right now. And so I decided to sell the gym, which was a grueling process. But I also, when that got really hard, I was fortunate enough to be working with a coach and she's like, you know, no matter how this ends up, at the end of the day, you're going to be a female business owner who sold the company.

- Sara Dean: [08:07](#) And I was like, thank you. That's all I needed. She's like, very few women do that. I was like, great, sign me up. I want to be, you know, among the leaders. So I sold the gym and went all in on the podcast and built a business around the podcast, which has been amazing and also challenging and also a lot of work also so rewarding and life giving in all sorts of ways I could never have imagined. So that's how I got here. And what I'm doing now.
- Kim Strobel: [08:39](#) So, okay, I want to back up a minute. So you really, you sold the gym in 2016.
- Sara Dean: [08:45](#) I sold it in 2018 it took me a while to sell.
- Kim Strobel: [08:48](#) Oh my God. Okay. So you sell the gym in 2018, you've got about a year and a half or two years of this podcast going. At what point did you start to make money for yourself and your company and like when did you start to like kind of launch into, okay, now I'm going to create my first women's program? Like how did that all come about? I have so many listeners who have these ideas. But they don't really think they can make them happen.
- Sara Dean: [09:21](#) Yeah, exactly. And the other thing that women, I mean, this happens with women and men, but when we start businesses, if they're, if we're not bringing in, because we see so many women are so many people online bringing in, you know, six figure building six figure businesses in six months. If we haven't done that, then we're like, Oh, well clearly I missed the mark. I need to move on to something else when the reality is no, you need to stick with the thing that you started.
- Sara Dean: [09:43](#) So for me, when I decided to start the podcast, I gave myself, I said, I just want to try this and see how it feels. I had no intentions of building a business around it. I just wanted to have a platform to be having different conversations than what I was having as a gym owner. And so it started out as a passion project, just a fun hobby, just a total, like I'm doing this out of curiosity to satisfy something in me that feels good. And so I did that and after about six months I was like, I'm liking this. I'm getting good feedback. I want to do more of this. So now what can I do with that? So I kind of made a deal with myself and I will fully admit I was in a very privileged situation that my gym could fund this hobby.
- Sara Dean: [10:24](#) So I understand a lot of people when they're starting a business can't just be like, I'm just going to not make money on it for a while. But I had another business paying the bills for me. So I was in this very privileged space to be able to let this be a hobby

for a while. So I made a deal with myself. I'm not going to try to monetize anything for the first year. I just want to really build a community, build a following and kind of elevate my credibility, authority and trust level with my listeners and then go more into building business. So I actually have a post it note on my desk that shows my revenue over the course of the years since I started the show. So the show, the first year that I had the show 2016 I made \$19.15 on the podcast.

Sara Dean: [11:05](#)

I don't even know what I did that I like. I just looked this up in QuickBooks the other day cause I was like I need to have these numbers in front of me for me to remember how far I've come kind of. And when I wrote this down I was like what did I sell for \$19.15? I have no idea. But in QuickBooks it said that the Shameless Mom Academy made \$19.15 in 2016 in 2017 it made \$9,281. Its when I still had the gym. So it was just a little bit every month. Like small little things, I did like a couple of little four week programs where people could join me for similar to what you're doing. I was like join me for we did like a self care program one summer we did like it was like curating happiness and like things like that. Little programs I brought in that money.

Sara Dean: [11:53](#)

Then in 2018 being fully out of the gym, actually the gym sale happened in 2018 so part of the year was out of the gym, but I went from that \$9,000 a year in 2017 and then 2018 I did \$67,000 and now this year we're on track to do multiple six figures. And so when people ask about like how long does it take and what do you do? You start out at \$19.15 and you build it and then the next year it might only be \$9,000 which is still not livable. So this is, again, coming from a place of privilege, I'm in a double income family. I had the gym, but this is what it looks like. Like the reality behind the scenes of the many people building businesses, this is what it looks like. It is a side hustle that takes time, it takes energy, it takes showing up.

Sara Dean: [12:40](#)

I've never missed an episode. I have now six streams of revenue built around it and it's just been slow, consistent and steady. When you look at it on the internet it looks like, Oh my gosh, it's like blown up overnight. Nope, it's been slow, consistent, steady.

Kim Strobel: [12:56](#)

I know, but, but what I love is, see, I think that's so much of the time. If we listen to that really burning desire of how we really want to show up and serve and that is our focus first, then I think the financial gain follows that. And I think it's like listening to that thing that lights a fire in you every day. And so like I love that. I mean because I'm just going to call it out right now, Sara Dean, I saw you in a picture on social media and you were

holding with your girlfriends a balloon that 2M which meant for 2019 you hit the \$2 million mark, my friend.

- Sara Dean: [13:37](#) No, 2 million downloads.
- Kim Strobel: [13:40](#) Oh, I thought it was 2 million! This whole time I thought it was \$2 million dollars!
- Sara Dean: [13:50](#) No, downloads! You're like, nevermind. Cancel the interview. She's actually not that great.
- Kim Strobel: [13:57](#) Oh my gosh. Okay. So like Sara you jumped from like you are already high up on my ladder.
- Sara Dean: [14:04](#) I went from \$67,000 to \$2 million.
- Kim Strobel: [14:07](#) I actually told my husband that on the phone!
- Sara Dean: [14:12](#) So that's why he thinks I'm so incredible.
- Kim Strobel: [14:14](#) But let's be honest, you said you're at multiple six figures for 2019 and you have six different stream of revenue and all of this born out of creative pursuits and designer that lived in your heart and was aligned to your core values.
- Sara Dean: [14:32](#) Right. Yes. Yes, absolutely. And I will tell you other people who started at the same time as me have very similar numbers and there are people who very publicly have shared reaching multiple six figures in the same amount of time as me. So I don't know if you follow Carla but she's someone who talks about, we launched at very similar time and she's done in her first full year or maybe second full year, but anyway, early she had seven figures doing something very similar.
- Sara Dean: [15:01](#) And hers was very much the same thing as me shown up really consistently being pretty comfortable. I mean for her, some of her messaging is a little sassier than mine, which I love. So she leaned into the discomfort of that and she built a massive following and she showed up and served her people. So, you know whether or not whether you're making enough money to quit a job at maybe \$67,000 a year or enough money that you have now, you know, seven figure, multiple seven figure business. All of it is possible, but you have to keep showing up and you have to do the work and you have to trust your skills and trust you have to believe that you're qualified. And so you have to believe that you're qualified and worthy, whether it's making the \$67,000 or the \$300,000 or the \$1 million or the \$2

million, all of it is that you have to believe that you're qualified and worthy.

Sara Dean: [15:50](#) And I think that's where we get tripped up is when the first year we make, you know, \$300 or \$3,000 and then we're like, Oh, well clearly that means I'm not qualified. No. It just means you haven't put the time in yet or you need to rework something or you need a different, maybe a different direction within the same thing. Or maybe you need to take a bigger leap in the same direction. So yeah.

Kim Strobel: [16:10](#) People give up too easily.

Sara Dean: [16:12](#) Oh my gosh, we give up so easily. We move on to plan B and plan B. When you move on to plan B repeatedly, it really, really, I think crumbles your identity. It like it cuts away who you are over time. And it's, I mean, if you look in diet culture, it's like women who quit diets over and over and over, that has a massive impact on your identity and your mental health and your ability to believe in yourself at all. And if you are quitting jobs over and over and over, if you're quitting businesses over and over and over, all of that. When you see yourself as someone who quits things or someone who doesn't stick it out and make it work, that totally impacts your ability to be successful at anything.

Kim Strobel: [16:54](#) I agree. And I think it helps. Like I love that you gave us those figures, like you made, what was it, \$16 or \$19 in the first year? When I look at, you know, in 2016 I went full time with Strobel Education and like I said, I'm the girl who made \$8 an hour at one time in her life. And in fact, I mean not only that, but I rode the bus in the morning and in the evening at the time to make an extra \$16 a day. So that 16 times five equals \$80, and that paid for my son's daycare. And so I'm that girl who made \$8 an hour and I am also the girl who can step on the stage now and command \$7,500 for an hour. And so if I were to look at my circumstances back then and make a judgment on what was possible, I really would have knocked myself based on circumstances.

Kim Strobel: [17:50](#) And I love that because then what happened was I love Strobel Education. I love working with teachers, but there's always been this like, and I guess I'll go ahead and say it, it might even be a bigger burning desire to really help women step into this best version of themselves. And so last year I launched my happiness coaching and you know, I think the first, last year I don't, Oh my gosh, I don't even want to like, I might've brought in \$48,000 but I'm just going to tell you my bills probably far outweighed

that, right? Because there's this whole team and now look at 2020 we're hoping to grow that even bigger. But it's just like taking an idea and not being afraid to enter into what I call the arena of bigness.

Sara Dean: [18:45](#)

Absolutely.

Kim Strobel: [18:47](#)

So I want to know, okay, I want to back up a little bit because there's a story that I happen to know about you. So we're gonna take a little bit of a segway off of the the business entrepreneur that you are and how your courage to show up in that realm has continued to have a major impact on women all across the world really. Cause I know you have people listening in other countries. But I want to talk a little bit about how as women we can overcome hard things. And I know that one of the most challenging things that you ever went through was infertility. And can you talk a little bit about that? Because I know we have some listeners who, I mean, I happen to know one of my previous coaching clients and it is the number one thing, Sara, that keeps her from living her best life is this constant concern over what will she ever be able to become a mother. And how do the rest of her pieces in her life fit into that. So tell us your story.

Sara Dean: [19:48](#)

Sure. So we, my husband and I, we had waited a while to try to try to get pregnant. We were, I believe I was probably 30, well, I mean it's all relative, but I was probably 34 or so when we started to try, he's nine years older than me. We'd been together for a long time. So at that point we'd been together for eight years or so. And so it felt like if we're going to do this, we should do this. We weren't super certain. We were like, we don't want to regret not having kids. So like we should just get the ball rolling. Well then it ended up taking quite a while. And what's funny is how long you spend, how much of your life you spend trying to not get pregnant. Like ensuring that that won't happen. Especially if you're a control freak like me. And then when it doesn't happen, you're like, hold on a second.

Sara Dean: [20:38](#)

Yeah. This is, I've tried so hard to make sure I never get pregnant on accident. And now the stars aligned for me. And so we went through this really long journey and which involves a ton of decision making, a ton of stress, financial and emotional and physical stress. And I think for me during that time, so the first round of that was between my ages of 34 and 37. And so during that time it felt extremely lonely, extremely isolated. And I didn't talk to very many people about it. All my girlfriends were having babies, a lot of my girlfriends were having second babies and I was constantly just getting like Facebook notifications,

like, Oh, guess who's pregnant? And Oh my gosh, picture of an ultrasound. And, and a lot of them were like, Oh my gosh, we didn't think it would happen so soon, but yay. Or we didn't expect it at all, but yay. And I was like, Oh my God, I hate you.

Sara Dean: [21:37](#)

I also was, I had my fitness business at the time. I had my gym and I had a lot of women there who were moms and who were coming in like as moms do, you know, like complaining about motherhood and stuff. And I was like, you don't even know how good you have it. So this was this kind of big secret that I had in the background and I had to show up constantly like, everything's great! It's wonderful, lovin' life! And then I would like drive home from the gym every day crying. It was a really, really hard time. And I definitely had that feeling around like, is this going to happen? When is this gonna happen? And my husband, I just think men don't understand because their bodies are not the ones. So when you're going through infertility, what a woman has to do to monitor everything about her body during that time is ridiculous.

Sara Dean: [22:22](#)

And so, talk about putting your life on hold, I mean, every single thing my husband wanted to do, I was like, well, but we can't do that cause what if we're pregnant then? And this went on for years. And so to your clients point around like you get so, so consumed and you really feel like you need to push pause on everything. So we went through all of that.

Kim Strobel: [22:42](#)

Is it like this visceral, like I am a woman and this is, this is what my body is supposed to be able to do naturally and my golly, I want to do whatever it takes and I'm going to kind of put life on hold and other areas, by golly, we're going to make this happen and I'm going to follow the charts and the temperatures. Is it all of that?

Sara Dean: [23:03](#)

So there was some of that for sure. There was also a part of it for me being a high achiever, like there's had never been anything that I had tried to do that I couldn't do. Like if I wanted to get an A on a test, I would do whatever it took to get an A on a test. And so for this to be like, I'm doing everything you're supposed to do and this is not working. I had never had that before. I had never. Basically the way I talked to my friends about it was like I'm getting an F on a test every month. I've never gotten anything besides like an A-, like an A- is failure in my book and I am getting an F every single month. So it was, I just never had that in my life. So there was that part of it as well.

- Sara Dean: [23:42](#) And because so you go through phases where you're like, okay, I'm going to try to like be really optimistic. Maybe this'll be the month and then it's not the month. And then you're devastated and it takes you that whole next cycle to like work your way back up to like, okay, maybe this will be the month and it's just over and over. It is so exhausting to have that happen. And then you think, well what if it doesn't ever happen and what does that mean and how far do we go? And I mean, fertility clinics, they will take any amount of money that you are willing to pay. And so then you're like, where do we draw a line in the sand and when do we start looking at other options? And so it's just, it gets very confusing and overwhelming. It's very surreal because you, I felt like you kind of dissociate from the process and you're just in decision making mode.
- Sara Dean: [24:26](#) Like, okay, I guess we're going to, you know, move down the list of like we tried A, B, and C, now let's go to D and you're not even really like able to think it through. So, we finally got pregnant. We had my son Vinny who is now seven, he's 100% of the light of our lives. And I'm rolling my eyes as I say it because I used to be annoyed with how people talked about their kids. And I'm like, Oh my God, I'm so that person. But so we had him, we went back through this infertility journey again after he was born. So he was born, he was a really hard baby. And that was like a whole other journey around, I worked really hard for this. I should be so grateful. But this is really hard. And so that was very challenging.
- Kim Strobel: [25:09](#) I want you to talk about that a little bit. So because, so you do all this work, you have this beautiful baby, you're in love with the baby. But what else are you feeling at this time?
- Sara Dean: [25:24](#) So I had set up, I mean one of the gifts of infertility and I have done a lot of mindset resets around infertility to kind of reframe it in my head. So one of the gifts of infertility for me, for us, was that during that few years that we were trying to get pregnant, I really restructured my gym to operate without me. So that whenever this baby came, I would be able to work from home and raise this baby and be home with the baby. And this was like my life dream. I would have this business running itself on the side. I'd be home with this baby. Well then the baby came and baby was really hard. Nursing was the hardest thing I've ever done in my life. I had a ton of health complications, some related to nursing and some related to my bladder. Like it was hot, fricking mess.
- Kim Strobel: [26:07](#) Did you feel guilty for having like some negative feelings about, you know like I should not feel frustrated. I should not feel

because like we worked so hard and now you've been given this gift but here I am and I'm this mom now and it sucks to nurse?

Sara Dean: [26:24](#)

Yeah, so I didn't feel guilty. I felt angry. Like I felt more angry. Like this is not what I was told this was going to be like. I was told it was going to be lots of snuggling on the couch and nobody has told me about mastitis. Nobody told me I was gonna end up in the ER with an infection. Nobody told me that my bladder was going to fall apart. Nobody told me that I was going to have this screaming baby that couldn't get enough food that was like borderline failure to thrive, that had to get weekly weight checks that had a really hard temperament, all those things. So I felt like, and then I had all these friends with three-year-olds who were like, don't worry, it gets better. And I was like, when? Like is it going to be better by Sunday at 6 because this is so hard?

Sara Dean: [27:09](#)

Yeah. So I wouldn't say I felt guilty. I felt like cheated. Like I worked so hard for this and it's still gonna be hard. And I had built it to be like, I had built this life of my dreams and it's not awesome, this thing I built. So that felt really, really hard. So when I was in that, then I was also in the background thinking, well if we're going to do this again, if we want to have a second child, number one, I have to go through all this fertility stuff again. And number two, every day that I've had, that's been really hard with this current baby, I'm going to have to live again if we have a second baby and do I have that in me to do it again? And that really put a damper on that first year for me because I spent so much time and energy worrying, cause worry is my gift, worrying like, what will this be like if we do this again?

Sara Dean: [28:02](#)

But as it turned out, when we went to do it again, when I finally felt ready, we ended up totally unsuccessful. and we basically had to draw a line in the sand and be like, how much resources are we putting into this for the second time? And I at the time felt like I'm good either way. Like, if this works great, if it doesn't, I'm fine. We already won the lottery. Like this baby who was really hard turned into a toddler who was a total delight. He's been, I mean, his temperament since then has been amazing. So that first year was really hard, but everyday since then has been better. And so I was like, we've already hit the jackpot. Like I don't need to push my luck that hard. But then again, high achiever, when I got this, like we drew a line in the sand, we were unsuccessful and then it's suddenly I was like, Oh wait. Like someone's going to tell me I can't have something. Hold on a second.

- Sara Dean: [28:50](#) So there was a massive grieving process after that. That that was three years ago. And I feel like I've just in the last six months started to recovering from that. And that I did not expect at all. So what I thought was like, so when I talk about infertility, a lot of people think like, Oh, well you've experienced infertility seven years ago to get this child who's now seven, but it's actually been this very long continuum that has taken up the better part of nine years of my life at this point because it's been this ongoing thing in the background that's taken up time, energy, resources, decisions, financial, like all this stuff. So, I think that that's what people don't see around infertility is like the pervasiveness on such an ongoing level.
- Kim Strobel: [29:39](#) Yes. You know, it reminds me of, so when Scott and I got married, he had three children from his previous marriage and then when we got married, my son Spencer his dad and I separated when he was two months old. And so Spencer was two, when Scott and I got married. And you know, when I married Scott, the big question was, you already have three kids. I have Spencer. I need to know, I'm young, I'm 28. I need to know that you want to have another child because I don't want to just have like one biological child. And Scott was like, yes, no problem. And then what happened was, his daughter Sidney ended up coming to live with us full time. And so it just never really felt like the right time. She did need a lot of like mothering and fathering and she was in the fourth grade at the time.
- Kim Strobel: [30:37](#) And so it just was, we were blending two families. We had just gotten married and we were just constantly dealing with difficult outside circumstances. And so it never really felt right to have another child in the current situation. But like I never ever, ever lost that dream or desire. And so when Sidney was a sophomore, she chose to move back with her mom. And I'm like over there, like knocking on my husband shoulder and I'm like, just so you know, I still want to have a baby and I have never lost this feeling. He was 46 at the time. He had had some trauma previously with just other things. And he just said, I'm too old and I can't do it. I can't start over. And I'm just going to tell you, I was so pissed. I couldn't see straight.
- Kim Strobel: [31:33](#) Well then began the cycle of resentment towards my husband of like, I got cheated out of this when I agreed to do things that were for the better of our family as a whole. And it robbed me of my chance to have another child and my golly, you told me this and now you're renegeing. And I mean, we had to go to counseling, I had to go to counseling. Scott went to counseling to see if he could possibly bring himself to have another child.

And at the end of it, and my husband's a pretty like passive guy. He pretty much does whatever I want. It's just in his nature. But he had a lot of, I think, trauma and different things in the back of his head around parenting. And long story short, Sara, he put his foot in the ground and said, I can't do this.

Kim Strobel: [32:24](#) And so, I spent a long time being angry and resentful and we went to counseling over it and I remember the counselors saying, you know, Kim, you have to make a decision like you can get out of this marriage and maybe you'll find someone and maybe you'll be able to have another child or you have to decide that your marriage matters more to you than having this child. And so I made the decision to stay in my marriage and to do my own healing around that grief. And I have come through that and I've come to see that I would not be doing what I'm currently doing if I had a four or a five year old around right now. I understand that I was, that maybe God's bigger plan was for me to birth a different kind of baby. But let me tell you that I'm just going to go there with our audience because we're talking about grief and we're talking about how we get these reminders that take us back into grief.

Kim Strobel: [33:24](#) Scott was having a bit like when we finally made the decision, it's over. I was having a lot of problems with my menstrual cycle. They wanted to do an ablation on me. I agreed to it because Scott was not going to budge. Scott had the vasectomy. I had the ablation. I go in the day before, get this, Sara. I go in the day before and they have to do an ultrasound just to make sure you're not pregnant before they go in and burn the insides of you out or whatever they do. I am laying on the table. The nurse has the ultra sound machine on my belly. She has no idea of my past history and how hard it is for me to even shut the door and know that once this is done. It's done. The screen is in front of me and she says, Oh my Kim, look at that.

Kim Strobel: [34:14](#) You have the most beautiful egg dropping and the next 12 hours.

Sara Dean: [34:19](#) Oh my gosh.

Kim Strobel: [34:24](#) I laid there, the tears began to just stream down my face and she said, Oh my goodness, I'm what's wrong? And so I kind of had to explain. Cause to me, to me that was two things. One, I thought God was giving me a sign. Right? And, and two, I was like, that's it. That's him or her. I have always felt like I'm supposed to have him or her and there she is. And so immediately I text Scott, I'm like, Oh, can we just like this is divine intervention. Like it can we just have sex one time? And if

that happens, we know it was meant. And he was like, he couldn't do it. So long story short today when I see a pregnant woman on the TV or I see a pregnant mom, there's a part of me that aches still for that grief resurfaces like it does for you.

Sara Dean: [35:18](#) Oh, I have that a lot with people with family photos or people being like, Oh, we're having a third or a fourth or fifth. And I'm like, really? And not that I want to like take anyone else's happiness, but I'm like, Oh yeah.

Kim Strobel: [35:35](#) I think that that like we can come through hard things and I know you coach women on this a lot. We can come through hard things. We have the ability, you and I have trained our brains to be able to see the hidden gifts among the struggles. But it doesn't take away that we still feel pain at times.

Sara Dean: [35:56](#) Yeah. I had a client years ago and this was such a game changer for me. So she was a client of mine before I was married. She was married, had been married for a while. She was approaching 40 she had had, I didn't know this, but we were just having this casual conversation one day during our workout and we were talking about kids or something. She was like, yeah, we went down that road. We tried. I had a lot of miscarriages. So at a certain point we just had to kind of decide that wasn't for us.

Sara Dean: [36:21](#) I was like, Oh my gosh, like that must've been a really big decision. And she said, well, what we ended up deciding and kind of agreeing upon was that this was so traumatic to go through all these miscarriages. So we decided that if we weren't gonna continue down that road, that instead we would commit to building a life that we couldn't have had if we had had children. And so we have this nice house and we have these nice cars and we'd go on to these fancy vacations because we can afford that because we aren't funding a child's education and raising a child. And that has always stuck with me. That when you are, when you're given something that's not the thing that you planned, what do you get to do with those circumstances that can actually be fruitful for you? And so I think about all the time.

Sara Dean: [37:04](#) And so when we couldn't have the second child, then I immediately was like, with my husband, like we will live a life that we couldn't live if we had two small children. And so within like, if our last attempts we had gone through IVF, if that attempted worked, we would have been during the time that that baby would have been born, we ended up booking a trip to Europe and we took Vinny to Paris. So I was like, okay, so

instead of having a baby, it's not the same. Not saying it's the same, but I'm going to do the thing I could not, I absolutely could not be doing if I had a newborn right now. Let's take our five-year-old to Europe. So that's what we did and we really, really stand by that. We all got up skiing last year. Like I took up skiing, I'm scared of momentum and heights.

Sara Dean: [37:46](#)

Like skiing should not be my sport, but we took Vinny got up there, Vinny loves skiing. Like we would never be a skiing family if we had a second child. And so, or at least not at this time in our lives. I traveled for work. I'd be able to build this community, build the Shameless Mom Academy, do live events for my work, all the things that I get to do. It's all because I can do all of that because I don't have a two year old right now. So I am constantly aware of the gifts other than fertility. I also, and I think that you have this too, you know, I've talked about this a little bit. I feel like the bond that I have with my one is like the most precious thing. I mean we might be slightly codependent. I just think it's so, so special. And I have so many moms who I work with and mom friends who are like, I constantly feel like I have to divide my attention and one is never getting enough and the other one always needs more. And I'm always leaving something hanging and I'm like, my kid gets so much of me. I'm like, I'm tired of both of us.

Kim Strobel: [38:48](#)

But you're right, I love that because what we're doing is we're telling ourselves another story, like the story doesn't have to be, you know, we are this three person family. We are, that's one story. He doesn't have a sibling right, Vinny doesn't have a sibling.

Sara Dean: [39:05](#)

It doesn't mean it's less than.

Kim Strobel: [39:05](#)

But here are those hidden gifts. And so it's so funny that you bring that up. Spencer and I are going skiing and just a few weeks we go snow skiing every year together. And I think yeah, that's one of the gifts is that there is a different kind of bond. Not that it's better than those who have, but theres a kind of bond whenever, let's be honest, it's not as hard for you and I to be parents as it is for people who have multiple kids. And am I sometimes envious of my friend Trish who has four children? I am in awe of her, you know. But I also understand that this is my route. And so I love what you're talking about circumstances because as you know, the happiness researcher that I am knows that whether you have kids or you don't have kids, that's an external circumstance and that the research comes back that that contributes to no more than 10% of your longterm happiness.

- Kim Strobel: [40:01](#) And in fact, I always tell this to parents what the research shows is that once you become a parent, you actually for the rest of your life, believe it or not, you do have a little bit of a dip in your happiness levels, because you're stressed out all the time, right?
- Sara Dean: [40:22](#) Yup. The happiest time, I can't remember the exact like framing of the research, you probably know it, but like the happiest time in a woman's life, in a mom's life, where is she like writes your happiness at the highest is in the third trimester of pregnancy and I read this during my third trimester and I was like, Oh my God, it all ends here. Yeah, I think it was the happiest time in your marriage. I think the happiest time in your marriage is third trimester because there's so much hope and anticipation and you haven't had to face any of the hard stuff.
- Kim Strobel: [40:57](#) Exactly, right? And so I actually have this pretty famous author who has let this situation of she and her husband never being able to have children. It has truly been the number one preventer of how much happiness and joy she will allow herself to experience. And I was at a conference, I was giving a conference and she heard me quote that research, and I know it sounds silly, but she literally sent me a message and said, you have no idea how that new information has freed me up. I thought that I would never allow myself to experience the same level of happiness as people who have kids. And I now know, that that is me preventing myself.
- Sara Dean: [41:45](#) Yes, totally. Yeah, absolutely. The stories that we tell ourselves.
- Kim Strobel: [41:50](#) It is, Oh my goodness, you and I could talk forever. So we have all of this, all these commonalities. You talk fast and move fast. I talk fast and move fast. You said you married a man nine years older. I always tease Scott Strobel cause he's eight years older, which you know, when we're grownups it's not a big deal but I'm like in the fifth grade when you high school. Were you like peering at the fence back then and I was a little kid playing on the playground? But I do love that you work with moms especially who I think this idea of being a mom is so, I dunno what's the word for it, Sara? It's, it's just it's really hard.
- Sara Dean: [42:36](#) Yeah it is really hard. I mean I think it's really dynamic and multifaceted and I think women struggle with compartmentalization and in different ways than men. So I think men can like go to work and be like, I'm at work right now and I'm only at work. Whereas women, if we're at work, we are also like planning dinner, doing our kids' homework, scheduling birthday parties, planning vacations and figuring out how we can make sure that our kids has great social relationships all

within our work day versus like compartmentalizing. Like, I'm just going to be at work until five and then I'll think about all those other things. So I think that that's I think that's like the unique piece of motherhood is that is how all these boundaries are blurred and the struggle that that creates in terms of mental load.

Sara Dean: [43:31](#) I think it's can be pretty overwhelming. And I don't think, I think men just, their brains work in a different way where they can compartmentalize and be like, I'm going to be in dad mode from 7:00 to 8:00 AM, in work mode from 8:00 to 5:00 PM in dad mode from 5:00 to 7:00 PM and then I'm just going to like, you know, watch a show.

Kim Strobel: [43:50](#) And then you, you better get in wife mode by 9:00, right?

Sara Dean: [43:54](#) Yeah, exactly. I just think it's really different, I think it's so challenging because no one warns you about how about, I mean, the mental, the mental load is very burdensome at times. And it's so much more than just the mothering part of it. It's the household management and all these other things that come up that like you just don't know that you're going to have to be responsible for until you're in it. And that you don't know that you're going to potentially have to like have conversations with a partner around like, why do I have to make all the doctor's appointments?

Sara Dean: [44:28](#) Why do I have to clean the bottles? Why do I have like, why this automatically just on me? So it's, it's a lot to take on. It's also amazing. It's also so awesome. I mean, it's easily the best thing I've ever done. But it's also hard in so many different directions. So yeah. It's constantly like, how do you want to look at it? Like I right now, I had a mom recently ask if I could take her son to soccer practice every Wednesday with Vinny because she was working and I was like, yeah, absolutely. She said, can you do it every now and then? I was like, I'll just take them every Wednesday for the whole season, it's not a big deal. She was like, Oh my gosh, that's like the biggest favor ever. And I was like, you don't understand.

Sara Dean: [45:08](#) For me to quit my work to end my work day at three o'clock and take these two little boys to soccer, it's like the highlight of my week. It is so much fun for me. So thank you. Because she has the best behaved little kid ever who I want my child to be exposed to. I'm like, yes, please let me be a part of this. And so I think that that's, for me, the gift comes in stopping a workday a little early to go do something that's pretty trivial in comparison to go watch these little kids play soccer in the first grade.

Kim Strobel: [45:36](#) So I love that the woman was willing to ask for help.

Sara Dean: [45:40](#) I liked that too.

Kim Strobel: [45:41](#) And you have to have the tough conversations with our spouses and really it's our responsibility to change the social script of, you know, like we are allowed to be ambitious working women with careers and still be really great mothers. You're a great model for that. And I know that you work with so many women on how to do all of that, how to do it without so much guilt in so much shame. And so where for my moms out there, where can they find more of Sara Dean?

Sara Dean: [46:17](#) So they can find me on any podcast app if you just do a search for the Shameless Mom Academy or you can go to my website. That's shamelessmom.com.

Kim Strobel: [46:27](#) Excellent. And my last question, I always end every interview like this. Tell me what is a kind of super fun, unique way that you are claiming more joy in your life right now?

Sara Dean: [46:43](#) So we are recording this before the new year and I am making a goal around spaciousness in the new year. So I'm going to be reclaiming joy by having better boundaries around my schedule. And just to create some space for me to have a little more downtime. And specifically. I want to start meditating more regularly. And when I know most people are gonna be like, really meditation is going to bring you joy? But yes, I believe it will. I think that it will help me quiet the clutter in my mind and I think that'll feel really good. So, I think of, I mean I think joy can come from a lot of things and some of, sometimes that can be like an immediate gratification thing and sometimes it's part of a bigger process that has some discipline around it. And I think meditation will create that.

Kim Strobel: [47:32](#) Yeah, it's one of the top five happiness habits. Did you know that?

Sara Dean: [47:35](#) I did not know.

Kim Strobel: [47:37](#) Meditation is one of the top five and personally it's on my list. It's the one happiness habit that's fallen to the wayside.

Sara Dean: [47:44](#) And that's for me. I feel like it's the harder one for me to integrate. Like I can work out every day. That's not a problem. Meditation?

Kim Strobel: [47:51](#) It's cause you and I don't understand the gift yet of slowing down. Exactly. Yeah. So I use the Ananda app, just an FYI. Oprah has an a Nanda app, it's like \$8.99 a month and it's around themes. Like it might be today's is on joy or abundance or a sense of belonging and he does like a little two or three minute intro to talk about that topic and then he sends you to the meditation. So I have found that because my mind is so wild that I do have to have sort of someone coaching me.

Sara Dean: [48:21](#) Something guided. Yeah. I prefer guided as well. Like don't tell me to just sit quietly.

Kim Strobel: [48:26](#) I know, I hear you. All right, Ms Sara. Dean, thank you so much for your vulnerability, your truth, your realness and your tips for all of us showing up in a bigger way in our lives. I appreciate you so much.

Sara Dean: [48:37](#) I appreciate you Kim Strobel.

Kim Strobel: [48:40](#) Whoop, whoop, we did it! Thank you so much for joining me on the She Finds Joy podcast today. I'm super honored to share this space with you and I hope you learned something new and helpful. As always, this conversation will be continued in our free private Facebook group. You can join that group by going to kimstrobel.com/shefindsjoy to connect with other joy seekers just like you. Additionally, if this is your first time joining the show, know that I am here every Wednesday with a brand new episode, so make sure you subscribe, go to whatever podcast app you use and subscribe to the show so you never miss an episode. You can go to that directly if you go to kimstrobel.com/podcast that will put you in Apple podcast where you can click on the subscribe button and you can also leave a review. If you scroll down just a little bit, you will be able to leave that five star review and just leave me a few sentences letting me know what you thought about the show. It really helps me if you let me know how the show has impacted you and how you are striving for more joy in your life. You might be nominated to be the joyful woman of the week. Also, please share this episode. My goal is to help more women unleash their happiness, one daring day at a time. So please take a screenshot on your phone, share it out on social media, tag your friends, tag me @KimStrobelJoy on Instagram or in our Facebook group, kimstrobel.com/shefindsjoy. I'm quick to reply and I am super eager to send you some Facebook love. It makes my heart happy to be able to connect and surround myself with other women who are all ready to do this work. So thanks for being here and I'll be back next week. Until then, no matter

what you do today, make sure you know that you are enough just as you are. Here's to finding more joy!