



Simple, with Tsh Oxenreider

Episode 213

thesimpleshow.com

Segment One

Speaker 1: [00:03](#) This is Simple; I'm Tsh Oxenreider.

[00:10](#) Hey friends! In this episode, I'm sharing with you a previous episode from a little over a year ago when my friend Haley Stewart and I did a four part deep dive on the idea of social self-care. This isn't just self-care which is now become a complete and total buzzword, but social self-care and by that we mean self-care for the greater good. It's the simple idea of being the healthiest version of ourselves so that we're better citizens, members of our community, neighbors, family members. There's nothing wrong with taking care of yourself just because you deserve to be healthy. Don't hear us say that because we're not saying the opposite. We're simply exploring the avenue of what it looks like to take care of ourselves for the collective greater good. As I mentioned, this is part of a four part series. I'm re-sharing with you here just the first part. The next three parts of our conversation are linked in the show notes of this episode so head there afterwards if you want to keep listening. This is a really good chat and in fact it's one of the most downloaded episodes of this entire podcast. I love that because it means this concept really resonates with you, so we'll get right into it.

But first a quick reminder to make sure you're signed up for my weekly email called Five Quick Things because it's the best way to make sure you never miss an episode of this show or of anything I write. Basically, you'll get links to five things from the week I either created or love, plus occasional news you'd otherwise miss because I don't share it anywhere else. The emails can be read in under a minute because I hate inbox clutter too. Go to five quick things dot email to sign up for the free weekly email or just click on the links in the show notes of this episode.

Let's get right into it. Here is Haley and me talking about social self-care for the greater good and we're starting off with friendships and what it means to take care of ourselves in order to be a good friend.

Haley, we are starting a new series. I'm so excited about this topic, social self-care. Before we get into the nitty gritty of this episode's topic, let's talk about this broad idea, social self-care. What do we mean when we say that?

Haley: I think that often when we talk about self-care we get stuck on, my self-care is going to get a manicure every month or it's reading in the bathtub or something that's just a private thing that I do for myself, but we're expanding on that in this series and talking about self-care regarding our relationships, regarding our broader communities and how that all fits into the big idea of self-care. We're going beyond manicures, I think would be a good subtitle for our deep dive.

Tsh: I like that. One of my favorite definitions of self-care I learned a few months ago was from co-host of The Simple Show, Kendra's writing. She said something really profound on her site and that was that self-care is anything that makes you feel more like yourself. That's all that really is. It's just doing things that make you more you. To me, I think that's great. Not only because, yeah, that can sometimes mean things like spa days or sleeping in or whatever, but really being more you makes you a better you for other people. This series is all about being healthy and it's not just healthy like exercise or getting enough sleep. It's healthy little things that we can do along the way that as we do them make us better friends, neighbors, spouses and parents, things like that. To me personally, this is the ultimate best type of self-care there is. Not because it's wrong necessarily to prioritize you just for the sake of you. There's definitely value to that, but ultimately we humans are communal creatures. We live in community, and so none of us are in a vacuum and how well we're doing ultimately affects the other people around us.

Haley: [04:11](#) I think that's really insightful and I think it's also important to realize that we're always going to be in a crazy season of life. It's not like, oh, well when I wrap up this project or this season, when my kids are small, then I'm going to start taking care of myself. Because there's always going to be a need for you to be healthy and to feel like yourself. It's not like once my kids are out of the house, I'm not going to be needing to serve anyone or be giving back in any way. It's not like my serving time is over. To say, okay, I'm going to put these practices in place right now, even though life is crazy, because life isn't going to stop being crazy. I'm not gonna need to stop giving of myself.

Tsh: [04:59](#) I'm so glad you actually said that because it's so easy to get into this habit of as soon as this thing is done, even if it's the huge topic or the huge stage of the baby stage, but even little things like, this is a busy month, I'll just focus on these other things later. There's never going to be a later, exactly what you said. I'm so glad you brought that up because I think it's easy to think, I mean you can even go big picture, well when we're empty nesters we'll be able to volunteer in our community or make more time for these other people. No. I think the healthiest way to take care of ourselves is to just figure out ways to make it work in the thick of life.

Haley: [05:41](#) Because who's to say when my kids leave home that my parents aren't going to need intensive care from me? There's always gonna be something that's needing my attention and energy and so I have to be healthy in order to be prepared to do that at any point in life.

Tsh: [05:58](#) That's a great point. We're of course not being dogmatic here, we're not saying black and white that if you have a newborn in the house, you should just buck up and do it. No, there's definitely seasons and stages where things are easier and harder and that's okay. That's ultimately what we're going to talk about in this series, that none of us have the exact same situations in our lives at all. It's really about figuring out what works for you, but not just giving up and saying, oh, well this isn't exactly how I want it to be, so I'm just not going to bother at all.

This episode, part one is about friendships. It's about the social aspect of the social self-care, at least in the most literal sense. Self-care is a hot topic, but I don't know about you, Haley, I'm finding friendships and connection with other people to be a hot topic lately. I don't know if that's my stage of life with kids that are more elementary into middle school or if it's just, I am seeing that everywhere. I feel like it's what a lot of people I know, especially on social media are talking about this idea of just feeling really lonely. I don't know. Are you seeing that too?

Haley: Yes, and for the other podcasts that I co-host, this was a topic that people wanted us to talk about on that other podcast because they were saying, I don't know how to make friends as an adult or I'm feeling lonely or I feel like my friendships are really shallow or just a million things that meant that for some reason they weren't feeling satisfied in their friendships or didn't know, feeling lost about how to fix the problem.

Tsh: [07:30](#) Yeah, I think it's interesting and honestly, I mean I don't know if this is going to rub people the wrong way, but I especially think it's interesting that we are talking about this on social media. I honestly feel like that's part of the problem. I think in our culture, especially parents or just even adults that with full lives are spinning flat out too much time on social media. I feel like there are people that have Facebook up hours every day hoping that will just give them that little hit of whatever they need to make that feel like they're connecting with people. But ultimately it's almost like eating candy, you're going to crash and actually feel worse. I think that's happening in our relationships.

Haley: I think that's a good point. I think that it's less the, I mean I think it can be a contributing problem, but I think it isn't the original problem of our disconnectedness. I think it's a symptom of it. I think that because of the way our communities are set up now and the way most people probably live in the suburbs and maybe it's not the same, I'm going to hang up my laundry to dry next to my neighbor and we're going to talk about neighborhood news. It doesn't feel like that anymore. People feel disconnected. People moved away from family because everything became so much more mobile. I think that this happened a while ago and social media is a symptom of people knowing something is off and wanting to be connected. But it isn't ultimately satisfying the way an in person relationship is. I think that it's an example of us reaching for something good, but it's not quite the good thing that we really desire.

Tsh: [09:31](#) That is an an interesting point and I'm so glad you said it. A little side note, and maybe you were the one that first told me about this, but I have been watching the Masterpiece show, Home Fires, lately.

Haley: Yeah, I love it.

Tsh: I'm going to talk about it more in part two because I have things that I am learning about that, but oh my gosh, it has been so interesting. What a great snapshot of everyday life in the 1940s in England. But I think it's pretty similar to the way it was in the US too. But one of the takeaways I've had was, not a lot of them still didn't have vehicles, but they all lived really close to each other in this village. I don't mean close like relationally, I mean like physically close to each other, they are right next door to each other and they walked everywhere. It was impossible to not see people all the time. To me it's really cool to see how connected these little villages were, even though they didn't really know much about the

outside world compared to the way we know now. They didn't just go all over the place or just hop on a plane for vacation. They spent most of their life in this little bubble and yet how much more they rubbed shoulders with other people and how it makes it forces you to get along with other people and have compassion for other people because you're just all going to run into each other at the post office. There's no getting away from everybody.

Haley: Right. I think it's a good, positive thing where you have to have more grace for people and give them the time to show you what their gifts are and what makes them valuable. Where I think we're so a first impression society now that often first impressions might be off and so you might completely miss that you would be really good friends with someone or come to really appreciate their gifts even though they're different from yours because we never really have the opportunity to have to do that.

Tsh: Something I learned when we were living cross-culturally and there's a formal term for this, I can't remember what it is, but basically whenever you're an expat somewhere and so there's way fewer people that speak your native language in the culture in which you live, you become friends with each other even if you probably wouldn't have bothered to become friends in your home culture where you just have more choices. I think in this day and age we more choices in that our worlds are geographically bigger. We drive farther for work and school and just life stuff and so it's so much easier to, well my neighbor doesn't seem like someone I'd click with so I'm just going to get my needs met over here and instead of like what you said, digging in and doing the work.

Haley: [12:13](#) That's interesting. One thing I think that fits in with your insight about Home Fires and the little village is a friend of mine, Rebecca Frech wrote a book, I think it's called, *Can We Be Friends?* It was released really recently about making friends as an adult. Something that she told me about her research for this book is she discovered there's actually a scientific thing called Dunbar's number and it's that each person has about the capacity for 150-ish relationships, which would be about maybe the number of people in your little village, several hundred years ago. That's how many spots you have in your brain for relationships and really caring about other people and what's going on in their lives. I think it makes it really difficult now with social media where you can be on Facebook and have 3000 friends, you don't have room for that many. You're a) going to feel overwhelmed and b) going to be filling up spots

with people who really shouldn't be in your spots because your extended family, really close friends, those are the people that should be in your 150. I just thought this was so fascinating and it made me go through and I didn't unfriend people on Facebook, but I just unfollowed tons of people or I was like, I like you, I care about you, we don't live in the same place anymore. When I go visit my family, you're not going to be one of the seven people I visit when I go back to Florida. I can't follow everything in your life on Facebook. I can't do that even though I wish you very well. It's been interesting for me as I think about different relationships and I realized, that person, that's one of my 150 or that person I really like, but I'm probably not going to see them very much for the rest of my life. They can't be in my 150 and it's been a really different shift for me and thinking about what is my capacity for relationships and how can I make sure that I'm investing well in my real deep friendships.

Tsh: [14:30](#) That is so interesting and listeners have heard me talk, probably too much, about the book *Deep Work* and how much that's affected my own personal life and work last year. But one thing that it did convince me to do, I used to have on my personal Facebook account, I had the toggled the settings where anyone can follow me and the reason I decided that was instead of creating another author page, I'm just going to let people follow me cause I wouldn't say anything on my personal account that I wouldn't on a professional account. But then I decided, oh gosh, I am contributing to other people's issues with this. I don't want them to follow me thinking I can meet a friend need in their life as much as I appreciate and value and am grateful for readers and listeners. It's just like you said, I can't possibly be friends with the 6,000 people that have chosen to follow me and so I disabled that feature and I immediately felt so much better on their behalf. I actually did go through and unfriend a few people, not because I don't like them, but because I literally didn't know them. You know what I mean? Somehow it was a friend of a friend from the Internet and it made me realize, I don't think I'm ever going to know these people and I'm just going to make my life a little bit better. I still don't use Facebook because it just has stressed me out so much for a number of these reasons, mostly social. But it did make me feel a little bit more in control of my social media parameters and what I allow and don't allow in my life. I think that's so interesting, the 150 number, it's really insightful.

Haley: When you think about, okay, my immediate family, my extended family, then maybe people like godparents or god children, really, really close

friends. You've almost reached your 150, probably. It's like when you're trying to figure out who to invite to your wedding and you're like, oh well we can invite these people to0, and then you're like, oh wait, now that's like tons and tons more people than I realized I could possibly know in the world. I think it's like that where we over estimate our capacity for relationships.

Tsh: That's true.

Haley: Then we feel unsatisfied because we have all these acquaintances but don't have the deep friendships we really want.

Tsh: That's a great point. I'm grateful for social media and the Internet. I have made some truly good friends through it. Gosh, there are people I would not know without it. This is definitely not a dogmatic black and white, kill Facebook or delete your account even though I know there are some benefits to doing that so I'm not saying not to do that. But I personally am grateful for several of the friendships I've made, but I will say that they are very few in number. I feel like I've got quite a few colleagues, people that I rub shoulders with, I connect with, I'm in some kind of group with. But ultimately when it comes to I would call this person a friend, if something were to happen to their family, I would know about it and want to reach out and see what I can do. That's a really small number. I think just like you said, I think that's how we're wired and how we're made. Back to the Home Fires thing, they just literally didn't have that issue because there was no way to connect with that many people.

While we can't go back to the forties, that's not the solution neither, let's just wish things were the way they were and hate everything about the current modern era. Let's talk a little bit about okay, so then what? How do we manage our life in our current culture and have room for deep friends so that we're taking better care of ourselves, for these actual friends in our lives? Haley, what's been your experience with connecting with people in a real, actual connected way beyond just friends on Facebook?

Haley: [18:13](#) I think that post college, that was a challenge for me and my husband Daniel, because you're not connected in the same way with people. You have coworkers, but that might not be who you want to hang out with or people from church, but maybe they also have young kids and they're really busy and it's really hard to get together. Finding who are the

people that I can count on and who can count on me that we can actually make time for each other. That was a big transition. I remember we moved from Waco, Texas where we went to college, back to our hometown to Tallahassee, Florida after our first child was born. I remember feeling so lonely and we'd been there for maybe six months and I remember telling Daniel all I want for Christmas is a good friend. We'd lived in Tallahassee before it was our hometown, but friendships had changed, people had moved away and I just couldn't figure out how to find my people there. It's really a process. It took a while.

Tsh: I think this is something that doesn't get talked about much. In college, in those early years, even a little bit outside of college, if you're single, you just have more time and more of the social structure to be around friends, to be around people of your choosing. Then suddenly, almost it feels like when you get thrust into the real adult world of work, maybe marriage and kids, then it changes. It can be a real shock, especially when you're used to just being around friends when suddenly it just does not come as easily and naturally anymore. That can cause a lot of loneliness, I find. Just the shock of it, the not being made aware that, oh gosh, a lot of us are going through this and so therefore we're not making time to be each other's friends and it can be really lonely.

Segment Two

Haley: [23:14](#) I agree. I feel like I've been there. I remember one time we just moved back to Florida and we were even if I could get away from the kids to go see a movie, I don't know who I would call to go see it with me. I just felt so in despair. It just took a long time. I think something that has helped us is to learn, you gotta make the first move. If you feel like maybe I connect with this person and we could be friends, you have to be the one to say we'd love to have you over or do you want to go do something? That's just what it requires as a grownup. No one is going to set up a play date for me.

Tsh: [23:51](#) That to me has been huge because it's so easy for me to throw a pity party if I wish somebody would initiate inviting me out for coffee or to go see a movie, that ultimately I need to just be the person I wish was in my own life and initiate, as much as I don't want that. It's better than just sitting at home and feeling sorry for myself and I'm never disappointed that I went ahead and reached out to somebody and did that. Because not only did I hopefully brighten their day by being the

person that I wish I had in my own life. But then I really do just benefit from having a friend and it's being a grownup. This idea of oh, get over yourself and just make the move. It's okay.

Haley: [24:46](#) Yes. I think maybe we mentioned this a little bit, but schedules and busy lives and just being in a different season, you don't have extended time to hang out with everyone. There's all sorts of things that get in the way. Something that Daniel and I have been doing for maybe the past year that's been really helpful is having a standing friend date on Friday nights where we're always available that night to have people over for dinner or to go over to somebody else's house for dinner. We have a group of friends that hangs out together. Having that Friday nights, who's up for this Friday night? We'll have soup ready or whatever. That has helped us keep in their rhythm of hanging out with friends that we care about and want to invest in without the scheduling stress of when can we fit this in? When are they available, when are we available, and making it into a big thing. That's stressful.

Tsh: [25:43](#) How do you know these people initially? How did you meet them?

Haley: Some of them are friends from college because we're now back in Texas where we went to college. Some are godparents of our children and then some are friends we've just met over the past couple of years where we've said hey, do you want to join in too? So people who may not initially have been friends with everyone that might show up, but who are just up for making new friends and hanging out. I don't know if this happens to you, Tsh, I feel like I'm pretty outgoing and friendly and so a problem I end up having is I end up having a lot of shallow relationships and sometimes I feel like I don't have enough time to invest in each of these. One thing that's helped me is do friend matchmaking. Hey this person, this person, would be really good friends. I'm going to hang out with the three of us and then they can get connected and they can be friends together with each other, too. It's not like I have all of these different shallow relationships. I'm trying to maintain not very well, but there's more to go around if that makes sense.

Tsh: I love that you do that because I'm not as outgoing as you are. You're an extrovert, right?

Haley: Yes.

Tsh: I'm an introvert and so I definitely feel more of like I have this limited supply of energy to share with people. But I love that there are people like you out there who act as those connectors because we need those people. We need you guys to sometimes think of oh, this person would connect well with this person. I'm grateful for people like you. I think you said this earlier at the top of the show, but also just now you alluded to it, this idea of partial solutions has been huge for me. Again, if you've been listening to the show for a while or read the blog, you've heard me talk about this, but when it comes to friendships, it's this idea of instead of it being absolutely perfect or not at all be okay with something being good enough. By that I mean, like initiating, I wish somebody would reach out to me or I wish my neighbor or I had friends in my life that had these qualities, A-B-C, or we shared these three things in common. But if that's not going to be the case, that's okay and to see what kind of friendship you can cultivate with this type of person any way while still holding out for I hope I do find a friend. In my case, an example, something I've been wanting since we moved to Georgetown, Texas is another woman that works from home. I would love to find a local friend that has that. I have tons of friends from the Internet that know and identify with this, but I don't really have a local in my town friend and I'm still waiting on that. But you know what? That's okay. That doesn't mean I can't still find ways to connect with other women and other types of ways. Do you know what I mean?

Haley: Yes. I think that's a good point because I think sometimes as adults we want to have that best friend feeling that we had in middle school or high school, like we have everything in common. We're best friends. Sometimes that happens and it's fantastic, but sometimes as adults that doesn't really happen because we've all grown in such different ways and so to be okay with, hey, this is the friend that I love to watch Jane Austen movies with and this is the friend that is also really into this other thing that I'm into. I don't have to have one person that is going to satisfy all of these different parts of my personality that I have some different friends and we can enjoy some of these different things together. And that's okay if I don't have that one person.

Tsh: [29:54](#) I think it's actually really important to talk about in our little bubbles here because it's easy to maybe see other people and think, well they have a best friend, they have a sister they grew up with and can connect with, to where you feel like, am I the only adult that doesn't have this BFF that can share everything with, and I think maybe that's

exaggerated in our culture, both in the media we're given in TV shows and books and movies, but also just we think we're seeing more than we are on things like social media where people are sharing, getting together with my bestie on a Friday night for drinks. I just think, uh, really, that's really cool. But you how are you still besties when you're 40 years old when really, I mean there are people that are blessed enough to have that and fortunate enough, but that's not as common as maybe we think it is.

Haley: [30:45](#) I think that's a great point. A lot of the friends that I have had over the years, that were really close friends say in high school or early college that I still connect with, we're not going to connect on every level we did when we were younger. We can still be close and have things in common, but it might not be quite the same because we've grown and changed in certain ways and that's okay. I think that's a good point that probably most people don't have. This is my one person that understands everything about me, that that might not really be as common as we imagine in our heads.

Tsh: [31:17](#) Yeah. I think with that, something that might feel a little forced or cliché but I think is really okay is that sometimes it's okay to have an official purpose for getting together. It is so fun to have people that you can just connect with just because, let's have our Friday night dinners or go out for coffee. But it's also a good idea if you're really feeling like you don't have that in your life to do things like do a book club or some kind of clothing exchange or some other official reason to get together some sort of defining characteristic and so that they might still end up being someone you might not otherwise hang out with. But maybe because you both loved to read or you both have kids of a certain age, if you go to some kind of MOPS group or some other church or neighborhood thing that you might have just that one thing in common and that's okay and that official group or that sort of gathering spot is what connected you.

Haley: [32:16](#) I think that's a good point. My husband for instance, is a runner. Some of our friends that are close friends or some just acquaintances that he likes, they'll run together on a regular basis, maybe on two mornings a week or something. He'll see and connect with those friends because they have this common interest and they do this common thing together and it keeps them all hanging out and fulfilling that. But they're also doing it because they all like running. It keeps it going.

Tsh: That's cool. It's easy to maybe just, you don't want to necessarily pigeon hole people, you're my running friend, you're my Jane Austen friend. But that's okay, too. I think ultimately, this comes down to, this sounds pessimistic, but I don't mean it, it comes down to lowering our expectations. I think in the height of our social world, in our twenties and our young adult lives, it's easy to be a little pickier because you just have more to choose from. But when you're in the trenches of adulthood and life, sometimes you take what you get and ultimately you can find a little bit of a surprise that way that it ends up okay and what we said at the beginning, that we might just then move on to another stage of life and find ourselves finding new friends in a different way that surprises us.

Haley: [33:37](#) Yes. I think friendship, it requires different things of you as an adult and is just going to look a little bit different and we have to learn to be okay with it, as you said, not in a pessimistic way, but just have some somewhat different expectations so that we're not imagining everybody has friendships like this but me, I'm the only one.

Tsh: [33:58](#) Then ultimately, I guess my final thought is a reminder for me too, is that we've also ultimately got to learn to take care of ourselves to practice good self-care that's not necessarily social, but it makes us better social creatures. Think about what am I hoping to get from other people that I just literally can't get from other people, whether that's good mental health or learning to be content with alone time because you just might have more alone time in your life than you wish or even your physical health can affect so much of our just emotional and relational health. Am I taking care of myself so that I'm a better social creature? Keep that in mind as well.

Haley: [34:43](#) I think that's a really good point. Try to be healthy so that we can have healthy relationships and be serving and all of those good things.

Tsh: [34:58](#) Don't forget you can listen to the next three parts of this conversation through the links in the show notes so head on over there in just a minute. You can find Haley on her blog at CarrotsForMichaelmas.com and on Twitter and Instagram @haleycarrots. And to keep up with me, I'm on twitter @tsh and Instagram @tshoxenreider and of course at theartofsimple.net where you can find my writing. Head to the show notes for this episode, number 213 at thesimpleshow.com where you can find all sorts of things, links to things we talked about ,where you can sign up for my weekly email called Five

Quick Things, how you can become a patron and support the work it takes to create the show for just a few dollars per month as well as how to connect with Haley and myself. The show was produced by Chad Michael Snavely and thanks also to Caroline TeSelle, Andrea Debbink, and my furry intern, Ginny. Thanks so much for listening. I'm Tsh Oxenreider and I'll catch you back here soon.