

The Brave Files Podcast

Tanya Meesman: Girl, Empowered: The Building Blocks of Confidence

Episode 161

Heather Vickery 0:00

Hi out there. This is Heather Vickery. Thanks so much for tuning in to this week's episode of The Brave File's Podcast. Have you heard about our Kickstarter yet? I collaborated with a friend and client, Rachel Swanson, who's a creativity coach to create a deck of cards to help you manifest and source your next step. So it's sort of Tarot inspired in design, but it's definitely not a tarot card. It's a deck that we created. To support business owners goal getters, creators and innovators to help them set intention for their work, get creative, think outside the box and manifest their next steps. It's really a tool to help you stay focused each day on your goals to help you have regular encouragement, inspiration and guidance. When making decisions for your business or your life. You could do all sorts of things with the cards you can pull one each day and use it to journal reflect on your goals or think about a task or project in a new out of the box creative way. draw a card to focus on for the week. Or since each card is really a unique piece of art. You could simply draw one each day to leave on your desk for inspiration while you work. The deck is really like having a coach in your pocket or in our case, like having two coaches in your pocket. You can secure your deck right now, by backing our Kickstarter. You can get all the details at Vickeryandco.com/CreateBrave, the Kickstarter is already funded, which is amazing. And now we're working hard A F to unlock some kick ass stretch goals and we really cannot do it without your help. Again, you can go and check them out right now. Secure your deck. The price is the best it will ever be. Get a deck for your whole team or secure some to giveaway as gifts because they really are beautiful. Get all the details at Vickeryandco.com/CreateBrave . Okay, so today's episode, you know some people are natural cheerleaders. Have you ever met someone like that? Perhaps that's how you operate always supporting others showing up and being the loudest person in the room to cheer someone else on. But what happens when the loudest cheerleader forgets to support the most important person themselves. That's what happened with today's guest, always helping others chase their dreams. Tanya Meesman woke up one day and realized she wasn't chasing her own dreams. So she said about to do something about it and change it right away. Now She is the founder of Girl Shaped Flames, an organization that's committed to cultivating the most confident, courageous and self assured generation of girls the world has ever seen. Join us as we talk about the trials and tribulations of being a teen. As well as the Herculean task of raising one. This is a fantastic conversation. I absolutely loved it. And I cannot wait to share it with you. So let's get started.

Tanya Meesman 3:26

Determined, passionate and fun.

Heather Vickery 3:30

Hi, friends. So excited to have you here with me today because I am talking to Tanya Meesman, the founder of Girl Shaped Flames. This is a really incredible organization and y'all are going to love getting to know her. She is committed to developing the most confident, courageous and

self assured generation of girls the world has ever seen. Now, as a mother of four, this already gets me excited. Anytime I see somebody who's trying to infuse courage into the world. I am a happy camper. Tanya has worked with over 3000 teenage girls, their parents and educators through powerful mentorship, inspiring events and transformative courses. She specializes in confidence development for high school girls and I have two high schoolers and high school girls need that kind of love. Inspiring unique career pathways and courageous parenting. Welcome to The Brave Files.

Tanya Meesman 4:27

Heather, thank you so much for having me. It's amazing to be here.

Heather Vickery 4:31

Really excited. So you are coming to us from Queensland, Australia. Is that right?

Tanya Meesman 4:36

Yes, I absolutely am. The Sunshine State here in Australia.

Heather Vickery 4:39

I love that. I've never been to Queensland. I did spend some time in Sydney. I love Australia. It's on our bucket list to get back and do more of the country. But you you were born there. You did a lot of traveling. You sort of took a number of paths to land at this amazing work that you're doing right now. Can you just give us a, a quick version of how you got here doing this incredible work.

Tanya Meesman 5:04

Yeah, absolutely. I had I certainly did not see Girl Shaped Flames anywhere in my pathway. As I went on, I grew up in a very small town in Queensland, about 10,000 people on the coast called Yeppoon. And I was very career focused, I went and did a degree in business communications and set off on a very ambitious advertising career, which saw me get a lot of success in big ad agencies and big brands like Virgin and Nokia, and MasterCard. But along the way, I had always believed in following your passion, and I'd always been the cheerleader for a lot of my friends and colleagues and things as far as making sure that you do things that you love. And as it turned out, I just wasn't doing what I loved. And so, over time, I realized that filmmaking and storytelling was really my passion. And so I, I broke out of my advertising world. And at the age of 24, I was already living in London at the time, moved to Belfast and just started meeting people and making connections and quite quickly got into filmmaking, which then set out my second career. So for 12 years, I was in production and then moved into producing feature films. Then I moved back to Australia. And it was when we were back here that I worked in film for another few years, and we started our family and had our first little son. And we decided to move back to Queensland for the lifestyle. It's beautiful here and sunny. Today, it's actually pouring rain today. But generally, it's sunny and beautiful. And when we got back here, I took a job working as head of brand communications for a set of three International Baccalaureate high schools. And what that meant was that I was suddenly speaking with a lot of parents, and a lot of students, and interestingly, mostly female students, as I was sort of understanding the school

and how to promote it. And simultaneously, I had been mentoring a number of girls throughout my career, I just naturally became the cheerleader of people essentially. And so I had these two young girls sort of 20 ish years old, who was struggling in their own way, with their confidence and with their self belief and their determination. And so I all of these components just kind of came together in this moment in time where I was headed off on maternity leave with my second child, I didn't know whether I would go back to that company, again, the schools, I had all these parents that I'd been speaking with, who were really in desperate need of wanting to help their daughters with this confidence erosion that was happening, and they wanted them to believe in themselves and to try new things and to take risks and they couldn't understand why they weren't. And I was seeing this in the early 20s, as well of the girls that I've been mentoring professionally. And I honestly, it sounds like a made up story. But I was sitting in a dog park one day, a beautiful sunset amongst the gum trees. And I just I was hit with this overwhelming need to do something about it. And I'm a real doer, I'm I'm really good when a task needs to be done, I kind of get a great organizer, logistics person. So suddenly, I was like, You know what, the girls I mentor get a lot out of access to me, they get a lot out of the fact that I can give them personalized information. They can learn from my mistakes and all those kinds of things. I wonder if there's a way we could exponentially increase that impact? What if there were lots of mes? And what if I was the conduit to being able to connect those other amazing women, with girls to show them and teach them about, you know, life and determination and getting back up when you fall down and all those kinds of things. So that was really the genesis of Girl Shaped Flames. That was four years ago. We've, we have evolved since then. We were heavily events based until COVID, obviously, but I'm proud to say that we've come out the other side. Well here in Australia, we're starting to come out the other side of COVID. I know it's really hard over on your side of the world still at the moment. But on the other side, I have managed to salvage our camp. So we have a camp called Camp Courage. Camp Courage is one of our most popular things we do, which is really important. We managed to develop an online program for parents called Courageous Parenting where we actually help the parents learn how to raise strong daughters. And then we still go into schools and do lots of you know competence development. Rah rah, I have one of my best friends is Kai Fenner who is a Hollywood believing female Hollywood stunt artist did x men and Avengers and.

Heather Vickery 9:48

Oh Cool. My daughter's probably know who she is.

Tanya Meesman 9:50

Yeah. So she, she and I do lots of schools events and she comes and does camp with me and stuff. So we've managed to come out the other side of COVID or at least where we are right now, still being able to fly. Well, we talked about fanning the flames in the belly. So you know, every girl has a fire in our belly. And we're here to fan those flames. And I'm quite proud to say that we're still here, we're still standing. Everything we've been through.

Heather Vickery 10:15

It's amazing. And I love how it just sort of came to you organically as someone who's in a natural mentor, because as women, I think it's taken us a really long time. And I actually think

there's still a long way to go for all women to embrace that we can help others faster than there's that there's room at the top for everybody. That we don't have to make it hard for them just because it was hard for us kind of thing. And it's a total, it's a total mind shift. And as the parent, as I mentioned before, I have four daughters and two of which are teenagers and are in high school. But even with my little one, I had to laugh when you said you know, helping parents learn to raise these. What was the word you use? The word actually made me laugh, because it wasn't courageous daughters, but

Tanya Meesman 11:02

Oh, well, mainly confident. So self confidence and self belief, daughters.

Heather Vickery 11:07

maybe just confident, confident daughters. But I have to laugh, because I do think that we do that. But it's like, sometimes you're like, Okay, could you just be a little less? Could you not tell me exactly how you feel about this right now? Because I just need you to put your shoes on. So we can go.

Tanya Meesman 11:23

Oh, yeah. And we get that we get parents coming in being a bit like, you know, she's fine. I need the help navigate this confidence. Yeah.

Heather Vickery 11:35

We raise them to be emotionally intelligent and aware. And then they throw back things like, Well, you know, when you asked me to do that, it makes me feel like you don't value me.

Tanya Meesman 11:46

I know, I'm, you know what I'm, it's it's one of those moments that we, we validate. We're like, yep, that feels it's very frustrating when they do that. But secretly, I know, I just do such a happy dance when I hear that because she's going to be fine. She's going to do great things. If you can hold on tight for this ride. She's gonna be amazing.

Heather Vickery 12:11

No, I totally, I totally feel that and I love it. And I'm always so proud of my girls when they do but it does. It takes a minute. Because, you know, I saw cartoon years ago, it was actually a dad with a little girl. And he says, I want you to grow up to be strong willed and ask for what you want, and never let anybody take advantage of you just not right now.

Tanya Meesman 12:31

Yeah.

Heather Vickery 12:34

If we want them to be that way, as adults, we have to raise them to be that way as children. And and then, for me, this is I'm so curious about the work with high schoolers, because I, we've always raised our daughters in that space. And then something changes when they hit Middle

School, particularly, where no matter how positive the Body Talk has been in the house, they dislike their body. Where no matter, you know, I can't even figure out where half of this stuff comes from that they're so hard on themselves, and they don't trust themselves. And they don't, they're not willing to ask for help. I've also been there's a fault in that when when that's never been the case. So it was there. I mean, I don't know what kind of research you have on it, or why Why does that happen, do you know?

Tanya Meesman 13:25

Yeah, well, it's interesting. Everything you have just listed off is elements of what we teach in now Courageous Parenting Program, because I partnered with a friend of mine, who is a neuroscientist, and a counselor. And we came together because I was having these exact conversations with so many parents going, Well, what the conversations would always start with, what should I be getting my daughter to do to address all these confidence issues? Like what do I get my daughter to do to fix that? And then as the conversation would go on, and I would sort of dig a little deeper with them, it would be a bit like, Well, have you looked at what you're doing? And do you understand really what's going on with her developmentally because sometimes we're in such a rush that we forget that and this is the critical reason I partnered with Kai to do this work is that they're not built yet. They're not finished yet. And you're trying you're not you. I mean, parents in general, we can lose sight of the fact that your daughter's is still trying to build themselves. And to do that they have to go through some really critical and scientifically proven developmental phases and one, the key one that she hits, when you see the crazy start to sit in, usually it used to be around 13/14. But because of society today, it's getting younger, and we're seeing around 10, 11, 12. And the reason for this is because the brain actually goes through a proven phase called the identity phase. And that identity phase is to blame. Everyone can point squarely at that phase and be like,

Heather Vickery 15:08

Damn, that phase.

Tanya Meesman 15:09

I don't like you at all. Because what happens in this, but but simultaneously, it is critical, like if she does not go through this identity phase, and if she doesn't milk it for everything it's worth what we see. And again, it's been proven when they hit when adults hit sort of their 30s, around about, if they haven't been given the opportunity to develop a strong identity phase. That's when they have their crisis. So they get to their 30s. And they go, who am I and what do I stand for? And what do I believe in. And often that can be attributed to the fact that when they were younger, they were potentially sheltered or coddled a little bit, or just not given the opportunity to go through that phase. Now, during that phase, what we why it's called the identity phase is because they are doing exactly that, they are trying to figure out who they are. And the absolutely heartbreaking thing for all of us as parents to experience is that they have to do that without us. And you get to that stage where they start turning around going. I don't I don't need you. I don't need you right now. And I don't actually kind of want you around right now. And it is because they have to start cutting the cord, they have to start separating themselves out from you. And then what happens is they shift their gaze outward to the world, and the world

becomes their influence. And we talk about key areas of influence for their spheres of influence for the girls, where we start seeing that, instead of parents now they're obviously going to the number one is friends and friendship groups. And that's where they start learning from, they also turned to older parent, older adults in their life, like teachers and grandparents and coaches. They turn to what we all hate to hear, but it's, you know, way of the world now, social media. And now, these are all of the influences that are going to help shape her as she grows, which is terrifying, because we don't have control over any of them.

Heather Vickery 17:22

No, and, and so an added layer of complication, because all of that makes sense. And I remember that even from being a young girl myself. But for my daughters, and I know that they're not unique in this situation. They were counting on high school to be the opportunity to actually make new or good friends they their friendships outgrown. Well, now, they they haven't, because they're not in school. They're in remote learning school, and they're here. And all they do is think that everybody is constantly watching them on zoom and focused on whether or not they have a zit or whatever. I mean, the anxiety is outrageous. And they're not making friendships. They're literally just getting through each day. It's like so much more complicated now. Thank it even was two years ago.

Tanya Meesman 18:12

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, the social, social connection plays an incredibly important role in their development. And once we take that away, and it's very difficult to replicate it, we do, there are concerns around how is that going to work. I would say though, that they are more resilient than sometimes we give them credit for.

Heather Vickery 18:36

I appreciate that.

Tanya Meesman 18:37

We're in we're in a moment in time, I know that this moment is going on for a very long time. And we don't know when it's going to end. But it will end at some point. And at that point in time. They're quite resilient in that they do get back into things and I guess we can probably give you almost a six month ahead forecast here from Australia because we didn't have anywhere near the amount of lockdowns and solitude that the rest of the world is experiencing. And so I have watched the girls go through their solitude and lockdown and then come out the other side. They come out nervous, anxious, stressed, worried about what everyone thinks, thinking all their friends have left them, but some of them actually come out with a little bit more renewed understanding of themselves. They come out with a renewed appreciation of who are the good people in their life and who aren't. And they get back on the horse pretty quickly. Once they get face to face with kids again, it might take a week or two weeks or three weeks, but they do get back into the habit of connecting and seeing who has similar likes and values and dislikes and things and they do get back into it. So I guess my biggest tip that I gave all of our parents while we were in lockdown was it is about facilitating the connections, the good and healthy connections with friends that you know, good and healthy for your daughter. Facilitating those

and means you might need to back up a little bit on your screen time, restrictions and stuff because she might need to be on video with them more frequently. And also making sure that the connection within the family stays strong. So do activities with them. I know it's hard, everyone's trying to juggle everything. And it's exhausting, but making sure that she feels seen and appreciated once a day, even if it's just 10 minutes, so that she can stay connected with the family. And that gives her a sense of belonging, and a sense of acceptance. And then also giving a look, it's an age tried and true method from when kids are little but give them distractions as far as projects and activities. So I like projects are a great idea if you come up with a project where like, you want to save the dolphins right, right now we have the internet. So let's put together a project where we're going to talk about what could be an initiative to save the dolphins and let's watch a documentary on saving dolphins or just give them a focus that can buy you some time. While we wait for all of this to pass.

Heather Vickery 21:12

I love that distraction is always the winner isn't? Yeah.

Tanya Meesman 21:17

Good go to strategy.

Heather Vickery 21:19

It is. Yeah, in our house, we have had a general rule. Now my two little ones are in hybrid schools, they go in person for a few hours every morning, and then they're remote in the afternoon. But we've had a general rule that there are no screen time limits if you are engaging with an actual live human on the other side. So you're playing video games where there are other people playing video games, and you don't actually know them. And you're in a chat box. You're on zoom or whatever, and you're having a conversation. And I did see, particularly my third daughter, who's 11 now but last summer when she was still 10. She was doing amazingly creative things with her friends, they would co write books, one would write the story and the other would author or they would say or not illustrate not author, or they would say oh, let's both draw, a robot and then compare them or whatever. And so they were very, very inventive. And, you know, I did, boredom is the best form of invention. At some point, we get creative.

Tanya Meesman 22:24

Absolutely. For this generation. It's critical. I mean, we didn't have a choice when we were growing up because there just wasn't as much stimuli around. But now it's actually critical for the again, Kai talks to this better than I do, but for their brain development, they actually do need that nonstimulated time. So the brain can continue mapping its neurological pathways and and teach them how to think for themselves and think out the box and get creative. So I on the one hand, while I recommend providing them distractions, on the other hand, as well make sure that you back off a little bit and as you've seen yourself, yeah, with your daughters, where they they pick up the reins themselves and go. Okay, maybe I can figure this out myself. And that's one of the best life skills you can teach your daughter is to start just taking ownership of her own time and her own activities.

Heather Vickery 23:19

Yeah, absolutely my, again, the same third daughter, actually just today, just wasn't feeling up to par. She's not sick. She doesn't have COVID or anything, but we didn't, i didn't send her to morning hybrid School, which means she didn't have school, right? Because there's nothing. And I said, Listen, if you're telling me you feel poorly, you can stay home, but you will not do anything that has to be plugged in at any point. And her eyeballs popped out of her head and she literally it was hilarious. She literally laid on the couch and played with the dog for three and a half hours. She did nothing at all as well. That's not true. Then she goes Mommy, I really want something to do. And I said well, you were supposed to clean the bathroom. And 10 minutes later, after a really shoddy job the bathroom was clean. But and part of me was like I can't believe like there's a whole house full of stuff that you're not going to find something to do and then I thought maybe she just needed three hours of nothing because I certainly do sometimes.

Tanya Meesman 24:19

Yeah, you're absolutely right. I think she had hit her stimulus limit. And her brain just needed to shut down for a bit and you know pets and that tactile interaction. Are really good circuit breakers and pattern interrupt is where she can sit there and have that tactile feeling on her fingers and, and play and there's no expectation from the dog. You know, she's just there playing. I think that would have been amazing for her.

Heather Vickery 24:43

Yeah, I think it worked out just fine. She was a little peeved at me when I said nothing electronic but in the end. You know, we all survived it. So I'm really curious. I love that you're doing camp in person and your parent stuff. Do you only work with girls and their families in Australia? Is this a global initiative for you?

Tanya Meesman 25:02

So our in person events are just in Australia, I haven't quite managed to go global yet. COVID has interrupted those plans. But that's why we spent a lot of last year bringing a number of things online. So the Courageous Parenting Program was really born out of the fact that I couldn't, I couldn't actually be speaking to the parents before and after events like I normally do. So that is an online program. We're currently in the middle of a cohort right now, but we have them a few times a year. And, and that's a nine week intensive, where we, we actually do weekly calls, and we have a Facebook group. Plus, there's a very comprehensive program that goes with that. But then I've also taken a number of the teachings that I used to do for the girls in school, I've taken a few of those online. So we have a stronger than, you know, online course, that is me coaching the girls about confidence and, and what, why we needed and then getting to understand their own version of confidence, what it looks like and things and then we have a we have a few other bits and pieces that we brought online. So what we are finding is the courageous parenting side of things. And I have a Facebook group, just a normal one, called Raising Girl Shaped Flames that we have about 1500 parents in there, and they're from all over the world. So we've got from the states in the UK and a few from Africa. And so that's a really centralized point. Because the challenges we're facing and going back to this whole brain identity phase and the psychology around it, you know, they are universal. There are geographic

and societal impacts that are slightly different for each culture and each place. But we know that this is how the brain works, regardless of where in the world you grow and develop and we know the confidence influences anywhere in the world as well. So I do hope that in years to come, that we do end up being able to spread our wings a bit further and help parents and girls everywhere.

Heather Vickery 25:21

Absolutely. So now the summer camp that you do, is it like a sleepaway camp or is it just a day camp?

Tanya Meesman 27:07

No, it's camping camping in tents. So we have three yeah, three, it's a three day camp just here in Queensland. And we have girls that are aged between sort of 12 to 17. And we they sleep in two person tents. Now it's glamping if we're honest, because they have, they have full on beds with mattress that like spring mattresses and duvets and like quilts and pillows and stuff. But they are intense. So it's you know, the you wake up with the dew side of the tent on your face, and all that kind of stuff, which they love. But we were out in this beautiful landscape of bush land, which is very, very, it's, I guess you'd consider remote, but it's it's very quiet and private. And it's not one of these abseiling and jumping off cliffs. It's not that kind of a Camp Courage, it's a lot more about personal development, and, and connection and friendship making. So it's an aspect of the camp, I didn't expect when I started it, we've run four, or five, I can't remember up to so far. And I was really like they're going to come and we're going to inject all of this confidence into them, and they're going to leave so empowered. And I didn't occur to me that they would come and they would actually finally find their people and they would find acceptance through connecting with completely unexpected strangers because 70% of the girls that attend any camp, know, no one else on camp, they come totally by themselves. So what we've seen time and time again, is they're practicing this confidence and courage development by connecting with people they don't know and having to have, there's no, we only have certain times of day that they can have their tech. So they really do have to actually speak to each other and, and make connections and, and it is some of the best confidence development because they they get to really be themselves. And I have seen girls come into camp who they start by trying to keep on the, you know, the facade that we will put on when we're trying to be a certain type of person that they will put on when they're at school. And then very quickly that gets dropped to the wayside. They find themselves belly laughing with some other total stranger about something that they both connect over. And that's what I think I'm most proud of with the campus it gives them the space to be themselves connect with other people who share their joys and their values. Feel out what they are comfortable with and what they aren't. And we've got ridiculous rates as far as feedback goes. I think we're up to something like 96% of girls leave the camp, having got out of the camp, what they came to achieve and, and really, so much of that is about giving them equal parts space to do what they need without being sort of forced into everything all the time, but also pushing them a bit. So we take them on a big hike up a hill, and they don't know how big the hill is, and they don't know how long it's going to go for, they have to just do it, we have lots of other sort of getting out of your comfort zone activities. And, and it pushes them in a way that is achievable for them to be pushed. And they come back and I

have many parents reaching out to me afterwards, just saying, you know, what did you do to my daughter, she's..

Heather Vickery 30:33

In just three days.

Tanya Meesman 30:34

Yes, come back this other person, and we actually have, I think I've got, we only take 40 girls at a time. And I think 10 of the girls coming to the next camp are all from the last camp because they had such a great time. And they and I we've had camp girls come to multiple camps, and every time they grow more and more and more, and you see them flourishing into the people that they are destined to become. And and that is it is my greatest joy, like the camps are my greatest joy of what we do.

Heather Vickery 31:06

Oh my gosh, I'll bet it is. When do you hold the camp?

Tanya Meesman 31:09

We do it, at the moment it's twice a year. So we do it in January. And then again in the June/ July, we have a June/ July break here over the holidays. So yeah, so at the moment, twice a year, but we are looking to in future years, I want to expand it so we have it more frequently.

Heather Vickery 31:25

Absolutely. I love it. To my absolute delight, we have a pretty large listenership in Australia. So yeah, you can get your daughter signed for this amazing, amazing camp. I love what you're doing. This is really an unusual interview for those of you who listened regularly, you know that we haven't really necessarily focused on Tanya's journey. But what you're doing is so crucial and so important. And I believe that it is brave to embrace it, because it has such a tremendous impact. Do you feel like this work is brave work?

Tanya Meesman 32:06

Yes, yes. And I mean, as far as my personal experience, you know, I'd never run my own business. I had never really properly worked with young people. I'd always mentored older people, sort of young adults, I had never had to navigate the school system. I've never run camps before. I've never been responsible for the mental health and well being of so many people at one time.

Heather Vickery 32:29

It's a lot of learning, my friend.

Tanya Meesman 32:31

Yeah, there's a lot of me having to get out of my comfort zone. And at times, I have been incredibly tested to see where my own confidence and self belief limits lie. And I'm just very, very, very lucky that I have been surrounded by an incredible group of well, a growing group of

people who see what gotrek claims is trying to achieve, share my belief in my vision in it, and unequivocally come and say, How can I help? How can I support? What do you need? And it's at the times where I felt myself wavering, thinking, I can't do this, or I'm out of my depth, or no one really wants this stuff. It's those people who rise up and they're predominantly women. And my husband who's a fantastic support, but they do rise up and you were saying right at the beginning about you know, teaching and helping women understand the importance of what impact you helping another woman can have. I mean, Girl Shaped Flames is absolute testament to that, because it would never have grown to the size that it is or impacted as many girls lives and parents lives as it has, without the support I have had from other women who have helped make it what it is. So there has been a lot of bravery required and a lot of courage drawn upon. I'm super proud of where where we've ended up.

Heather Vickery 34:01

You should be. I absolutely see this being a global thing for you. When you head out Chicago way, I hope that I get to be involved. Because I love it so much. I ask every guest who comes on this show how they like to celebrate. And I'm gonna ask you that I want to know that. But I wonder is there an element of celebration in any of the work that you're doing, particularly the camps or when you're working with parents? Is celebration something that comes up?

Tanya Meesman 34:31

Yeah, we Yes. At camp, Well, it feels like one big celebration of how amazing the girls are. But at camp we have a ritual that we know a tradition, I guess I'd rather say that we do at the end of every camp where we have strips of cord that we stand in a big circle. So there's about 40 or 45 of us in a big circle out on this beautiful green landscape at the camp, and we give each girl a courage cord. And then they have to pick someone in the circle, they have to cross across the circle to that person and tie it on that person's wrist. And as they do that, they look them in the eye and they say, you've got this. And then that person goes to the next and then the next and the next and you see girls. That's our moment of celebrating each other, celebrating how far each individual girl has gone. And for Kai and I, your host, the camp, that's our moment where we get to step back and look at all these girls, and just think this is incredible how far they have come in three short days. So that's our moment of celebration, I believe, when we do camp. And then I would say the moments of celebration with the parents. We tried it with throughout courageous parenting program, we have a success Sunday, where we try to encourage all the parents every week to be celebrating something that worked or some little progress they have made in their relationship with their daughter or in their own confidence of their own parenting skills. So I think it's incredibly important that we do stop and celebrate moments because we have to recognize how far we're all going. As we go. I think it's critical.

Heather Vickery 36:12

Yeah. I mean, that's exactly it. We're so often so focused on the path, or the destination, that we don't realize how far we've gone. Yes. And if we don't stop and reflect and celebrate it, we're missing so much of the component. I love that. And the cord is really, really beautiful. So what's your favorite way to celebrate?

Tanya Meesman 36:35

Oh, look, I love a good dinner with some bubbles with some of my close girlfriends who have helped me I often get to the end of a big push of something rather than say, right now we need to go out and have dinner and giggle about all the things that were really hard of whatever we just did. And Kai and I actually after the last camp by took her to we have a thing here called gold class cinema, which is fancy cinema where you sit in a recliner and get food and wine brought to you and stuff like that. And she'd never been this is the Hollywood stunt artists had never been to a gold class cinema. So we went and did that as our celebration together to recognize how much work we put into that. So for me, it's really precious to have a moment of a little bit of luxury, and with someone who understands whatever journey I've just been on with whichever portion of the business it's been on, generally. But nothing also beats just sort of coming home to my kids and my husband and getting to play with them and whatever they're interested in at that time and sit down and know that the impact that whatever I've done that day has had. And I do try to take those moments as often as I can, because you get it gets hard. And you know, this is all bravery and courage related. It gets hard. It's just because you're brave or courageous doesn't mean things that easy. Tears and strain and all the rest of it. But when you can take those moments to go. In fact, I even had a little email from one of the girls that came to camp the other day. And all she did was took it upon herself to write me a couple of paragraphs to say the impact that camp but had on her. She's just finished grade 12 now and gone off to uni, and it helped her choose which pathway to go. And now she feels so good about it. And just getting little things like

Heather Vickery 38:20

That's worth celebrating.

Tanya Meesman 38:21

Yeah, taking a moment being like, oh, wow, something I did has helped result in that moment for her. And so yeah, I really do believe in the power of celebration. I probably don't do it enough, intentionally, but I try.

Heather Vickery 38:35

There you go. Well, there's always an opportunity to be more intentional about it tomorrow. So you can it's not the kind of thing that if you haven't done it in the past, you can't start. So that's that's one of the good things. I love that I think it's really beautiful. Alright, so as we're wrapping up, I get to feel like I could just talk to you forever.

Tanya Meesman 38:55

I want to hear so much about your girls and everything. We'll just have to pick offline. And you can tell me all about them.

Heather Vickery 39:01

Yeah, for sure. I would love that. In fact, when we're done with the interview, I want to talk with you about whether or not you would allow somebody from the states to come and attend one of your camps.

Tanya Meesman 39:12
Oh, my goodness. Yeah.

Heather Vickery 39:14
Maybe we'll see if can make something like that happen. Which feels like a grand gesture, a grand thing to think about. But

Tanya Meesman 39:25
It's a brilliant goal, I think. Yes. Oh, my goodness.

Heather Vickery 39:29
I love that. So I get to ask you one of my favorite questions. And I particularly love asking this with folks who do not live in the United States because this is a global question. This is something that is so important to us as an entire global community that we show up for one another and support one another. So Tanya, what is your favorite charitable organization to support?

Tanya Meesman 39:53
Well, oh my goodness, there are so many.

Heather Vickery 39:55
I know

Tanya Meesman 39:56
but I would say the one that is very close to my heart here in Australia is Headspace. And Headspace is a not for profit mental health service for young people. And one thing that has been very confronting for me since starting Girl Shaped Flames was becoming much more aware of the statistics around depression, anxiety, and eventually suicide. And this isn't a girl specific issue. Boys, and the statistics are horrendous for boys as well. But the fact that there is a nationwide free service in Australia, that supports young people's mental health by giving them counseling services and psychological services and activities and support, I just think is is incredible that we have that it's it's so important. And I think the other thing that I really appreciate about it is it's not saved or held back just for the very critical cases. So when you have young people who have reached a point where they are running away from home, or they are self harming, or worse, that's this is that's where you have your very high risk. And there are a lot of different services available for the the young people who unfortunately end up into that situation. But what I have seen because my, the girls that I work with, they typically come from, some come from the low socio economic areas, but they also come from a lot of middle class spaces. And those girls are suffering too, they might have more than half the families might have more financial resources at their disposal, but they don't necessarily have more education or psychological support. And if anything, there seems to be a barrier between goals that are in those spaces from reaching out for help. And then what we see is we see them deteriorate. And we had a terrifying sequence of events last year here in Australia, where we had a whole bunch

of middle class girls take their own lives in a short period of time in an area in New South Wales. And I think what that really brings about is this awareness that this problem and the challenges the girls are facing a universal regardless of your socio economic background. So Headspace is open doors to any young person from any background, who feels like they are not coping mentally, and they could do with some support. And I have referred a number of my girls who have come to my programs to Headspace and said, if you just need someone to talk to you, your parents don't even need to know about it, you can just walk into a center and say I need to talk to someone. And so that's, that's the the nonprofit organization that I we partner with them last year to support them with some programs as well. And I think it's, it's an incredible service, they are heavily understaffed and underfunded, as is everyone. But it's really, really important that it exists.

Heather Vickery 42:57

That's fantastic. I love that they exist, I hope there's an equivalent here in the US. Maybe I can have my team look for something like that. But it's so valuable. Thank you so much for sharing them with us. Folks, I asked you every week, get to know them, go check them out, check out their there'll be our charity of the week. So you'll have access to all their social links. And you know, if you can, at the very least you can do is support and share their message with other people then go out and do that. I love it. tangible you share your three words with us one last time.

Tanya Meesman 43:27

Absolutely. I think everyone's probably gotten the sense now, determined, passionate and fun.

Heather Vickery 43:35

Absolutely. Those are three wonderful words. And I think we've touched on all of them. You are most certainly determined if you could not be pulling off what you're pulling off without some serious determination and passion. And making it a lot of fun. So this has been fantastic. Thank you so much for joining us and sharing Girl Shaped Flames with us and tell folks how they can connect with you if they want to.

Tanya Meesman 43:58

Yeah, thank you, Heather, thank you so much for having me. And thank you for doing this what you do, because the more confidence and courage that can be encouraged around the world and bravery, the better we're all going to be so thank you. Best way to get a hold of us. We have our website GirlShapedFlames.com, where you can find all of our different programs and there's a Contact Us page there as well. But any parents listening who are raising a daughter of any age up to the age of 18, I really would encourage you to come and join our Raising Girl Shaped Flames Facebook group. And in there, I spend a fair bit of time in there and share lots of resources and we have conversations about challenges that are going on. So that's as a parent, that's your best bet. Otherwise, you can always find us on usual Instagram, Facebook.

Heather Vickery 44:43

So thank you so everybody, go check them out because they're doing amazing work and I'm really excited to continue to support and hopefully be a part of it at some point in the future.

Tanya Meesman 44:55

Thank you.

Heather Vickery 44:55

Alright folks, Well speaking of Facebook groups, Are you a member of ours? Facebook collective yet it's called Brave on Purpose. So if you like what we are talking about, if you like what Tanya is doing and the work that we're doing, leveraging our fear into intentional bravery and you want to lead a more intentionally brave life or run an intentionally brave business, come hang out with us, it's absolutely free. Just go to Facebook, search Brave on Purpose, and answer three little questions. And there you are. I love hearing from all of you. I listened to every voicemail, I check every email I will respond to you personally. If you have thoughts on this episode, or any others, or if you just want to share how you're out choosing bravely, give me a call 312-646-0205 or send me an email Heather@VickeryandCo.com. It's always a pleasure to be with you every week. I will talk to you again next Thursday with a new amazing, brave guest. For now, this is Heather Vickery reminding you today and every day to go out and choose bravely.

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