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Intro: Hey friends! Welcome to Girls Night. I'm Stephanie May Wilson and I am so happy that you're here. Each week I have a girlfriend over and we talk through one of the biggest questions we have about our lives as women.

We're talking about friendships and faith and relationships and self-confidence, about our calling in life, and how to live every bit of our lives to the full. Life is so much better and easier and absolutely more fun when we navigate it together as girlfriends. And I cannot wait to get started.

Stephanie: I'm so excited about today's episode because my dear friend and our Girls Night favorite, Mariko Clark is back on the show. I call her Marri, but we'll talk about that in the episode.

So today we're talking about how to make a new city feel like home. Mari has made a few really big moves in the last handful of years, and so she knows all about this process and what goes into making a decision like this. She also knows how hard of a transition it can be.

So today we're talking about how to make a new city truly feel like home. We're going to be talking about everything from finding your nearest grocery store, which is hard, to how to stop feeling like the awkward middle schooler all over again, to how to make true lasting friendships in your new city, and more. Guys, Marri is an absolute treasure. I am so happy for you to get to hear from her today.

But before we dive in, I wanted to take a second to share with you one of my all-time favorite resources. And that's therapy, like just as a whole. The thing is that moving is so hard. It's a season where we could all use someone else in our corner. But when you've just moved to a new city, you're like, Steph, I can't even remember my own address, let alone find a therapist.

So let me take something off of your moving to-do list today and share with you my favorite therapy resource that just so happens to be available online, no matter where you live. It's one of our amazing Girls Night podcast sponsors, Faithful Counseling.

Faithful Counseling is a website where you can get matched up with a Christian counselor for professional online therapy sessions. This is truly the easiest and most affordable way to find a faith-based counselor. You've probably heard me talk about Faithful Counseling before. But just in case you haven't, I wanted to tell you four quick reasons why I love them so much.

The first is that it's easy to get started. All you have to do is go to their website, fill out a form about yourself, what you're going through, what you're looking for in a counselor, and within 24 hours, Faithful Counseling will connect you with a licensed, vetted, faith-based professional counselor.

The second reason, it's easy to schedule. Once you're connected to a therapist, you can start communicating with them in less than 24 hours. You can log into your account at any time and send a message to your therapist and you'll get timely and thoughtful responses back.

You can also schedule weekly video or phone sessions and you can do it all virtually. No commute, no awkward waiting room time, less time away from work, you can even do your sessions in your PJs.

The third reason is it's easy to find the right counselor for you. In order for counseling to be truly beneficial, you have to find a therapist you really connect with. And oftentimes we don't find the right person on our first try. So then we're stuck going through the whole process of breaking up with our counselor, which is awkward, then starting from scratch to find a new one.

But with Faithful Counseling, if you don't love your counselor or if you find that you're looking for something different, you can switch by clicking a button. It is easy and it's free.

The last reason I love them so much is that it's so much easier to fit into your budget. While I love traditional in-person counseling, it can cost more than \$100 per session, which just makes it a total no-go for so many of us, especially as we're moving, oh, what an expensive time!

But Faithful Counseling is significantly less expensive and they have financial aid available. And if you sign up through this special link they gave me, you can get 10% off your first month.

Friends, if therapy is something you've been considering or something you think might be helpful for you right now, head on over to stephaniemaywilson.com/counseling. That link will also give you 10% off your first month. Again that stephaniemaywilson.com/counseling for all the info, and you can get 10% off your first month of counseling there too.

All right, friends, you ready? Let's jump into the episode with Marri.

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Stephanie: All right, friends, I am so so happy about who we get to welcome back to the show today. I just don't even know how to introduce you because of how important you are to me and how important you've been to Girls Night. So anyway, Marri Welcome back to the show.

Mariko: Thank you. I was actually thinking this morning as I was getting ready that it truly feels like returning to Girls Night that I have my little life updates. And I feel like I've been attending Girls Night for however many years it's been now. Like I was with you when you started it.

I remember my first little introduction, I was like, "I'm Marri." I think I was like, "I have a little girl and I'm married and I hang out with her." And my career and my family have had so many changes in transitions since then. And I feel like every time I come on, my little blurb about myself is way different. So I'm like coming back to the girl just to give you an update about my life.

It just feels like that it's been this witness to and companion for, you know, the past five or so years of things changing and growing but that this is a constant and that feels really pretty warm and cozy.

Stephanie: I love that. There's no other way I would want Girls Night to feel. And really you were the first person I was like, "I'm thinking about doing a podcast and I'm not totally sure if I know how to do this." And you and I did like a sample podcast episode that was like two hours long and bad. I think we did a couple-

Mariko: We didn't know anything.

Stephanie: No, we didn't know anything, and we like trashed it. And I'm like, "I don't know how to host a podcast."

Mariko: And now you've got this cool little interface that we're on. I feel like you've learned so much and grown so much. I remember we had, during that first episode, a little sticky note that just said "It's okay to be a beginner." Remember that?

Stephanie: Yes. It was taped to the microphone.

Mariko: And now you're not a beginner anymore. You're just a veteran.

Stephanie: I mean, I'm still a beginner in every single way that matters in life except that, yeah...No, I've actually learned a couple things about podcasting.

Mariko: Ring light. I have a ring light.

Stephanie: I have a good microphone setup only because you had one first and I was like, "How are you doing this?" Okay, so Marri I need to know, for women who haven't met official you yet, tell us who you are, what you do, and a fun fact. And also like... I really should know this. What's your official work name? It's Mariko Clark, right?

Mariko: Oh, good point.

Stephanie: Or do you go by Straton or Marri Straton?

Mariko: I have been going by Mariko Clark, which is my maiden name and also my middle name for years now only because Mariko is sometimes tricky for people to pronounce. It's Japanese. And then my current last name is Straton but almost everyone who reads it will say Stratton.

And I hate to correct people twice. You know, almost everyone will say Mariko Stratton. And I hate to be like, "It's actually Mariko and it's actually also Straton. So Clark is pretty straightforward. Almost no one messes that up. Or easier on the memory.

Stephanie: We also have to say, anyone who has a name that gets mispronounced, tell your friends that they're mispronouncing it. Because if you guys have been around the show for a long time, you know that Marri and I had been friends for years when I introduced her as... Shoot, now I'm gonna do it wrong.

Mariko: You said Mariko, which is what everyone does.

Stephanie: And you were like-

[crosstalk 00:07:46]

Mariko: I think I [corrected?] you on air. I'm cool.

Stephanie: You did. And it had been like three years. And I was like, "Marri, I will kill you not because you're doing this right now but because you didn't do this years ago."

Mariko: I know. I know. You almost never called me that and then I was like, "Oh, shoot. Here's a situation where she does call me that. I need to let her know."

Stephanie: Yeah.

Mariko: So I'm Mariko Clark, longtime friend of the show, longtime friend of Steph. We met in Nashville when I was living there. I am a writer. I just got my first book deal

last year. It was a very exciting for a book that we had launched on Kickstarter to start a Bible for kids. And then it went really well. One thing led to another and now I'm working towards my deadline for an actual publisher, which feels crazy. So that feels really exciting.

I have three kids, so I have a mom role that I switch back and forth, do the whole work and mom things. Steph, you know all about that.

Stephanie: Totally.

Mariko: I have a husband. I live with my in-laws. We do sort of like the multigenerational house thing, which has been a very cool and fun experiment. And I live in Indianapolis now. That's the bigger update, I guess.

Oh, and fun fact. I need to go get a prop from my fun facts.

Stephanie: This is maybe the first time on this show that somebody needs to get a prop. This is amazing. Yes, yes.

Mariko: Hold on. Let me put my headphones on.

Stephanie: Okay.

Mariko: Sorry, that was hard on the audio. Because now that you video record, I can show this. I was just telling Steph, for any of our 90s babies in the audience, you'll remember seeing commercials on TV when you were watching Nick at Night? Maybe not Nick at Night, but for the ab slide.

I was telling Steph I had one in high school. My older brother and I saved up our money and sent away the little envelope of cash to buy the ab slide. Totally shredded one summer when I was like 14, you had a little six-pack that worked wonders for me.

So I just had my third kid. Not just. He's two years old. And I was like, "You know what? I'm gonna get my core back in shape. I know what I need." So I went on eBay and I bought ab slide. I was just showing it to Steph before we started recording.

So just so everyone knows that's an option—ab slide. There was many of them on eBay, I don't know why people aren't snatching this. But that's my fun fact. I have an ab slide and they do it in my office when I take breaks from writing.

Stephanie: I'm just so happy. I'm just so happy. It's so amazing. Oh, man, I'm so glad you guys get to hear from Marri again today. All right, Marri, a lot of questions for you. I really want to talk about moving today.

Mariko: Let's do it.

Stephanie: For the girls who have been listening to the show for a while, you and I both moved to Nashville around the same time and you and I both were like, "We don't like small talk. We don't want to make new friends. This is hard. This is uncomfortable. No, thank you."

And we had a mutual friend set us up. It was like love at first sight.

Mariko: Totally.

Stephanie: I mean, we were at coffee for a million years, but neither of us wanted to go. We've told that story before about how our friendship unfolded, you know what it was like for us to both move to Nashville. I feel like you had an easier time than I did. I was unsure about the whole thing for a while. I just resisted making a new home for a really long time.

So we've kind of talked about that before, but not enough. And then you also just made a really big new move. So I just want to talk about that. Because you've done a really good job over the years and then you're also currently in the process of doing this again, of moving to a new place and making a new home. I want to hear about it.

So I want to first ask, you moved from Boston to Nashville. Why did you do that? How did you figure out that that was a good next move for you? And how did the process of making a new home go?

Mariko: So when we moved to Boston, it was one of those... Drew, that's my husband, and I, we always joke that God moves us through life through our humor. We'll realize there's something that we've been joking about for a while, like, "Oh, wouldn't it be so funny if (blank)?" And then it's almost like we have to joke about it before we feel brave enough to explore it seriously.

So we had been joking for a little while, like, "Oh, wouldn't it be so funny if our jobs let us work remotely? Oh, wouldn't that be so funny if we could just live wherever we wanted?" "Oh, yeah, that's so funny. Let's make a list of all the cities where we would want to live." "Okay, cool. That's hilarious. Let's talk more seriously about where we want to go. Okay, let's plan a little exploratory trip to Nashville. Oh, that's hilarious."

And just through all of these little like tricking ourselves into baby steps sort of narrowed it down to a couple of cities. And Drew had family at the time living in Nashville. Two of his brothers at the time were at college at Belmont in Nashville. That felt safe. It felt good to have family.

We had wanted somewhere new. It didn't feel like completely out of the blue to try Nashville. I had wanted to live somewhere warmer. I had been doing the Boston winters my entire life. I don't like cold weather.

So ended up in one of those things where like every little baby step we took in every sort of like exploratory tendrils we would send out just came back... I say that we didn't even walk through doors or knock on them. God just drop-kicked us through them and we were like, "Oh, now we're here."

You know, we found a neighborhood that we thought would be cool to live in and then all of a sudden, we have a house. It just was like one of those things that felt undeniable and very easy as far as logistics go. Because moves can be incredibly complex and stressful. And I feel like everyone I know who has moved anywhere has this really dramatic story about how it almost didn't work out and then it did. And we just didn't have that experience.

So that's how we ended up in Nashville was kind of like started as a joke and then made our way there and it ended up being incredibly life-giving and healing. We went through some pretty intense transitions while we were there. Just like with family and with faith and all the big topics.

And for us, specifically being in a brand new place to explore big decisions was really liberating and healing. I feel like I have some people-pleasing tendencies and I probably, if we had not been in a brand new space with new people, would have leaned into what I thought would make other people happy.

But instead I like, Well, I'll just do whatever I want, or I'll do whatever Drew and I decide is a good decision or I'll lean into my intuition instead of trying to please all these people around me. And that ended up being a really fortifying and clarifying position to be in for us.

Stephanie: I love that. Really moving to Nashville for me was so complicated because I just wanted to move home. I'm from Colorado and I wanted to end up back there. I ended up living not in Colorado. I agreed six months. I was like, "I'll move to Georgia for this job, I'll be there for six months, and then I'm gonna go home. Or if I don't go home and I go to the beach, somewhere." Those were my options.

And then I met Carl and one thing led to another and then all of a sudden we're like living in Georgia. You know, I'm like, "Okay, well, I'm in love, we're getting married, I really, really like our jobs. We'll stay here." But then we lost our jobs and so we were trying to figure out where are we going to replant ourselves.

And we tried to move to Colorado. We applied for all kinds of jobs and heard like truly crickets. Like didn't even get an email back. And then, finally doors opened in Nashville and so we moved here. And Nashville is an amazing place. Like really amazing. Yeah, it's an awesome place to live. Everybody loves it. And it's because it's super lovable. It's as amazing as everybody says.

Mariko: I agree.

Stephanie: But I didn't want to be here because this isn't where my closest people were and I just was really resistant to making new closest people because I think I felt like I was letting go of the people I already loved by loving new people or letting go of a place that I really loved by loving a new place.

And that's not true. You can love two places or more places. You can love lots of people all at once. And that's kind of what I feel like God's been teaching me since I've lived here.

Then once I started to embrace that it made living here so much easier. But there was a really long time where I was like, this is technically my new home, but I will not be at home here. So that made the process way harder for me. Like I just would do things really differently moving forward. If we were to ever move again, I would like to do everything I could to make it home as fast as possible. Like so embrace it as fast as possible because I know that that's the path to feeling at home.

And I feel like that's what you did. Like you guys came here and really cozied in. What did that look like? What were some of the things that you guys did to make Nashville feel like home?

Mariko: I feel like I've maybe talked a little bit about it here on the podcast, you know, at some point over the years. One thing I think that I did was I challenged myself when we moved to Nashville to just say yes to things. That is not my typical stance. I love to say no to things. That is my favorite thing to do.

But I had thought like, you know, if I protect my energy so much, if I want to stay in my safety, I'll never make this a home. Like you're saying, if I'm so set on not putting myself out there, then it's making it harder on myself. So I had sort of challenged myself, knowing how I can be, I'm just gonna say yes to things.

So whether it was, you know, yes to trying a new church, yes to... Even just I had... Ada, my daughter was like one and a half at the time. And the way I am it's like, before I go to a new place, even if it's like to a new coffee shop, I'm gonna do my research, I'm gonna find out where I can park, I'm going to find out what door to go through and I'm gonna look at the menu. I just like to do a lot of prep ahead of time.

And I was like, I can't do that with absolutely every decision in Nashville. I'll get overwhelmed about saying that. So I was just saying yes to things, whether it was like, I'm gonna walk to that coffee shop we drove by earlier and I'm not gonna do too much work ahead of time. I'm just gonna do it.

One of the things I said yes to was coffee with this strange person named Stephanie a super rando had connected me with. And it ended up being wonderful. I feel like you were one of my very first friends in Nashville. And I feel like our first day, as we like to call it that, going so well actually gave me the confidence to continue to say yes to things.

I think if I had said yes to something that had been tragic or even just really boring, it would have taken the wind out of my sails, but instead, it was like, I challenge myself to something new. It was incredible. It was this affirmation of that new goal of mine. And yeah, I think that was a really big thing was just saying yes to opportunities, even if they felt minute.

You know, when you're in a new place, it can feel really overwhelming. Like all the grocery stores in Nashville had totally different names from the grocery stores of Massachusetts. That can feel overwhelming. You know, all of the restaurants... Even like the way the streets are laid out in Nashville, that was new for me. I had never had an alley behind my house before. They don't have those in New England.

It can feel really overwhelming. So I think the challenge of saying yes almost gives you this tunnel vision, because otherwise there's so much sensory input going on all the time and it's easy to just kind of shut down and be like, No, it's too much. I'm just gonna stick with what's familiar. But almost like giving yourself that singular task of saying yes to what comes up it almost helps you focus because otherwise it's too much.

Stephanie: I love that. I love that. Something that I've been practicing that... And these are all things where I'm like, some of these I did right, some of these I would like... This is how I do it if we did it again. Like going places twice. So it's like the first time you go to a new grocery store it's super weird. Like the parking thing really gets me.

I remember being at that coffee shop with you and I'd never been to that one before. So I didn't know which part of the counter to stand out to order. I didn't know if

once you order your food if they bring it to you or if you wait. I just felt so uncomfortable like everyone was just staring at me, which no one was. Everyone was focused on their own thing. But I just felt so uncomfortable.

But it's like making myself go again. Because then the next time I'll know where to order. So then that becomes a familiar place. It went from being a strange place the first time to the second time I go, now it's a familiar place and now it's a place under my belt in my repertoire. You know, I can choose to go there in the future. So I just always have to remember that.

And then I like that you do some research. I need to get better at that faster. And I know I've shared this on the podcast before but I love taking walks. It's so therapeutic for me. So everywhere where we've lived, I've been like, That's like my block spot.

Well, the first whole year that we lived in Nashville, I didn't look up where parks were. So I walked around our apartment building and just did loops like behind the carwash by the dumpster, behind the carwash by the dumpsters. Like just in a loop for a year. Just walked through the parking lot for a year, which is fine.

But when I did some research, I found out that there's this gorgeous Greenbelt kind of walking trail like mile and a half away that I could have been walking around. So just like a little bit of research. And then the first time I walked around that loop, I thought like, "Is this actually a loop or am I just going to walk and walk and walk and get just further and further and further away from my car?"

I went in the middle of the day, I had my phone, I had some money on me, you know, it wasn't supposed to rain. And I got to find out it is in fact a loop and I made it back to my car. And then the next time I went I knew what to expect.

Mariko: Yes, exactly, going twice. I feel like that's a really good thing. I was thinking while you were talking, there's the interpersonal aspect that... I feel like we've talked a lot about logistics, like how. But the "who" I think is really important too. I think so many of us even as adults, we all have these little teenagers... like the little middle school version of ourselves I feel like it's really, really loud when you move to a new place.

And I feel like it's because a lot of us the last time that we've had to really put ourselves out there and be like, "Do you want to be my friend?" was maybe at a new school or a new you transition from elementary to middle or middle to high school, or even like college orientation. And you're all just like wandering around hoping that you connect with someone.

I feel like it's easy to take that mindset as an adult in a new city and to assume that we're all going to be the teenage versions of ourselves. And let's be honest, we weren't at our most empathetic or compassionate, at least I wasn't, as a teenager. But as an adult, I have seen enough and I've done enough new really hard things, especially socially that I feel like I have so much more empathy in those situations.

You know, if you're in middle school and a super Rando came up to you and was like, "Hey, would you ever want to go for coffee?" you would probably be judgmental. I would be judgmental, like, "Who's this weirdo?" But adult me is like, Wow, that is so brave. I love that that person approached me. That's so hard to approach someone and ask.

And even if it's a no from me—and you're allowed to say no—I'm able to take that stance of compassion towards them and to recognize that most of the other adults in the world, in the city of Nashville are also not the middle school versions of themselves and we're all so worried about the other person is going to think.

But so many of us have done that so many times that I think it's really important to remember it's a bunch of 20 to 30-year-olds walking around and probably trying to make friends themselves. And even if they don't want to be your person, they're going to be compassionate towards you looking for your person. So I think that that's so important to keep in mind that everyone's kind of doing the same thing.

Stephanie: And you're not in middle school anymore.

Mariko: No one's judging you. No one's thinking about you. Even I feel like when you were talking about the coffee shop and how it's laid out, in new places, at least for me, yeah, nervous a little, our seventh grader comes out and I'm like, "Well, if I stand in the wrong place, people are gonna think it's weird." And it's like, "No, literally no one is thinking about me at any given moment. People are kind of in their own stuff.

Or if they do notice, for the most part, people have compassion. They're like, "Oh, she doesn't understand." They're gonna be like, "Hey, go over there." I think that that is helpful for me to put myself in that mindset. Now that I've done it again too, I'm like, for the most part, you know, people are approaching me with tenderness and not with judgment.

Stephanie: That is so life-changing, that perspective. Because you're exactly right. It's like we just zoom back to being these small, nervous versions of ourselves. Because you're right, that's probably the last time that we really did this, or it was such a jarring, scarring experience to me as a kid, that it's like even if you've been the new kid a couple times since and it like has gone fine, I still feel like I'm a freshman in high

school again, and I'm like walking and I have my lunch tray and desperately I just want to sit in the bathroom so I don't have to figure out where to put my tray.

But you're right, I'm not a middle school or high school version of me anymore because thank God she wasn't that kind sometimes. And then other times she just was a puddle and trying to figure out where to put her lunch tray. So I had both. But I'm not that version anymore and neither other people. Occasionally, maybe you do run into someone who has not grown out of that. Okay, well, then that's a very clear sign that that's not your person.

Mariko: Exactly. That's about them.

Stephanie: Yeah, and that's about them. Like if someone, God forbid, does laugh at you because you don't know where to stand at the coffee shop, you can very clearly know that that person has some stuff to work out in themselves and that they are not your person. But the vast majority of people are gonna be like, "Oh, hey, the counters are over there." And you'll go, "Oh, I've never been here before." And they'll go, "Oh, are you new?" And you go, "Yeah, I am," blah, blah, blah. And then all of a sudden, you're talking to someone who's kind.

Mariko: Yeah. Completely. And I feel like that's important to remember. Because, you know, we can tell people all day, "Put yourself out there, do this, do that." It's the "how" of that that can be really difficult. Like, well, how do I put myself out there? I don't feel brave enough. And it's like, neither does anyone. Neither does anyone.

Stephanie: I was just talking about this this weekend because this weekend I was at a conference. Any situation where you have to go in and you know that you're basically networking, you're meeting a bunch of people you don't know, you're trying to remember a bunch of names, you're trying to work up the courage to go say hi to people that you have never met before, the whole thing is just nerve-racking.

So I was thinking a lot about my dad, because I feel like something that my dad really imparted to me growing up was that, like, you just don't have anything to lose. If you walk away from any situation with your pride and your cards still held tightly to your chest, you're just really not walking away with much. Because it's either you get to walk away having saved face or with your pride or whatever or you get to walk away knowing that you did the very best to make this relationship work out or to know that you put your very best self out there and there's nothing more you could have done. And you have that peace.

Or you walk away with a new friend or you walk away knowing that he likes you back or you walk away having gotten a new job or something but your pride just

really isn't worth very much. And so walking away doesn't keep you safe, it keeps you from really good things. So I just thought about that a lot.

So there were so many times this weekend where I just said hi to someone that I had never met before, or like I knew who they were, but I hadn't met them. So I walked up and stuck out my hand, was like, "Hi, I'm Stephanie." And sometimes it was great and sometimes it was super awkward. But it was fine. Like I really didn't lose anything and I actually gained so much.

But I just remember so many times growing up... like I would see someone that I would kind of know but not know or someone... You know, we were at... This is so random. We were at Red Robin one time and there was an Olympic swimmer there and she was just at another table. Me and my dad recognized her and he was like, "It'd be cool to get her autograph, wouldn't it?" And I was like, "Yeah." And he was like, "Go ask her." And I'm like, "Ah, no way."

And he was just like, Steph, you really don't have anything to lose in this moment. Just go say hi. And so I did. And I was so glad I did. And there just has never been a time that I'm upset that I said hi. There are a million times where I'm upset that I didn't.

Mariko: That's true. That's really good advice. That's wise.

Stephanie: Right?

Mariko: Yeah. You're always going to beat yourself up for the opposite of what you might initially think.

Stephanie: Yeah, yeah. And really everyone is nervous. Everyone is nervous. I just don't know. It's just something that everybody feels and that we just have to push through. And we don't get to wait until that nervousness goes away, because I just don't know that it does. And if it does go away, it goes away because we've practiced enough times. So it's like only through doing it nervous, doing it scared that you ever get to a time where you can do it not scared. But it's not something you just wait for.

Mariko: Oh, 100%.

[00:30:52] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Our sponsor for today's episode is a company I adore called [Jenni Kayne](#). Jenni Kayne has classic, comfortable, and California-inspired clothes from their cashmere knit sweater you're obsessed with to the flowy summer dress you never want to take off.

Their everyday basics and wardrobe essentials are timeless pieces that make it effortless to get dressed in the morning and stay cozy throughout the entire day. They're the type of clothes that feels so good to wear because not only are they comfortable but they're made with quality materials that last.

I have to say my style has changed a lot in the last few years. First of all, it needs to be comfortable. Life is just too short to wear uncomfortable clothes. Am I right? I also don't have a ton of time to shop these days or to get ready in the morning, so I want really classic pieces that are easy to mix and match.

I'm also trying to be better about sustainability. And so that means buying less items but keeping them for longer. So I want things that aren't going to go out of style anytime soon, and that aren't going to fall apart after being washed once or twice. That's why I am truly obsessed with Jenni Kayne.

Their aesthetic is right up my alley and I'm on a mission to basically wear nothing else but their stuff. I'm not there yet, but I'm on my way. I actually recently got their sweater coat in that oatmeal color and to say that I'm in love with it is a total understatement. With elevated everyday basics and wardrobe essentials, getting dressed and keeping cozy is easier than ever before. When it comes to investing in a uniform that will last, my choice is Jenni Kayne.

And of course, I love them even more because they have a special gift for all my listeners. Find your forever pieces at jennikayne.com. Our listeners get 15% off their first order when you use the code GIRLSNIGHT at checkout. That's 15% off your first order at jennikayne.com, the promo code GIRLSNIGHT. The brand goes for all-season staples. Treat yourself because you deserve it.

[00:32:49] <music>

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[00:34:44] <music>

Stephanie: Marri, I want to ask you, so you just moved again, and I would love to... Well, first of all, when you told me you're moving I cried. Just cried.

Mariko: I know.

Stephanie: Because I think, you know-

Mariko: We were in the middle of a restaurant, I was like, "I should have done this privately."

Stephanie: Totally. Didn't care. I didn't care. I mostly just was like, "Please don't move." But I do want to hear, you know, as you were telling me kind of the different things that you guys talked through, the pros and cons, even though personally I was on the "please don't move" boat, that was my vote for you, as you told me all the different things that you guys talked through and the things you weighed, I was like, "This is really what's right for you."

And have thought about that ever since, that there are all these different kinds of things that push you forward and pull you away from different decisions. I want to

hear the process of that, because I think that hearing that will be really helpful for women listening kind of no matter what they're trying to figure out right now.

Mariko: I think it was interesting to reflect on the two moves. I think that it depends on the season of your life that you're in. Drew and I have moved a lot together. Not to new cities. Like moved around a lot in the Boston area and then to Nashville. But there was a huge season of our life where we were making our decisions on present or very close future Drew and Marri. Like, what they needed, what they wanted.

And, you know, your 20s are a great season for that. Or at least mine were. I was making decisions for present-day me or for me one year from now. And that served us really, really well for a season.

Drew and I we're moving into a new season of our life. We've got three kids, our oldest is eight, my career is developing, you know, his career is fairly established. And the decisions that we're making now necessarily because our kids are getting older, we're making decisions for future Drew and future Marri five, six, seven years down the line.

And that can be a lot more complicated because some of it you're guessing. And it's finding that tough balance between you don't want to make decisions out of fear but you also have to sort of, you know, predict a little bit or guess a little bit and move against that in your decision making. So we were considering a lot of different things, like the schools we wanted our kids to go to, the type of childcare that we wanted for them, the family that we involved in their life.

The house that we had in Nashville, we loved so much. It was such a sweet house. But we were really, really rapidly outgrowing it. And we had done lockdown, we had done two years of COVID in that house, doing, you know, at-home learning with our daughter. So she needed to be on her online kindergarten. We both had our computers. Like we're all out there on our separate computers just trying to make it work, trying to be quiet. And we were just pretty rapidly outgrowing the house that we were in.

So we're like, Okay, we may either need to go drop \$10,000 at IKEA organizing this and turning so many places that are not storage into storage or we need to consider the fact that we might be ready for a different house. Okay, well, if we're ready for a different house, now the door is open to that house being somewhere else? Do we want it to be in a different neighborhood, do we want it to be in a different city, or do we want it to be in a different state?

So then it sort of opened the doors... you know, the decisions kind of branch off of each other. And it wasn't just like, Well, where do we want to be next year? It was

kind of like, Okay, well, in three years, Ada will be in middle school? What do we think about the middle schools? Where would we want her to go to middle school?

At some point, our kids are all going to be in school and childcare will look different. What do we want from that? We have grandparents in the picture. How involved do we want them to be and in what ways we want them to be involved? So there was a lot of factors at play and a lot of them future factors that we kind of just had to...

And then there's a whole financial aspect of the market at the time. Nashville, our house was worth probably more than it ever would be ever again. And you know, we were hearing a lot of talk about a recession coming up. So it was kind of like, okay, well, if we want to sell, now might be the best time to sell our house.

So there was just a lot of factors at play and it was probably the most complex decision we've had to make as far as moving. Before it's just kind of like, you know, it'd be funny and it'd be cool. And this one was like, "Okay, this feels like a decision that we'll have to live with for a much longer time. And it's not just about what is funny and cool to Drew and I anymore. There are three small people whose futures depend on the decisions that we're going to make.

So that was hard and there was a time limit on it. We wanted to move before school started so that Ada didn't have to be the new kid. Because you know how hard that is. We didn't want her to be the new kid in the middle of the year. So it was tricky and complex and a lot of factors at play.

And it just was the same sort of thing that there were certain doors that we approached with open hands that were kind of like, Okay, here's what we're thinking. Let's see what God does." And we just kind of, again, got dropped-kicked through. And we're like, okay, I guess we're on the right track.

I mean, it just sometimes feels like a guessing game where you just get the smallest encouragement along the way, and you just have to keep moving. I mean, making a decision and making a move as a 35-year-old was a very, very different story from making a move as a 29-year-old. Not even in just the decision factors but even in reestablishing ourself here has been like a wildly different journey than reestablishing ourselves in Nashville.

Stephanie: I've so many follow-up questions. How did you guys pick Indy and how did you guys pick your house?

Mariko: So we chose Indy because again, Drew had family... So he had family kind of in Nashville, Kentucky, Indiana, that 65 strip of states. His parents at the time in Nashville were living right across the street from us, which was incredible.

So we kind of had this community and it was perfect, especially during COVID. We kind of had our little bubble. Drew's mom helps us a lot with childcare, which is incredible. And they've just become such an integrated part of our everyday life. And they were talking about moving to Indy. Drew's dad had been offered a job there. So it kind of put the seed in our mind like, "Okay, well, if he gets this job, would we go with them?" So a big factor was Drew's parents.

Another factor was we had done the city living thing and absolutely loved every second of it. Like you said, Nashville is a wonderful place. People love it because it's very lovable. But we had had a family vacation during the summer after all the COVID stuff, and Drew and Ada specifically we were at a lake house and we just saw such a shift in both of their mental health being out in nature more.

And Drew had been saying for years, like, "Oh, I just love trees. Trees give me life," that kind of thing. We kind of joke about that. And you know this, we would walk through our alleyway in Nashville, because we do a lot of actually old trees in our neighborhood over the alley.

And we're just kind of like making do with city nature. You know, you go to the park or you sit next to your bushes on your front steps. And Drew was like, "I don't know." Weirdly, I never thought I'd say this. We thought we were city people through and through. He's like, "I kind of want to live on a chunk of land where I can't see into my neighbor's window." And I'm like, "What?" Because, you know, that was our reality for so long. And we loved it. We were close friends with all of our neighbors. We loved everything about it.

Stephanie: I'm looking at my neighbor's window as first thing here.

Mariko: That's just part of it and it's wonderful. But he had started realizing, you know, for his mental health and for Ada's mental health, we're like, Okay, maybe we need a little bit more nature in our lives. So, okay, if we're going to do that, we're not going to do city anymore. Does that mean we're going to move to the Nashville suburbs? Maybe. Are there other suburbs that we would consider?

And we were kind of back to what we had done in Boston. We made a list of the suburbs that we would consider and Indy just made a lot of sense. Drew has family here. His parents were considering moving back. We had friends here that we hadn't seen in a while. Drew grew up here. He went to middle school and high school here and just loved it.

I mean, the Midwest is such a special place. I mean, Indy just won the contest, I guess. And we kind of had said, like, All right, well, let's just explore some places. So we had a realtor up here, and she would send us stuff every once in a while. We tried to buy a couple of houses and it just didn't even get past the initial "Okay, we think that was cool." And it just wouldn't work out.

And so for a while there we were like, "All right, maybe this isn't the thing." We really were able to have such open... I felt really grateful that you know... I have friends who have had to move. Like, you know, they got a job and it's like new city for me, I have to find a place to live. I did feel very fortunate that there was no urgency on our end really. Like, all right, if it doesn't work out, we'll continue to live in our house that we love with our friends that we live in our neighborhood that we love. It's a win-win.

But we were like, you know, we're not going to do this for a year. You know how something is stressful. You know that. So, we had said, Okay, if by the 4th of July, we haven't found a house, we're just going to stop. Because I had a deadline for my book, Ada had to start school. We were like, "Okay, that's it." And on the 3rd of July, we looked at this house that we're currently in and spoiler alert, we got it. On the fifth of July we got the call that an offer had been accepted.

And we were able to, you know, bring our kids here and show them. It was very sweet. So we're like two minutes away from some of our kids' best friends, which was really wonderful. I feel like there are people who follow the podcast that are aware of the Ada-Calvin saga. Ada now lives two minutes away from Calvin. And that's just like her favorite thing.

So this house was kind of just like, again, one of those things that just like we were dropped-kicked through the door. We were like, cool. I wasn't sold on this house right away. I'm not very good at visualizing things. The person who owned it before us had painted every room black, which was tough for me to move past visual.

But Drew is really good at that and had said like, "Honestly, I feel like a coat of paint, you would love this house" and I just couldn't see it. The first thing we did was paint it and he's right. I really love it now. So that was kind of like our, I don't know, the dominoes that had to fumble in order for us to end up here.

Stephanie: And then you guys are living, as you said, multi-generationally because you're living with your in-laws. How did that happen?

Mariko: So they had been across the street. Like I said, in Nashville, they had bought a house in... You know, moved in truly to help us, which was wonderful and we just

had the best time. And just ended up... some of it during COVID forced, you know, we were forced to be in kind of like a little bubble together. But you know, we found rhythms together.

My mother-in-law's awesome. She and I have a pretty similar way of doing things, I think, so that helps. I know, this multi-generational thing is not for everyone. She does my laundry and I make her breakfast. We just kind of had found a rhythm.

So then when we had thought about moving, you know, they were already on board with moving because they had considered it for Drew's dad's job. We considered buying a farm at one point. There was this big farm that we're like... It was out of our budget and so we're like, "Let's ask them if they want to move to this farm with us" because there was a bunch of different buildings.

We're like, We'll renovate one of the barns and they can live there. We thought it was really cool idea and so glad it didn't work out because now I'm like, "I didn't want to live on a farm. What was I thinking? I'm not a farmer." I don't know what we were thinking.

I thought I would be like a Joanna Gaines. So I was like, I'll have a few chickens and a flower garden. That's not my vibe. I don't know what I was thinking. But anyways, they were like, "Sure, we would consider that."

And then we sort of just fell into this pace of looking at places that could possibly work for both of us, at the same time looking at our own individual places. And this place came up and had space for all of us. And, you know, it's got this little creek and a good chunk of land. It has been amazing. So it just worked out. I don't know, there's no magic to it. It just happened to...

I mean, a lot of communication, I guess, a lot of constant communication about, would this be okay? And I would say that's the strength. My mother-in-law is very direct communicator. So that was really helpful that it's like, Okay, if we're going to live together, here's what we need. Okay, what do you need? Not only, you know, space-wise, but even like, Okay, here's what we need. Here's when we have quiet time. Here's where we don't want to be interrupted. Here's the boundary we have around dishes, kind of stuff like that. I mean, you're taking on roommates. It's like any roommate situation. So that's how that worked out.

Stephanie: I love this. The other thing that, you know, I know that you guys really weighed in on your... Child care is such a big thing. When you have kids you have to figure out who's going to take care of them, and they need care all the time.

I think that that was one of the things that I just didn't... It crossed my mind, but I didn't really have a plan for it, you know, before we had our girls. So figuring all of that out. There's math to be done there too in terms of like, this is your job, this is Drew's job, this is what you guys want your jobs to continue to move into.

So therefore what do you need your childcare situation to look like? You can pay for great childcare, it's still really hard to find no matter how much you can pay for it. Especially in Nashville I feel like it's really competitive to find. There's just not enough. So if anyone's looking for jobs, come to Nashville and work in childcare, because there's plenty, plenty of need here. But that's a whole thing to figure out too.

Like that's a factor that we all are considering. You know, what does this mean for our job? When we were trying to decide whether we wanted to stay in Nashville or move to Denver, so many people... Nashville is such a great place for the kind of work that both Carl and I do.

And it is possible to do anything remotely, I think, especially at this point. But it is really nice that a lot of things happen just down the street from our house. And it's been so good for both of us, creatively for our careers for, you know, community finding other people who do similar work to us.

Denver would have been different, especially 10 years ago, you know, eight years ago, when we were looking at this it would have been different. And so that's a factor to consider as well.

And all of these things just have different weights. Like you love a city, but the people you love are at a different place. So which one of those kind of weighs more? This is better for work but this would be better for community.

Can one of those things be tweaked so that you can... Or is there a place that has both. There just are so many things to consider, but I think hearing you talk through the ways that you guys considered it and the results that came out of the equation have been so beautiful and such a good fit for you guys, and your family and your personalities and stuff. I think that helps as we're doing our own equations in our own lives to just hear someone else talk through theirs.

Mariko: Yeah. And I think it takes a good measure of self-knowledge too. I knew from our previous move that I can maintain friendship long distance. And I know that there are people who would say, like, That is not my thing. I am not a fan of the phone, or FaceTime, or Marcopolo, or all of the many ways you're able to keep in touch with people now, which is great.

So I think that's something to consider too. Like you're saying, community, is that possible here, is it possible there? I think you also consider like, Okay, how do I best keep in touch with people? As you're considering your job, sure you can work remotely, but there are some people whose mental health is really going to suffer from being in your house all day long on a computer with no other humans.

Whereas if you live in a certain city, and if it has, you know, a hub for your job or whatever, then you have an office to go to or if there's a co-working space that is fairly affordable nearby or... You know what I mean? Every friend I have, who has kids is doing the whole childcare. Do I do my own child care? Do I have someone else do it? Do I hire someone to do it? Do I hire some to do it? Do we do daycare?

That whole wrestle, everyone is in that because it's just a season. And it's also like there's so many options there before it's like, daycare, no daycare? But it's like, we can do hybrid sort of things now. People's work schedules are more flexible and that just makes it more complex. I think that's also something to consider is like, not only like, what am I capable of doing and what do I prefer? But like, what is my kid capable of?

You and I were just talking about this. I have one kid who would have been like a shoo-in for daycare, would have loved it, would have been like, "Look at all these new friends I can make immediately Bye mom." And then I have another kid who would hate it, who would have hated every single second of it. And those were things that we had to take into account as well

Never mind the whole budgeting aspect of it. Childcare is expensive. And there's some people who have to make the decision between, okay, do I just take everything I've made at my job this week and hand it over to child care or do I stay home with the kids and try a side hustle? It's like there's so many different configurations.

And to just look at what someone else has done on paper I think is helpful. But I guess what I'm trying to say is like, but also examine yourself and your preferences and what you're capable of and take an honest look at your abilities and your preferences.

Stephanie: I think that that's become just like this heart song for me, is like we all get to do this differently. And we should because we're all different. All of our circumstances are different. I mean, right before we hopped on, I was like, Are two-year-olds big enough to go to school? I mean, I don't know, I've never had two-year-olds before and I've never... I don't know, I don't remember going to preschool. I don't know.

And you're like, "Well, Noah, would have absolutely loved it. Like, See later, mom." And then Asher would hate it. So it's not about two-year-olds, and it's not about school. It's about your two-year-olds and that school and their personality and kind of how it all fits.

I just feel like that's something I'm learning over and over and over in all corners of my life is to just really take in the information that's out there, hear from wise people, but then also look at where we are and where we want to go. And to really take those things into consideration also. Because it's just not one size fits all.

Mariko: It's so tricky. But also I think when we step back and consider what you just said, that everyone's different, it can be really beautiful and affirming. Amy Poehler has this line in one of her books, where she's talking about how the whole stay-at-home mom versus working mom thing, especially I guess, in Hollywood can be very contentious. And she just says, "Good for you, not for me."

And I feel like I see that so often in like the whole work-life mom balance with other friends, but also with so many things. Like you're raising kids in the city, good for you. Turns out not for me. You drive a minivan, good for you, not for me. And to see that, that is so good for this other person. And you're able to extend so much joy and compassion for their situation but you also are then giving that same gift to yourself of like, That's not for me and that's so great. I'm just different, and that's okay.

And I think our kids really benefit from us having that attitude too. I feel like we say that to our daughter sometimes. Like, "Oh, our family's just different, and that's okay." Like, "Oh, our family does that differently." And that not only I think assures her, but it also is creating empathy and compassion for her towards other families who are still like, "Oh, they're weird." It's like, we just do things differently. They do things differently. Ain't that so cool that we get to learn about other families? We made this decision differently. Good for them, not for us. Cool.

Stephanie: I love that so much. One of my favorite things about Girls Night is getting to share the things that, you know... The whole point of this podcast in the first place was to get to share the conversations that I'm having with my friends because my friends are brilliant as everyone's seeing right now and as everyone's gotten to see throughout the years from you, Marri.

But these are the conversations we've been having so much over the last handful of years. And I'm so glad to get to share them because that phrase... I mean, you know, you and I were waiting for our sandwiches at our favorite sandwich spot as you told me that "the good for you not for me thing." And it just is really is true. Every one

of our circumstances is different and we're all different. And we get to choose what this looks like for us.

I mean, we have to choose and that's intimidating, but we get to and that's... Like for some people, intergenerational living, living with your in-laws don't do it. For everyone's mental health, like run away, don't do it. But for some people, that is so beautiful, do it. That's an option for you. And everyone will benefit from you guys living together. What a beautiful way to live!

Also, a way that so many people around the world live their lives just so beautifully. That's an option. And we kind of forget that in the US. But then also for some people, don't do it with your family, because it's just not good for anybody. So it really depends. And everything is like that.

Mariko: Agreed.

Stephanie: For women who are moving to a new place right now, Marri, now that you've done this, you know, as many times as you have, and having the empathy of being in it again right now, what are some of takeaways for them? Like, don't forget this, bring this with you, try this. Just any care package, you know, lunch sack for the road that you can sign this for women.

Mariko: I think I would say three things. First of all, kind of what we talked about earlier, have the perspective that people are being more generous and compassionate to you than you think. And you can be more generous and compassionate to yourself than you think. Because I think that that eases some of the pressure and it makes it easier to just put yourself out there, which is a huge part of moving to a new city, like saying yes to things.

The second thing I would say is, I think it's actually very similar to what you teach in Your Single Life course, Steph. That I think one of the most effective and efficient ways to build community is to build your own rhythms and then invite other people into them.

So depending on your season that might look different. One of my friends is single, she's in her late 20s and she lives in Nashville, and she lives near this really cool bar. And every week on a certain night, they have like a frequent flier card at this bar or whatever. And it's like you get a certain amount of drinks, whatever. I don't know. It's like you get the stamps.

And she just had established this rhythm of going to this same place once a week, she gets a drink. So then she, when she makes a new friend, invites that friend into her rhythm. I think it's just an easier yes when someone is, instead of saying, like,

"Hey, would you ever want to get a drink sometimes?" That can feel really vague and difficult to commit to. But also, I don't know, it feels like there's more pressure than if someone is like, "I'm already doing this thing if you want to tag along."

It feels very cozy to be invited into someone's rhythm. But also it doesn't feel like if you say no you're crushing them. They're like, I'm already doing this thing. So whether it's doing like a trivia night, or if you're young and married and you're looking to meet other couples, or if you're like.... whatever stage you're in, it's like, "Oh, every Tuesday we do this trivia night, would you guys ever want to meet up for that? It's super fun at X place."

Or I feel like it's been especially helpful. A season of new momming, especially when you have really, really young kids super hands-on, it can be really difficult to make community. And I know that that can be a really lonely season for lots of women. And there is the classic like moms groups and stuff that you can do.

And I know a lot of friends who have gotten so much life and so many wonderful experiences through that. But I feel like it can also... Like if you're a working mom that can be more complex. So one thing I think is really helpful and easy is if you have your park you go to or if you have your thing, it's so much less pressure to say your kids are really enjoying playing with this one kid instead of like, let's set up a playdate sometime.

That can be really intimidating. And then you're committing to not only your kid being friends with this kid, but you and the mom are then in community together, whether you like it or not. It's a way lower pressure ask to say, "Oh, usually, after pickup, we go to this playground right over here. If you guys ever wanted to meet up with us, we're usually playing there for about an hour or so after school pick-up." You know what I mean?

Or like, "On Sundays after church, we usually grab coffee, and then we hang out at such and such a park. You guys ever wanted to take a walk with us." I feel like walks are such a wonderful way to make a new friend because you're not just sitting there staring into each other's eyes having a moment. It can be really low stakes when you're moving your body and it just loosens you up in general.

So I felt like if you build a rhythm for your life, build a life that you love, and then invite other people into it, I feel like it's not only this cozy, wonderful feeling when someone does that for you but it also is low stakes for everyone. And bonus, you're building a life that you love. Like you shouldn't be doing that anyways.

I think that is something I've tried to be more intentional with with this move, I think because I'm more comfortable with the decisions I've made in life and I feel

more established in what I do. And also because my life is very scheduled. I've got three kids. There's not a lot of wiggle room to be like, "Would you ever want to meet up with a coffee at some point?" I can't do that.

But I can say, you know, "I dropped my daughter off at preschool every Tuesday and Thursday at nine. I drove right past that Starbucks. Do you want to take a walk through the park" or blah, blah, blah, whatever. "When I pick her up, I always go to this playground. Do you want to meet me there?" I just feel like that... I said three things and I can't remember the third thing. So that's number two and three.

Stephanie: Scheduling friend time is hard. We're still figuring out how to have dates and what we want that to look like for us, you know, and getting a child care for that when we've been busy all day and so we kind of just want to do nothing. But then the weekends don't look like they used to because we can't just sit around and do nothing. We have to do something.

So what we've been learning is that that's a really good time to hang out with friends. Like we're all doing something, so let's do something together. And so our thing for the last probably a year or so is that every Sunday Carl makes pancakes. So we've started to just invite friends over for pancakes.

Our house is a good kid house now because we've had to totally baby-proof everything. So it's indestructible for our kids and other people's kids. And we have toys. So it's like everyone just come over. Carl makes pancakes. Bring your kids and we'll just let them play and we'll hang out and it's become just this... And we're doing it anyway. So it's like whether you're there or not, we will be having pancakes on Sunday. If you'd like to come... and we're not getting anything productive done anyway. That's not time we're spending doing anything else. So there might as well be other people here. So I really liked that. I really like that.

Marri, I love you so much.

Mariko: I love you too.

Stephanie: I just am so grateful for, gosh, a million things. I'll start crying if I talk too much about you. But I'm so glad that the women got to hear this from you because you've been so inspiring to me-

Mariko: Oh, thank you.

Stephanie: ...in this area of life and so many other ones. I know that you have a lot of things coming up in the next year work-wise that I'm going to be obnoxiously... I'm going to be talking about your book once it's available to an obnoxious degree. You can

just say see you soon to Marri because that's coming your way. But I love you, friend. Thanks for coming on the show.

Mariko: I love you too. Thanks for having me. It was good to be here again.

[01:05:59] <music>

Outro: You guys, isn't Marri amazing? I love her so much. Don't forget that if you ever want to find the links for anything we talked about in our Girls Night episodes, you can always find those over in our show notes. Just head over to girlsnightpodcast.com and you'll find links for everything, including links for Marri so you can preorder her book here soon, ah, I'm so excited, listen to her podcast, follow along with all the great stuff she's doing too.

Friends, that's it for today's episode, but we have so much good stuff ahead this season. And with that in mind, now is the perfect time to make sure you're subscribed. Subscribing to the show is the best way to make sure you never miss an episode. We won't send you an email or anything, it just makes sure your phone downloads the latest episode when the new one's released.

And I did want to take a quick second to ask you guys a favor. If you enjoyed this episode or if you've been a Girls Night fan for a while, would you take just two quick seconds to leave us a rating and review on iTunes? Those reviews help out our podcasts so much and it really would mean the world to me. So if you take two quick seconds to do that, I'd be so grateful. Friends, thanks so much for joining me for Girls Night. I'll see you next week.