



INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT | NORA BOUCHARD BOUCHARD | MAY 24, 2018

DR. ANNE HALLWARD: So Nora, I wondered if you would please start by introducing yourself. Tell me your name and about the work that you do sure.

NORA BOUCHARD: My name is Nora Klaver Bouchard and I am a leadership and executive coach. I've been doing this work since the mid-90s and that means that I work with leaders in corporations to help them develop their leadership abilities. And along the way I noticed a pattern in the behavior of a lot of my clients and that had to do with asking for help. They were happy talking to me about what they needed, but if I asked them to go out and ask other people to assist them, you could see the blood rushing from their faces. So I thought maybe this might be a good idea for a book. So I am also author of *Mayday: Asking For Help In Times of Need*.

DR. ANNE HALLWARD: Why does it matter whether or not we learn how to ask for help?

NORA BOUCHARD: There are so many wonderful reasons for reaching out and asking for what you need. It matters because it is a fundamental bedrock skill that most of us refuse to learn. And it is something that actually brings us closer together rather than further apart.

I think that the people who actually experiment and push themselves to ask for help find benefits that they just really never intended to see. I think first of all we get help. It's unlikely you're going to get it if you don't ask for it, I think is what it comes down to. And in fact, most of us have created lives of such self-sufficiency that there's really not much of a push for us to reach out and ask for what we need. So, we think, we talk ourselves into thinking that nobody's going to help but, in fact, when we do ask more than likely we will get a positive response. We get help, which is ultimately a fabulous thing mostly because we're better able to balance our energy and our workloads and our life loads at home. It's so much easier to do if we have someone helping us along the way.

We also, when we ask for help, we end up returning to what I consider the flow of life. Oftentimes we're resisting it so much -- asking for what we need -- that the situation whatever situation we're in just continues to exist over and over and over again, but if we ask it seems to break that damn and then life returns to a flow.

We grow as people when we ask for help. We learn to ask in the right way. We recognize that we're really connected to everybody else. That surrender and relying on someone else is actually a beautiful thing. We deepen our relationships. Others -- the people who participate who are willing to help us -- actually end up feeling really good about themselves. Most people want to help; they want to give of themselves. They want to make sure that they're doing something of value every day and if you reach out and ask for help, most people love that because it gives them a chance to really show what they can do.

And then I think also our relationships change. We start seeing each other in a little different light and I think that's usually a pretty good place to be. Instead of seeing ourselves as superhuman, we see each other as really human.

DR. ANNE HALLWARD: Why is it hard to ask for help?

NORA BOUCHARD: Yeah, there's so many reasons. On a very basic level, we're really not taught how to ask for help. We might be taught as children how to share from our abundance if we have a lot of toys or candy. We're taught how to share that with other kids or with our family members, but we're really not taught how to ask for help when we're young. And I really actually wish we were taught how.

But I think the primary reason is that we're afraid when it comes right down to it. We're afraid of three different things. We're afraid of surrendering to someone else because, really, when we're asking someone for help, we're

asking them to come into our lives and to maybe even take control over a situation or part of a situation. And, it's really hard to let go and let someone else do that. You know, we may have to we might have to give up that control or we may actually have to trust in an unknown a result. We may not have control over the result, how it's going to pan out. Or we actually may have to pay a price for help. When we ask someone else for help often times we think about it in terms of a transaction. A bit of tit-for-tat and it doesn't always have to be that way. And in fact when I'm asking for help from my friends, you know, I offer to make sure that I let them know that I'm happy to pay them back, but most of them say, "Don't worry about it. We're friends. This is what friends do."

We're also afraid to that if we ask for help, we might come across as a little too needy. And so people may not want to hang out with us anymore or they might actually think we're really not capable so they actually might -- we fear anyway -- fire us or let us go or not be with us anymore. So there's a fear of separation that I think comes into play as well.

And then the final fear, the one that I think really does a number on all of us, is the fear of shame. We try so hard to be perfect and to appear as competent and in control and able to handle every situation, but, in reality, we're really not able to do that. And we're ashamed to show people that maybe we're a little bit weaker than we like to let on or maybe we're not as put together as we want people to see us as. So shame comes into play and people just kind of hide the fact that they need help. I think that one probably is prevalent. That one shows up an awful lot. We're really just embarrassed that we have to ask for something.

DR. ANNE HALLWARD: You said that asking for help is not something that we're taught. What would be the best way to learn to ask for help or for people to teach how to do it?

NORA BOUCHARD: Well, I think we need to begin very young just as we teach children how to use their inside voice or to use their words now when they're frustrated or challenged. I think we need to start early teaching them to ask for what they need and just coming out and saying, "What's the question? What's the request? What are you requesting?" And I think that kids will pick up on that. They'll learn to say instead of, "Pick me up, mommy." They'll say, "Will you please pick me up, mommy?" Or "I need some help over here, daddy. Can you come over and help me with my Legos?" I think it—just like everything else when you're raising a child, it takes a deliberate effort and the parents and societies part to make that change happen.

DR. ANNE HALLWARD: So often what I hear in my office is struggles from people in primary relationships where they don't want to have to ask. They want their partner to know what they need. And I think of that as sort of as a very young wish. You know, like children when we're really little before we are even verbal, right? We can't ask for what we need. We need our parents to pay attention and get it. And I think there's often a persistence of that longing for someone to understand me — so, well, I won't have to ask or they feel like asking kind of cheapens it. It won't be, it won't feel as good if a person just doesn't give it spontaneously. How do you respond to people who tell you that they don't want to have to ask?

NORA BOUCHARD: You know, I think that's probably a pretty valid statement — that we all want to be seen and especially our needs so that we don't have to articulate them or give voice to them ourselves — but I think if we do ask early and ask often in all of our relationships, it becomes less of a a personal stigma. We can we can see it for what it is — that it's just another part of our conversation, part of our relationship with that person. And, actually, if you're asking for what you need frequently, the other person figures it out pretty quickly. You know, they are gonna know that you have an expectation at some point around your birthday to actually be doing something romantic. But you you have to make a step forward and start asking early.

DR. ANNE HALLWARD: I love that. So start asking your partner early and often for help. Like set a precedent. Establish it. That's so great.

NORA BOUCHARD: I would also add that if if you do it that way it becomes less of a significant action. It just becomes an everyday kind of activity between the two of you. If you just ask for help once or twice a year that becomes pretty significant and it makes it much harder.

DR. ANNE HALLWARD: Right, it's too loaded and then it almost becomes like a test.

NORA BOUCHARD: Yes.

DR. ANNE HALLWARD: So when you talk about, you know, the transactional or the hesitation that people have for a transactional kind of relationship where if I ask you for help, then I'm going to have to do something back for you. How do you help people move past transactional ways of relating to each other?

NORA BOUCHARD: Because asking for help, it shines a light on the relationship that you have, it helps you see where it's strong and where it's weak. And by seeing where it might be weak, that's an opportunity for deepening the relationship. So I do have my clients really talk through where they think the relationship might be a little weaker and we work through ideas that might make it a little bit better. What kind of conversations can you be having? What can you offer? Before you even make the request what can you do for that other person.

Often times it's a question of what it is they really know about that other person. Is it just the superficial stuff? That they work in this department? They have this many people reporting to them? Or is it really deeper? Do they understand what's going on at home? Do they understand what their biggest challenges are? So we really take a more holistic approach at the relationship and not just focus on where it's strong, but also where it's weak and how we can build that up by really personal connection

DR. ANNE HALLWARD: I want to I want to ask you now about the role of gender in asking for help and I want to ask you a personal question as a woman. Have you had the experience of being given offers of help from men that felt really unwelcome? Like they feel kind of patronizing or condescending? For help that you don't need?

NORA BOUCHARD: Yes. I do have a number of those stories. The one that really comes to mind for me was years ago. I was working with large consulting firm and we were doing an outdoor adventure kind of activity and I was climbing a wall and our team had to climb the wall together. And at one point I was lagging. I was, you know, I wasn't the last person, but I was lagging a little bit. The next thing I know I feel a hand on the collar of my shirt and I feel myself being yanked up by one man on the team and I was totally stunned. I wasn't asking for help. I wasn't scared. I was just slowly moving at my pace, but he really felt as though I needed assistance, physical assistance to make it up this wall. And I have to tell you, I got to the top with him and I gave him a piece of my mind. It was not pretty. I mean, I appreciate what he was trying to do, but it really ruined the the opportunity for me. I wasn't able to prove to myself that I could do it without assistance.

DR. ANNE HALLWARD: Do you think that for women being treated as if we're weak, as if we're not competent, contributes to our hesitation to ask for help?

NORA BOUCHARD: I think it does to a certain extent. It makes it harder for us to stand up for ourselves. We see automatically the the wall that has been built there, the wall that's been built on preconceptions and expectations. We know we have to break through that. It's one thing to talk about a glass ceiling. It's it's another to talk about this wall of prejudice that might exist. I do.

I have another story about a couple of clients of mine. One was a man. One was a woman. So let's just call them Dan and Elizabeth. And Dan was Elizabeth's supervisor. Dan saw great potential in her and so what he did — what he thought he was doing was helping her — and he would go and pay extra attention to her and he would really be critical of the work that she did to try to make her so much better. From her perspective, she really felt like she was being singled out, picked on. She felt as though her boss had no confidence in her capabilities and the two of them really had this very difficult relationship with this—with really prejudices on both sides, these these prejudgments about what the intention was from the other person. And thankfully I was coaching them both at the same time and we were able to get them beyond that, but it was it was interesting that they both had the best intentions. It's just that giving help when it's not been requested is rarely welcome. Especially if you're not talking to the person about what it is you're doing.

And I find that that forcing help on others is, it's something that men tend to do more often than women. Women are, we're known for wanting to talk out our issues, to just talk to someone. Have them heard so that we can work through themselves. Men are known for wanting to be problem solvers. And these are gross exaggerations, but there's a trend that way. And men want to solve our problems for us without really even involving us, if at all possible. They just want to fix the situation. So we have to be really careful that we're not foisting our help on someone whether you're a man or a woman.

DR. ANNE HALLWARD: What are the gender differences that you observe between men and women in asking for help?

NORA BOUCHARD: So in regards to gender differences ultimately, there's not a huge difference. Men and women have the same fears. We're all afraid of looking bad or weak or out of control. And we don't want to be rejected from others if we ask for help. It's not really so much the gender, it's just that each individual person may have a preferred place where they would ask for help. So it may be that one woman's comfortable asking for help at home. Another might be comfortable asking more comfortable asking for help at work. Same with men. So I don't really see huge gender differences when it comes to asking for help. It's universally feared.

DR. ANNE HALLWARD: So it's clear that people struggle with a number of fears about asking for help. What are the benefits of asking for help. Especially what are the benefits that people don't anticipate necessarily?

NORA BOUCHARD: Well, I think people are surprised that they actually might get help, which is great. When we do get the help that we need, it helps us balance our lives a little bit more and that's always something we're searching for. We definitely grow. We learn that it's not so bad being frail humans. That it's okay to not be perfect. That it's okay to rely on other people. And when we do that, we grow as people. We grow in empathy. We grow in self compassion for ourselves. We grow in trust and faith of the people that we have in our lives. We we really experience kind of a burst of of love and support when we ask for that help. And honestly others feel great about giving it to us.

There's a there's a old definition for the word community which is about bringing gifts to the center. And when you ask someone for help, it's like you're asking them to bring a gift of themselves to the center of whatever your problem or issue is. That they're contributing something from within themselves. It's really important that it's either their skill or their listening ear or their heart. It could be it could be anything or it could be a car even, but they're contributing something that's going to help you out. And most people feel really, really good about that and it makes them feel good about themselves.

DR. ANNE HALLWARD: Nora, I really believe you. When my father, who had dementia for many years, as his dementia was advancing, probably his biggest struggle was feeling like he didn't have a way to contribute anymore. And he had a caregiver who helped him make greeting cards for all his kids and family members and he would cut out these pictures that he liked and glue them on and then she would help him. Like, by the end, it was literally just making a mark with his name, but he would send them out at moments when we were struggling or on our birthdays and it was so important to him. Really right—close to, you know, the time that he died that, he had a way to give help or to make a contribution.

NORA BOUCHARD: Oh, that's so beautiful. And I think that's true. We all want to feel needed, like our life is still of value even in the late years. So I thank you for sharing that. That was beautiful.

DR. ANNE HALLWARD: I think there was a study by a Stanford Professor showing that people who ask for help so often underestimate how meaningful it is to the person who gives.

NORA BOUCHARD: I think that's very true. I think we we want an opportunity to help each other. It really deepens the relationship. It is establishes some trust that maybe you might have had a good level of trust to start with, but it really takes that to a whole new level when you can be vulnerable in front of someone else and they can be respectful and supportive of you. That just deepens the trust in the relationship and you know that refines it. That's what makes it so beautiful in life.

DR. ANNE HALLWARD: Are there any benefits to asking for help even if we do get turned down?

NORA BOUCHARD: Well, I think so. Actually I have a story where a number of years ago I had to go in for surgery and I was going to be recuperating for over a week afterwards. And so I asked my boyfriend at the time if he would come stay with me for that week. And we had been going out for a couple of years at that point, so I thought that was a no-brainer. But apparently he didn't see the see it that way.

So although he said yes initially, two days before my surgery, he said no. And so asking for help in that situation really let me shine a light on some problems in that relationship and really it ended the relationship which was probably — well not probably, definitely — a good thing for me. I needed to let go of that kind of love in my life and find someone else who was really going to care for me even when I wasn't completely self-sufficient.

DR. ANNE HALLWARD: And that sounds like the kind of benefit that you especially appreciate a lot later.

NORA BOUCHARD: Yeah. Yeah. I did. It took me a while to let go of the anger and disappointment and just the plain old hurt. Yeah, but I did really see the benefit of it later on. And actually the other thing it did for me was it helped me recognize that the way I had created my life at that point, I was the one who was usually helping everybody else. So here I am a coach, you know, that's my *raison d'être*. I'm going to be out there working to help people achieve their best, you know. I was very capable. I was living this great life and everybody was coming to me for help and I had surrounded myself with people who wanted to do that and who thought nothing about *me* for help, but I realized, not just with that relationship, but with other relationships, even with my friends, I started realizing this wasn't what I really wanted out of my relationships. And so I ended up letting go of a number of friends at that time because they just weren't willing to be there for me.

But I also think in addition to shining a light on the relationship, when we ask for helping get a rejection, I think it also teaches us that asking for help really is a conversation. It's not just a hey, will you help me? Yes or no. It's the beginning of a real conversation. Are we if you're willing to listen to my request, can I tell you what I need or what I think I need, and I'm open to hearing what you think I need. So there's a little give and take going on in the relationship so that you're starting a conversation about what really needs to be done.

DR. ANNE HALLWARD: You're really letting someone in. Are there — I'm going to ask you in a moment about the how-to's of asking for help — but before we go there, are there classic mistakes that people make in asking for help? Or things to avoid doing if you really want to make sure that something, that asking for help will go well?

NORA BOUCHARD: Yes, there are some basic mistakes. And one is you don't want to use any coercion. You don't want to make it seem like they have to help you or else. That is a bad move. You want to make sure that they're willing, really heartfelt willing, to help you and not doing it just because they're afraid of what might come if they don't. So there are some people who get — because they're so uncomfortable with this topic of asking for help — they really get very pushy in their requests. And so whether it's deliberate or inadvertent, they end up asking for help in a way that is kind of coercive. "I really need you to do this or I'm not going to be able to help you out ever again." It just doesn't work.

So, you know when I think a lot of people, not everyone but there are some who will use their emotional distress in a way that adds extra pressure on the person they're asking help of. And I don't think it's always necessary. I think you can very easily make the request and explain what you're feeling emotionally without really just laying it, covering them with your distress, your worry, your concern.

DR. ANNE HALLWARD: I would, in some ways, let's try this out as you coaching me. So if I had someone that I, if I needed to ask for help, what are the steps that I should follow?

NORA BOUCHARD: Well, first of all what you'd like to do is just really breathe. Take a moment. Give yourself a little bit of a break and sit back. Because I think a lot of us really get to a place of panic or worry and it's so intense that we're not thinking straight. But if you can sit back and take a deep breath, cut yourself a little bit of slack and just relax for a moment that will help pieces of the request fall together. You might, during this time, be able to get a sense of who you should ask for help. And when you think about that, I don't want you to assume anything, because a lot of people say, oh, you know, there's so busy, you know, he's not going to have time. I know what else he's going through and and you'd be surprised even people who are dealing with a tough situation actually still want to be able to give up themselves. They may set some parameters about what they can do, but they still want to help out.

So while you're sitting there breathing don't assume that people are going to be too busy to help you out. Then make sure that you have a pretty clear idea of what you think you need. Is it that you just need a little bit of cash to cover you for the next five days until your paycheck comes? Is it that you need someone to help you driving the kids to school? What specifically do you need help with and try to narrow it down as much as you possibly can. Then

when you have an idea of who you want to ask, and you have an idea of what you want to ask about, then you want to make sure that you request this person's time. And that sounds really formal, but you just want to make sure it's okay to talk to them about it. You don't want to call them up in the middle of dinner. You don't want to call them up when they're heading out of the house you want to talk to them when they're calm situated, relaxed and they're not distracted by anything else. And you want to make sure you're doing that in the same way. You want to make sure that you're not cooking dinner that you're relaxed that as relaxed as you can be and then begin that conversation.

And I'll tell you, Anne, one of the things that I think people really struggle with is to use that word. You know, you know I could, it's it's it's a hard word for us to say and in fact when I was writing the book I struggled because we don't actually have many words that act as synonyms for help. And so I was kind of getting bored using the same ones over and over again. So I so I think it's deliberate almost we need to really be specific. I really need some help. Do you think you could help me?

DR. ANNE HALLWARD: So it's almost like our language reflects our cultural discomfort. We don't even have that many words. You know that famous thing that the Inuit have 52 words for snow. I'm not even sure if that's actually accurate, but something that's very important to you, you have to talk about a lot, whereas we have like one or two words for help.

NORA BOUCHARD: Yes. I believe that's really true. I actually think the language is a reflection of our culture and so we have to be really clear that we're asking for help because somebody might be just sitting there, listening to us going, "Yeah, that's pretty tough. You know, wow, that's rough," and not recognizing that you need their help. You have to be specific about it. And even when I'm working with leaders and organizations, it becomes a really powerful tool to use that word when you're talking to a subordinate or a direct report and you say, you know, I really need your help on this. It's amazing people's brains just completely attune. Maybe they just zero in on that and people start responding like, "Yeah, I'm happy to help." I mean it's it's it's a word that we react to very significantly. It's really important to us and it speaks to us really deep down at a heart level. So I want to make sure that if you're going to ask for help, you're actually using that word.

DR. ANNE HALLWARD: Okay, use the H word

NORA BOUCHARD: Use the H word. Exactly.

There a couple more steps I could add. Okay, then the two of you, you know, you can offer up what you think you need help with and it's always up to the other person to say, "Well, you know, that sounds about right, but what if you did this?" Or they might say, "Oh, yeah, I can do I can drive your kids to school on Tuesdays and Thursdays, but I can't do it Monday, Wednesday and Friday." So that's part of the conversation that goes on. And then you need to really listen to the answer. Is it really a solid no? Or is it a no, that maybe if the circumstances changed a little bit could become a yes? It's worth having that conversation. So a lot of people are really terrified of hearing that, "No, I can't do that." But I think that's still an opening for another conversation. So if you can't help me out with that, do you know if somebody else who could help me? Or if you can't help me out on those days, are there other days later on that you might be able to? Or under, you know, what kind of circumstances do you think you might be able to help me out? What would you need in order to make this comfortable for you?

And then the final the final step is just to make sure everybody's really clear on who's going to do what and when, so that you leave kind of knowing exactly what the next steps are.

DR. ANNE HALLWARD: In your book you write about the importance of taking time for self compassion before you ask for help and I was particularly interested in that because what I observe is that when we ask in a way that feels embarrassing or like I'm I feel ashamed to ask you this, it often kind of sabotages the ask. And I wondered if you could please tell me about. What makes it important to access self-compassion before you ask?

NORA BOUCHARD: Yeah, you know, I don't know about you but most of the people I know are pretty hard on themselves. They have high expectations for what they want to achieve, for the kind of behavior that they should be showing, you know, for the kind of competence they should be demonstrating. We are also hard on ourselves whether we work at home whether we work out of the office or on a job site somewhere. We're all very proud of our accomplishments and and we like believing that about ourselves, that, you know, we can really tackle anything. But

in reality is that's not the case, and that sometimes we don't meet our own standards. And we actually have to admit that to ourselves first, and I think if we admit to ourselves, we don't necessarily have to admit it to other people. We don't have to say I'm embarrassed to ask this. We can just ask, but I think because we're so hard on ourselves, it's really hard to take a moment for self-care and self-compassion. It sounds selfish. It sounds as though no one really deserves time to just take care of themselves, when in fact they do.

And I always go back — this is such a cliché — but I always go back to the little speech that the flight attendants give at the start of a flight, that you need to put your mask on first before you can help anyone else. And to me that is the same exact kind of behavior that you have to show yourself. You have to take care of yourself first before you go help others. You have to take care of yourself first before you ask for help from others. You have to look at your life and really decide where you can squeeze in a moment of reflection or journaling or a trip to the ice cream shop, you know, whatever. It is something that is going to pamper you. Something that you deserve to have.

DR. ANNE HALLWARD: And you think doing so will help you ask in a more effective way?

NORA BOUCHARD: I think it does because, at some level, it shows you that you deserve being cared for. It reminds you that yeah, that's okay, someone can take care of me and I don't have to be the only one to do that. And, you know, of course, if your taking me to the ice cream store, I'm really happy about that. It does feel like go ahead.

DR. ANNE HALLWARD: Well, it does feel like that is a big obstacle for people and asking for help is believing that they deserve it that they're worthy of help.

NORA BOUCHARD: Yeah, I think that's probably true. We see all our own shadows and we work so hard to make sure that no one else sees them and asking for help may reveal some of those dark sides of ourselves. Those sides that people don't want others to know. The fact that maybe we don't handle our money all that well, or that we do have a crazy brother or sister in the family or whatever it is. And asking for help requires us to reveal that, but I think if we do recognize that we're lovable humans, that we're just lovable people who deserve just as much as anyone else deserves help, I think that speaks to our psyche and drives the point home that yeah, we are deserving of it.

DR. ANNE HALLWARD: Okay. Do you have a favorite story about asking for help or being asked for help?

NORA BOUCHARD: Yeah. So I was working with a coach a number of years ago before I wrote the book and one of the assignments that she had given me was to ask for help three times a day. And I really recommend that for everybody, but, you know, I was a little stubborn about it because I kept thinking that am I going to ask for help, but, you know, I don't need much. Everything's under control. My life is pretty good the way it is. I remember I was working out of town and there was a snowstorm. The flight was delayed. I'd been gone all week. I was exhausted and kind of grumpy which is where I usually go when I'm tired and they finally let us on the on the plane.

It was probably about 11:30 at night. I'd been at the airport for six hours. I was getting on the plane and there was a gentleman behind me who was in my space. He was so close to me. It was driving me crazy and all week long I had been reminding myself I should ask for help. I had been doing that, but it really didn't resonate. Nothing really clicked for me. So here I am. I'm tired. I'm dragging my case onto the plane. This man is in my space and I stopped at my seat and I go to lift the suitcase up into the bin and I swear in my arms stopped working. I could not lift that case. There was no way my arms were going to work. I don't know what it was. I could not get it up into the bin. And the gentleman behind me. Reaches over any any touches my shoulder and he says I'm happy to help you with that. And I said no. No, no thanks. I'm fine. I'm fine and, in my mind, I'm still hearing ask for help, ask for help and but I'm so ingrained in the habit of not asking for help that my knee-jerk response was to say no. And so I tried again to get it up into the bin and it didn't work. So he said a second time, "No, really, I'm happy to help," and I said, "Nope. I got it. I got it." And then finally I slide the handle back into the case and I slammed my thumb in the process of doing this and now I'm sucking my thumb like the baby that I am. And he steps forward picks up the case gently puts it in the bin and here I am expecting this really condescending look on his face because I had been really so ungracious about the whole thing. And instead his face was just glowing and he was so happy to have helped me and I was stunned. I was just speechless. I did stumble a thank you out, but I was so taken aback by how much he enjoyed being able to help me and how sweet he was about it.

And it was such a revelation to me that asking for help really isn't always just about me. That it is often about the

other person. And it's it's funny, I often tell the story and a lot of people are like did you marry him? Did you see him again? Like it's, you know, something out of a film. And no I never saw him again, but he taught me such an amazing lesson about asking for help and it showed to me that these breakthroughs can happen at any point and it made such a difference in my life. It helped me understand that being vulnerable was totally okay. Now I let anyone put my suitcase up in the bin. It doesn't matter at all. And I I enjoy the fact that they appreciate the opportunity to help. So that's one of my favorite stories because, you know, it shows that many of us just get into this habit of not asking out of being completely self-sufficient and it really stops us from really even having quick connections with other people.

DR. ANNE HALLWARD: Why have you invested so much in learning and teaching about asking for help?

NORA BOUCHARD: Well, this goes back really to my family. I'm one of nine children. And my father was in sales and so he traveled a lot and so my mother stay at home mom. She's 92, by the way. She's amazing. She took care of all nine of us. But I learned early on that, you know, I couldn't always be asking for the help I needed because she really was stressed and stretched across nine children. And I think I learned early on to be fairly self-sufficient. I don't even think it's something that I adopted later after college, you know, when I got into business.

I think it was something that I adopted early on and I realized that it really made me pretty lonely. It really isolated me. People always thought that I was completely in control and, you know, I'm just like everybody else. I'm like a duck on water and my my little feet are flapping just fast as they possibly can just to stay afloat, you know, but because I always came across as so under control and so competent I don't think anybody even thought to think that I needed help. And when I did ask, I wouldn't I wouldn't necessarily get it.

I actually I rarely asked as a child. I didn't ask all that much growing up. But I was also attracted to a number of people who were a bit needier who didn't have any problem asking me for favors? You know, I remember in college my boyfriend loved to wait to the last minute to write his papers and asked me to type them up. And so we'd be up in the middle of the night. I'd sleep for a while. And once he finished a page, I would type it and then I go back to sleep and it just it never occurred to me that I could ask for the same thing in return. So it I think as I grew into an adult I just attracted the wrong kind of people in my life. I um felt as though no one really demonstrated their care and support of me and that asking for help was just too hard, and then I had to crack the code on that. I had to find a way of doing it so it wasn't so difficult. And now I'm happy to do it pretty frequently.

DR. ANNE HALLWARD: And how would you say your life has changed as a result?

NORA BOUCHARD: Oh, it's so much more rich and my friendships are so much more deep. You know, just thinking about just people near my home and in the neighborhood, the people that I've connected with, the friends that I've really created over the last few years who, they've had their health issues. I've had my health issues. We've had home issues and job issues between all of us and we've been there and we've been there for each other and we just laugh it off. It's you know, happy to help. We just laugh when the request comes in because it's, of course, we're happy to help. So my life is so much more rich and I have people around me who really care for me and want to help me.

DR. ANNE HALLWARD: Sounds like a great feeling.

NORA BOUCHARD: Yeah, it is. I really feel embraced.

DR. ANNE HALLWARD: Why do you think that we have such a cultural avoidance of dependency or of appearing dependent on one another?

NORA BOUCHARD: Well here in the US especially, I think in our culture the foremost value that we have as a country is independence. I mean our founding document is written about independence. And we have created all sorts of archetypes around the independent person the John Wayne types, the people who go out there and do it on their own. Even nowadays like Chance the Rapper, although Chance is amazing and he really gives back and is really involved in the community, but he really broke away from the whole idea of where he went through record labels and did it on his own through YouTube, you know. We value those people who really do it on their own or appear to, but I think it's a myth really. We buy into this myth that that's the best way to be and the reality is that nobody makes it on their own. No one can get by in this life without help from anyone else and that we're all reliant

on each other to support one another.

DR. ANNE HALLWARD: Right and it's a pretty lonely life to not really know that and live that.

NORA BOUCHARD: Oh, it's incredibly lonely. Incredibly lonely. And I think that is actually one of the problems in the country right now. You know, we talk about the shooters at the school. And who knows if these these boys, mostly boys, have reached out for help and if they've gotten the help that they need, but I think most of them are feeling very deeply lonely. And I think that's part of the culture that we are isolating ourselves even more than we ever did before just by our focus on use of phones and iPads and the rest, you know. We have these relationships with people where we're not really even ever near them and that's still very lonely, not having the physical touch every day really contributes to a sense of isolation and feeling outside the the group. Having someone touch you physically every day, whether it's a hand on your shoulder, a kiss on your cheek or a shaking of a hand that really makes us feel like we're part of something bigger than ourselves.

DR. ANNE HALLWARD: Nora, of the steps that you outline in how to ask for help, what would you say is the hardest part of asking for help?

NORA BOUCHARD: I think it's the self-compassion. I think it's incredibly hard for us to give ourselves some slack. I think it's really hard for us to to accept that we need help and that we deserve it. And once we get over that hurdle everything else kind of falls into place and we may not be really graceful doing it. We may stumble a lot. We may trip over our words. We might screw it up somehow, but ultimately we're not going to get to that point unless we feel at some level that we deserve the help that we need.

DR. ANNE HALLWARD: My experience in talking to so many people these days about their stories of asking for help is it people often say, you know — I say, well what finally got you to do it, you know? — and often the answer is well because my fear of what would happen if I didn't ask became bigger than my fear of asking. And so they were sort of like pushed to the wall in a way. Do you find that a lot? Do you find that it often has to get to that place?

NORA BOUCHARD: Yes, I do. And especially when it comes to issues of addiction. For example, people really have to get to a point where they see for themselves that they can't do it alone. Where the message is really very clear and that they feel it not just intellectually, but emotionally and physically that they can't do it themselves and it's at that point where they step up and they fear for their lives. They fear that they are never going to get out of this addiction hole. And they know that they need someone else to come up and give them a hand.

DR. ANNE HALLWARD: Can you speak to what it's like for someone to not be asked for help? Like if you love someone and you see that they're really struggling and they won't ask you for help. They won't let you in. They won't receive your help. Can you speak to how hard it is to not be asked?

NORA BOUCHARD: Actually yes, I can. I know of a woman who had a brother who is an alcoholic and he'd gotten to the point where he was damaging himself physically and she and her sister held an intervention with him and he just basically threw them out of the house. He just rejected the help that they were offering him. And, it was crushing for her absolutely crushing. She, you know, here is someone she loves so deeply and was so close to for a very long time and to see him choose to take a different path really just ripped both of her both her and her sister up inside. They were essentially grieving for the loss of his life in advance of his demise and thankfully, a couple of months later, he actually came around and he hit his rock bottom and called them both up and asked for help.

But I think when we observe that, I mean there's so much that goes through our minds. We don't understand it. We can't. There's no logic behind it. It's not a typical kind of disease that where we might actually see some sort of physical manifestation of the illness and we don't really understand it intellectually, but emotionally we feel the end. We feel a rejection that's so deep and profound. And you know, if the person you love actually does turn around and it's wonderful. It's like Lazarus coming out of the tomb. There's an opportunity. A chance. There's still life here. We can still do something.

DR. ANNE HALLWARD: So one of the biggest fears of asking for help is the fear of not getting it, you know be feeling rejected. How what advice can you give or how what can help for people to cope with daring to ask for help and then not receiving it?

NORA BOUCHARD: Yeah, it is hard. There's there's no easy way around it really and it is something that, you

know, most of us have to experience in life, whether it's multiple times or once. But I do think what mitigates it is asking for help frequently, and getting used to it, getting accustomed to making the request and getting accustomed to some yesses and nos. I mean, I often liken it to actors who are trying to break into show business, you know. They're constantly getting rejected until they find their big break, but they have to keep pushing themselves over and over again getting out there. So one of the things that the actors I know, what they do is they create a support system for themselves. They have others who've been at through it before. They learn to laugh it off. They see that it's not the end of the world.

You know, one of the things that we haven't talked about is the use of gratitude and asking for help because if you can be grateful about something or a situation, you can see it in a little different light. It's the old bromide of saying well, it's not a problem. It's a challenge. We have a challenge here. Well, it's the same thing. We should be grateful that you have an opportunity to ask someone for help.

DR. ANNE HALLWARD: So you're saying be grateful even before. You're not saying be grateful for receiving help, you're saying be grateful that you have an opportunity to ask for help.

NORA BOUCHARD: Even before you make the request so that you even have someone you can talk to. There's some people out there who don't even have that so recognizing that you can be grateful for the chance to ask for help that you actually have someone in your life who might be willing or able to help. I mean, that's one thing to be grateful for to start with and another to start with is just even recognizing that you do need help. And then of course once you do get the help that you asked for, really, really valuing that gratitude. Really being grateful for the other person. And thanking them, not so much that you're embarrassing them, but thinking them in a way that is sincere and where they understand you really understood how important or the depth of their help is. How do I want to phrase that? How would you really understand the sacrifice that they may have put forth?

DR. ANNE HALLWARD: I love your answer. It is so counterintuitive, like so how do you cope with rejection and not getting help? And your answer is ask more often.

NORA BOUCHARD: Yeah. It's really true. I love the counterintuitive. Even the whole idea of asking for help is counterintuitive to us. We don't want to do it.

DR. ANNE HALLWARD: So in a way, you know, I'm thinking when I was in college at college senior. I remember a guy in my dorm who literally wallpapered his room with all the rejection letters for the jobs that he applied to and it was this way that he made it a joke.

NORA BOUCHARD: Yeah, you know, I think that's absolutely incredible. It's taking the fear out of it too. It's like yeah, so I got another rejection big deal. I'm moving on to the next one.

DR. ANNE HALLWARD: Right. It's almost desensitization strategy.

NORA BOUCHARD: Exactly. Exactly and my keyword is onward.

DR. ANNE HALLWARD: Nora, it's really, it's a pleasure to talk to you. I'm so enjoying this conversation. Is there anything I haven't asked you that you feel like you really want to say or any any last piece that feels like we would be remiss to say goodbye without naming it?

NORA BOUCHARD: You know, one of the things, I don't know what you think about this, but you know, there's a lot there are a lot of people out there right now who are caregivers and, you know, just like what your father experienced, you know, someone who's taking care of them on a regular basis or perhaps there was someone in your family who took care of him for a while. And there are almost 70M caregivers out there now who are afraid to ask for help. And uh because they're the ones giving the help and there's a lot of frustration about it. So I don't know if you want to get into that topic or not.

DR. ANNE HALLWARD: What makes it hard for a caregiver say for a family member with dementia or some other kind of illness, what makes it hard for a family caregiver to ask for?

NORA BOUCHARD: Well, it's hard because first of all they've taken on this role and most take it very seriously and

love the person that they're taking care of, but they also know that trying to get assistance from family members who have their own lives makes it difficult. And sometimes they don't really know what to even ask for. We're actually going through this in my family and we're looking for a way to spell and help my sister so that she has time for herself. She can go off and have a life and not just be taking care of my mother. She struggles because it's hard to ask just plain and we just want to be seen as completely capable and able to handle it all so, you know, when you do have someone in your family who is stepping up and taking on that role I think it really does fall to the rest of the family to work up some sort of way of supporting the caregiver, caring for the caregiver, and if that doesn't happen the caregiver really needs to make that request to.

DR. ANNE HALLWARD: Nora Bouchard, thank you so much. I enjoyed reading your book so much. It really made me think about asking for help in new ways. And you know, like I'm afraid the book has created a monster. I'm going out there asking for help.

NORA BOUCHARD: It's just like a pendulum swing.

DR. ANNE HALLWARD: There you go.

NORA BOUCHARD: It'll swing back to the center.

DR. ANNE HALLWARD: Thank you so much. And, we hope the show will air in November and I'll be back in touch with you.

NORA BOUCHARD: Thank you so much, Anne: I look forward to it.