

I Don't Have to Hold It All Together

Nicole J. Suvar on Cultivating the Peace of Eden When Life Feels Overwhelming

Nicole J. Suvar

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Program Summary

In this edition of Mark & Friends, guest host Donna Leland talks with author Nicole J. Suvar about the pressure to hold life together and the invitation to cultivate the peace of Eden instead. Nicole describes a lifelong struggle with anxiety and explains why Eden became a picture of peace, settledness, communion with God, and trusting Him with outcomes and provision. Rather than reducing anxiety to a spiritual failure or simply telling overwhelmed people to pray harder, she encourages listeners to look beneath the feeling, recognize that anxiety can have spiritual, emotional, situational, or physical contributors, and respond with wisdom and compassion. The conversation contrasts managing overwhelm with tight-fisted control against intentionally cultivating peace through communion with God, healthy community, rest, time outdoors, honest vulnerability, and practical care for body and mind. Nicole closes with an in-the-moment practice: name the anxiety, step away briefly when possible, breathe slowly, pray Scripture, and remember Colossians 1:17 - Jesus is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

Key Takeaways

- Trying to control outcomes and provision creates pressure because those responsibilities ultimately belong to God.
- Communion with God is more than completing spiritual tasks; it is living with an ongoing awareness that the Holy Spirit is present.
- Anxiety should not automatically be labeled as sin; it can be a signal that invites careful attention to spiritual, emotional, situational, or physical causes.
- Managing overwhelm often looks like tightening my grip, while cultivating peace means intentionally tending the conditions that help me trust God.
- Mental and emotional wellness, like physical health, usually benefits from repeated and intentional practices rather than a one-time effort.
- Healthy community is forged through vulnerability, encouragement, accountability, and a willingness to make room for people who are still looking for belonging.
- Rest is not wasted time; intentionally giving body and mind room to recover is part of cultivating peace.
- Time in God's creation can redirect attention from my own pressure toward the Creator who sustains what He has made.
- When anxiety rises, naming it aloud to a safe person can reduce isolation and make room for wise support.
- Slow breathing paired with a short Scripture prayer can help calm the body while re-centering the mind on God's presence and care.
- Colossians 1:17 is a powerful reminder for overwhelmed moments: I do not hold everything together - Jesus does.
- Peace grows as I steward what God has actually given me while holding people, plans, responsibilities, and outcomes with open hands.

Scripture References

- Colossians 1:17
- Genesis 2:8-25
- Matthew 6:25-34
- Philippians 4:6-7
- 1 Corinthians 6:17
- Hebrews 13:5
- Psalm 46:10
- Galatians 6:2
- Hebrews 10:24-25
- 1 Peter 5:7

Quote of the Day

"I don't have to hold it all together. That's God's job description."

Broadcast Notes

Donna introduces Nicole J. Suvar through the title of her book, *I Don't Have to Hold It All Together*, observing that none of us can actually hold everything together and that this belongs to God. Nicole explains why she begins with Eden: when anxiety and overwhelm rise, she asks what was originally good but has become twisted or distorted outside Eden. Eden becomes a picture of peace, settledness, and relationship with God. Nicole distinguishes communion with God from simply adding more religious effort. For someone already overwhelmed, 'pray more' or 'read your Bible more' can feel like another task and can even create shame. Communion, she says, is recognizing that the Holy Spirit is already present throughout the day and living in that relationship. The discussion then turns to control. Nicole says anxiety often grows when people assume responsibility for outcomes and provision that belong to God. She urges listeners to steward what God has given them with open hands while trusting Him with results. Nicole also cautions against automatically classifying anxiety as sin. Anxiety can function like a temperature gauge, signaling that something deeper needs attention; possible contributors can be spiritual, emotional, situational, or physical. Using a garden metaphor, Nicole contrasts merely managing overwhelm with cultivating peace. Intentional practices include communion with God, supportive community, time outdoors, rest, and thoughtful attention to mental wellness. She speaks vulnerably about the difficulty of finding community as an introvert and encourages established groups to open their circles to people who may be hoping for an invitation. Donna and Nicole also discuss the calming value of nature. Nicole connects Jesus' teaching about flowers and birds with the reminder that the God who sustains creation also cares for His children. For acute moments of anxiety, Nicole recommends telling a safe person what is happening, stepping away briefly when possible, breathing slowly, and praying Scripture. Her own repeated breath prayer comes from Colossians 1:17: Jesus is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

♥ Practical Applications

- When I feel responsible for everything, name which outcomes actually belong to God and release them to Him.
- Replace one tight-fisted attempt at control with an open-handed prayer of trust.
- Practice communion with God during an ordinary task by simply acknowledging, 'Holy Spirit, You are here with me.'
- If anxiety rises, resist immediately condemning myself; instead ask what the feeling may be signaling.
- Review practical contributors to overwhelm such as rest, schedule, caffeine, physical health, relationships, and unresolved stress.
- Choose one intentional peace-cultivating practice this week: rest, outdoor time, Scripture meditation, community, or a healthier rhythm.
- Invite someone into my circle who may be waiting for friendship or belonging.
- If I feel lonely, ask God both for someone who can encourage me and for someone I can encourage.
- Spend ten unhurried minutes outdoors noticing details of God's creation and thanking Him for sustaining what He has made.
- When overwhelmed, tell a safe person plainly, 'I am feeling anxious right now,' rather than hiding it.
- Use Colossians 1:17 as a breath prayer: 'Jesus, You are before all things; in You all things hold together.'
- Remember that my task is faithful stewardship, not control of every outcome.

Today's Challenge

For seven days, practice an 'open hands' pause whenever you notice yourself tightening your grip on a person, problem, responsibility, or outcome. Open your hands physically if possible and pray: 'Father, this belongs to You. Show me what is mine to steward and what is Yours to hold.' Then take one faithful next step and leave the outcome with God. At the end of each day, record one moment when releasing control made room for greater peace.

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You that I do not have to hold everything together. You are my provider, and You are trustworthy with the outcomes I cannot control. Teach me to live in communion with You throughout the ordinary moments of my day, aware that Your Spirit is present with me. When I feel anxious or overwhelmed, keep me from shame and help me listen wisely to what my body, mind, circumstances, and spirit may be telling me. Show me what is mine to steward and what I need to release. Loosen my grip on people, plans, responsibilities, and results that I have tried to control. Help

me cultivate peace through Your Word, healthy community, honest vulnerability, rest, wise care for my body and mind, and time noticing the beauty of Your creation. When I feel alone, give me courage to seek community and generosity to make room for someone else who needs belonging. When anxiety rises quickly, remind me to slow down, breathe, pray, and remember that Jesus is before all things and in Him all things hold together. I place what I cannot carry into Your hands. Hold me steady and teach me to trust You one moment at a time. In Jesus' name, Amen.

About Today's Speaker

Nicole J. Suvar

Author of *I Don't Have to Hold It All Together*

Nicole J. Suvar is an author who writes about overwhelm, anxiety, peace, and intentional Christian living. In *I Don't Have to Hold It All Together: Cultivating the Peace of Eden When Feeling Overwhelmed*, she draws from her own long experience with anxiety to help readers move away from controlling every outcome and toward communion with God, healthy rhythms, community, rest, creation, and open-handed trust. Her approach combines honest personal reflection with practical practices designed to help readers cultivate greater peace while remembering that God is the One who ultimately holds all things together.

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About Today's Host

Donna Leland

Thursday Guest Host of Mark & Friends

Donna Leland is a longtime member of the Great News Media radio family and regularly serves as guest host of the Thursday edition of Mark & Friends. With a warm, conversational interviewing style, Donna welcomes authors, ministry leaders, teachers, and guests whose stories and resources can encourage listeners in their walk with Jesus. Her conversations are an important part of the Mark & Friends weekly lineup and Great News Media's mission to educate, edify, and evangelize.

Proofread Broadcast Transcript

Welcome to Mark & Friends. I'm your host Donna Leland. Today we talk with Nicole Suvar, and she's written a book about *I don't have to hold it all together*, and when I read the title I thought I need to talk to this woman and get some points on just how to let things go because it's obviously None of us can hold it all together.

That's not our job. That's God's job description Thank you so much Nicole for joining us here on Mark & Friends Yeah, Donna, it is great to be here. I'm looking forward to our conversation.

You start us off in Eden, why is it that you want to take us back to Eden and Help us understand that peaceful feeling that we might be missing out on Yeah, I go back to Eden because it's something that often would come into my mind When I was just feeling overwhelmed feeling anxious I have struggled with an anxiety disorder since I was like in third grade So I've most of my life have known anxiety and a thought that often will come to mind is the question Okay, what part of this? was good, but it's been twisted and distorted since coming outside of Eden and so I Eat it is just like that place of peace and settled Ness and comfort and I think that often when I'm just really struggling that is just a Beautiful thought to the going back to Eden and so they I often would just kind of trace whatever the struggle I was having I would trace it back to the root of like what part of this is good and then I would kind of cultivate and Really grasp onto the good parts and try to let the rest of it go You know, I do love Eden because you know God walked with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day One thing I've always noticed about Eden though was he walked with them, but he was not living inside of them They had not yet said yes, you can come inside and live in my heart You know, he was waiting for that now We get a redo from Eden and that's a part of our opportunity here as believers to say yes to Jesus And so you you write about the importance of communion with God and how this calms our anxious hearts What does that look like in everyday life? When someone maybe already feels stretched thin talk to us about that beautiful communion That is now ours on this side of the cross Yes, so this is not The solutions of you need to pray more you need to read your Bible more, right? I say that caveat just because if someone again who has struggled with anxiety, that's often the solution that's given and for those of us that we have tried that and It just feels like we're failing and we just kind of there's some shame that's attached to that because we feel like we're maybe not being a good enough Christian and Communion with God is different Because the reading the Bible more and trying to pray more those are all efforts that we're trying to do But communion with God is how we are It's our being and it's recognizing that at all times. We have the Holy Spirit with us That as we go throughout the day, it's acknowledging and recognizing that he is always near You had a picture Someone who's who's walking beside you so, you know, they're always there But then you want to

you want to tell them something a little more intimate or you're just you're wanting to point something out So you kind of like give them the little hey come here thing here motion. And so they lean in a little closer I kind of picture that with our walk with God that he's always there with us But when we have those times of we're like, oh Lord Jesus be near.

I need you. He just leans in a little closer And so communion again is this that being with him? It's a relationship that's deeper Than just hey touch and base with you coming back in in a conversation, but it's always There and can always happen Amen, you know He cannot get any closer than he already is to us because how can you get closer than one spirit? He who has joined himself to the Lord is one spirit with him And I think it's that realization that calms us down it helps us not to be anxious because going back to Eden Right when Adam and Eve said no God, I think we're gonna go our way well, they had to be their own God and Isn't that what is? Creating all of this anxiety. We feel like we have to keep it all together the family the work the faith Responsibilities, you know, why do you think we try and carry that pressure? Well, it's what the world is telling us when we're listening to what the world says like you here are all these responsibilities that You need to take care of and then we also compare ourselves.

We see somebody else It seems like they are doing it so much better. So why can't I I need to get my act together? we Feel overwhelmed and anxious because we are trying to be the ones in charge of the outcomes and in charge of the provision And both of those things are God's When we try to control how things end up if we try to control what we have and how we get it all of those Things cause us this anxiety and overwhelm because we have to keep maintaining it But our father is the one who is our provider and he is the one that has the ultimate outcome because he knows what is Best for us So it's it's holding on and doing the things that God has given us to steward But also we're doing it with open hands trusting that he provides what we need when we need it and also that he is going to determine our steps and How these things that we're asked to steward people places things whatever it might be We're trusting him to bring out the outcome Ultimately to bring him glory and to draw us closer to him. I think it's a lifetime process of Absolutely Understanding how to release my grasp on Control, you know, it's just you know you as a kid You had so much placed upon you to do right be right and yeah I mean we were just jumping like trained ponies right doing all the things we were being told to do and we get in trouble When we didn't you know, we were just learning and growing but yet I think a lot of you know pressure is put on kids and I just think we learn how to you know Try to control what we can control and I feel like we're just trained in that so quickly.

We're not really trained Independence on the Lord when we are kids we're trained to you know, just buck up and control things and Just a lot of that has to be unlearned I know in my own heart, you know to trust the one who is in and it's such a joke Isn't it Nicole that we think we're in control It's a false reality, that's for sure It's just what are we thinking that we can control anything? You know, what are some of the common misconceptions that Christians can have about maybe they're overwhelmed and their anxiety which are real Right, and we're not downplaying that at all. I've had overwhelm I've had anxiety, but what are some your common misconceptions that you've noticed? This one is this was really big that often people See someone who is struggling with anxiety and they just this they tell them straight out like you This is a sin that you need to root out in your life And I think in instead we need to see anxiety as actually it's a that's that temperature gauge telling us something else is going on And that's what we need to get to the root of because there could be Maybe some unconfessed sin in your life or something that you're doing that needs to be changed or repented from but also there could be Physically, there's something wrong with your body that's causing your you to feel this way. There are different health Issues medical issues that can cause the feelings of anxiety We try we often try to clump it all into the same thing when it's actually so nuanced Like all of our feelings are anger can be traced back to so many different things as well as Depression can be traced back to so many different things I think that we need to be careful that we don't so easily dismiss or classify a feeling as such But to encourage each other to get down to the root of what is causing it, you know I found that in our own family magnesium magnesium is a Wonderful component of anyone's health choices and then melatonin is so important But everybody is deficient in magnesium and it's really a calming, you know benefit Whenever you make sure your magnesium levels are where they should be.

So yeah there there can be physical, you know observations I know when I've had too much coffee. I am just an anxious wreck and I just can't do it anymore My body just cannot use the coffee like I used to to manage and what was I trying to do? I was trying to manage my overwhelm By using you know a substance caffeine Because as a mom of four kids there was a lot of overwhelm and when that kicked in I just tried to control it even harder So I like your two approaches Let's talk about this the difference between just managing your overwhelm as opposed to cultivating peace Yeah managing overwhelm is you trying to clamp down on everything so it's you're doing it with tight fists and when we cultivate the peace of Eden what that means cultivation is intentional, I think we sometimes think of our mental health as We don't see it as much as like we do with physical health You don't just go to the gym once and you're like, hey, I am fit and ready to go I don't ever have to work out again You have to eat healthy. You have to exercise there You need to move your body in order to gain some physical health and wellness But also you need to do that mentally too and there has to be some Intentional things that you do in your life to help bring about some better mental wellness

And so that's what I kind of dig into in my book is when I talk about cultivating you think about it as like a garden hmm, you have to intentionally find the seeds that you want to plant you need to intentionally till up the ground and Plant those seeds you cover them up You even throw on some garden hose water to begin with but then those are the things you can intentionally do The rain the Sun the ultimate growth of a plant and what it produces that is all up to God So what are the things that you can do? to intentionally Address your mental wellness.

And so we're going back to Eden. We're thinking about or we're looking at how our communion with God What is that looking like? What kind of people are we surrounding ourselves if are we in a community that can hold us accountable and encourage us and likewise? We can do the same for others. Are we outside? Every day in some form of another because being outdoors Connects us to our Creator in a way that's sitting inside in our comfort controlled homes Can't are we building in rest? Are we intentional with giving our bodies our minds all of ourselves? Rest, those are just a few of the different things that I talk about in the book just to be intentional with cultivating That's just so beautiful I we all love our gardens We love just the blessing of all of our efforts being, you know realized in the growth So yeah, there is stuff we can do if we want to be a control freak Why not? Control what we can and that's our thoughts and cultivating the garden of our mind the garden of our heart I mean that's a full-time job right there if we want, you know something to do Cultivate and think about how much the Lord loves us and that he's on our side that he is never gonna leave us nor forsake us plant some of those thoughts in your brain and see all the beautiful results that we're going to Benefit from that.

So don't we have to like just like, you know, how you have to get into the garden and pull some weeds Yes, there's so many metaphors that can be done with the garden. Yeah, cuz again that's like an intentional thing you have to do You have to get in there and you have to get the reeds and you have to get them all the way at the root If you really don't want them to come back when you write a book a lot of times There's some just very difficult or vulnerable Moments in your world that you share with people Which were they for you? Yeah, a vulnerable chapter. I feel like I was vulnerable throughout the book and somewhere another yeah every chapter.

Yes Just I mean coming out straight talking about my anxiety and the struggles with it but a chapter that stands out in my mind for being vulnerable was the chapter I talked about belonging and how we need to Forge community. We don't just find community. It has to be forged and That's a vulnerable chapter for me because community has always been tough.

I'm an introvert and it's always been kind of tough to find my people and And It's something that even as I write it I know that it's still something that I'm growing in and it's not because I don't want people in my circle it just I've often there was a time where I Ended up with a lot of really good friends and all of them went to the mission field Wow, I had a joke that I was like, well if you want to be a missionary be my friend because everybody is leaving And so there was in a way like I had this group of people but now they were throughout the world and so there was a little bit of like having to build back up and and it's even hard like it's hard as a child or as a teenager especially to find friends, but there's a different part in as an adult to have to go and forge that community because a lot of Belong a lot of communities have already been created. Mm-hmm. And so you're trying to insert yourself into something so I think if anything as I'm saying that I want to encourage those who are in a community that you're like I have a solid group that I can connect with open up your circle a little bit allow your circle to be more of a you than a circle and Look around for maybe someone who is Hoping to be invited who doesn't really know how to get started Because there are a lot of people out there who are feeling like they need a group and they're not really sure how to find Them that is so true.

I mean I found myself in that we moved four years ago and You know, we had no no group We've joined this little church and you're right The word foraging is so good because when two or three are gathered their sparks fly They just do and we're gonna get on each other's nerves. We're gonna think that we know the best way We're not gonna do it the way everybody else is doing it It's not perfect and I'm not perfect, but we have a common goal and I feel like that's how we find community. Isn't it Nicole? Yeah, so much is there is something in common that everyone has and often it's a goal and off to also forge that Community there has to be vulnerability.

I think is a little bit what you were hinting at that if we If we find a group of people we're wanting to help build this community together. We have to be vulnerable with one another Is that helps us go deeper? Especially when we're bringing Christ into the center of it So often what if I'm feeling lonely I go to God and I just ask him to show me how I'm not like I'm sure there's somebody else out there who needs a friend and Then also just to help me just wait, maybe this is a time of a Refining that he has in me and then just asking him to bring Someone into my life that I can encourage and that they can encourage me He doesn't want us to live all alone he built us for community and for belonging so just even Asking that simple prayer Being persistent with it. I know that the Lord will answer.

I agree Yeah, I'm so grateful for I don't know about you But nature is amazing and anytime I am just overwhelmed I take my shoes off and I go stand on the grass and it has this beautiful grounding effect or you know I look out my

windows and there was many years. I didn't have nature I had one tree in my front yard and the rest was just you know, Chicago Asphalt and cement it was just devastating and if you go to a you know, Forest Preserve You know, there's also a hundred thousand people there so we moved to a farm which is helping quite a bit to just calm me down and I appreciate it so Much wouldn't you encourage Nicole if someone's feeling overwhelmed to try to get back in touch with that beautiful Eden garden Yes, absolutely. I have an entire chapter on going outside and just how Being in his creation and really noticing his creation can help calm us Because we start to see all of these little intricacies of things that he's created and he's also holding together and he's sustaining and if he can do that for these little flowers that are popping up in the middle of Concrete or the sparrows that are flying overhead.

How much more can he do that for us? I think that just goes back to like Sermon on the Mount when he was telling us like consider the flowers consider the birds Like when you think about how they how I take care of them I'm also taking care of you and just you had said like there's also like Practical scientific ways that they have discovered how the outdoors Helps us and our mental wellness and you had mentioned one with the grounding just standing on the ground With our bare feet in the grass. There's actually some components that help Help calm our Bodies down. So just there's so many things and like that's only God God created these humans and he created this earth to put them in and he found ways for us to connect with him that we aren't even Fully aware of hmm, and there's just so much in between us and what God created in nature That we don't get to benefit from I mean another thing.

I'm learning is red light therapy and The red light is the best in the morning, you know Just go for a walk in the morning and get some of that beautiful red light It's only beneficial and There's just so many ways that God has already built in actually free things dear friends If you're looking to up your health quotient, I mean it it you know, it's free air is free Sunshine and so far it's still free I'm sure may might want to find out some way to you know, make that a little bit more tax Friendly, but yeah, there's a lot we can do so in the moment Nicole in the moment. Let's say you know, I'm just feeling overwhelmed and I'm feeling anxious and You know the thing that I was dreading perhaps happened. So take us in that moment Yes, if I am with safe people I will say it out loud and tell them like I am feeling anxious right now or right now I am feeling very overwhelmed and then I need to take a step back five minutes Maybe is all I need but I need to go somewhere where I can take deep breaths And often those deep breaths are a breath prayer I will say a psalm over and over or my favorite one is actually Ties into the book and the fact that I say I say over and over Colossians 1:17 that He is before all things and in him all things are held together And so sometimes it's just Lord hold this all together and it's just over and over he's already doing that But it's a part of this Asking him and reminding myself that he is the one in charge.

So there's this breath prayer that I'm over and over and as I'm Breathing deeper. I'm also slowing down my heart rate It's giving me a chance for my brain to think and process for a minute and also reminding myself that although These things are overwhelming and anxious. It's most likely not something that's life-threatening Our bodies will go to that Space it will feel like it's Possibly going to die because something seems so extreme our bodies read fear as Well as anxiety all on the same spectrum So breathing slowly and just slowing our bodies down can remind ourselves that we are safe Maybe the situation isn't super great But we can be safe in that and that we can remind ourselves that it is our father that is holding it all together Well, thank you so much Nicole for being with us here on Mark & Friends, can you let us know how can we connect with you? Yeah, they can find me at my website Nicole J. Suvar comm there will be resources there I have a quiz that you can take to that will help you find out which of the seven attributes of Eden that you should Start with first and as well as other free resources and other ways to get a hold of me and chat Wonderful Nicole is the author of I don't have to hold it all together Cultivating the peace of Eden when feeling overwhelmed by moody publishers.

Thanks again, Nicole Have a fabulous and peaceful and anxiety-free day. Oh Thank you so much Donna. This was so great I was thrilled to be on today and thanks for listening dear listener mark and friends is a ministry of great news media Have a great day