

ANNESTASIS

PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

Annestasis Podcast Episode 2 – Daughter of A Downsizer

Podcast Description: Let's meet Sally Whitehorn a "Daughter of a Downsizer". Sally and her husband downsized a few years ago releasing unneeded possessions of their past and embracing a new life in Downtown Memphis. Sally took that learned skill to assist her mother as she relocated to the OPUS community of East Memphis in Tennessee. The trials and beauty are uncovered as Sally inspires us through her experience in the gentle art of being a daughter as she helped her mom get to safer ground. Annestasis was a part of the process for one leg of this journey, and it unfolded beautifully as Sally's Mother lightened her load and experiences a new life today.

Podcast Transcript:

Stacey Sade: Hello, friends. So this is Stacy, and we are at the Anastasis podcast with Sally Whitehorn. And Sally is with the Memphis Business journal. And she's got an amazing job. She's very impressive around town, and I could tell you all of her accolades, but that's not what we're going to talk to Sally about today. Sally is a daughter, and that's the story that we want to talk about. So if the Anastasis podcast is all about the transformation that happens when someone relocates, what I want to do is ask Sally specifically about her experience as a daughter of someone who just recently downsized and what that looked like, what that felt like, and just the emotional toll that it took during the process. And what is your mom's life like now? In the Anastasis world, it's a three part process. There is an event that happens that precipitates a move in everyone's life. And then there's the process, that I love to call the tomb process. It's the process while it's happening and what

that feels like and what that looks like. And then, you know, there's the new life. So you've had all of those experiences. So, let me introduce my friends to Sally Whitehorn.

Sally Whitehorn: Good morning, Stacey. Thank you so much for having me on your podcast. I'm thrilled to be here.

Stacey Sade: Thank you, Sally. So let's just open it up. You've got a precious mom, and I was able to be with her for a minute in the process. But tell me what that was like. What started the conversation that your mom was going for? From a well appointed, beautiful four bedroom, three bath home that obviously, she had been a collector and a traveler, and then all of a sudden, it was time for her to downsize. Can you kind of just share with me what that experience was like?

Sally Whitehorn: Absolutely. And we are very fortunate in that my mom made the decision, rather than the decision being made for her, which is very empowering. She had heard about this new senior community a couple of years ago in concept, and had been keeping her eye on it. But when you're 82, things start to happen in life to where your world starts getting smaller every time there's a storm, you know you have heightened anxiety. You're in the closet, literally, with your weather radio, scared, anxious, worried. Now, with the crime in and around, it's unfortunate. The Memphis Germantown area coming in at night becomes restrictive. Going out with friends, you're always very hyper aware. And as a daughter, you're even more aware of mom at night, coming home, being by herself, if she were to have a fall, all of those general anxieties that come with being 82. And I think the realization just came to her after she saw us downsize. Actually, my husband and I are empty nesters, and we went from a very large footprint to a small footprint downtown, and she would hear me talking about how life is easier, we can lock and leave. And I think that piled on with her overall

increasing anxieties about life. Fear, storms, the expenses of maintaining the house, all of that came to its time.

Stacey Sade: I love that. It's interesting to me, too, that you mentioned the fact and I think it's paramount that she was on the deception end of it. I've seen it done both ways, and it's so difficult for someone who is having that decision inflicted upon them. Sometimes it's necessary. And truthfully, at 82, there's a lot of life on the other side of 82, in my opinion. What I've seen some people do is they postpone the decision until someone has to make it for them. But it sounds like that was a different experience from you.

Sally Whitehorn: It was, and we are so proud of her for making the decision. I've seen several of her fellow residents now she is settled at opus. I've seen several of the fellow residents that they've had to make the decision because they're widowed now, or they've relocated with an adult child to the area to be closer. And whereas it may have slightly been their choice as to the apartment or the exact community, still the relocation. There's a lot that comes with that.

Stacey Sade: Absolutely. And just to clarify something that Sally mentioned, opus retirement community is a brand new shining diamond in the city of Memphis, a retirement community. It is in the east Memphis area, for those of you who are listening elsewhere, and that, is the one that Sally is referencing that her mom was watching as it was being built. You get to this point with your mom, and y'all are having conversations. You, of course, are advertising all the good things that I love to share with people, which is the new life that is on the other side of all our stuff. All our stuff, you know, which is what we're hanging on to so tightly, can, actually decrease

Stacey Sade: our quality of life. And you're sharing with her, whoo. Wasn't that wonderful? And how free you are, and you can just take a trip, and who cares?

Somebody else is worried about the roof and the shingles and all the things. So I love that. So, your mom gets to this place, and she's making mention of it to you. How much of a conversation or how, much influence did you have when she was really ready to sign papers.

Sally Whitehorn: I was all for it. This particular community, and we're not being endorsed by Opus, but this particular community, is a yemenite choice for her. And I think every community offers its own unique set of amenities, benefits, location. But this one is tailor made for my mom. The place it is in Memphis. The location, it's a fresh new community. And what I liked for my mom is that it's new construction for all the residents. So there weren't those established cliques or groups, that she would have to find her way into, but rather, it's something that everyone has, is having a shared experience on. Did you figure this out, or did you find that? Or where did. What did you do when you came across this? You know, whatever it was, they're all experiencing it together, which was exciting. So we're all for the move. The move itself was exhausting. Mentally, physically, emotionally. And that's a whole nother thing.

Stacey Sade: Well, absolutely. Well, we will definitely get into it. But what I heard when you were saying, what you were saying is that's just like a new school. So in so much of the process, and is two things, one is you're exactly right about how each wonderful, community has got their own, they've really got their own personality. And to me, that would be no different than shopping for a college. They're all. They all have wonderful things, and it's all about where do I feel comfortable, where do I feel a fit. So I love the fact that you were talking about your mom would be on the ground floor of something very brand new, and there is nothing established, and she would be a part of that new movement. So now the paperwork has been signed, your mom is ready to go. and everything is a little bit undefined as far as dates. And that's new. The joy of new construction. It's a

floating. It's a floating figure. I know everybody can appreciate that, but tell me what, the first part of the process was like for her?

Sally Whitehorn: For her. Then you have this two story, as you mentioned, four bedroom home with a huge walk in attic. And so now we have to start tackling the downsize to get ready to go from a large footprint to a much smaller one. to me, one of the first psychological steps was, you can't think about this new, smaller apartment as now I'm losing something. I'm going from my home to this apartment. Not to demean apartments, but for her psychologically, I'm, thinking about the smaller footprint and I'm going to have to get rid of about 85% of my things, to fit into this new space. So for her, I got her thinking. You can't think about this as your new home. You need to think about your apartment as your master bedroom suite. M you've got your bedroom, you have your kitchenette, which actually is a full kitchen. You have a nice bathroom and a little patio, but that's your master suite. This new community is your home. So your living room, maybe it's an elevator away, but you'll go downstairs to your living room. You'll go sit by the pool, you'll walk around the grounds. So don't be confined to your apartment or start limiting yourself. Thinking I'm giving up so much and I'm losing so much, but rather I'm gaining friends, community, this beautiful new space and where they happen to be located, I can hop on the bus and be at the botanic garden in five minutes. That's my new backyard. The Dixon art gallery is my new entertaining space. So I tried to get her to open up her mind and Stacy, it has actually worked. I'm thrilled to hear mom say things like, I sat outside to read the paper or I took a nap by the pool the other day. So she really has embraced that concept of don't be just locked up in your apartment.

Stacey Sade: I love that perspective and I don't know that I've heard anybody share it that way. That don't think about all the things you have to peel back because you're just going to be knocking around in this 700 sqft or 1100 square,

whatever it is, of space. That perspective is lovely. And what a blessing she had in you to have that conversation. So she's looking at, an attic and bedrooms full of things. What were kind of the first things that she did as far as starting to get her mind wrapped around what it was she was taking? What she wasn't taking.

Sally Whitehorn: Well, to your credit, she enlisted your help and you were invaluable to say what are the pieces that mean the very most to you? That if there were the proverbial fire you would come in and grab, what are the ones you definitely want to take with you that are the we're not going to negotiate on. And once she had kind of picked those that she could went together in a decorative sense, but also were treasured pieces. The most treasured you, were able to go to the apartment in its construction state and map out a floor plan. This is where this sofa could go, where this treasured print could be hung, where the coat rack could be placed. And I think for her, that was, solidified the vision more of now, in concept, we're going to. I have a floor plan that she, I think, wore out that page going back and forth to look at. these are the things I'm taking. This is where it's going to go. So now it becomes more tangible. And I think that's what helped to have at least a floor plan. Or you could, in another scenario, have, an apartment drawing and start to think about what are the most treasured. Like I said, get them in a fire. Things that I can't live without. That, I definitely want to have on the moving truck.

Stacey Sade: I love that. I love that. And that's a wonderful thing too. In our world, what I'm always hoping is to keep people focused forward, the more people look behind them. And I think no matter what our age, when the view is in the rear view mirror, that is where the pain and the strain and the suffering is. But if the, if we can turn the gaze toward the future, I think that that is a really beautiful place to be able to look forward to. We're not ever meant to keep going back. But I think, I do think, also people do stay in that space. It freezes us all. so she's got a vision

now. She can see what she's taking, what she's not taking, within that moment, what I find is so beautiful in the work that we do is that we get to hear the stories. It's almost as if a human being is reliving the trip to Italy. The moment I believe in my heart of hearts, that is not the thing that people really grieve. It is the story attached to the thing. And I think one of the greatest honors and love, love that we can offer someone is to listen to the story. So what did that look like for your mom? She now knows what she's taken. So here's the a list. And where did you guys go from there?

Sally Whitehorn: We actually. What is it they say? How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time. So I would. It was a long process and. Which probably made it more exhausting on my end, but for her, maybe a little more palatable in that we are going to go this Saturday and tackle the laundry room.

Sally Whitehorn: Let's do the kitchen. So it wasn't just where do we start in the house? Because that was completely overwhelming to us both. If we could tackle a closet, cabinets on either side of the fireplace, that would be about 2 hours. There would be stories, memories, a little bit of negotiation. Do we sell it? Do we donate it? Where does it go? A, little push pull. And for me, it was trying to help her constantly see that you just don't need this. I'm very anal, I guess, and so I'm like, but you're not going to need this. I've made this downsize move. I know you are not going to have room for it. So there was a little push pull on my end, too, to go, okay, take it. We may have to do this twice, but take it. And then we will. We will figure it out.

Stacey Sade: It is that negotiation between and guys, no slight to you, but it is a mother and daughter m moment. And I'll be honest, I don't know that I'll be able to help my mother in any other way other than in the daughter capacity. So that's lovely. And I believe you had some credibility, probably in your mom's mind,

because you had just done it. It's not as if you were sitting in your 20 year house and telling someone what to do. You said, hey, I know it's no fun. I've been there. well, that's lovely. So, you guys, one room at a time, a couple of hours at a time. I wholeheartedly support that. Decluttering should only be done an hour or two at a time, and there needs to be breaks. So you've gotten that together. And I guess the next step is the pack up. Am I correct or what did you do from there?

Sally Whitehorn: Honestly, it kind of felt like we were moving things literally out of the house. We ended up moving it. Cause at the time, our house is for sale, and so it had to be show ready. So we're not only boxing her up and preparing for this move.

Sally Whitehorn: but we had to physically get everything out of the house so people could see the house. So pretty much everything ended up in the garage. and I think that was probably overwhelming because all your possessions are in this garage in boxes and estate. So at that point, you know, we knew what we were taking that was identified for the movers, but it almost became, I saw a little bit of a panic of, oh, my goodness, these are all my things. And the psychology being these things are me. These are. This is an extension of me. like you said, stacy, all of my travels, my memories, the pictures, like heaven forbid, what do you do with the portraits of us? You don't just donate a portrait of me in my wedding dress. Where do those things go? What happens to those things? So I saw a little bit of a panic of, we have a very real situation that people are coming to look at the house and we have to get this stuff gone. But I'm trying to, you know, respect your emotions that this is like we're just taking it all away.

Sally Whitehorn: And so there had to be a little bit of a, I understand this is hard, I understand this feels like a loss, but we let us do this. So at some point we had to

cross over and say, mom, we know what you're taking to opus. We know the meaningful pieces. Why don't you just go and let us handle this?

Sally Whitehorn: Because it's almost, I guess, like a death in a way, 100% that you are seeing everything being carried out, loaded into cars and just taken. And so we just assured her, we are paying it forward. I'm taking blankets and I did to the humane society, I'm taking the housewares to the Dorothy day house for people that are starting new apartments, for immigrants that have nothing, that have landed in Memphis, trying to make a home. So at least if I could help her feel like it's going to a meaningful place, not just all dumped at, you know, the various depository. These are going to people and it's going to make their life better. I could only hope that that helped.

Stacey Sade: Oh, no doubt about it. And that's a whole other series that we're going to have about, the attachment with people, their things, and where are they going, what is happening to them. It's an interesting dynamic, in my opinion, where there is no space between us as human beings and our things, where they define us almost. And, whenever I'm speaking to a crowd or people, I always say this. If I walked into your home and saw a beautiful chair, some fabulous designer fabric, it was all cushy and yummy. I would sit in that chair I would enjoy to death. But when I got back in my car, I would not miss your chair. It would not mean, it would not hold the weight in my world. And I question in the question, it is to my mind, too, why is that different for my own things? And can I create a healthy mental space between the things that serve me well, the chaise lounge that I'm able to do my quiet time in, but it's not a part of me. How can I keep that boundary there? that's just fascinating information. And I love the fact that you, asked her to just step away for her own sake. And that is 100% true for anyone who is moving or downsizing. Have a restful place, whether it's a hotel room or an Airbnb or a family member, just to take a step back because, the process is grievous and you're 100.

That's, that's the only word to use is that there is a grieving process. This is the end of a season of life. And just like empty nesting or anything, any other season of life, it needs a moment to be acknowledged. And that takes some quiet. So we've gotten your mom moved. I mean, packed up and things are moving in that direction. And, she lives through that and, you know, which everybody lives through that. tell me now, you touched on it just a little bit. What is the new life that was produced from all of that work and all of that grieving and all of that difficult time?

Sally Whitehorn: Unfortunately, still a lot of things made it to the new place. So we almost have a second downsizing. So there was a lot, in her space, she kept saying, I just have to see it. And so there were some push pull compromises where I said, okay, fine, let's take it. You'll see. And in my mind I think you will see it doesn't work. But however, now we're in the apartment, she's living the lifestyle, eating every meal with her new friends. my anxiety that I just carried around every

Sally Whitehorn: day as a daughter is now I have a lot more mental space because I know she's in a safe, secure spot. So when a storm happened, she said, I didn't even realize it rained to. And knowing before she would have been in the closet. The same with coming in. the safety aspect, the no worries. She doesn't have to worry. I said, mom, you're renting. This is not your place. So if something goes wrong, the refrigerator's not working, call the man. So you don't have to worry about that anymore. So she's starting to, I think, come out from a perceived burden of repairs on the house, things that are coming up, you know, all the worries and whatnot. And my mom is one not to get into it. She has had a life of significant loss. So for her, I'm hoping this next chapter is going to be more of gains, for her with new friends, a new community. My daughter, her granddaughter's a block away. We'll be seeing her actually more often. Because I hate to say it, but where she lives is more convenient for drop ins and pop bys. So

that's what I hope. So it's an exciting new chapter, and I've already seen her enjoying the community. Like I said, reading the paper by the pool, napping here and there in the community. So it's good.

Stacey Sade: Oh, I'm so happy. And every once in a while, I get a vision of her, and you can see the lightness on her face. It's hard to imagine, for someone to just. Like you said, she had to see it. It's interesting too, Sally, to me, and this is a new world. So nursing homes and what people are saying about us warehousing people has gotten a terrible rap. What I am observing all the time, is what a wonderful sense of community. It's almost as if we are recreating what we lost by living in silos. We are actually, what I'm envisioning are people that are able to sit by the well, you know, and do their laundry, like it used to happen once upon a time, and share stories and share life. I see no downside to being in community. And what you're sharing is exactly what I've said, is that the process was never supposed to be a solo act. For instance, if your mother did not have children in town, and there was not someone to walk alongside her, that's just too much for one person to bear alone. So a cousin, a friend, book study, a church or a synagogue group, somebody we're not meant to be that by ourselves.

Sally Whitehorn: It would have been completely overwhelming, physically impossible. It really took me and I would literally leave Saturdays with my car full.

Stacey Sade: Oh, yeah.

Sally Whitehorn: And I have the energy and the ability and the resources to then drive around to two or three places to deposit. These things go here. These things go here. But just the physical lift, the emotional toll. Excuse me. Toll. And, just kind of all of the ability to get overwhelmed.

Sally Whitehorn: Where do I start? Where does it go? I just can't start. I think you get frozen.

Stacey Sade: I agree. I agree. And I think that that is, what I have shared with people before is that the palace is the palace, and it's amazing. But the whole time that an individual is listening to all the indoor pool and the three meals a day and the happy hour and the piano players and stuff, I guarantee you all that is being thought of are the four bedrooms and three baths.

Sally Whitehorn: I believe that.

Stacey Sade: And they cannot without a bridge. And you, of course, in your mother's world, were a bridge. without that, they cannot make it to the palace. They can't swim the moat, which is one of my favorite things. You want to get to the palace, but you got to swim the moat. And I think that that's the piece that, is so essential that you have shared your story about it. And I just anticipate many good things coming from that. I believe that there is a whole new life to be lived, I think, with medical advances and advances and, what our diet is and what the meaning of exercise is. And, I've just done some research on longevity, and it's all about that. I think that there's. There could be two decades of life on the other side of those doors. And so how lovely that you allowed yourself the pain of many months of full cars and Saturdays lost, to get your mother, who has experienced more than, the average bear of loss in her life, to a new space. And my prayer and thoughts and hopes are that it will just continue to be a beautiful experience all the way around. I know that they are blessed to have her there. She is quite the cutie. so I love hearing the story. Thank you for sharing your time as

Stacey Sade: a daughter, as a empty nester, as a businesswoman, and how all of that worked in your world, because you're a little busy in your whole world.

Sally Whitehorn: My mom says her biggest regret was she didn't have more children. She said, I wish I'd had ten children to have shared in all of the care and keeping of mom. however, we do have my husband, me, my daughter, her husband, my other daughter. So we have our own little community, and then she has a welcoming community on the other side at Opus. So it's been, it's been a journey, for sure, but one went through pain to get lots of gain.

Stacey Sade: Absolutely. Absolutely. So that is the, you know, that's the takeaway. To get to the palace, we have got to swim the moat. We've got to swim the moat. Well, thank you for your time. It's a joy to hear your story. you are not alone. I guarantee you people listening to this podcast, there are countless people who have. Are in it or whatever, and, you know, just hanging on. And your story of hope and encouragement, I believe, will strengthen people as they make these journeys. So, for today, this wraps up our second session of the Anastasis podcast. Podcast. I am so grateful that you friends have tuned in, and if you want to know more about it, you can reach out to our website, annndashstasis.com you can like and subscribe to our YouTube channel. I'm, the same name. We've got Instagram and Facebook and a whole lot of other things I have no idea how to use. I'll figure it out sometime. Please come back and be with us next time, and we look forward to talking to you soon.

Sally Whitehorn: Bye.