

NICE GALS FINISH FIRST

Anna Faris is your Unqualified
guide to happy relationships.



by Gina Roberts-Grey illustrations by Clairice Gifford
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When actor, producer and podcast creator Anna Faris, age 40, starts talking, anyone within earshot is bound to feel like they've run into a long-lost high school bestie. With no veils of celebrity pretense or ego, Anna (whose name is pronounced AH-na, like Donna) has a knack for connecting with friends and strangers alike by exchanging life stories and bonding over common experiences.

Anna—star of CBS' popular show *Mom*, voice actor for *The Emoji Movie* and currently filming an *Overboard* remake due out next year—is also wife to *Guardians of the Galaxy*'s hunky Star-Lord Chris Pratt and mom to the couple's 5-year-old son, Jack. It's hard to imagine there would be time for another project.

Yet Anna, who thrives on testing her personal boundaries, fulfilled her lifelong passion of doling out unsolicited advice to family and friends by developing a call-in-style podcast in 2015 called *Anna Faris Is Unqualified*. Her memoir and advice book, *Unqualified*, is set to be published this October.

Despite her choice of book titles, hubby Chris is quick to note that dispensing advice is a natural fit for Anna. "Anna is genuinely interested in the stories of other people," he says. "She always takes into careful consideration

the well-being of her listeners' hearts and gives the kind of supportive advice you'd get from a friend."

A fan of NPR and podcasts, Anna says she devoured advice-style talk shows as a child. "Instead of cartoons, I'd watch Sally Jessy Raphael and was always reading Dear Abby and other relationship and advice columns. I just loved Dr. Joyce Brothers, too." To parlay that childhood hobby into an adult, creative outlet, Anna ordered microphones on a whim. She invited a few friends over to discuss their relationship trials, tribulations and testimonies but didn't expect anyone to listen to what they had to say. "It was like a therapy session we recorded."

Within days, her longtime pal Sim Sarna offered to lend a hand. "That was the first time someone, including me, took the idea seriously. We really started from there."

The podcast has grabbed attention from several of Anna's colleagues like Sarah Silverman and Lance Bass, as well as legions of listeners seeking down-to-earth advice. "It's a chance for listeners to get to relate to people they see in movies, hear on the radio, etc., in a real

way. To see everyone has heartache. It's not exclusive to any one group or demographic."

When talking to listeners, Anna isn't afraid to divulge personal details or dive right into the chaos, like when she made actor Nick Kroll play acting games with her in a New Orleans hotel lobby before chatting with him about the importance of dating passionate people. The podcast advisers—Anna, Sim and a guest celebrity—also share stories of their own relationship successes and failures, tales of puberty or even parenting frustrations or flops. "No topic is off limits for us, or callers," Anna says.

In typical Anna fashion, she quickly—but naturally—connects with callers to the show. "Honest and, hopefully, really good advice is our goal," says Anna. "Sure, we're fun and joke around, but when we're listening to callers, we're 100 percent there for them and want to let them know that usually someone else has gone through a similar situation."

The podcast's success morphed into Anna's writing *Unqualified*, allowing her to flex the English degree muscle she built in college at the University of Washington. "That's the most terrifying

ANNA FARIS CO-STARS IN THE CBS SITCOM *MOM* WITH ALLISON JANNEY. ANNA AND HUSBAND, CHRIS PRATT, SHARED A FEW STEAMY SCENES IN HIS GUEST APPEARANCE ON THE SHOW EARLIER THIS YEAR.



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experience I've had in long time," she confides. "It made me feel more vulnerable than probably I've ever felt, besides maybe giving birth.

"The goal was to share my experience because it's not that different from so many other people. Everyone has had their heart broken or screwed up a good relationship. And my hope is that people will walk away realizing that so many journeys are the same. My heartbreak is

ANNA FARIS, CHRIS PRATT AND THEIR SON, JACK, CELEBRATE CHRIS' STAR ON THE HOLLYWOOD WALK OF FAME IN APRIL. IN THEIR SPEECHES, ANNA AND CHRIS SHARED THEIR GRATITUDE FOR EACH OTHER. CHRIS TOLD ANNA, "YOU HAVE MY HEART, MY DEDICATION, MY TRUST."

the same as someone else's and if I have to be vulnerable for people to get that, that's OK."

The daughter of a special education teacher mother and a sociologist father, Anna grew up north of Seattle. Both she and Chris call the Northwest home. "I think that's one of many reasons we fit so well together. We get each other because even though we met under the lights of Hollywood, we're from the same place. We both know the same trees and smells and birds. It sounds corny, but those are things that ground us in everything outside of Hollywood."

Although dishing out advice is second nature to Anna, the same can't always be said for taking it. The best advice she's received—but never took—

came from her mother. "When I was a young adult, she would say, 'Anny, be selfish in love.' I didn't understand what that meant for a long time. But I later realized she meant to protect my heart and look out for myself and let a partner rise to that."

However, that lesson is one that didn't come easily for Anna. "There was a time when I was willing to marry any cute boy that looked at me. I felt like if someone was attractive and wanted to hook up, it was a validation of my own identity."

She admits that if she had taken her mother's advice sooner, she may have sidestepped some heartaches. And that finally grasping that lesson helped lead her to her life and love with Chris. "That's

part of why I love the podcast and book. Hopefully, I can help someone else 'get it,' too."

Why So Serious?

For nearly two decades, Anna has been having the time of her life making people laugh. But the star of numerous comedy feature films including the lead character Cindy Campbell in the *Scary Movie* series, *The House Bunny* and on the hit sitcom television series *Mom* is quick to point out that comedic timing is something she struggles with. "I grew up doing dramatic roles and comedy still feels a little 'ugh' for me," Anna explains. "I'm still not sure what 'comedic timing' means or how to achieve it."

Active in theater as a child, she performed with the Seattle Repertory Theatre at age 9. But despite her success, Anna says comedic acting and making people laugh found her. "I was never a funny kid. I was actually really quiet and took myself incredibly seriously," she shares. The self-described "short kid in a tall family," may not have possessed quick wit, but she did possess a drive to be heard. "I was the quiet short kid who might have had a bit of a Napoleon complex," she jokes.

In 2000, a year after graduating college, Anna was cast in the horror-comedy parody *Scary Movie*. That set her on a course for comedic acting stardom. "That was a huge surprise to me," she says of that first major acting role. "I thought for sure I'd get fired because I thought there's no way comedy was the right fit for me."

Despite thinking herself unqualified to crack up an audience, that's exactly what Anna continues to consistently do on-screen. And to find comfort in what she once saw as a potentially uncomfortable profession, she frequently falls back on her dramatic acting background. "I'm sure other

Making Time to Give Back

Anna and Chris are deeply committed to supporting the Global Alliance to Prevent Prematurity and Stillbirth (GAPPS), a nonprofit that works to significantly reduce the instances of premature birth and stillbirth. They signed on to the Healthy Pregnancy 2030 campaign that's aimed at raising awareness of the risks and complications of preterm birth and reducing the global incidence of preterm birth in half by 2030. Founded in 2007, the organization's mission is one that's near and dear to Anna's heart.

"Jack was born prematurely at 34 weeks," Anna shares. "I went into labor in the middle of the night and that experience was crazy and unexpected as I was having a completely normal pregnancy up to that point."

The experience left an indelible impression. "It never leaves you and completely shaped my life," she says. "That experience of Jack in the NICU for a month was unbelievably transformative."

Like so many parents with similar experiences, Anna wants to know why her son was born prematurely. "It is so important that Anna and her husband, Chris, are sharing their story. They are helping to build support for a global effort to learn more about why prematurity and stillbirths happen and find more ways to prevent them," says Craig Rubens, M.D., Ph.D., co-founder and executive director of GAPPS.

Being part of what she calls the "massive common denominator" among fellow parents and children whose lives have been touched by premature birth, Anna says she and Chris were struck by the increasing rate of preterm births. "Globally, prematurity is the leading cause of death for newborns, and each year 2.6 million infants die just minutes or hours before birth. This isn't something that's defined by class, race or nationality. We wanted to get involved to promote the great research GAPPS does on how to prevent premature babies."

Learn more at gapps.org.

comedic actors have a much better approach than me, but I don't know how to do anything other than honor a character's desire the way you would doing Shakespeare or a very serious role. So, I consider who the person is and what they'd want out of a scene and to hope that lends itself to making them—and their actions—entertaining to viewers."

That approach has helped Anna have fun at work, no matter how many hours she spends on set or how late at night she's shooting scenes. "I'm so fortunate to have a job I love and to do it with such amazing people. But I think that anyone can have similar experiences if you find a way to connect with what you're doing day in and out."



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5 Fast Faris Facts

With a one-minute timer ticking, we put Anna in the hot seat and asked her to choose a few of her favorite happy things.

Dog or cat? “Cat. I grew up with cats and I love dogs, but I feel like I understand cats better. I love that cats are independent and have a quirkiness I can work with. I’m going to be that crazy cat lady in a few years. Our lives are so busy right now, but just yesterday I was missing having an animal and would love one again. My dream is to one day have a Shetland pony.”

Glammed-up or fresh-faced? “Maybe a little of both? I put on makeup every day, but you wouldn’t know it, I’m so bad at it. My glammed-up is sloppily applied makeup. But I like putting on mascara every day for the ritual of it more than the look.”

Go-to movie? “Overboard. It sounds cliché but since I was a kid, it’s been my favorite movie. I could recite every line and have just loved that movie for as long as I can remember. Any time it’s on, I have to stop what I’m doing and watch it!”

When the chance to star in the 2018 remake knocked at her door, Anna jumped to answer. “I love Goldie Hawn and Kurt Russell in that, and I can’t believe I have the privilege of being part of this remake. And because I’ve loved it forever, I feel like being in it is ‘meant to be,’” Anna says. “But it’s also daunting because we’re trying to put a new spin on such iconic roles played by such amazing actors.”

Coffee or tea? “I’m drinking coffee now because I need the caffeine [laughs], but I prefer English breakfast tea with a lot of milk.”

Best date ever? “I recently visited Chris in London while he was shooting *Jurassic World 2*, and he rented a boat that took us up and down the Thames. He had scones, and it was wildly romantic. He’s constantly doing really romantic things like that which are so wonderful. But I also think that for us, our best date is an afternoon at our Washington home. Chris will put out crab pots early in the morning, and later that day, we’ll eat fresh crab with a little butter and just look at the scenery.”

Want her advice? Anna says on unqualified.com that, “I could not love all of you more and please e-mail me at questions@unqualified.com with your pressing relationship questions.”

Stretching herself to work outside her comfort zone brought Anna unexpected rewards beyond accolades and adoring fans. “There’s a freedom of being part of a comedy. I have a B+ glamorous career, and I feel like if I had a more glamorous career, that wouldn’t be as freeing. My fans know I’m clearly not perfect. In fact,

I’m messy,” she jokes. “I’m grateful that I could be caught tripping and falling down in an airport or with something in my teeth and I wouldn’t have to be holding up a different version of myself. That fall or spinach wouldn’t feel painful because no one expects me to be this perfect person. Comedy lets me be a ‘real’ person. And I know that when I do

screw up, I’ll forgive myself, too, because that’s big when it comes to overall positivity.”

No Time for Stress

Her professional life may be filled with the chaos of demanding shooting schedules, pages of scripts to remember and weeks away from her husband and son, but off-screen, Anna exudes a comforting, relaxed nature that leaves you wondering if anything gets her riled.

She’s developed a rolls-off-your-back attitude that keeps her grounded and able to maintain a positive perspective. “I think that as I get older and [spend more time] in Hollywood, I realize there are so many things that can ruffle your feathers. But if I spent time getting worked up like that, I’d be in a state of total anxiety all day,” she says. “For me, I guess it comes down to choosing your battles. And I don’t, in general, find myself getting road rage.”

She’s also conscious of how she expends her emotional energy.

“I also feel like so many women, especially working moms, are so exhausted. There are times when I think, ‘Do I have the energy to be upset?’ and the answer is ‘no.’”

That philosophy has spilled into Anna’s parenting style, too. Getting pregnant at 35 afforded her a mature perspective. “When Jack is a little naughty or bratty, I try to suppress my laughter,” she explains. “It’s not like Chris and I let him do whatever he wants, we set guidelines and expectations like any parent. But I think if I were a young mom in my 20s, I would be different. I’d probably be wrapped up in not messing up and be a lot more hyper about trying to strive for Instagram perfection. Having him at the age I did has left me feeling lucky that I get to really enjoy his childhood and watch the way a kid’s brain develops.


Because I’m older, I have the luxury of a little distant perspective.”

When she does eventually blow her top, she admits it’s hard to fall back on her easygoing ways. “I can’t stand confrontation, which maybe is a character flaw. But having said that, I do feel like when I do get upset, which is rare as my husband and family would say, I have a hard time letting it go.”

Anna and Chris rely on laughter to maintain perspective in the face of the constant scrutiny showered upon them via social media and a 24-hour news cycle. “It can be incredibly stressful. When I was first getting recognized in the 2000s, we didn’t have cameras on us all the time. Now I could be walking down the street and someone who

recognizes me starts filming or taking photos. That can be tough, especially if I’m with my son.”

Anna has adopted a *c’est la vie* approach to rumors and undo criticism. “I’m really lucky that I have Chris and we laugh a lot about stupid stuff. I was reading false rumors in a tabloid about us, and I feel so lucky that Chris and I can laugh about it rather than let it ruin our day.”

That’s not to say hurtful words and lies don’t sting. “But we do our best to shrug it off and make jokes about it,” she adds. “At some point, it becomes so unbelievably absurd that it’s oddly flattering that someone is talking about you and making up stories about your life.” 

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