

Sara Bareilles on “Good Grief” and the Book Powering Her Next Chapter

The Grammy Award-winning singer opens up about her new album, “Good Grief,” and the Meg Wolitzer book she’s adapting for the stage.

LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, September 4, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- There's a phrase Sara Bareilles keeps circling when she talks about Meg Wolitzer's "The Interestings." "Great love and great loss are braided together," she tells host Chris Collins on a recent episode of Books That Changed My Life. "They are one."



Sara Bareilles.

Over the last five years, she's lost two close friends and spent years on a fertility journey that hasn't gone the way she expected. She's also fallen for Wolitzer's novel hard enough that she's now adapting it as a stage musical, her first since *Waitress*, ten years ago.

Bareilles calls the book a portal, and she means it structurally as well as emotionally. "There is some portal that lives in this book for me that's opened up a channel to a kind of music I've never written before," she says. "A kind of storytelling I've never done before." She'd been waiting the better part of a decade for the next theatrical project to feel right, turning down scripts and novels as they came in. "The Interestings" was the one that finally cracked her open. "It's changed my life as an artist, as a creator, as an actor, as a producer."

Wolitzer's novel spans about forty years in the life of a group of teenagers who meet at an arts camp in the early 1970s, and Bareilles has become something of a Wolitzer evangelist in the process of adapting it. "Meg's voice as a writer is really singular," she says. "She has a way of describing things with laser accuracy from an oddball, quirky perspective. And she's really funny."

What pulled her in, she says, wasn't the plot, so much as it was the ache expressed in Wolitzer's

work. As she puts it, the book contains: "So much yearning and striving... We miss, and we fail, and we disappoint each other. And all of those themes live in this book in such a beautiful way. The characters just feel like they're out walking around."

The character she identifies with most is Jules; the outsider, the striver, the one desperate to be more interesting than she believes she really is. "I relate to feeling like an outsider. I relate to feeling awkward," Bareilles says. "The striving of wanting to get closer to something that may or may not materialize." What she loves about Wolitzer's Jules is that she's a mess: "awkward and funny and whiny and greedy — a wonderful combination of really lovable qualities and really loathsome ones."

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Jules's arc, as Bareilles reads it, is learning to stop chasing the word in the book's title. "This idea of being interesting is in opposition to just being," she says. "Just being is interesting. She doesn't have to search for it to be something else." Her therapist, she notes, calls this "unique and ordinary medicine," the idea that everyone carries something valuable.

The same emotional territory has been running through her new album, *Good Grief*, which she's been writing since 2020. "It's every kind of loss," she says. "COVID, two best friends who passed, my fertility journey. Everything's in there."

She's quick to say the record isn't a wake. "There's plenty of hope on it, too. It's not somber. It's transformative grief." She recorded most of it upstate at Dreamland Studios and at Aaron Dessner's Long Pond Studios; she needed, she says, the tranquility and the natural space. One of the album's rawest tracks is "Forever," written from the perspective of her friend Gavin, one of two best friends she's lost in recent years.

The full conversation covers Wolitzer's cast in detail, the philosophy of stopping versus staying in motion, Bareilles's take on backup plans ("pay your bills and do what you love"), and a running theory about being stuck at twelve years old that involves Russian nesting dolls. For fans of Bareilles or Wolitzer, this conversation is a must-watch.

View the full conversation on Books That Changed My Life [HERE](#).

ABOUT BOOKS THAT CHANGED MY LIFE:

"Books That Changed My Life," hosted by bestselling author Chris Collins, is a YouTube show exploring how great books transform us in profound and unexpected ways. Each episode features a special guest sharing a book that shaped or inspired them, sparking deep conversations and unearthing unfiltered personal stories.

Recent guests include actor and comedian Patton Oswalt, soap opera legend Susan Lucci, former covert CIA officer Andrew Bustamante, actress and reality star Lisa Rinna, Dancing With the Stars pro Jenna Johnson, Good Morning America icon Joan Lunden, and television legend Kelsey Grammer.

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