

Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules

Episode #23: How to Add Wow to Your Holiday Wardrobe

Amy:

Aww, it sounds like you've had a rough go though.

Cheri:

Here's how I'm spinning it, I'm thinking of myself as performing a public service to our listeners to remind them that this is the time to stock up on anything they need for the illnesses that are bound to crop up over Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Amy:

Yes, yes, yes.

Cheri:

(Cough) And if I do that, I will sip some of my freshly heated tea.

Amy:

OK. Have you got a throat coat?

Cheri:

Hu-ugh

Amy:

Have you used that before? It's really good stuff. It actually works.

Cheri:

I'm not sure Daniel wants me to be cured. I think this is like his favorite time of the year is when I lose my voice.

<music>

Cheri:

Hey, this is Cheri Gregory, and you're listening to Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules.

Today, my deLIGHT-full co-host, Amy Carroll, and I are discussing dressing up and dealing with body image issues during the holidays.

And we are thrilled to welcome Kim Nowlin, a fashion expert who has some fabulous practical tips for you!

Cheri:

Well, for this episode we are talking about clothes and appearance and body image at the holidays and the bad rule that we're working with is the voice in our head that says, "You can't go out in public looking like that."

Amy:

Oh man my husband has a very loved family member who her favorite saying used to be, "You're not going out in that rig, are you?" That's the southern version!

Cheri:

I love it!

Amy:

And every once in a while, I'll kind of throw that out to them, "Well, ugh, you're not going out in that rig, are you?"

Cheri:

You know, Californians need more southern sayings. I need to come spend some time and let the south rub off on me. It's making me think though of my mother who was the exact opposite of actually being that direct. She would hint. She'd look at what I was wearing and say, "Oh it's time for you to change for church." Knowing full well that that's what I was planning to wear for church and it was like oh that was code for, "You aren't going to church in that."

Amy:

I see.

My favorite is the critical question when somebody says, "Oh, is that what you're wearing?" That, yeah, that's the way Southern girls do it a lot cause it sounds sweet coming out of your mouth but, you know, it's got a to barb attached to it.

Cheri:

You know as I was thinking about this topic, I realized that for me when the kids were little I had so much fun sewing for them. I would just get so excited and I will plan ahead. I was definitely a pre-crastinator in this area. I would plan ahead and buy the fabric and patterns and I would have their matchy-matchy outfits sown well before Thanksgiving and that was part of getting me into the mood for the holidays. And so when they got...

Amy:

Ah.

Cheri:

...too old for that and they were like, "No mom we don't want to match anymore," you know there like 20 and 22, no I'm kidding, but I realized that during that phase of motherhood I put all of my energy, and time and money into them, I don't remember what I wore frankly during those years. I probably just pulled something out of the closet that was clean and who knows if it was even ironed. My idea of an iron is a spray bottle full of hot water and if I can mist it let it hang and the wrinkles come out, I'm happy.

Amy:

Yes girl.

Cheri:

So that's my level of fashion. But just in thinking back now that they're older I realized that I never replaced that enjoyment of dressing them up with anything, I never brought the emphasis back onto me or anything. It was just like, "Oh they grew up and the fun is gone" and with this whole idea of, "You're not going out in that rig, are you?" How about you? What's your relationship with holiday dressing?

Amy:

I have to say, I do love clothes and dressing, but it's interesting to see my pictures over the years. So one of the things, that delights my heart is funkiness. I love some funky clothes, funky shoes, something a little different than everybody is wearing. I was kind of known for it in high school. But I went through a time period where honestly, I've been looking at a lot of pictures as I've been cleaning out recently, and I thought, "Who is that woman?" I went through a time period where I was, I would use the word dowdy.

Cheri:

Whoa.

Amy:

I really faded into the background, wallflowerish. And I don't mean that as uh, like an indictment on any particular kind of dressing. It was just a time period where I realized that I was not expressing my true self. It's interesting in decorating and clothing, I think, it's an opportunity to express our true self. And it's always worth it to take a look at our closets and say, "Do I have a closet full of things that I love or do I have a closet full of things I think other people will approve of?"

Cheri:

Mmmm.

Amy:

And at that point in my life I had a closet full of things that would gain other people's approval, I thought. And I've come back to really wanting to express my true self in the way that I dress.

Cheri:

You know, it's so funny that you use the word dowdy. I cannot imagine you ever looking dowdy. I have to see some of these pictures. I won't believe you otherwise.

Amy:

It's true, it is true.

I want to be really clear that I'm not such a fashionista. So one of the things that I've always done is I always joke about having a champagne taste on a beer budget, especially when the kids were little. So, one of the things that I've adopted is thrifting. If you're a listener who thinks, "Well I would like to fill my closet was something else or one or two things else" I highly advocate for thrifting because maybe you don't have the budget to do that, we've been talking about buying gifts and budgeting for that, there are a lot of things that cost a lot of money this time of year. Dressing doesn't have to be one of them. Thrifting is a lot of fun. Let me give you an example of how it just thrills my funky heart, I found a pair of, they look like Converse high tops...

Cheri:

Oh!

Amy:

But they have kitten heels...

Cheri:

Oh my goodness!

Amy:

So, yes, I bought them. I know buying used shoes is kind of gross, but I did put them through the washing machine twice before I wore them and now I just feel like the cutest girl in these funky shoes.

Cheri:

How fun!

OK, I definitely want a picture of those. I'm not visual, so I'm not visualizing, but they sound great.

Amy:

Well let's post it on the website.

Cheri:
Absolutely.

Amy:
We'll put the picture. Yeah.

Cheri:
Absolutely.

My problem is I tend to be so pragmatic that I wait until I need something desperately and then I'm on a mission to find that one thing rather than just taking the time to go out maybe with a girlfriend and just see what we can find. And if we don't find anything then we go find a mocha at Starbucks and call it a great day.

Amy:
It's a different kind of shopping, for sure.

Cheri:
Yeah, definitely. Well, and I also think that planning ahead now, starting ahead now, and making sure everything that we might be wearing during the holidays, is it clean, is it repaired does anything need to go to the, I don't own anything that needs to go to the dry cleaning, but I know some people do choose that. I noticed one of my favorite jackets, the other day - I love to wear at Christmas, because it it's red - it's missing a button. And I know what the button is and I own needle and thread, but if I don't make it a priority I'm not going to be able to wear that thing during December because in December I'm too busy, way too busy. So, this is the time this weekend I will make sure that I get that done.

Well there's kind of a corollary to the bad rule that you can't go out in public looking like that and this one is more related to body image and this is one that those of us who struggle with food might hear and that is, "you can't eat that you're already too fat."

Amy:
Oh gracious.

Cheri:
The holidays we end up around food a lot. More than any other time of year I think.

Amy:
Well, this is a topic I could probably address personally. I have wrestled with fluffiness ever since my first pregnancy.

Cheri:
You're not fat. You're fluffy.

Amy:

I'm fluffy. I like that word much better. It has some positive connotations. And it's so funny, because I think about our interview with Kathy Lipp way back when, when she talked about being a pocket perfectionist. I feel like I'm a pocket perfectionist in this area and that I don't think too much about it. I just don't, I would like to do better, I would like to be healthier. That is a goal. However I don't worry about my weight too much. And I just want to say to girls out there don't worry about your weight too much.

Cheri:

Amen.

Amy:

And to those of you – oh I...I didn't know whether to say this, and it might end up on the cutting room floor and it's okay. But for those of you who *don't* wrestle with your weight, I have something to say to you: Your friends who do wrestle with their weight – they know. You don't have to tell them. I have a much-loved relative who has decided that it's her job to tell me about my weight and let me just say it's not helpful. It only makes me want to avoid her. So...and this is somebody I love so dearly – I don't really want to avoid. So, it's just an aside for those of you who don't struggle.

Cheri:

One of the things that I have come to realize about food at the holidays for me –food has still tended to be one of my coping mechanisms through the years. It's not a full-blown eating disorder, but it's still a complicated relationship, like we say on Facebook. What I realize at the holidays especially, is I tend to go to food to solve problems that food can't solve. Food is meant for nourishment. And hopefully to some degree for enjoyment, but primarily it's to fuel our bodies. During the holidays when we're traveling and I'm tired and I'm stressed and I'm encountering people...and you know, more difficult relationships than usual, I'm asking food to solve my anxiety problems. I'm asking food to solve my relational problems. And sometimes I'll find myself, at a...oh let's say at a party where I don't know too many people. And just because I'm a little socially anxious, I'm sitting there shoveling appetizers into my mouth. Well - I'm not hungry. And I'm going to end up with a very full stomach feeling gross. When the issue is simply...I didn't know how to ask a good question. Or, I couldn't just sit and listen to someone. So being a little bit more aware of what we're trying to have food do for us – for those of us who do – struggle with our relationship with food – and going in with a bit of a plan. There's nothing wrong with asking for a little bit of help from a friend. One of the things I love that Brene Brown says, she says, "Shame thrives on secrecy." And so...

Amy:

Yes.

Cheri:

...when our food struggles are completely secret and we're the only ones trying to solve them all by ourselves, that can just be so much stress. Whereas bringing in another person or two – or even it could be a friend by text message – to just say, "Hey, I'm struggling. Give me a question I could ask the person sitting next to me. Instead of eating more," could be really, really helpful.

Amy:

That's really insightful. And it's such a problem over the holidays because you said it was relational and social. Well that's all amped up – over the holidays. Food becomes a part of that.

Cheri:

There's also obligatory eating. You go to a family member and they've made this huge meal for you. What if you're not hungry at that moment? In some families it's a huge insult not to eat. Maybe you've had your first serving and they want you to have seconds and thirds? One of the best things I ever heard from a counselor – she said, "Would you over-feed a child?" Just think of a five-year-old who says, "I'm not hungry anymore." Would you force her to keep on eating until she was stuffed and miserable? Well of course not. We wouldn't do that to a child. We don't need to do that to ourselves.

Amy:

Wow.

Cheri:

We can take good, careful care of ourselves and set those boundaries.

Amy:

That's great insight. Well one of my goals this year is too – is to treat treats like treats. Instead of..."Oh! I need to treat myself three times a day." No treat, by definition, is something that happens on occasion. And I have treated treats like food. I'm one of these people who if you tell me what I cannot have, that that just really works against me. Or even if I'm telling myself, "I cannot have any sugar over Christmas." That would torpedo me. So what I have to say is, "I can have something twice a week over Christmas, instead." So, that's how I'm trying to substitute and eat a little healthier. I have a doctor's appointment in January.

Cheri:

Good for you!

Amy:

It's a motivating factor, let's just say!

So let's read through Mathew 11:28-30 one more time, and just really listen, you guys and absorb and feel the grace in this: "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me. Recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me. Watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill fitting on you. Keep company with me. You'll learn how to live freely and lightly." The thing that jumped off the page at me this time – every week it's something different – is the *walk with me and work with me – watch how I do it*. For me, when I have my eyes on Jesus – so I'm trying to watch him, walk with him, learn how he does it, then I'm in alignment in so many areas of my life that can quickly get out of alignment - food is just one of them. If I'm watching other people or trying to gain approval, alignment never comes. It's always one extreme or the other.

Cheri:

I've just really been enjoying immersing in these verses and returning to them over and over again. That just is wonderful. The grit aspect to all of this, I think is planning ahead. Which is why we're doing the holiday break now. Because if we plan ahead whether its to 'you know go, do that thrifting spree and look for a few fun accessories to make sure that this holiday season when we show up at events or even just in our own home that we are expressing who we are and then when it comes to the food, to be listening to our bodies needs and as necessary, reaching out for help and accountability. All of that takes a certain amount of grit. Of course, the *natural* thing to do is just go pell-mell into the holidays and just you know let things happen as they may. It takes grit to say, "We're going to plan now. We're going to think about it ahead of time." How about the *grace* aspect?

Amy:

Well, for me, it's loving the body we *have* instead of just *always* longing for the body that we want. Hey – I'm not at my goal weight this Christmas – maybe next Christmas – that'd be great! But I'm not. But still giving myself permission...I think the dressing and the weight thing go hand in hand because when my weight is up, when I see the pictures I've tended to try to blend in - not stand out, so I'm going to try to embrace what Anita Renfroe says, which I totally love...

Cheri:

What's that?

Amy:

I saw her doing a show one evening and she kind of waved her hand over her belly area, which might be my issue too, and she said, "If you can't lose it, DECORATE IT!"

Cheri:

I love it!

Amy:

And so she had some blingy necklaces hanging over the problem area! I'm embracing that this Christmas.

Cheri:

Well you had a great truth that we could focus on instead of the bad rule. What was that?

Amy:

To dress and feed your outer self to reflect your inner self.

Cheri:

This is permission to love yourself this holiday season. To take care of yourself. To express yourself, to realize, 'yes, you deserve to have some fun, you deserve to wear something that makes you feel good, and you deserve to take care of yourself. Yes! By all means, enjoy the food. By all means stop eating if you're not enjoying it anymore. But yeah – permission to take care of yourself and that who you are is worth expressing.

Amy:

That's terrific. I always think about when Jesus says, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Embedded in that scripture is the – really the command to also love ourselves. So, I love that.

Cheri:

Kim, thank you so much for agreeing to come with such short notice. Feel free to just go at it with the topic of decorating what you have. Especially for the holiday season.

Kim:

You like that one Amy, yes?

Amy:

Yes, I do. I'm quite ready to hear about this.

Kim:

I love this idea of decorating what you have. I am very passionate about women dressing the bodies that they have. It's about being confident in who you are. Our confidence doesn't come from our clothes, or from our outer appearance. It comes from who we are in Christ. What I like to help women is to have that confidence be seen on the outside. So that women are dressing for their day, or in this case, they're dressing for the holidays. I worked for Weight Watchers for eight years and I really did see a difference in the women that took care of themselves at every stage of their journey. That they were dressing and proud of the body that they had. I feel like it also motivated them to move forward in their journey because they were always looking put together.

Cheri:

Interesting

Kim:

Yeah. There's really something to that. For the holidays everybody wants to look fun and festive at the holidays. I think it's very simple. I think we complicate things too much or we think we have to go buy a Christmas sweater or a Thanksgiving sweater or... It's not my thing. I know for some people it is a thing and that's fine, but you don't have to do that. I think it depends on the ... How you dress for your holidays. My holidays are pretty casual so I just am looking for pieces to elevate my everyday wardrobe. You can do that for any body, right? If I'm adding a cool statement necklace, that's pretty much my go to. I wear jeans and t-shirts. I'm a in the car Mom, not a stay at home Mom. We're never at home I'm in the car.

Amy:

I love that.

Kim:

My wardrobe is mainly jeans and t-shirts. What I'm looking for are what I call completer pieces like a cardigan or a blazer that are unique. Especially for the holidays. Finding a unique piece, not just a plain cardigan but maybe something that has some embroidery on it or something that has a little bedazzled to elevate just your everyday look. Because on Thanksgiving day, we're not dressing up as a family but I do like to wear something a little bit nicer on that day. It's just going to be going with my standard wardrobe.

Same thing I think with a statement necklace or statement earrings. It's an easy way to elevate an outfit for a holiday look and that doesn't involve clothing if you're worried about the body. Decorating what you have, which I love that Anita says that, decorating what you have. It's about being proud of what you are at any stage. Whether you're trying to reshape your body or not. This is where you're at and how can I show my best with where I'm at.

Amy:

I love your suggestions because it freaks me out. I'll go through these magazines and they have holiday outfits and they say, "Everything under fifty dollars." Well what they mean is every piece is under fifty dollars and so they have a two thousand dollar outfit when you add it all together. I know very few people who can do that so I love the idea of just taking one thing and elevating your everyday outfit.

Kim:

There are pieces out there right now. Some things that are really on trend right now, is just a bomber jacket, if you guys are familiar with the leather bomber. They've made them more feminine now. I have one that I just purchased, it's actually made out of rayon but it still has the knit band around the waist and around the neck. It's black and it has this really pretty embroidery on it. That piece I can wear with, again with my jeans

and t-shirts and a necklace and that is an elevated outfit without having to spend so much money on a whole new outfit. And velvet is, velvet's pretty much always in.

Amy:

The suggestions you made too aren't holiday specific so its not like you can only pull them out one time a year like some of our favorite Christmas sweaters.

Kim:

That's how I do my speaker wardrobe or any kind of wardrobe where ... I think most women have that kind of wardrobe where you have a primary wardrobe of what you're wearing a majority of the time and then a secondary wardrobe that is hand in hand with your primary. So certain pieces that I'm going to add but they all work together.

Cheri:

Kim, I love this idea of elevating. You've got me actually excited about going upstairs and looking at my closet. Which I'm not buying anything major new, but I'm starting to suspect there are a few things I could elevate by doing some of Amy's thrifting. So, that's exciting.

I also know that on your website, you've got a self assessment that our listeners can take to figure out what their particular fashion style is?

Kim:

By answering just a few questions that can let you know what your primary style is so you know what to look for. Actually, you're probably already shopping that way, you just don't know it. A lot of women just aren't aware that there's a certain style they gravitate towards. That's why we end up going to the department store looking like deer in the headlights. It's so overwhelming when you step off that escalator at Nordstrom and it's like, "Okay, which department do I go to?" Once you know the style that you gravitate to, it makes it much simpler just to pass everything else and go for the things that you know that you want. I think dressing for your ... I don't have this on my website, I should put it on. Dressing for your body type, that's kind of what we're talking about here, is really important too. Maybe some women don't know what their body type is.

Cheri:

The word you keep using over and over again, that I'm sure Amy and I both are loving, is the word simple. Simple. That you are speaking our language.

Kim:

Something I thought about, because we were talking about dressing the body you have, is fit. An outfit always looks the best when it fits you correctly. I know that involves trying on clothes and that could be frustrating. It's not so much even about how much the item is. I know that you've mentioned that Amy is our thrifter. It's not that you have to spend a lot of money. You can buy a very expensive piece of clothing and if it doesn't

fit you right, it's not going to look good. So making sure that things fit. That may mean, it does mean you should have a good tailor, because sometimes, it's not you, it's the garment. If it doesn't fit, it's not you it's the garment.

I know women get really frustrated when they're trying things on especially if they're trying to reshape their body. Just know it's not you, it's the garment and that can be tailored. Then you have a very lovely piece of clothing that fits you and fits you well. Fit trumps everything.

Cheri:

Now that's quotable. Kim, thank you so much.

Cheri:

Don't you just LOVE Kim's emphasis on simplicity and elevating what you already have?

Head on over to the web page for today's episode at GritNGrace.info — that's Grit the letter N Grace dot info — and you'll find some great resources from Kim, including a style quiz.

You'll also find several free downloadables, including this week's "permission slip."

Print it out and post it as a reminder you that you don't HAVE to obey the bad rules that say

You can't go out in public looking like THAT!" and "You can't eat that — you're already too fat."

Instead, you can give yourself permission to

Dress and feed your outer self to reflect your inner self.

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We hope you've enjoyed Episode 23 of Grit 'n' Grace: Good Girls Breaking Bad Rules. Join Amy and me for next week's HOLIDAY BREAK, when we'll be discussing things we can do when we feel alone during the holidays.

For today, grow your grit ... embrace God's grace ... and when you run across a bad rule, you know what to do! Go right on ahead and BREAK IT!